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Deadly Sista Girlz final evaluation report

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Deadly Sista Girlz
Final Evaluation Report

28th February 2021

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that this report was penned on *Noongar Boodjar*. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of *Whadjuck* Country. We also acknowledge the *Yaruwu* nation whose lands we traversed to yarn and gather information contained within this report. We pay our respects to all the peoples, their cultures and Elders and thank you all for the privilege of letting us stand upon and gather on your Country.

We write this evaluation in the spirit of sovereignty.

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the young women and staff at the Wirrpanda Foundation and from within the Deadly Sista Girlz Program who yarned, shared their stories and viewpoints with us for this evaluation. We hope we have captured the spirit of our yarning and done justice to your experiences through the writing of this report. We look forward to seeing the Deadly Sista Girlz program flourish and grow so that you can assist in the **futures** of many more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls who will access your program.

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List of acronyms used

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACSF	Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AIEOs	Aboriginal Islander Education Officers
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
CEO	Catholic Education Office
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DET	Department of Education
DETWA	Department of Education Western Australia
DSG	Deadly Sista Girlz
EALD	English as an additional language
FAST	Families and Schools Together
GA	Girls Academy
IAS	Indigenous Advancement Strategy
KEP	Kinship Empowerment Program
KKNH	Kaat Koort N Hoops
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
NASCA	National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy
NIAA	National Indigenous Australian Agency
OAM	Order of Australia

PWCs	Price Waterhouse Coopers	
RMLA	Role Models and Leaders Australia	
SHS	Senior High School	
TAI	The Aspirations Initiative	
VTEC	Vocational Training Employment Centre	
WA	Western Australia	
WF	Wirrpanda Foundation	

Terminology

There are many Indigenous nations, languages and cultures in Australia. We acknowledge that is difficult to select nomenclature that is appropriate and acceptable to all First Nation Australians. Generally speaking, the authors have used the term 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' to apply to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, we have used the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' when referring to original documents that used this term; in some instances, we have used the term to emphasise the distinct identities of these two broad groups of people. The authors use all terms interchangeably and do so, in order to demonstrate and recognise the diversity of Aboriginal peoples in Australia and as a way of respecting their rights to self-determine.

Executive Summary

Background

The Deadly Sista Girlz (DSG) program is one of several school-based mentoring programs currently operating in Australia to improve educational outcomes of Indigenous girls. Deadly Sista Girlz runs programs on 12 DET WA school sites, 1 Catholic Education school site in Broome and 1 in Victoria. Each school site has a dedicated DSG room where DSG coordinators and mentors support the girls individually and communally whilst also running regular program workshops. There are currently over 732 high school aged girls enrolled in the program. DSG is part of the large and well established Wirrpanda Foundation.

Overall aims

This External Evaluation Review was commissioned as part of an agreement between the Wirrpanda Foundation and the Western Australian Department of Education. An External Evaluation was one of the recommendations made by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) in its 2020 Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funding review. The overarching aim of the Evaluation was to examine the focus and scope of the Deadly Sista Girlz Program. More specifically to:

- Identify a broad range of strategies to include the WA Education Department's Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework (ACSF), to strengthen the existing Deadly Sista Girlz Program
- Evaluate the learning environments and the extent of the cultural safety and welcoming
- Identify examples of evidence based best practice optimising culturally appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal girls.

What we examined

The evaluation covers the time period from mid 2020 to February 2021 and examined aspects of the Deadly Sista Girlz program. The objective of the evaluation is to provide an evidence based neutral assessment of all working aspects of the Deadly Sista Girlz Program that can be used to inform future decision making.

Methods

Indigenous methodological principles were used to ethically guide this research. Yarning was the key methodological approach used to gather the data alongside comprehensive literature reviews. We understood that the most important and insightful people to tell us about the program were the participants - the school site coordinators and mentors; the DSG central office staff, alumni and school leaders and ideally and in a longer term project the girls themselves. We also understood that in order to evaluate the cultural safety of the schools and the DSG rooms we would need to visit them. Given the reduced scope of research, we did not visit the DSG rooms on any of the DET sites nor did we interview or contact school principals. Despite the limitations, our evaluation provides in depth and authentic insights into the program as it draws on the standpoint of the site coordinators, staff and alumni gathered through yarning. The report also draws from a review of contemporary literature relevant to the education, health and well-being of Indigenous young women in Australia.

Recommendations that emerged from the External Evaluation

The following recommendations address the overall requirement for the External Evaluation to *Examine focus and scope of the Deadly Sista Girlz Program.* These recommendations are based on our overall evaluation of the program and draw from our analysis of data collected through, yarning, interviews and review of current literature.

The results of the evaluation have confirmed that the Deadly Sista Girlz Program is a highly successful program. The following recommendations are therefore made in the spirit of ensuring that the current quality of program provision by the Wirrpanda Foundation is not compromised and that the program can continue to develop and meet the changing needs of Aboriginal girls and school communities into the future. The Deadly Sista Girlz Program should be continued, and consideration should be given to increasing the resource allocation to reflect the recommendations that follow. We note that in the recent GAR a new data system/base was recommended. During the course of this evaluation, DSG began using Microsoft Dynamics' Higher Education Platform as the CRM template. This will automate and refine many of the DSG processes giving greater accessibility and improved data management.

> ### Recommendation 1
>
> Re-develop the Deadly Sista Girlz program curriculum to make it more relevant and authentic to the lived experiences of the girls in the program. Contemporise the curriculum based on three broad themes: Future Pathways, Community [re] establishing connections and Health & Wellbeing.

- DSG to employ a suitably qualified curriculum development consultant and/or coordinator to redevelop the DSG curriculum
- The DSG curriculum modules in the lower secondary where appropriate be aligned to ACARA
- The DSG curriculum modules in the senior secondary where appropriate be aligned to the Australian Core Standards Framework (eg Cert I or II)
- The DSG curriculum workshops should be embedded at regular timeslots in the school timetable as per the NIAA – IAS funding agreement
- The curriculum should incorporate regular community outreach activities eg visits to aged care to [re] establish cultural connections
- Increased engagement with DSG alumni and involve them in the DSG programs

> ### Recommendation 2
>
> That the Deadly Sista Girlz develop an ACSF aligned Professional Development module for school leaders and teaching staff. This PD should address all the ACSF standards where strategies are developed in collaboration with principals and teaching staff. This is to assist schools to work with the DSG to transition to a more integrative whole schools approach aligned to ACSF.

- Develop and provide schools with a PD module that conveys the core business of the DSG program and its purpose of operating within respective school sites. Importantly DSG must highlight to schools the areas of the ACSF they are able to assist with
- We would also encourage that teaching staff visit the DSG rooms on a regular basis in order to build relationships outside the classroom
- School leaders should facilitate appropriate professional learning for school staff to help ensure a whole school commitment to the Deadly Sista Girlz Program
- The Deadly Sista Girlz programs need to be woven into the fabric of their respective school sites. Strategies to achieve this include having Deadly Sista Girlz staff attend school and executive staff meetings and a regular communication segment in school newsletters and other media

Recommendation 3

Major investment and development in and around the Future Pathways area.

- The DSG program should become more closely integrated within the Wirrpanda Foundation VET sector to build on its capacity to provide targeted VET opportunities for young Indigenous women
- The Wirrpanda Foundation already has a strong VET infrastructure geared to meet both current and future Indigenous Vocation and Education Training. The labour market conditions indicate this is an area of growth in WA
- The DSG Program should use the established Indigenous entrepreneur and business connections provided by the Wirra Hub. The facilities, expertise and connections are a readily available resource to provide Indigenous women role models, entrepreneurial and business skill development and workplace learning opportunities
- Extra funding and resources are required to support the Future Pathways Manager/Coordinator role/s for regional and metropolitan site visits
- Greater liaison between the DSG Future Pathways Manager/Coordinator(s) and VETinSchools programs
- The WF explore purchasing a computer-generated program such as Career Voyage, which we believe DSG and other employment entities at the Foundation would benefit from students or clients are exploring career choices.

Recommendation 4

Ensure that Deadly Sista Girlz staff members have relevant current skills and experience in establishing effective relationships with school leaders and teaching staff. The Foundation provides their staff with the opportunity to develop qualifications complimentary to their multiple roles.

- Ensure that continuing professional learning opportunities are provided for new and existing staff to maintain and grow their skills and expertise. This could include how to develop IEPs for students
- Implement a work/study program for staff who wish to undertake tertiary study

- Continue with the annual DSG conference. Have high profile Aboriginal women champion to key-note and inspire staff
- Ongoing Data and financial management training should be considered for Professional Development

> ### Recommendation 5
>
> School leaders must strengthen and develop their knowledge and understanding of the vital work that the DSG program and in particular site coordinators do in providing a culturally safe environment for the girls. Every effort should be made to ensure the dedicated DSG rooms are adequately and appropriately located and resourced to support this essential work.

- **School Leaders** should strengthen and develop their knowledge and understanding of the concept of cultural safety and how the DSG program assists in the provision of a culturally safe environment
- In consultation with DSG staff and students the DSG dedicated rooms should be adequately and appropriately designed, furnished and equipped to enhance a sense of pride and identity as well as provide cultural safety
- Facilities should include suitable spaces for kitchens, group sessions and individual quiet break out spaces
- The rooms should be located in appropriate places within the school (eg not "down the back" or "next to the boys change rooms")

> ### Recommendation 6
>
> Redesign of DSG website, marketing and communications strategies internally and externally.

- Update and improve DSG web presence and develop other social media platforms
- Seek out support from high profile Indigenous women including DSG Alumni, staff and community leaders as champions
- Build on the media leverage from the AFLW/DSG connections
- Develop community profile through DSG merchandise eg school shirts, hats, water bottles

Summary of the outcomes

1. Recommendations for strategies to include the WA DET ACSF to strengthen the existing DSG program

The DSG program and the Wirrpanda Foundation are well placed to assist respective schools in meeting some aspects of the Standards outlined in the ACSF (see p 31). School leaders must work collaboratively within a framework informed by principles of **co-design with the DSG program for the ACSF to be successful in schools**. This is a complex process which takes time as it based on building reciprocity between

all parties. This requires School Leaders to invite DSG site coordinators to the table as equal partners in shared discussions.   Specific strategies related to relevant ACSF Standards and Performance Descriptors/Indicators are provided in the report.

2. *A review of the relevant contemporary Australian literature pertaining to cultural safety and in particular culturally safe learning environments*

As part of the evaluation of the Deadly Sista Girlz program, the evaluators undertook a review of the literature on cultural safety and culturally safe learning environments. As we did not visit DET school sites due to the reduced scope of research a review of the literature has been used to address this outcome. The evaluation found that engagement in education plays a critical role in the attainment of educational success (ACER, 2007; Ehrich et al., 2010). Addressing long-standing educational inequity is arduous and complex. Progress in Aboriginal educational outcomes must address and place emphasis on the learning environment rather than in the deficit model that seeks to change the student as the source of the problem (Apple, 2006). That said, given the intergenerational experiences in education for many Aboriginal peoples, in 2021 there is an urgent and inherent requirement that today's schools ensure that their schooling environments are culturally safe, welcoming and culturally responsive to the needs of all Aboriginal students. Ramsden (1992) first introduced the concept of 'cultural safety' to the nursing profession as a practice model for nurses to respect the cultural diversity of patients, their families and communities. Researchers across disciplines and in particular education were quick to apply the ideas around 'cultural safety' to challenge the ongoing colonisation of Indigenous peoples and their communities. As such, programs like the Deadly Sista Girlz, offer a welcoming environment through a strong connection to culture and community. From our yarning conversations with the DSG site coordinators there is clear evidence that DSG program and in particular dedicated rooms provide a culturally safe space. They provide a sense of belonging where Aboriginal girls are free to develop their sense of identities whilst learning at school, setting them up for their future life pathways. It is vital that school leaders understand, acknowledge and respect the work that the DSG program does in providing a culturally safe environment for the girls and that every effort is made to ensure the dedicated DSG rooms are adequately and appropriately located and resourced to support this essential work.

3. *Desktop review of programs for Aboriginal girls across Australia*

An extensive literature search and review was conducted to gather a comprehensive body of information relevant to Aboriginal girl's programs in Australia. Stakeholder suggestions and existing research documents assisted this review. The review found that whilst there was diversity amongst programs there were many common themes. These included the use of mentoring as a key strategy. The majority of programs indicated that the use of dedicated rooms was a critical element in providing cultural safety. Majority of Indigenous staffing and governance are highlighted as a critical success factor with the use of alumni as role models. The literature reflects the disparity of funding between boys and girl's programs. All of the programs had sophisticated websites and active social media engagement. Most of the curricular focused on health and well-being with sport highlighted as a 'hook' for many. However, there was little research evidence to support the efficacy of focusing on sports for girl's programs.

4. *Examples of evidence based best practice optimising culturally appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal girls*

A review of government, non-government and academic literature found that co-design and self-determination are keys to the success of educational programs for Aboriginal girls. In essence this means

that Aboriginal peoples, their knowledges and experiences should be at the forefront of all research and programs that involve them. The research also demonstrates that localised and relevant programs work best. A focus on local Indigenous engagement is supported by the recent revised National School Reform Agreement (Council of Australian Governments, 2019). More funding for girl's programs is considered paramount in the literature. More research & better evidence is required relating to Aboriginal girl's programs. Longitudinal research is needed to establish the best strategies for continuous, long-lasting Indigenous student successes in the existing schooling system. There is a dearth of robust evaluation and evidence about the efficacy of programs for Aboriginal students, including sports programs and their relatedness to Aboriginal girls.

In summary

The results of the DSG evaluation will be used by the Wirrpanda Foundation to guide and inform decision-making regarding the future directions of the Deadly Sista Girlz program. The results of the evaluation clearly indicate that the program is successful in assisting young Aboriginal girls to better manage their educational studies and future life and career pathways as it provides them with a culturally supportive environment within the school.

The critical importance of providing Aboriginal girls with culturally appropriate mentoring and culturally safe places is a common thread in all the relevant programs examined in the desk top and literature reviews. This support is complex and often provided both within and outside regular school hours. This Evaluation found that the DSG program provides culturally safe support through its mentoring by Aboriginal women site coordinators and mentors, its curriculum and a range of extra-curricular activities offered to the girls both in and outside of school hours. This 'outside of school' assistance is exemplified in examples of driving the girls home when required and role modelling alongside the girls in health and wellbeing programs such as F45.

We were unable to visit the DSG rooms on DET sites but yarning with coordinators, mentors and alumni indicated clearly that these rooms were of vital importance to the girls' health, well-being, educational engagement and sense of cultural safety. Along with the highly committed DSG staff, they were central to the programme's success. Some of the rooms were well resourced and appropriately situated within the school while others would benefit from improved facilities (such as kitchen areas and break out rooms) and more appropriate locations.

The review of the literature regarding evidenced based best practice optimising culturally appropriate learning environments highlighted the following key points that support the continued growth and development of the DSG program.

Firstly

- **Co-design and self-determination are keys to success**: Aboriginal peoples, their knowledges and experiences should be at the forefront of all research and programs that involve them (co-design and self-determination).
- **Localised and relevant programs work best**: programs should be localised, reflexive and relevant to each Aboriginal community. Yarning circles and culturally safe spaces are key to these programs.

And secondly

- **More funding for girls**: more funding for girls' programs is needed to ensure that tailored and flexible support for young women is provided, given that young Aboriginal women are often those who provide fundamental supports to their families and communities.

More research & better evidence is required: more research – especially longitudinal - is required to establish the best strategies for continuous, long-lasting Indigenous student successes in the existing schooling system, including the efficacy of sports programs.

It is abundantly clear from the material provided that the DSG programme provides participants with crucial culturally safe and appropriate support to enhance their engagement with school and future pathways. The mentors and site coordinators care deeply for their participants and are highly motivated to ensure all girls are engaged with their education with all going over and above their job outlines to ensure this occurs. The DSG programme also provides a critical link between the school, parents and the community. The broader DSG programme and the individual onsite coordinators have and use the appropriate cultural knowledge to assist schools to connect authentically and respectfully with parents and the broader Aboriginal community.

The knowledge of the DSG program and staff and their community connections are vital for the success of the WA Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework.

About us

The evaluation team consists of Libby Jackson-Barrett, Dr Anne Price, Jen Featch and Dr Norman Stomski.

Libby is a descendant of the Noongar Nation with cultural ties to the Whadjuck; Wardandi and Njunga nations. She is a Senior Academic for both Kurongkurl Katitjin, Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research and the School of Education, Edith Cowan University. Libby has been involved in Aboriginal education and research alongside Aboriginal communities for over 20 years. Libby is also an Adjunct Lecturer at Murdoch University.

Dr Anne Price was most recently a Senior Lecturer within the School of Education at Murdoch University for 15 years. Anne has taught extensively in remote communities throughout Australia, as well as at a tertiary level in both undergraduate and post graduate programs in Aboriginal studies and curriculum development units.

Research Assistant Jen Featch works at the School of Education, Murdoch University. Jen is a PhD student with a background in communications and education. Her Master of Education (Research) looked at the long-term benefits and disadvantages of school sectors. Jen has coordinated many aspects of this evaluation. Her efforts with design and editing are greatly appreciated.

The researchers have a great deal of experience in research alongside Indigenous communities, Aboriginal corporations and in Indigenous education sectors such as: OLT Project: Skilling Up – Improving educational opportunities for AEWs through technology-based pedagogy; Northwest Early Childhood Workforce Development Strategy; Indigenous curriculum development for Catholic Education; and as senior researchers on the Gumula Aboriginal Health and Education Needs Analysis (2012) funded by Gumula Aboriginal Corporation, Rio Tinto and Murdoch University. Also, ACER: Curriculum Development for Little J and Big Cuz Indigenous Animation; Froebelian Play and Aboriginal Knowledges - Remote On Country Learning Project and initial consultancy with the Djarindjin Pilot Project.

The team has a strong research history based on Indigenous education, school-based curriculum, teacher education and professional development, curriculum development, pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse teacher assistants in remote locations, rural and remote education educational technology, authentic learning approaches and design-based research. We have, and continue to, supervise a number of Higher Degree Research students in related fields.

Finally, and sadly, we pay respect to the late Dr Norman Stomski and acknowledge his valuable contribution and getting us started with the literature review and initial data collection.

Background and Context

External Evaluation aims and objectives

The DSG External Evaluation is required (but is not limited to):

- Examination of the focus and scope of the Deadly Sista Girlz Program

As per the Funding Agreement Schedule (DET ED19159) the evaluation will:

- Identify a broad range of strategies to include the WA Education Department's Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework (ACSF), to strengthen the existing Deadly Sista Girlz Program
- Evaluate the learning environments and the extent of the cultural safety and welcoming
- Identify examples of evidence based best practice optimising culturally appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal girls.

Deadly Sista Girls as part of the Wirrpanda Foundation

https://www.wf.org.au/

The Deadly Sista Girlz (DSG) program is one of 13 education and employment programs designed and delivered by the Wirrpanda Foundation (WF).

The Wirrpanda Foundation (WF) was founded in 2005 by former West Coast Eagles player David Wirrpanda and established by the West Coast Eagles Football Club. The Foundation is a corporation limited by guarantee and is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission. WF is funded through a variety of government, corporate and philanthropic sources, including the West Coast Eagles Football Club.

The Foundation is committed to Indigenous ownership and control and recently voted to become Indigenous controlled and now uniquely has a 50% Indigenous Board. The WF Board is chaired by Alan Cransberg, former Chairman of the West Coast Eagles Football Club, Former President of Alcoa Australia and is Adjunct Professor in Corporate Strategy at the UWA Business School. Other Board members include Deputy Chair Trevor Nesbitt, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of the West Coast Eagles Football Club; David Wirrpanda, founder and director and former Professional AFL Footballer, WA Finalist Citizen of the Year 2012 and NAIDOC Person of the Year 2012; Troy Cook, former AFL footballer and now Director and General Manager of Community Development at the Wirrpanda Foundation; Brad Collard, Western Power. Amanda Healy is the only current female board member and is Director of engineering group, Warrikal and Chief Executive Officer of clothing brand, Kirrikin. The Foundation has a Cultural Advisory Committee part

of the Governance structure (membership includes; Josie Janz-Dawson, Troy Cook, Dale Kickett, Brad Collard, Amanda Healey, Kristen Nelson).

The Foundation is located within the new high-tech Mineral Resources Park in the inner city Perth suburb of Lathlain, where it sits alongside the West Coast Eagles HQ. The facility includes meeting rooms, open-plan office space, community classrooms with ICT facilities and an amphitheatre. These state of the art facilities are used by the Foundation to run a range of successful education, employment and business programs and are available for the DSG as it expands its service delivery. The coexistence of the DSG and the Wirrpanda Foundation were recognised as a key strength and opportunity by the recent NIAA grant review.

In all, the Foundation delivers 13 programs across education and employment. The education programs include Deadly Sista Girls, Onslow Family Support, Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) Wiluna and the Wirra Club. There are also 8 successful vocational training and employment programs.

Employment Programs

The WF runs a number of successful and diverse employment programs including a Transition to Work mentoring and practical skills program for 15-21 year olds. In partnership with Communicare it delivers the Australian government's Transition to Work initiative to Perth's South East region. WF also operates the Vocational and Training Employment Centre (VTEC) which connects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers with local community leaders.

The profile, experience and connections of the Wirrpanda Foundation vocational education and employment programs provide significant opportunities for the DSG program to support the Deadly Sista girls in their education and career aspirations. The range of career, job-seeking and business supports offered at the Foundation are well placed to enable the DSG to develop a strong education, career, business strand in its curriculum renewal.

Wirra Hub

One of the Wirrpanda Foundation's fast-growing sectors is its unique Indigenous business centre. The Wirra Hub supports and promotes Indigenous business by assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to build their business capability to start, grow or sustain their businesses.

> *"This new Hub will be a catalyst for Indigenous Businesses in Swan and across Western Australia to come together to network, access opportunities and continue its record growth."*
>
> *– Steve Irons*
>
> Member for Swan and Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships

The Hub provides a wide range of key services such as tendering and contract execution, import, export and foreign investment advice, back office systems and processes as well as in-house business coaching. Clients are provided direct access to independent, professional support. Currently, 147 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are serviced by the Hub supported by 100% Indigenous business coaches. With 767 Indigenous owned business in WA the Wirra Hub provides a large and rapidly expanding service to the community. The Wirra Hub has the potential to be used to support the DSG program provide innovative opportunities to meet the diverse education and employment aspirations of Deadly Sista Girlz

Indigenous businesses both traditional and non-traditional from mining, tourism, fashion, the environment and the arts are a rapidly growing sector of the economy. The Wirra Hub's established connections with Indigenous businesses is another unique service that the DSG program can align with to provide entrepreneurial skills and employment opportunities for the Deadly Sista Girlz.

Deadly Sista Girlz Overview

https://www.wf.org.au/deadly-sista-girlz/

The Deadly Sista Girlz (DSG) program evolved out of the earlier "Dare to Dream" program established originally as a school holiday program in 2007. DSG currently describes itself as a *"culturally appropriate healthy lifestyle program which aims to improve engagement and education amongst school-aged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls".*

The DSG program has reached over 4000 girls since 2007. Currently 711 girls are being mentored in the program which operates in 13 school sites in WA and 1 in Victoria. Each school site has 1-2 skilled Indigenous coordinator/mentors who provide individual support to the girls as well as deliver focused workshops and excursions. One hundred percent of the staff in the Deadly Sista Girlz program are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Each school has a dedicated Sista Girlz Room provided by the school.

Specifically, the DSG program focuses on supporting the development a range of skills and attributes among the girls enrolled including:

- building self-esteem and confidence
- pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity
- having practical cultural contribution in the community
- positive social interactions
- building relationships based on mutual respect
- encouraging active self-development and yarning about sexual and women's health, drug and alcohol abuse, road safety, healthy nutrition, financial literacy and healthy relationships.

DSG Funding

Federal Government Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS).

Currently the DSG program is primarily funded by the Australian Government, National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA) through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy - Children and Schooling Program (https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/education/children-and-schooling-program). This program supports activities to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational outcomes, opening the door to more options of pathways to success. The program has a critical focus on increased school attendance and improved educational outcomes that lead to employment.

IAS current funding for the DSG is over a four year period from July 2019 to June 2023 of $9,625 million (GST exc). The funding agreement sets out the activities and targets for the DSG program to June 2023.

The Purpose of IAS DSG Funding

The overall purpose of this IAS funding is to support the DSG to deliver daily mentoring and support to at risk Indigenous girls aged 8-18 years old. The program must be delivered within school and focus on supporting girls

to make better choices for their health and futures. The program target is to enrol 760 Indigenous girls aged 11-18 in the DSG program and 390 girls aged 8-10 through outreach activities. There are specific quantitative project aims that set high targets for improved school attendance, the ability to recall and discuss drug, alcohol and sexual health related messages and active or confirmed post school pathway decisions.

The IAS Funding Agreement also specifies activities to be undertaken by the DSG program. These activities include the provision of culturally appropriate mentoring support for the 11-18 age group on school grounds. This mentoring support is to be available at all times during the school day, five days per week.

As well as this, timetabled group session/workshops are to be delivered across the school year by skilled Indigenous mentors. These mentors are employees of the Wirrpanda Foundation. The workshops include topics on women's and sexual health, cultural identity, numeracy and literacy and career planning.

The IAS funding also provides for the development and delivery of an outreach program in Terms 3 and 4 for girls 8-10 years (in upper primary schools). The aim is to facilitate a smooth transition for Indigenous girls to high school.

Participation in DSG is open to all Indigenous girls at the host schools. This is achieved through an opt-in non-exclusive model. The level of engagement and support provided is bespoke and within resource constraints managed on a needs-basis that considers student's aspirations, needs and willingness to engage with DSG respectfully. Upon enrolment into the program, participants remain participants until a formal request to exit has been put forward and accepted.

Girls are selected in consultation with school staff, community Elders and program mentors. The selection of each participant based upon their need for the program, social and economic disadvantage, behaviour and current engagement level at school.

Post school pathways is another key component of the IAS Agreement with the funding made available for the employment of a full time Career Pathways Coordinator to facilitate school-based traineeships, employment opportunities or entry to vocational and tertiary study. The Coordinator role is to work with local mentors and upskill them on career pathway support while providing a central point of contact to facilitate linkages with other programs including Transition to Work and VTEC.

To further support the DSG program to enhance career information and aspirations the funding can also be used for relevant excursions for participants such as employer tours, visits to mine sites, immersion camps, university open days, female AFL carnivals and career expos.

Another key feature of the program as part of the IAS Agreement is that the DSG is to establish an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with individual school sites. One of the MOU requirements is that the

school provides a dedicated space for DSG participants to attend during school hours for mentoring or during free periods.

The MOU also stipulates the school provide a timetable calendar for the DSG to program its workshops. This is to ensure the participants do not miss out on core school curriculum subjects or lessons whilst attending DSG workshops

or activities. This timetable is to be negotiated at each school site and is often aligned with broader school health and wellbeing curriculum areas.

IAS 2020 Funding Review

As a regular part of the IAS funding agreement the DSG underwent a review in May 2020. This most recent review found the program to have the following strengths and operational challenges and opportunities pertinent to this External Evaluation.

The review identified that the DSG is strengthened from being part of the much larger Wirrpanda Foundation with its well established reputation as a support services provider across WA. The Wirrpanda Foundation also has significant leverage and network connection with the AFL and other potential corporate partners and sponsors. The Wirrpanda Foundation is firmly committed to Indigenous advancement both within its organisation and the design and delivery of its services. This commitment is replicated in the staffing, design and delivery of services in the DSG program.

A further strength identified in the IAS Review was DSG's ongoing commitment to its own growth and improvement as an organisation and among its staff. It is hoped that this External Evaluation Review assists in the pursuit of this goal.

The IAS Review also identified challenges and made recommendations that are relevant to this External Evaluation. Significantly among these was the recommendation that there be a review of the DSG program to establish alignment with the WA Department of Education Cultural Standards Framework and Guidelines which is one of the outcomes for this report. A second recommendation was for the DSG to review and improve its data recording and management systems.

This External Evaluation acknowledges the strengths identified in the IAS Review. In particular, the opportunities presented to the DSG program through its connection to the large and well established Wirrpanda Foundation and the DSG program's clear commitment to ongoing development and renewal. This review concurs with the recommendations outlined above.

State Government WA Education Department Funding (ED19159)

As well as being a recommendation of the IAS Review, this External Review also comes within an agreement with the Wirrpanda Foundation and the Western Australian Department of Education (DET). WA DET Agreement ED19159, June 2019.

The Funding Agreement Term was for eighteen months to commence on 1 July 2019 and expire on 31 December 2020. The ED19159 Funding Agreement Amount to be Paid $ 275, 000 on 29 June 2019.

The overall purpose of the DETWA funding is to support the Foundation to develop a broader strategy, including the Department's Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework, to strengthen the existing Deadly Sista Girlz program. Specifically, the Project Definition and/or Anticipated Activities aim to support the Wirrpanda Foundation to:

- develop a broader strategy, including the Department's Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework (ACSF), to strengthen the existing Deadly Sista Girlz program;
- support the creation of culturally safe and welcoming learning environments for Aboriginal girls;
- contract an external evaluation, focusing on research and development, of the existing program in order to identify examples of evidence-based best practice optimising culturally appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal girls.

Deadly Sista Girlz External Evaluation

This report addresses the requirements set out in the subsequent DSG External Evaluation agreement. Under this agreement The Deadly Sista Girlz External Evaluation is jointly funded by the Department of Education, Wirrpanda Foundation, Edith Cowan and Murdoch Universities. The Wirrpanda Foundation and Edith Cowan University signed off on the contract on 30th June, 2020. Murdoch University signed the contract on 17th July 2020. The project was funded for 18 months from receipt of funding July 2019. The evaluation project commenced in April 2020 and finished in February 2021. Total funding of $65,000 included allocations for research assistant, researcher teaching relief, travel expenses and other costs such as transcriptions and printing of the report. Amendments to the contract were approved by the WF on 8th February 2021. These included an extension of the deadline due to external factors. Amendments to the budget were also made. The travel budget was reduced as a result of Covid 19 restrictions and the total contract amount totalled $45,000.

DSG External Evaluation Aims, Objectives and Deliverables

The DSG External Evaluation is required (but is not limited to):

- Examination of the focus and scope of the Deadly Sista Girlz Program

As per the Funding Agreement Schedule (DET ED19159) the evaluation will:

- Identify a broad range of strategies to include the WA Education Department's Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework (ACSF), to strengthen the existing Deadly Sista Girlz Program;
- Evaluate the learning environments and the extent of the cultural safety and welcoming
- Identify examples of evidence based best practice optimising culturally appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal girls.

The project had four phases with key deliverables in each phase:

Table 1: deliverables and phases of the evaluation project

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Deliverables	• Desktop review of programs for Aboriginal girls across Australia • Letter of Introduction to all stakeholders	• Development of an appropriate evaluation methodology based on Aboriginal protocols and ethics	• Site visits or Zoom/Skype meetings with stakeholders unable to host a site. • Regular email or phone follow up with all stakeholders	Final Evaluation Report
Times	Progress Report – June 30th 2020	Progress Report – September 30th 2020	Progress Report – December 30th 2020	Due February 2021

The following are presented to address the above aims, objectives and deliverables:

1. Recommendations for strategies to include the WA DETWA ACSF to strengthen the existing DSG program
2. A review of the relevant contemporary Australian literature pertaining to cultural safety and in particular culturally safe learning environments
3. Desktop review of programs for Aboriginal girls across Australia
4. Examples of evidence based best practice optimising culturally appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal girls.
5. An appropriate evaluation methodology based on Aboriginal protocols and methods
6. Recommendations that emerged from the External Evaluation

All Progress Reports were submitted to WF as per the scheduled dates.

Evaluation Methodology

The following details the methodologies used to inform the outcomes and deliverables presented at the end of this report. In line with the IAS Evaluation Framework we have built this evaluation on the 'strengths' of the DSG to date and believe the evaluation to be relevant, robust and appropriate (Dept of Prime Minister & Cabinet, 2018). The data collection and analysis methods used for each data source elaborated below:

Table 2: data sources, collection and analysis methods

Outcome	Data Source	Data Collection Method Analysis Method
Identify a broad range of strategies to include the ACSF, to strengthen the existing Deadly Sista Girlz Program *Leading to:* Recommendations for strategies to include the ACSF to strengthen the existing DSG program	• Yarning Circle Site Coordinators • Interviews DSG staff (Manager and Pathways coordinator) • Yarning phone site coordinators • Yarning Alumni • DSG curriculum materials	• Yarning circle group discussion with guided questions about the 3 entities: the WF/DSG program, the School, the Community - *what works well, what needs work?* • Yarning circle - Individual task – highlight the ACSF document descriptors and/or indicators *what works well/needs work* • DSG Manager and Pathways coordinator interviews analysed for key themes related to the ACSF descriptors/indicators • Curriculum documents analysed for themes related to ACSF *Yarning, interview, curriculum and other documents collated and themes related to ACSF generated collaboratively by the research team and recommendations developed from this analysis.*

Evaluate the learning environments and the extent of the cultural safety and welcoming *Leading to:* A review of the relevant contemporary Australian literature pertaining to cultural safety and in particular culturally safe learning environments	Literature review including relevant contemporary academic and grey literature	As a result of the reduced scope of research with the WA DET, the researchers were unable to collect data from interviews with DET school principals or staff and were unable to observe DSG dedicated rooms at school sites.
Desktop review of programs for Aboriginal girls across Australia	Desktop review using publicly available websites	• Annotated bibliography developed to inform relevant program selections • Website analysed collaboratively by research team for key generative themes and program idiosyncrasies
Examples of evidence based best practice optimising culturally appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal girls.	Review of contemporary relevant academic and grey literature	Analysis into consistent themes emerging

Changes required to the Evaluation brief

Several significant external factors during 2020 affected the evaluators' ability to conduct some critical components of the evaluation brief and therefore modifications were required. The DSG manager and WF CEO were kept informed via email and meetings of the external factors delaying progress.

The most significant factor affecting the Evaluation brief was that due to the reduced scope of research Department research approval was no longer required, therefore ethics approval was not obtained so we did not: 1) interview school DET Principals (either face to face, via video conferencing (eg TEAMS or email) and 2.) to visit and view the DSG dedicated DET school site rooms at any time.

This limited our ability to conduct a key part of the contract work ie to *evaluate the learning environments and the extent of the cultural safety and welcoming.* It also hampered our ability to effectively use Indigenous methodologies and protocols as we were unable to meet with and yarn with coordinators in situ, on site in the DSG rooms. Specific details of modifications required as a result of this and other factors are included in appendix C

The Deadly Sista Girlz program

The following presents information on the current DSG program. This provides context for the subsequent outcomes, deliverables and recommendations.

Demographic Data

Currently the DSG program operates in 14 school sites (13 in WA and 1 in Victoria). The program provides mentoring support for Indigenous girls aged 11-18 via in-school programs and girls aged 8-10 through outreach activities (eg in upper primary schools). At the time of writing there are 732 girls in the 11-18 age group and 367 in the outreach ages.

DSG Coordinators and Mentors

All DSG program staff are Indigenous women from Aboriginal Nations from all over Australia. They regularly attend Professional Development sessions across the school year. The table below details the staff structure and numbers of employees across the program.

Table 3: regions, sites and staff numbers for the DSG program

Region	Site	Staff
Perth	WF Head Office (DSG Management and Leadership)	5 (full time)
Perth	Southern River College	2 (full time)
Perth	Sevenoaks Senior College	1 (full time)
Perth	Governor Stirling Senior High School	1 (full time) 1 (part time)
Perth	Yule Brook College (years: 7-10); Sevenoaks College (years: 11-12)	2 (full time) 1 (part time)
Perth (SOR)	Fremantle College	2 (full time)
Perth (SOR)	Gilmore College	2 (full time)
Peel	John Tonkin College: Tindale and MET campuses (Mandurah)	2 (full time)
Perth (NOR)	Ellenbrook Secondary College	2 (full time)
Wheatbelt	Northam Senior High School	2 (full time)
Great Southern	North Albany Senior High School	1 (full time) 1 (part time) 1 (casual)
Great Southern	Katanning Senior High School	1 (full time) 1 (full time)
Gascoyne	Champion Bay Senior High School (Geraldton)	2 (full time) 2 (part time)
Kimberley	St Mary's College Broome	2 (full time)
Victoria	Thornbury High School	1 (full time)
All Regions	Casual relief pool (preference DSG Alumni)	2 (casuals)
TOTAL	16 Locations (14 schools)	37 Staff

Contact Time and Curriculum

DSG workers at each school site negotiate scheduled time in the wider school timetable for participants to attend the DSG room and activities.

In line with cultural safety theory and frameworks, the DSG phased program is linked across the years of schooling by integrated workshops and yarning circles and spaces that are culturally appropriate and safe for participants. "Cultural safety … is the provision of a learning environment conducive to the diverse learning needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and where the students' cultures and identities are visible, centred, and valued. Cultural safety centres on the experience of the student." (AITSL, 2020)

DSG phase 1

During Phase 1, mentors establish the conditions that help each participant to take an active role in their own development, with confidence and purpose, setting the stage for subsequent phases. Mentors also work hard in Phase 1 to build a trusting and supportive relationship with each participant. All girls/young women are treated as equals and part of the group. Sharing information about each other's Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander origins is an important part of this connecting phase. A central feature of both the Deadly Sista Girls' physical and human environment is establishing the yarning circle from the first day of the Program and maintaining this circle of comfort, support and learning throughout the duration of the Program. Each session of the Program therefore begins with the yarning circle with all mentors, participants and visitors participating. Supporting cultural identities and the process of decolonization are key elements of a culturally safe framework that could be applied to non-government or social organisation such as DSG (Mackean, Fisher, Friel, & Baum, 2019). Establishing a culturally safe and appropriate space for participants is important given that activities such as yarning form one of five cultural safety elements as suggested in cultural safety theoretical frameworks such as (Mackean et al., 2019). Respect for and protection of culture and identity are a core component of the right to self-determination and play an important role in promoting the health and wellbeing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020).

Phase 2

The yarning circle becomes particularly important during this Phase therefore the mentor's work building trusting relationships with each participant continues within the context of the yarning circle as a safe place of learning and empowerment. Phase 2 is primarily focused on laying the foundation for participants to become role models in their own right, being role models for each other and outside the program with Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander women who are younger than themselves. For this to occur, an emphasis is placed in Phase 2 on developing the capabilities of each participant as she grows towards adulthood and has to deal with a wide range of personal issues and pressures associated with this growth, both within herself and within her external environment. Building the ability of the participants to operate in a cooperative, non-adversarial way as a cohesive social group/community is also a focus, in preparation for Phase 3.

Phase 3

Phase 3 provides an opportunity for participants to not only continue developing in the areas listed in Phases 1 and 2 but to move beyond Deadly Sista Girlz and make a contribution to their community. Community could be their school, other social groups, family networks, whatever context is relevant for their age and experience. This is an opportunity or setting goals and carrying them out with a significant amount of autonomy and independence. The yarning circle in Phase 3 becomes both a safe haven for sharing on-going learnings and experiences but also a group planning and decision-making environment as DSG participants are given the opportunity to contribute to their community within the context of the program.

The DSG curriculum is divided into six themes:

1. Deadly Sista Girlz: introduction to the program and creating culturally safe spaces
2. Solid Connections: to self, culture and community
3. Lil Women's Business: healthy lifestyles, women's health, mental health
4. Standing Tall and Proud: resilience, confidence, good relationships
5. Deadly Futures: employment and future pathways
6. Kickin' Goals: incentive activities

Outcomes

The stated outcomes are:

1. 75% of participants have improved school attendance
2. 70% of participants can recall and discuss messages related to drugs, tobacco and alcohol
3. 70% of participants can recall and discuss messages related to sexual health
4. 80% of participants will have decided upon a post-school pathway for education and/or career
5. 80% of participants will have made active decisions about post-school pathway for education or employment.

DSG Rooms

As part of the IAS funding agreement the DSG has an MOU with each school who must provide a dedicated room. Feedback from yarning with site coordinators and alumni indicate that DSG rooms are available for use throughout the school day and often before and after. They are used for mentoring individually and with groups and the delivery of the DSG workshops. Most have kitchens and some office and storage space. The DSG rooms vary significantly in location within the school, size and facilities. Some are large and well serviced, some are very small relative to the number of girls and the range of activities conducted. Space and availability of quiet break out rooms are especially important when sensitive one on one mentoring may be required. Appropriate location within the school also varies and is raised as a concern among some site coordinators.

Aligning the WADET ACSF to strengthen the DSG program

Introduction to the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework (ACSF)

The Western Australian Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework (ASCF) is essentially a reflection tool for school leaders and teachers. It sets expected standards for all staff when working with Aboriginal students, their parents and families, and communities (Western Australia Dept of Education, 2015).

The Framework was first released to schools in 2016. It forms a part of the overall public school accountability processes for school leaders under the DET School Improvement and Accountability in Public Schools Policy where all schools are required to seek continuous improvement and account for their performance (WA Department of Education, 2018).

The Framework provides a structure to support staff in DET schools to reflect on their practices and identify opportunities for improved action to build on existing knowledge and skills (DET, 2015). Staff are not measured nor assessed against the framework but are expected to reflect on their own, and the school's, behaviours and practices.

(Re)framing the question

The research team began this part of the evaluation by reflecting on the wording of this outcome. Given our understanding of the principles of co design and responsibilities for shared decision making we began by reframing the outcome so that it read from the outset:

> *What strategies can assist schools together with the DSG to strengthen the implementation of the ACSF?*

We also note that these strategies - whilst reflecting the broad principles of the ACSF - must be locally contextualised as each school site and each community varies. In particular DET must understand and acknowledge that schools, school leaders and teachers are at various stages of the culturally responsive continuum. This means the strategies cannot be viewed as a one size fits all. They are not a quick fix. They must be modified and adapted in direct relation to the extent to which the school leadership has already established meaningful and authentic relationships with the DSG program and the wider community. Authentic, considered and respectful steps are required.

The principles of the ACSF

Two of the fundamental principles underlying the ACSF are:

1. Culturally responsive schools build collaborative relationships between staff, Aboriginal students, their parents and families, and communities to support student learning (Western Australia Dept of Education, 2015).
2. Culturally responsive schools foster positive participation, communication and interaction between staff, Aboriginal students, their parents and families, and the local Aboriginal community (Western Australia Dept of Education, 2015)

Fundamental to principles of collaboration and codesign in any project or policy enactment is the development of meaningful and an agreed to understanding of the key terms. This should be done at the organisational level and at, in this case, each local school level. Many education policy documents are littered

with jargonistic words and phrases that are broad and vague that can widely interpreted. Phrases such as "positive participation", "respectful communication" and "meaningful interaction" can mean very different things to different people.

Developing a shared understanding of the terminology is not just about semantics but, more importantly, about understanding the intention and purpose that lie behind these terms. School leaders need to engage in this kind of intellectual work with Aboriginal staff, parents, community and organisations like the DSG if meaningful and authentic collaboration is to occur. PriceWaterhouse-Coopers (PwC's) Indigenous Design consultant, Olli Wynyard Gonford has developed a Co-Design Tool which provides a good example of how School Leaders may begin to develop authentic relationships with the Aboriginal community for the purpose of improving the educational experiences and outcomes of Indigenous students. An initial step is for school leaders to understand the barriers and enablers to engagement with schools.

Issues that affect community engagement with schools

Lowe et al. (2019) recently conducted a rigorous systematic review of the current Australian research literature on School and Indigenous community engagement which is helpful here. The study asked "What issues affect the development of Aboriginal community and school collaboration and what impact have these had on schools and Aboriginal students, families and their communities?" (Lowe et al., 2019, p. 255).

The study found that the purpose of 'engagement' in schools from the perspectives of the Aboriginal communities was to "enhance teachers' understanding of parental concerns and aspirations" (Lowe et al., 2019, p. 266). In contrast, for some schools, engagement was primarily seen as a tool to "reduce student's resistance through having families enforce school attendance, undertake supervision and practise 'being the teacher at home' (Lowe et al., 2019, p. 266).

Similarly, the concept of 'authentic' partnerships was often poorly defined. This often led to vague promises around 'consulting', 'listening' and then (possibly) taking action. More precise definitions that articulated shared, two-way engagement had much greater traction with the many teachers and Indigenous families than (Lowe et al., 2019).

Authentic interactions required time to build deeper two-way knowledge between teachers and Indigenous families. Teachers and principals who actively sought to establish purposeful relationships benefited professionally through the establishment of higher levels of reciprocated trust and respect, which in turn provided them greater access to community 'knowledge' about its history, aspirations and concerns about the schooling of their children. An interesting finding that community engagement with schools positively affected students' interactions with community elders.

Key enablers

The Lowe et al study (2019) found that the following were key enablers for community and school engagement. Exemplary leadership by leaders who themselves understand the historical complex and largely negative relationships that continue to underpin relationships between indigenous Australia and the wider community. Parents saw authentic engagement as a shared framework that engaged families and teachers in all aspects of the program. Parents also spoke of teachers needing significant support to reflexively engage in making real changes to their pedagogic practices and the curriculum. Parent trust in the school was enhanced by the success of school programs and the programs' authenticity and purposefulness in addressing the needs of students (Lowe et al., 2019).

Barriers identified

Lowe et al (2019) also identified a range of barriers to successful engagement. The legacy and intergenerational impact of past practices including dislocation, removal and racism are still not fully understood or acknowledged by many schools. The level of school leader and teacher ignorance of the continuing impact of these practices is amongst the many issues limiting students' achievement. Also parents' perceptions of the schools' ambivalence and/or hostility towards Aboriginal families. Schools were often seen as sites of low expectations (Lowe et al., 2019). Parents considered that schools often articulated powerful discourses about poor parenting and resistant learner identities of Aboriginal students and believed that teachers' often lacked understanding of how the pervasiveness of these attitudes impacted directly on their classroom practices.

Epistemic tokenism about Aboriginal culture in school curriculum and unwillingness of schools to engage authentically were also barriers as were levels of community pessimism about the schools capacity to improve student outcomes. Where schools had partnership policies they were often vague on detail, generalised and 'feel good' documents that, while speaking of inclusion, actually provided parents with little real access to schools. Involvement in these types of activities actually isolated them from the 'real work' of school by focusing their collaboration on 'busy' ephemeral programs that had little or no impact on students' learning.

Further issues focused on the qualities and capacity of school leaders and their impact on facilitating purposeful collaborations and co-constructing opportunities with Aboriginal people to participate in key decisions that affect their children's education. Finally, schools needed to accept the responsibility of reaching out to families and to seek opportunities to build relationships that would underpin students' educational success.

This overview serves to provide critical insights into the complex issues that underpin the successful implementation of the ACSF. Thus, an overarching recommendation is that local schools work with the WF and DSG staff to help develop a meaningful and agreed to understanding of the key terms in the ACSF. This then can work towards more meaningful and authentic, purposeful and trusting relationships with the wider community. This needs to be enacted at a system level and at each local school level so that it relates to the local school community and is cognisant of local Aboriginal communities' perspectives on, for example, positive participation, communication and interaction.

While the strategies we propose below are important ways in which parts of the ACSF can be actioned in collaboration with the DSG, the above broader contextual and conceptual principles must be acknowledged for systemic change to occur.

Structure and content

The ACSF comprises five cultural standards with performance descriptors and indicators to guide staff when working with Aboriginal students, their parents and families, and communities (Western Australia Dept of Education, 2015). Each of the five cultural standards are delineated along a continuum from Emerging (Cultural Awareness) to Proficient (Cultural Responsiveness). The performance descriptors and indicators for each cultural standard are provided to enable staff to reflect on individual and whole-school progress and to develop strategies to move towards becoming culturally responsive.

THE FRAMEWORK PROVIDES A STRUCTURE FOR ALL STAFF TO REFLECT ON THEIR PRACTICES AND IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVED ACTION TO BUILD ON EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS.

The framework comprises five cultural standards and a continuum.

FRAMEWORK

STANDARDS   **CONTINUUM**

Each of the cultural standards has performance descriptors and indicators to guide staff when working with Aboriginal students, their parents and families, and communities.

The continuum enables staff to reflect on individual and whole-school progress and to develop strategies to move towards becoming culturally responsive.

Together, the standards and continuum assist school leaders to start discussions about planning for improvement in their schools.

The framework is applicable to all staff delivering services to, and providing support for, students and schools.

The sentiments underlying the framework apply to all schools, even those with few or no Aboriginal student enrolments.

The framework is aligned to the School Improvement and Accountability policy, and to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's Australian Professional Standard for Principals and Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

RELATIONSHIPS
STANDARD:
Culturally responsive schools foster positive participation, communication and interaction between staff, Aboriginal students, their parents and families, and the local Aboriginal community.

LEADERSHIP
STANDARD:
Culturally responsive schools have leaders who develop and sustain an individual and school-wide focus on improving education outcomes for Aboriginal students.

TEACHING
STANDARD:
Culturally responsive schools have high expectations for Aboriginal students and teach in ways that enable them to better reach their full education potential.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
STANDARD:
Culturally responsive schools build an environment that is welcoming for Aboriginal students and reflects community aspirations for their children.

RESOURCES
STANDARD:
Culturally responsive schools target resourcing to optimise the education outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Data Collection

Data was collected through a Yarning Circle with Site Coordinator/Mentors; Yarning phone conversations with Site Coordinator/Mentors, Yarning Circle with Alumni and Interviews with DSG Managers.

DSG Program Alignment with WA Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework

The table below draws from data collected through yarning circles with site coordinators, Alumni and DSG staff. The data was then aligned to the ACSF Performance Descriptors and Indicators. This analysis shows specific, although not exhaustive, areas within the ACSF that the DSG program can assist schools and school leaders to meet the objectives of the ACSF.

The detailed recommendations drawn from the yarning are **clear evidence of the strong capacity that the current DSG programme** already has to assist schools in meeting the **Relationship and Learning Environment** standards in particular. There is also capacity to develop the School leadership and Teaching standards further through collaboration, with leaders and teachers utilising cultural knowledge of the DSG staff and program. DSG staff have the cultural knowledge and community capacity and links to assist schools to move along the continuum to assist with student attendance and engagement.

The recommendations listed below are not exhaustive. They indicate areas within the ASCF that the DSG and many schools already work collaboratively within a framework informed by principles of co-design and we encourage school leaders to work alongside DSG to strategically develop the recommendations. Noting that some schools will need to adapt these recommendations and allow local variation according to the current cultural capacity of the school leadership at the school.

Relationships

Performance descriptors	Indicators	Recommendations for Schools and School Leaders (ideas for future enhancement of ACSF in collaboration with DSG)
Staff[1] establish and maintain positive relationships with Aboriginal students	Staff build respectful working relationships with Aboriginal students.	• Invite Aboriginal parents who work in medical services or other professions, for example, come in to deliver on topics identified within the school as areas of need in order to build relationships as well as strategies to support Aboriginal students • Principals and teachers need to visit DSG rooms and DSG events in order to build relationships beyond the classroom. This should be part of the core business of schools
	Staff provide information to parents of Aboriginal students about their children's progress and support families to participate in all aspects of their children's education.	• Create a judgement-free, culturally safe and inviting school environment that parents wish to engage with. Positive communication empowers Indigenous families • Give messages which stress the important roles Aboriginal peoples have to play in enriching the school's life, as well as in their own child's unique learning
	Staff work with Aboriginal students, their parents and families to support students at key transition stages of schooling.	• Ask parents what they need to help support their children in years 11 & 12 • Ask working parents what particular assistance they require • Foster authentic relationships with parents/carers

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[1] Please Note: Staff refers to school teaching and school leadership

		• Pick up the phone, send a SMS to let parents know how well their child is going at school – use a strengths-based approach • Host transition meetings via zoom/Teams - talk to parents about their concerns and suggest ways in which parents/carers can support their children. • Send transition packages to parents by email, so they can read and process the information at their own pace • Create a Transition Tip Sheet
Staff engage professionally with local Aboriginal community members and organisations.	Staff, in partnership with the local Aboriginal community, understand and accept processes and protocols for respectful interaction.	• Invest in and draw upon the expertise of students' parents - they may be able to assist in this area. These areas of expertise could provide the strategy for students to engage in community outreach programs – context specific
	Staff draw on the expertise of Aboriginal staff (including AIEOs) and local Aboriginal community members and organisations to enrich learning experiences for students.	• Invest in Aboriginal school staff as they will have links to community members and there is a need for the younger generation to connect to community Elders. This could occur through a community outreach program • Develop the skills of Aboriginal school staff by engaging them in the professional development taking place within schools
	Staff and students participate, as appropriate, in local Aboriginal community events and activities.	• Schools have the responsibility to run and pay for NAIDOC however, DSG can support this • The DSG curriculum could have a module developed around community development and events management • Moving beyond NAIDOC - offer the school premises to host Community events and activities – eg: Black Markets (Friday Twilight/Sunday morning)
Staff provide Aboriginal students, their parents and families, and local Aboriginal community members with leadership opportunities.	Staff provide Aboriginal students with opportunities to take on leadership roles at school.	• Student Leadership roles and expectations vary across and within school varies so it is essential that the skills or expectations of these roles are clear • The DSG program can help girls develop skills to suit these roles if they aspire to them (include this as part of the DSG curriculum). Eg, head girl - regular attendance, communication, engaged in the wider community as well as the school community • Grow DSG parent club
	School leaders seek feedback from Aboriginal students, their parents and families on education delivery to inform decision making.	• DSG and schools to let parents and families know that they are welcome on the School Boards and committees • It should be noted that non-Indigenous parents on these boards and committees may need cultural awareness training • Ensure that School providers are able to create culturally safe environments for parents to engage • Parents cannot and should not just be called in on cultural points • Recognise Aboriginal parents have broad knowledge and experience –a strengths-based approach rather than relegated to a cultural base which is the default position. This is a long-term strategy.

		• Host a monthly Cuppa and Yarn for parents/Caregivers • If school holds parent events, then DSG site coordinators/AEIOs can attend
	School leaders provide opportunities for local Aboriginal community representation on the school council/board.	• DSG could advocate for the school and inform parents/caregivers of vacant positions • For this to happen, DSG will need to be represented at school meetings/PD etc • Secure Aboriginal procurement in Schools - Aboriginal business are the fastest growing business sector.
Staff broaden their knowledge and improve practices in Aboriginal education.	Staff participate in local Aboriginal community networks to understand the perspectives of Aboriginal people on education.	• DSG to advertise school wide community events to build capacity and relationships • DSG could put together a presentation on what assistance DSG staff can/cannot offer school staff
	Staff engage with local Aboriginal community members to identify opportunities for including cultural events at the school.	• DSG could provide an introduction to the Department's Aboriginal Education team • Move beyond NAIDOC (still important but there is more) - song/music/battle of the bands? Have an Indigenous film maker come as Film-maker in Residence. Artist in Residence – see Cecil Andrews for example
	Staff incorporate local Aboriginal community members' cultural and linguistic knowledge and expertise to build contextual relevance to the education of Aboriginal students.	• DSG could provide the School with the details for the Aboriginal Language Team in the Aboriginal Education team from the Department of Education

Leadership

Culturally responsive schools have leaders who develop and sustain an individual and school-wide focus on improving education outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Performance Descriptors	Indicators	Recommendations
School leaders develop a clear vision for the teaching and learning of Aboriginal students.	School leaders ensure school values are underpinned by high expectations for Aboriginal students.	• Host a PD day for parents to develop this vision, context and school specific • High expectations = quality learning = future opportunity • DSG could assist the school - run by the school but DSG be group facilitators
	School leaders involve parents and families, and local Aboriginal community members in the development of the school vision and ethos.	• WF/DSG could present their program at Primary/Secondary Principals' Conferences as part of the vision of their schools

	School leaders ensure Aboriginal education outcomes are defined in the school plan and reported in the annual school report.	• WF/ DSG at senior management level to discuss this with Principals individually and/or via Primary/Secondary Principals' Conferences
	School leaders establish a culture of continuous improvement and academic optimism for Aboriginal students.	• Schools need to develop better ways to promote themselves within Aboriginal communities - they need to sell themselves • Survey the families – how are we doing? Using a culturally appropriate survey method
School leaders build staff capability for effective teaching of Aboriginal students.	School leaders expand their own cultural knowledge relevant to the local context.	• Presentations at the Primary/Secondary Principals' Conferences about WF and the work of the DSG
	School leaders support staff to build individual capability for developing their knowledge of local Aboriginal histories, peoples, cultures and languages.	• WF could develop Cultural Models or Tours for schools and earn an income stream • This needs to be infused into the school curriculum across all learning areas
	School leaders support staff to teach in ways that are responsive to the learning needs of individual Aboriginal students.	• DSG could develop staff to go to the Stronger Smarter Institute - high expectations and authentic curriculum • Schools need to facilitate and pay for culturally responsive PD for their staff • Schools need to timetable the DSG sessions in collaboration with the DSG staff to minimise disruption to student learning in both programs. With greater alignment and discussions between the school and DSG these sessions can be complimentary and add value to the whole curriculum experience
	School leaders and staff are cognisant of their attitudes, behaviours and performance in teaching Aboriginal students.	• WF/ DSG at senior management level could develop a strong PD. This is not the work of the site coordinators but others in the WF organisation (eg a curriculum director) with a teaching background and/or knowledge of Education policy • Develop a service hub Eg: Governor Stirling
School leaders demonstrate transparency and accountability to Aboriginal students, their parents and families.	School leaders provide comprehensive reports about Aboriginal student performance as part of the annual school report.	• Visibility and success is needed across all school and other media platforms • Indigenous Times and Noongar radio - good news articles - get reporters to speak to the Principals • School websites, school matters magazine, The Conversation
	School leaders share education success with the local Aboriginal community and the broader community.	As above
	School leaders report on the progress and outcomes of targeted Aboriginal programs and initiatives, and seek feedback from the local Aboriginal community on their value and success.	• DSG host a function at Wirrpanda Foundation for Community and Schools • DSG girls and site coordinators and Principals/head teachers attend the NAIDOC Ball • School to host community meetings - Kutitjin Mia (Knowledge house or Learning House) Meetings

		• Extend to the wider community to create relationships and data base of possible community cultural ambassadors

Teaching

Culturally Responsive Schools have high expectations for Aboriginal students and teaching ways that enable them to better reach their full potential.

Performance Descriptors	Indicators	Recommendations
	Teachers support Aboriginal students to identify and achieve their aspirations.	• Plan a careers day at WF • DSG explore and purchase career voyage program - all girls could come to the foundation to do a career session and complete the voyage: https://www.careervoyage.com.au/au/swsi
Teachers plan for and implement effective teaching practices for Aboriginal students.	Teachers set learning goals that reflect high expectations for each Aboriginal student.	As above with the careers

Learning Environment

Culturally Responsive schools build and environment that is welcoming for Aboriginal students and reflects community standards and aspirations.

Performance Descriptor	Indicator	Recommendations
Staff support Aboriginal students to feel a sense of belonging and connection to the school.	Aboriginal students demonstrate pride in, and ownership of, the school.	• DSG Logo, School Bags, Hoodies, Shirts, Drink bottles etc • Give DSG had a higher profile on school websites
	Staff welcome parents and families of Aboriginal students at the school.	• DSG host a meet the teachers' day/night
Staff involve Aboriginal students, their parents and families to establish a physical environment that is welcoming for Aboriginal students.	Staff engage Aboriginal students, their parents and families, and community members in developing an environment which displays and respects their histories, cultures and languages.	• Schools should be doing this as core business. DSG can help with this but schools must take responsibility
	Staff and students use local Aboriginal community facilities	• DSG can host events at the Wirrpanda Foundation

Performance Description	Indicator	Recommendations
	and sites to enable students to learn in settings connected to local histories, cultures and languages where appropriate.	
Staff work with Aboriginal students, their parents and families to establish shared expectations and responsibility for attendance and behaviour.	Staff support and encourage local Aboriginal community members to promote consistent and clear messages about student attendance and behaviour.	• DSG can and already do this
	Staff identify and implement strategies to engage hard-to-reach Aboriginal students, their parents and families.	• DSG can assist with this, maybe those who have transport difficulty the DSG buses could be utilised to assist getting parents/caregivers to specific events. Special events only?
Staff establish a supportive and safe learning environment for Aboriginal students.	Staff know about factors in the local Aboriginal community that may have an impact on student engagement.	• Talk about this when DSG delivers the PD at school
	Staff work productively with other agencies to support the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal students, their parents and families.	• This needs to be a triage approach - School, DSG and student/families
	Staff, in collaboration with parents and families, develop plans to support Aboriginal students at educational risk.	• This needs to be a triage approach - School, DSG and student/families
	Staff put in place appropriate steps to support the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal students.	• DSG does this well but teachers need to do this too. Authentic collaboration between DSG and school

Resources

Culturally Responsive schools target resources to optimise the education outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Performance Description	Indicator	Recommendations
Staff acknowledge and value the expertise of Aboriginal staff.	Staff draw on the knowledge and expertise of Aboriginal staff in connecting the school with the local Aboriginal community.	• Schools could tap into the WF networks for this
	School leaders support Aboriginal staff to identify and	• DSG coordinators/mentors could be invited to work shadow and build their skills

	pursue leadership and aspirational opportunities.	
	School leaders and staff use flexible recruitment practices to encourage applications from Aboriginal people.	• DSG could support School-based traineeships
School leaders allocate staff to support the learning needs of individual Aboriginal students.	School leaders, in planning the staffing profile, give specific consideration to the learning needs of Aboriginal students.	• Support a dedicated school leader/staff member to work alongside DSG program.

Review of contemporary Australian literature on cultural safety and culturally safe learning environments

The concept of cultural safety was developed by health professionals in New Zealand as a way of critically analysing nursing practices and perspectives and the how these practices and views affected Maori patients (Ramsden, 1992, 2000). Australia quickly adopted the concept of cultural safety into the Australian Indigenous health sector. Since the 1990s, the term 'cultural safety' has been increasingly used in a range of government policy initiatives and in the non-government sector. The Australian education sector has a particular focus on cultural awareness, cultural understanding, cultural competence and cultural responsiveness. In 2021, there is an urgent need for schools and educational systems to support and develop culturally safe schooling environments in order to increase Aboriginal student participation in schools as the gap for successful completion of compulsory education between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students is widening (Dept of Prime Minister & Cabinet, 2020).

A literature review was conducted on contemporary understanding and use of the term cultural safety in both academic literature and Government/non-Government reports. The definition of cultural safety is premised on the following:

> *The foundational pillars of cultural safety are:*
>
> *1. Professionals must reflect upon and adjust their practice to ensure their biases don't impact negatively upon their clients.*
>
> *2. Clients are the only people who can determine what is culturally safe for them.*
>
> *When we apply these pillars to our practice in education, rich opportunities for learning are opened up for all students and teachers* (Vadiveloo & Edwardson, 2020).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner defines cultural safety as:

> *An environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening* (Priday, Gargett, & Kiss, 2011).

Our work on cultural safety for this evaluation is premised on elements that are defined in the above two definitions. The evaluators would like to bring to the attention of the readership that from the onset of the evaluation there was intent to view each of the DSG rooms at (12) West Australian Department of Education school sites as well as (2) school sites housed within the Catholic Education sector. These intended sites visits were to assist in the evaluation activities to:

> *identify examples of evidence-based best practice optimising culturally appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal girls*

These site visits were to ascertain if the DSG program and site rooms, as well as the overall school environment fostered a:

- sense of belonging and connection
- sense of cultural identity
- connection to opportunities that provide a deep and rich learning environment.

Ethics approval was received from Catholic Education within a month of lodging the application. However, due to the circumstances of COVID we have experienced in Australia over the past year, and the associated hard border by the Western Australian government, the evaluators were prevented from visiting the Victorian site in person and settled with a phone interview with the site coordinator. The Broome site was visited in December, 2020.

The initial ethics application to the Western Australian Department of Education was submitted in April 2020 with a resubmission lodged in November 2020. Given the reduced scope, Department research approval was no longer required. We therefore were unable to visit any DET school sites or to talk to any school principals.

It is important to state that given the past histories and poor experiences in education for many Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples, culturally safe practices should be enacted as core business in the daily working systems and context of schools and by school staff at all levels. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples a culturally safe environment is one where peoples feel safe and secure in their identities, cultures and community (Priday et al., 2011).

Cultural safety extends beyond cultural awareness and it became evident that as the evaluators yarned with DSG staff, site coordinators and alumni that the DSG program itself fostered a strong connection and engagement with the girls who attend the DSG program. Despite many emphasising the need for larger spaces, DSG site coordinators indicated that girls came to the room to yarn and connect with one another, and that there was a clear sense of belonging. It was evident that the DSG site rooms foster a shared and healthy respect amongst the girls, although at times this is tested as may be expected during adolescence, with 'yarn carrying' moments occurring that required the behaviour of students to be addressed. In these instances, the site rooms provided the 'safe space' to allow site coordinators to deal with associated issues. Overall, the evaluators believe that there is an engaged and working community between DSG site coordinators and the girls.

The evaluators also highlight that there is a need for schools to build culturally safe relationships with Aboriginal parents and caregivers. Literature reviewed for this evaluation showed that schools which foster strong and safe connections with Aboriginal parents/caregivers will develop even stronger community relationships; this in turn augments the capacity of schools to meet the domains and indicators of the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework.

The evaluators were disappointed to hear that there were unsafe cultural practices occurring at some school sites. It is important to understand that Unsafe cultural practices are defined as:

> *Any action which diminishes, demeans, or disempowers the cultural identity and wellbeing of an individual.*

(Dudgeon, Milroy, & Walker, 2014, p. 114),

During the yarning dialogue, site coordinators revealed the following unsafe practices that are occurring in schools:

- *I know the Principal doesn't like me, there is this invisible tension between us, and he is dismissive of what I have to say*
- *The teachers just barge in, don't knock which shows they have very little respect for us*
- *Access to our room has shifted and parents don't want to come here - they have to go through a locked gate or front office, for some this triggers 'trauma' from their own past experiences of school*
- *The campus needs Aboriginal artwork, not dot paintings but art that welcomes you to the space*

- *It is hard when girls are transitioning back, the teachers have this attitude, we go to class with these girls just to make sure they's ok and feeling safe*
- *We shouldn't just be in a room out of sight, we should be in the hub of school life. The boys programs have bigger spaces than what we girls get, us girls look like poor cousins*
- *Our room was the near the boys changerooms, how shame is that we should be away in another space*

There is evidence within the scope of literature that there is an expanding number of Aboriginal peoples doing well in education (Lowe, Skrebneva, Burgess, Harrison, & Vass, 2020), however there is still a large number of Aboriginal peoples who are not having this lived experience of education. This was highlighted at one site in the following comment:

> *I am scared for the students in this space as well as the staff. The school is trying to fix the issue. It is really difficult, especially when the families involved instigate the lateral violence that is occurring. It is scary. We have a number of girls suspended.*

We acknowledge that above quote is an isolated incident, however it does highlight the rapidly increasing gap in educational achievement, along with the lack of engagement in formal schooling, which compound disadvantage for Aboriginal students. There is growing evidence that school-based factors underpin educational disadvantage (Tracey et al., 2016), which serves to highlight the importance of such programs like the DSG program in schools. More broadly, the DSG program is vital to assist those girls seeking to transition from education to work in order to change their socio-economic circumstances which the literature indicates are a catalyst for poverty and disadvantage.

There was discussion on how 'racism' is enacted within the school environment with alumni and site coordinators acknowledging that at some sites there is a tokenistic approach to all things Aboriginal and that racism does exist:

- *I have been asked if I am a real Aboriginal by both teachers and other students*
- *Some teachers are bullying towards us, they have a bad attitude an you see it in, you know, their body language*
- *Racism does exist here, it is subtle but it's here*

Other site coordinators believed that their Deputy principals were far more approachable and supportive of the DSG program. However, most site coordinators acknowledged that their respective schools required not only professional development on cultural awareness about Aboriginal peoples but also knowledge about the DSG program in general and their roles as site coordinators. We have discussed this area further in the recommendations section.

Overwhelmingly the dialogue drawn from the yarning circles revealed that the majority of DSG site spaces are culturally appropriate and welcoming. There is evidence of a strong

connection and sense of belonging amongst the girls, with the girls engaging with each other in a respectful way. The number of girls who visit the DSG room in any one day, is in our view is one of the largest indicators of a healthy DSG community. Spaces that include artwork done by the girls, posters of Deadly Indigenous women, aspirational words that adorn the walls, food in the fridge, comfortable seating (which was not the case in all settings) where the girls could feel at home. Importantly, as noted in (Tracey et al., 2016, p. 643) it is the 'informality' of the DSG setting that provides girls with the opportunity to learn in appropriate and safe environment. This comes full circle to the beginning of this section where in the second foundational pillar highlights that *"clients are the only people who can determine what is culturally safe for them"* which is this case is the Deadly Sista Girlz themselves. We would recommend a further unhindered qualitative research project to explore the notion of cultural safety through the voices of the Deadly Sista Girlz, this could include participants families and communities particularly if conducted at the Wirrpanda Foundation through a co-designed community project.

Desktop review of programs for Aboriginal girls across Australia

Purpose

The purpose of this review is to provide stakeholders with an overview of school-based engagement programs for Aboriginal girls currently being offered across Australia. It must be noted that at the commencement of this research in mid 2020 one such program, the Girls Academy (GA) was included as it complied with our research criteria as outlined below. The Girls Academy, part of Role Models and Leaders Australia (RMLA), was the largest and perhaps most well-known service provider operating in 46 schools across Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales.

However, late in December 2020, news broke that Federal Government funding to the GA through the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) had been discontinued and therefore the programs would not recommence for the 2021 school year. Understandably, coming as the announcement did just before Christmas there was a palpable sense of confusion and uncertainty on social media. Concerns were raised about the fate of the program and the hundreds of staff and students affected.

Subsequently it was announced that a selection process for new providers was in progress and by late January 2021, a range of existing Indigenous program providers were selected to deliver their programs on the GA school sites. Many of the programs selected were also on our original data base of relevant programs for this review and appear asterisked in the list below.

As a result of these changes to program delivery we have not included the Girls Academy in this review as was originally intended. The Girls Academy is currently on hold as the Board of RMLA considers the program's future. We mean no disrespect to the GA staff and students by not including the program in this review. We acknowledge their many accomplishments over 15 years where they have ably assisted over 3000 Indigenous girls.

It is anticipated that this review will provide useful insights into a cross section of programs currently providing educational, mentoring and/or school-based support for Aboriginal girls. This aims to assist the Deadly Sista Girlz (DSG) program in considering a range of different approaches to strengthen their program development and delivery.

It will also enhance the possibility of greater coordination of service delivery across programs where some overlap may occur. Broader knowledge and understanding of the various programs and the specialisations that are available can only be of benefit to the girls and their families and the communities seeking to access these services.

Methodology

The content of this desktop review is based on information collected through a systematic review of the available documents relevant to Aboriginal girls' Programs in Australia. Programs were found using key word/phrase web search, links from government departments and non-government organisations. Other programs were added when they were discussed by participants during the course of the evaluation. Nineteen (19) programs were initially identified using these methods.

In depth program selection

In all 19 programs were initially identified with seven (7) being selected for more in-depth analysis. They are presented alphabetically below.

1. Aurora Project and Programs Pty Ltd
2. Girls at the Centre (Smith Family)
3. Koya Aboriginal Corporation (Kiara and Swan View SHS)*
4. National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy * (some NSW programs)
5. Shine (Geraldton)
6. Shooting Stars (Glass Jar Australia Ltd) (Derby and Kununurra)*
7. Stars Foundation * (some WA programs)

These programs represent some of the most visible and well-known programs. The majority of these programs were selected because they appeared in the search criteria and they had extensive and accessible published data. By chance, four (4) of these (indicated with an asterix) programs (3,4,6 & 7) were selected by the NIAA to replace the Girls Academy which was discontinued in late December 2020. Program 1 is included although it is not only for Aboriginal girls but offers a different approach to providing educational support to most of the others. Program 3 did not emerge in the initial data search but has been added here as it is a program selected for IAS funding to replace a GA program in WA and therefore appeared to offer some relevant insights. Program 5 was included although it is not a program exclusively for Aboriginal girls but was mentioned on several occasions by various participants as a well-known program for teenage girls operating in WA. Its inclusion seemed therefore pertinent.

General findings

The review of these seven programs found that they represented a diverse cross section of programs operating across Australia. While they varied in size and geographic locations all the programs had the broad aim to support and improve the educational attainment and as a consequence, life opportunities of Aboriginal girls.

All the programs focus their attention on school attendance and engagement. Importantly, the ways in which they aim to do this varied significantly, as did the philosophies and values that underpinned and drove these broader aspirations. The diverse approaches and philosophies among providers can be viewed as a strength in a sector that delivers services to young Aboriginal women who are themselves diverse and unique.

While many of the deeply entrenched and systemic challenges that face Indigenous young women are shared, they also live and learn in a wide range of contexts, with varied and emerging aspirations, hopes and desires. This therefore requires localised approaches to systemic barriers. In 2017, the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs found that the common elements among successful engagement programs were "flexibility, cultural safety, buy-in from the family and connection with community". (Dept of Prime Minister & Cabinet, 2020, p. 46)

Summary of key themes

School attendance

Attendance at school is prioritised as a goal for the majority of programs. The link between attendance and academic achievement is well supported in the literature. It is also a key criteria for the receipt of

government funding and hence is not surprising it is prioritised and highlighted on most program websites. While school attendance and engagement is a common theme the ways in which programs attempt to achieve this aim are varies.

Mentoring

A key strand of many of the programs' claims to counter absenteeism and year 12 non-completion rates was providing 1:1 mentoring to participants. This was a reflexive, bespoke approach for each participant so they felt supported in their individual aspirations and goals. Participants were also encouraged to develop enduring relationships with their peers, formative adults and the wider community, in part to boost engagement with schooling and also to help develop foundations for healthy relationships across lifetimes.

As confidantes and role models, mentoring roles are highly skilled and complex. Some of the girls in these programs require high levels of personal, social and emotional support. Many are impacted by trauma and require specialised assistance. Some of this mentoring work takes place outside of school hours and school gates and requires empathy, trust and collaboration with community and non-school agencies.

Mentoring roles also require working within the school site community with teachers, Aboriginal Education Workers and other on-site professionals. This can include assisting students in classes where the roles of mentors and Aboriginal Education workers may be blurred. It can also involve supporting schools with actioning their truancy, absenteeism and/or behaviour management strategies.

The complex, skilled and multifaceted roles of coordinators/mentors in these programs require recognition and effective support. This is to ensure they are appropriately trained, supported and recompensed for the work that they do.

> *They do what they do very well – that's totally to do with the calibre of the Coaches. Girls have to have a rapport with them. In similar programs, you achieve poor outcomes with the wrong people in place.*
>
> *- Girls at the Centre Policy Officer*

Curriculum

The curriculum offered including the content of contact time workshops, excursions, incursions and use of explicit incentives and rewards systems vary across the programs. Most programs offer regular timetabled 1-2 hour workshops or sessions during the school day. These are generally tailored for each year level. Most of these sessions focus broadly on health and well-being, life skills development, community and employment career options. Only some programs explicitly state that they are aligned with the school curriculum. Shooting Stars has for example employed a curriculum coordinator to develop their curriculum alongside ACARA's health curriculum. NASCA also aligns their curriculum to supplement and support the school curriculum in culturally appropriate ways.

While there is debate in the literature about its efficacy, sport is a common 'hook' used in many of the larger, established and successful programs. It is not the only 'hook' that can be successful as the example of SHINE shows with its focus on hair dressing and fashion. It is reasonable to expect that given the diversity of contexts within which these programs work that programs could develop their own unique theme, 'hook' or specialisation that builds on the organisation's strengths and the needs and aspirations of the communities it serves.

Culturally safe rooms

Culturally Safe Rooms are consistently mentioned as critical to the success of many of the programs. They provide the necessary space for mentoring, workshops and any before and after class support the girls require. Most have kitchen facilities where food is prepared and or shared. These rooms are invariably described as safe places for the girls to go.

It's a safe space for them as well in terms of, you know, when they're having a bad day or something. Coming down here they know it's always an option. They like to come down here and just either calm down or chill out or even conflict resolution or anything that going on with them, it's a really great space for that.

\- Halls Creek - Shooting Stars

These rooms provide what is described in the health and education literature as cultural safety. It is critically important that these rooms are managed, designed and located so that the principles of cultural safety are fostered within them.

Governance

Many of the programs have very well-known, high profile Indigenous female and male board members. These people bring outstanding skills, experience and community connections to the programs. It is also a very impressive public recognition of the organisation's real commitment to Indigenous ownership and control. The majority Indigenous makeup of Boards and/or staff is promoted as a critical success factor. Aurora, Koya, NASCA and Shooting Stars for example are very explicit about the importance of Indigenous ownership, decision making and or staffing. The Smith Family acknowledges that this is a priority for them in its new strategic directions.

A commitment to majority Indigenous governance is in keeping with sentiments expressed in recent key national reports. Cultural programs developed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are a clear recommendation of the recent 2020 Australian Human Rights Commission's *Wiyi Yani U Thangani Womens' Voices Securing our Rights Securing our Future* Report. Building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector is a priority reform in the current National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Dept of Prime Minister & Cabinet, 2020):

The parties acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services usually achieve better results, employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and are often preferred over mainstream services.

Alumni and role models

Many of the programs mention the important role of their alumni and keeping in touch with them. This supports the girls when they leave school but they also provide roles models for the girls in the programs. Alumni may return as guest speakers and often act as mentors. Some may gain employment in the programs as coordinators or managers.

"Once a SHINE girl, always a SHINE girl"

\- SHINE program literature

Girls' program funding disparity

Generally, funding arrangements for programs followed the same ratio of 60% state and federal government funding and 40% sponsorships and donations. Across interviews and literature for this evaluation, the funding disparity between programs for girls and those for boys was keenly felt. This inequitable anomaly has been raised in several key recent government reports and it is hoped therefore that it will be addressed in forthcoming funding rounds. It was noted that there was a range of programs available to girls, but one for boys (Clontarf) which received significantly more funding than all of the girls' programs put together: "Boys get to go on end-of-year camps, but the girls don't get enough funding to go on camps. Those cultural camps might cost around $8000, which is just about our yearly budget." (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 475).

Websites/Internet profile/social media

Most but not all of the programs have sophisticated and attractive websites. In this era of smart phones and mobile internet, it is imperative that websites are able to keep up with the ever-present thirst for information and connection, especially if they are to maintain and increase their viability and relevance to their prospective young audience. It is noteworthy that few of the programs appeared on page 1 of search results. Many times, programs were found on page 4 or beyond. This positioning reduces the possibility that potential participants (Aboriginal girls or their families and communities) can quickly and easily find these programs.

Only five of the programs found were listed in the first three pages of search results when using key words and phrases to search. A key implication of low website positioning is that potential participants do not find the information they need as they most often stop scrolling by page 3 of search results: "Because users rarely click on links beyond the first search results page, boosting search-engine ranking has become essential."(Gudivada, Rao, & Paris, 2015). Therefore, a very high ranking – that is to say, at the top of page 1 of search engine results - "can greatly boost an organization's visibility."(Gudivada et al., 2015).

Sport and cultural activities

Three programs explicitly used sports as 'a hook' or a means of encouraging engagement and retention at school. These are Shooting Stars, Stars Foundation and NASCA. Others encouraged attendance by offering extra-curricular activities, job or vocation related activities and movie nights. Reward camps, a range of excursions, cooking and yarning circles were also listed as activities. Many of the programs that used these activities, particularly sport, made the claim that "research has shown" or "it is widely known" but the actual research is not cited or easily accessible. In research of the literature conducted as part of this review, some caution was expressed in the unquestioned acceptance of this proposition: most recently for example from the Australian Human Rights Commission Wiyi Yani U Thangani Report (2020):

> "In some regions, women spoke about cultural programs and events being used to motivate students to attend school. I heard from women in NSW the risk of further demoralising students when culture is used as tool to encourage attendance … culture is integral to our life. It should never be used as a coercive mechanism to improve the behaviour of students." (p. 463).

Summary

This review is necessarily only a snapshot of the diverse programs operating in this educational space. It provides useful information for consideration in the future planning and development of the Deadly Sista Girlz programs. The case studies below provide more detailed demographic data for each program (eg size,

number of schools, locations) followed by details about the program's aims, values, approaches, stated outcomes and evaluation methods. Relevant information about the governance structure, funding and staffing is also included. The online and social media presence is included as this is an important part of contemporary organisational profiling. Each case study differs slightly depending on the publicly available data provided. The individual case studies provide a brief but nuanced picture of the programs as they present themselves via their web pages and annual reports. They all represent committed efforts to provide services that will improve and enhance educational opportunities for young Indigenous women within a context where there are enduring and systemic, explicit and implicit barriers to their rights to equality.

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Program Case Studies

Aurora Education Foundation

https://aurorafoundation.com.au

> *"A future where there is no education gap and where the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians achieve equitable participation at the highest level – in the professions, in boardrooms and across government."*

The Aurora Education Foundation (Ltd.) (Aurora) is a national not for profit organisation that focuses on Indigenous education. Its cluster of programs are quite unique among the programs reviewed. Aurora's emphasis is on very high academic achievement by supporting Indigenous students to attain university level studies both nationally and internationally and subsequently move into high level careers in their chosen fields.

> *"To transform lives by investing in potential and inspiring excellence through education at the highest level."*
>
> *Investing in potential • Inspiring excellence • Transforming lives*

The Aurora Project was established in 2006 initially to support an Internship Program for Indigenous and non-Indigenous interns in over 200 Indigenous sector organisations working in the burgeoning areas of native title, policy and community development, land rights, justice and research. In 2019 Aurora's brand was re-launched in response to its growth in breadth and depth. The Foundation now delivers five (5) distinct education programs: Aurora High School Program, Aurora Indigenous Scholarships Portal, Aurora Internship Program, Aurora International Scholarships and Aurora Outreach Program.

> *"We seek to change the conversation around Indigenous education to one of high expectations and possibilities."*

The programs are interrelated in a "virtuous circle" providing a long-term support framework for Indigenous students progressing from high school through to post graduate studies and professional careers:

> *This longevity is key to ensuring long-term impact and creating real change.*

Aurora Board

The makeup of the Aurora Board reflects its high level academic and professional focus as well as its international, human rights, social justice policy development focus. Among them is the Chair Anthony Mitchell, former Chair of Amnesty International Australia. Lilly Brown, a recipient of the Charlie Perkins scholarship to attend the University of Cambridge, where she completed an MPhil with distinction in Politics, Development and Democratic Education. Lilly belongs to the Gumbaynggirr people of the mid north coast of eastern Australia. Also on the board is Craig Ritchie, Chief Executive Officer of The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). Mark Heiss is a Wiradjuri man from south western NSW, born and raised on Gadigal land in Sydney. He is also the Chair of the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (NASCA) Board (featured in this review below). Mark attended the Harvard School of Education's Project Zero course in 2017. Finally, Helen Dalley is a Walkley Award-winning journalist and broadcaster with decades of experience in television media and journalism.

High school program manager

Tamara Murdock is responsible for leading Aurora's High School Program. Tamara is a Noongar woman, raised in Geraldton with family is from the southwest of Western Australia. She holds a Masters of Philosophy in Geography and the Environment from the University of Oxford. Tamara was a participant on the 2013 Aurora International Study tour, a 2014 recipient of Charlie Perkins Scholarship and 2015 Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation's Murray Chapman Scholarship. In 2017, she was a mentor on Aurora's International Study Tour.

The Aspiration Initiative (TAI) high school program

> *"Indigenous students realise their academic potential. Graduates have the skills and knowledge to perform at a high level in their chosen career fields."*

The High School Program provides intensive academic support over a 6-year period to Indigenous high school students. Students are recruited and selected for their interest in learning and the potential to undertake higher education. Each student is then provided with over 200 hours of wrap-around support each year. The support is delivered by specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, mentors and Elders. Support also includes 20 days of residential academic camps, tutoring, mentoring, well-being support, academic equipment (for example, laptops and Wi-Fi), as well as post Year 12 transition support.

The Aspiration Initiative is one of its 2018-21 Strategic Goals. The high school program focuses on raising student aspirations while building their academic skills and self-confidence:

> *With a focus on cultural identity, we equip Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with the competence and love of learning to achieve their academic and career aspirations, within a framework that places First Peoples' knowledge systems at its core.*

The Aurora Foundation is planning to scale up its high school programs with the aim of eventually reaching 4,000 Indigenous students across Australia every year:

> *A young person will strive further if they feel they are being invested in.*

Outcomes

- 70% of high school program participants completed Year 12, compared to 37% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students nationally

- 40% of high school program participants attained an ATAR, compared to 13% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students nationally
- 50% of high school program participants transitioned to university directly from Year 12, compared to 25% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students nationally (by age 21)

Impact

According to an independent evaluation by Nous Group (2017) the Aurora program noted the following achievements:

- Year 12 completion and ATAR attainment rates for Program participants were far higher than those of other Indigenous students and comparable to non-Indigenous students.
- The proportion of Program participants enrolled in university was far higher than for other Indigenous students and comparable to non-Indigenous students.
- A strong sense of community was reported to have fostered participant engagement and motivation, and improved health and wellbeing.
- Participants' educational aspirations and confidence were raised and their academic skills were strengthened.
- Indigenous students and graduates aspiring to undertake postgraduate study at the best universities in the world – from 2011 to 2017, 118 Indigenous Australians have participated on the Aurora Study Tour which visits leading universities in the US and UK.
- Young Indigenous people connected with outstanding Indigenous scholars who prove that anything is possible - since the Outreach Program started in 2017, 32 workshops have been held reaching 687 high school students and 103 teachers. 80% of students surveyed said they were more likely to go onto university after hearing the role models speak.

The Smith Family - Girls at the Centre

https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/programs/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander/girls-at-the-centre

> *The Smith Family is a national, independent children's charity helping disadvantaged Australians to get the most out of their education, so they can create better futures for themselves.*

The Smith Family charity began in 1922 providing material support to children in orphanages. Since then, it has grown and developed its charitable work, today focusing primarily on education though its *Learning for Life* programs which currently support over 200,000 Australian children in need.

> *Our goal was clear - no child should miss out at school and all should be given the best chance to achieve their potential.*

The Smith Family delivers a suite of programs to achieve its primary goals including of literacy, numeracy, technology and mentoring programs for disadvantaged children and young adults. The Smith Family also delivers a range of targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs. Two are presented here.

> *Every year we support over 8,822 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*

Indigenous Youth Leadership Program

With funding from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the scholarship program supports 221 secondary students from remote communities to attend **high-performing schools in several states.** In addition to helping Indigenous students achieve their educational aspirations, the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP) contributes to the development of a pool of positive role models and future leaders from Indigenous communities, to inspire other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and illustrate the successes that can be achieved through education.

> *"The IYLP gave me the opportunity to study at a prestigious school and the support and guidance to achieve well in the academic and sporting arenas."*

Girls at the Centre

Girls at the Centre began as a pilot program 2008-2015 in Alice Springs, NT. There are now two programs in Bairnsdale VIC, and Wagga Wagga NSW. In both locations the program runs in partnership with local schools. The program is described as aspirational and aiming to counteract high absenteeism and school drop-out rates though relationship building and mentoring.

Program objectives

Girls at the Centre aims to support participants to:

- Improve school attendance and achievement and foster their long-term engagement in education
- Develop life goals and aspirations
- Enhance their life skills, including social and emotional wellbeing and resilience.

It's an evidence-based approach

An independent evaluation of the Girls at the Centre program was conducted in 2011 by Associate Professor Tess Lea and Associate Professor Catherine Driscoll from the University of Sydney. This evaluation, complimented by further literature forms the basis of the on 2014 Improving Educational Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Report (The Smith Family, 2014).

The following was noted from the 2014 Report.

Program components

The *Girls at the Centre* reflects many of the features known to be effective in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls. It has a comprehensive range of components that participants can access, including:

- Girl Coaches
- Weekly after school activities

- Breakfast with a mentor
- Additional tailored activities through Contact Time
- The Girls' Room in the school
- The Families and Schools Together (FAST) program
- Camps and experiential mentoring trips.

Contact time

Fortnightly classes are included in the school timetable, allowing program staff to run additional activities tailored to each year level. There is a focus on building resilience, confidence and wellbeing, as well as team building, personal presentation, health and healthy relationships. In Year 9, there is an emphasis on developing employment skills and exploring career options. This includes resumé writing, job interviewing, work health and safety, setting career goals, as well as visiting a range of workplaces to give the girls a sense of the diverse range of careers available.

The Girls' Room

The Girls' Room is a room at the school which is exclusively available to *Girls at the Centre* participants, Coaches and invited guests. It includes a kitchen, lockers, office space and a lounge area. The room functions as a location for many of the program activities, as well as a retreat and safe place for the girls and a transition space between home and school.

> *"You know helping to ensure, in those less supervised times, that students have a safe place to go ... there's less [likelihood] ... for students to make inappropriate choices ... It is obviously also a good opportunity for them to check in and touch base with the staff down there, so that's one thing which is an amazing contribution to the school."*
>
> *- school staff*

Families and Schools Together (FAST)

An eight (8) week, small group program, involving girls and their parent/carer in structured activities. It aims to strengthen relationships between the student and their parent/carer. Skill development activities focus on improving communication and family functioning. *Girls at the Centre* participants nominate the discussion topics and help organise the weekly sessions and the activities for follow-through at home.

Camps and experiential mentoring trips

Girls are selected for the trip based on their school attendance, behaviour and effort and it is seen by many as a highlight of their participation in the program. In a reciprocal initiative, the *Girls at the Centre* participants host students from a Melbourne school.

Overall Program outcomes

According to an independent evaluation of *Girls at the Centre* conducted by Associate Professor Tess Lea and Associate Professor Catherine Driscoll from the University of Sydney (2014), Girls at the Centre:

- Positively impacts on life goals and skills
- Community engagement with the school, especially through families, is improved
- Is highly valued by school staff, participants and their families

- Significantly improves **school attendance** (eg 2011, average attendance rates for *Girls at the Centre* participants (83%) were consistently higher than the average attendance rates for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls (66%) at the school).

Critical success factors

- Skill level and effectiveness of the women employed as 'Girl Coaches':

'They do what they do very well – that's totally to do with the calibre of the Coaches. Girls have to have a rapport with them. In similar programs, you achieve poor outcomes with the wrong people in place." (policy officer)

- Significant parent engagement
- Inclusive of a mix of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and non-Indigenous girls
- Holistic approach to offering support across all aspects of girls' lives
- Input into decision making of the girls involved in the program
- Resources and facilities
- Site characteristics
- Decentralisation/independence from school and government

Whilst a decade old now there are still valuable insights about the Girls at the Centre program's format, design, outcomes and critical success factors can be gained from this report.

The Board

Board members include a wide range of senior executives from across government and non-government sectors:

- Nicholas Moore, Chairman, former Chief Executive Officer of Macquarie Group Limited. He is also Chairman of Screen Australia, The Centre for Independent Studies, The Smith Family, Willow Technology Corporation, the National Catholic Education Commission,
- Dr Lisa O'Brien, CEO since February 2011. A Medical Practitioner registered in New South Wales and a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators, Lisa also holds a Masters of Business Administration and a Masters of Human Resource Management and Coaching.
- Professor Peter Radoll, Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous, and Director of the Ngunnawal Centre at the University of Canberra. An Anaiwan man of Northern NSW, Peter remains deeply connected to the Aboriginal community.
- Christine Cawsey AM has had extensive experience in the education sector over more than four decades, including at schools in disadvantaged areas of Sydney. She has been the Principal of Rooty Hill High School since 1997 and is a Past President of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council and a past Non-Executive Director of the Australian Council of Educational Leaders.

2019 Annual Report – Indigenous community led directions

The 2019 Annual Report articulates a future focus on exploring more **community-led directions** for developing strategies for closing the gap in educational outcomes. This includes strategies to embed Indigenous knowledge into programs. Working with an **Advisory Group**, the aim is to deliver **culturally appropriate resources** for Indigenous children. Over the past year, the Board notes a continued to **transition ownership of a number of community-based programs to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations**.

This includes *Ready Set Go*, which tackles Indigenous disadvantage in the early primary years, to community ownership.

Koya Aboriginal Corporation

https://koya.org.au

Koya Aboriginal Corporation has recently been selected by NIAA Aboriginal Advancement Strategy to service the girls' program instead of the previous provider the Girls Academy A at Kiara College and Swan View SHS.

Koya Aboriginal Corporation is a not-for-profit organisation owned and operated by local Aboriginal people in the City of Swan in Perth, Western Australia. Koya Aboriginal Corporation has been delivering a range of community projects from small businesses and community groups, to local and state government agencies, for 14 years. Koya has 15 Aboriginal members between the ages of 15-80 working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members across metropolitan Perth, as well as in communities in the north east and south west corridors.

Directors and Staff

- Founding Chair and Elder, Allan Kickett
- Director of Research and Community Development, Professor Cheryl Kickett-Tucker. Professor Kickett-Tucker is an Aboriginal Western Australian who is a Wadjuk traditional owner. She has traditional ties to her grandparents' Balladong and Yued country. Professor Kickett-Tucker is currently a research Fellow at Curtin University and the Founding Director of Pindi Pindi Pty Ltd-Centre for Research Excellence in Aboriginal Wellbeing.
- Director Community Engagement, Tomzarni Dann
- Director of Community Stakeholder Engagement, Lisa Garlett

School related Programs

KAAT, KOORT N HOOPS (KKNH)

Kaat, Koort n Hoops (Head, Heart and Hoops) is a sports and wellbeing program for children and young people.

KAAT, KOORT SWIM N SURVIVE

KOYA Aboriginal Corporation with Royal Life Saving Society WA (RLSSWA) delivers cultural secure water safety awareness and swimming lessons.

KINSHIP EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM (KEP)

Kinship Empowerment Program (KEP) operate various activities that include engagement and meetings with key stakeholders, visits to school, delivering workshops, community gatherings targeted at students in Years

4-6. Koya Aboriginal Corporation collaborates with five primary schools with Aboriginal student population of over 50. The schools are located in the southern Perth corridor with a total school populations of up to 250 students.

KEP works within school environments via activities such as KEP breakfast clubs and the KEP homework clubs.

MOODITJ RELATIONSHIPS

The Mooditj Relationships project extends an existing Mooditj program and will develop, pilot and evaluate a holistic, strengths-based, culturally safe and effective, resilience and relationships education program for Aboriginal young people aged 10-14.

National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy

https://nasca.org.au/about/

> *NASCA's work will continue until every Aboriginal child is* **free from racism, inequality and social injustices**. *Free to live their life to the full as* **they determine.**

NACSA is an Aboriginal not-for-profit organisation based in NSW. The program is offered to both girls and boys. It was established in in **1995** by Rugby League champion David Liddiard (OAM). Initially it was a sports-based program but has evolved to include a range of programs with a focus on community development. As a grass roots organisation with a national focus, its ethos strongly asserts that:

> *Things should be done with, not to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

Of all the programs reviewed NACSA's messaging has the most explicit expression of issues of systemic racism as the major cause of inequality. The Academy uses structured sporting and cultural programs to realise its anti-racism and human rights agendas vision and purpose:

- A strong sense of **identity free from apprehension, fear or shame**.

- Access to **healthy foods** and participation in an **active lifestyle.**

- Access to an education system that **values Indigenous methods, cultures and knowledge** as an integral part of learning and personal development.

- **No barriers to future equal employment** with their fellow Australian peers and the opportunity to determine the path they choose.

- A right to envisage a future whereby **Indigenous communities run their own affairs** and are **empowered to address the consequences of dispossession.**

- **Freedom from racism.**

Board and Staff

NASCA has an all Indigenous board of directors, and two Indigenous women leading the organisation as the CEO and Program Director. Board and staff members include:

- **Mark Heiss,** Chairperson Wiradjuri man from Sydney Bachelor of Education, a Masters in Educational Leadership Head of Scholarships at the GO Foundation.
- **Chloe Wighton** Chloe is a Wiradjuri (Galari) woman, currently the Senior Cultural Impact Advisor at the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) Australia. She previously worked on the campaign for constitutional reform
- **Lachlan McDaniel** belongs to the Kilari Clan of the Wiradjuri Nation. His experience extends to political campaigning and improving organisations Indigenous Engagement in the not-for-profit and corporate business sector.
- **Barbie-Lee Kirby** is a Ngiyambaa, Wailwan, Baakindji-Maraura, Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay woman from Brewarrina, North West where she is currently studying an MBA in entrepreneurship.
- **Kristal Kinsela-Christie** is a proud Aboriginal woman, a descendant of both the Jawoyn and Wiradjuri nations and is currently Managing Director of IPS Management Consultants etc.
- The **Chief Executive Officer** for the last six years is Leanne Townsend, an Anaiwan Woman from Uralla, New South Wales. She previously led key aspects of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008 and was a Senior Advisor to Governor-General Her Excellency Quentin Bryce.

The Staff are led by 12 young Indigenous program directors and state managers.

NASCA Programs and Impact

NASCA currently works within 19 schools across NSW, WA, and the NT to provide academic support as well as leadership and health and wellness programs through a strong cultural lens. The program objectives include:

- Increase school attendance and retention
- Improve students' attitudes towards school
- Promote positive learning experiences
- Strengthen Aboriginal Cultural pride and identity
- Improve student's life skills including teamwork, communication and leadership

Our model strengthens connection to culture, builds confidence, and improves educational outcomes.

Sport and Youth Development

https://nasca.org.au/programs-impact/sport-and-youth-development/

NASCA's methodology uses sport and mentoring to engage young people to strengthen culture, build self-esteem and enable a strong sense of autonomy through personal development. Sport operates as a 'hook' to engage young people across programs, to encourage health and wellbeing, and to meet outcomes through transferable skill development. Sport may also remove young people from negative influences like anti-social peer groups, drugs and alcohol, low self-esteem and boredom. NASCA bases its approach on the understanding that numerous studies and publications have highlighted the strong link between good sport-focussed programs and positive outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These reports however are not cited on this website.

Mentoring

https://nasca.org.au/programs-impact/mentoring/

Mentoring is an integral part of NASCA's broader strategy. The generalised role of mentoring is to strengthen and maintain the positive benefits of a program, whilst providing role modelling and support to young people in the process of leading healthy and productive lives. "Mentoring is a relationship intervention strategy that research is showing can have powerful and lasting positive impacts on behavioural, academic and vocational outcomes for youth at risk". This strategy is justified by the claim that "many reports have shown that mentoring is an important tool" but as above these reports are not cited on the web page.

NASCA Urban and Regional Programs

In 2019 NASCA delivered over 40 weeks of in-class support and workshops for students from year 7-12 that supported life skills development and improvements in education. In total there were 371 participants and about 8000 hours of program delivery. NASCA school attendance rates were measured as 77%, compared to overall Indigenous 70%. These were complemented by activities outside the school grounds including popular weekend excursions such as connecting with the natural environment through bushwalking, beach visits, and sports activities.

NACSA Remote Programs – My World Framework

The NACSA remote program has been operating since 1997 in the Eastern States. In 2019 1,583 hours of educational and health programs were delivered in remote locations to 989 students. Delivery occurs through series of week-long visits in communities. The key focus is on confidence and self-awareness, leadership and communication skills to stimulate learning and development in their own communities. Each week-long visit has a sub-theme within the My World framework. All sub-themes for the NASCA remote delivery involve interactive models of learning and engagement that are culturally appropriate and align with the school curriculum, ultimately leading to an increased level of school engagement.

NACSA Expansion to WA 2018

In late 2018, NACSA expanded into Western Australia for the first time. A Perth Office was established and NACSA established partnerships in two WA remote communities - Wiluna and Mt Magnet, which were selected after extensive community consultation. Through the delivery of six programs in 2019, NASCA supported over 100 young people throughout central WA. Based on the success of program delivery in these communities in 2019, NASCA was planning expansion to a third WA community in 2020.

NACSA Expansion of Young Women's programs 2021 onwards

Early in January 2021 a NASCA media release announced the 100% Aboriginal owned organisation was to receive $7.9 million in funding over the next three years. The funding from NIAA would enable NASCA to work with 13 additional schools in NSW to deliver culturally connected and holistic learning and support activities to First Nations young women. With this additional funding, the team will be able to deliver its program to over 1,000 more young people over the next three years.

Shine

http://www.shinetoday.com.au/

> *SHINE supports, educates and empowers young women with the life skills and emotional tools to ensure their future is in their hands.*

One of the most striking things about the SHINE program at first glance is the beautifully presented and quite extensive website and social media pages. These virtual pages, and the lengthy Annual Reports available, provide a wealth of information about the program. These communication strategies with their contemporary and exquisitely choreographed photographs help create a strong sense of the vision of the program. For their target population of young women it is very attractive, and perhaps indicative of why there is a waiting list to enter the program.

In 2019 SHINE celebrated 10 years of continuous service to the mid-west community in WA 105 students participated in their programs across three secondary schools in 2019. SHINE also expanded to the primary school sector, launching the first SHINE primary school facility and SHIMMER program at Rangeway Primary School.

> *SHINE has supported over 800 girls and women over 10 years in the Midwest of Western Australia.*

SHINE *Inspire Achieve Belong* Inc. is a small, award winning non-government not-for-profit organisation based in Western Australia. It is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission (ACNC). SHINE funds its work through fundraising, donations, sponsorship and grants.

SHINE was established in 2009 by its Founder and former Program director Amanda Jolly when she formed a partnership with John Willcock College (Geraldton, WA) to set up the first SHINE school pilot project, encouraging community organisations and businesses to support the program.

SHINE's Governance

The Board of Management comprises four to nine volunteer members with a broad range of skills and expertise relevant to the objectives of our organisation, including representation from business, the community sector and the education community.

Working Together with Schools

At a school's request, SHINE will work with the school community to establish a SHINE program. Once a number of conditions have been met, SHINE and the school enter into a formal partnership in order to work together to deliver effective outcomes for SHINE students, in the most inclusive and efficient way.

SHINE Program

SHINE works with young women (13-16 years old) at risk of exiting the education system and provides them with the essential life skills to support their personal, education and career development. The program is designed for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous young women. In 2019, 52% of participants were Indigenous.

SHINE has a purpose-**built hairdressing and beauty salon**, where young women learn vocational skills including communication, customer service and an understanding of general employer expectations. Clear options for further education, vocational training, traineeships, apprenticeships and employment in a broad range of fields are explored and supported. Program partners provide qualified external support to deal with underlying obstacles and challenges as they present themselves through ongoing mentoring. The program is designed to supplement and support the school curriculum by encouraging participants of the SHINE program to attend school classes regularly and demonstrate positive classroom behaviour:

> *We continued to support past SHINE students from Geraldton Senior High School outside of regular school. We connected on the foreshore, over the phone or having some fish and chips on the beach.*

SHINE expanded in 2018 to include upper primary age girls with the SHIMMER and SHINE program supporting Year Six students (10-12 years old). SHIMMER and SHINE students are mentored by Year Nine SHINE students. This aims to build familiarity, support networks and understand what to expect at high school.

The Shine Program Model

Students participate in the formal learning program one day a week. While the students forego regular school classes on this day, they have typically been placed in the SHINE program because they already have low attendance rates and/or have been unable to engage successfully in the classroom for a variety of reasons. While students relinquish some traditional class time to participate in the SHINE program, it is recognised by the school, families and SHINE that learning is not limited to the school classroom and that the overall benefits to the student and the school far outweigh any small academic sacrifices.

SHINE students are **strongly encouraged to attend school regularly** if they are to be part of the SHINE program. When the school believes the student is **no longer at risk** of disengaging from school and is attending classes regularly, that student **can exit the formal SHINE program at any time.**

"Once a SHINE girl, always a SHINE girl"

SHINE continues to offer a haven to SHINE girls before school hours, after school hours and during school breaks. SHINE also provides support to SHINE students after they have completed school and are transitioning to the workplace:

- The program is delivered within the girls' regular school timetable in an on-campus, custom built hairdressing and beauty salon. This provides learning activities that not only appeal to the cohort age group, but which require physical contact.
- Students are selected and then invited to apply for a position in the program where they, and if possible, their parent/guardian, must demonstrate a commitment to participate.
- SHINE was designed to supplement and support the school curriculum by encouraging participants of the SHINE program to attend school classes regularly and demonstrate positive classroom behaviour to maximise learning and growth opportunities.

Giving back

A key objective for SHINE students is to give something back to community. SHINE participants attend the Geraldton Hillcrest residential aged-care facility as part of their regular school activities to develop respectful relations with older people. Here, participants engage residents through gentle conversation, walking together in sensory gardens, listening to stories and giving hand massages and foot spas. These interactions, through connection and human touch, nurture acceptance and respect amongst students and residents.

Similarly, SHINE participants have worked with the City of Greater Geraldton to provide community-based mobile workshops with the Council's youth services. Other initiatives and events include participation in the Cancer Council's 'Shave a Mate' Day and World's Greatest Shave, and providing volunteer work at the Sun City Church Soup Kitchen. SHINE students are encouraged to support public awareness campaigns on issues they feel strongly about. For example, they rallied behind R U OK? Day, Walk Against Violence, Reconciliation Week and 16 Days in WA to Stop Violence Against Women.

Paige McGregor who was the first trainee at Iluka Resources from SHINE is continuing to strive to be a leader for her community and we were extremely happy to help her gain a $10,000 sponsorship to participate in the Yorga Djenna Bindi Aboriginal Women's Leadership Program. Paige committed to the regular travel to Perth and said she gained great insight and connection to other Indigenous leaders and her own personal growth as a young Indigenous woman.

Shine Schools in the Mid West region of WA

SHINE currently works in collaboration with three Western Australian regional schools: Champion Bay Senior High School, Rangeway Primary School and Mt Magnet District High School. SHINE has delivered programs at Geraldton Senior College (2016-2019) and Northampton District High School (2018-2019) and run a pilot program with Allendale Primary School.

2019 Outcomes and impact

The SHINE Annual Reports are a wealth of beautifully presented information, photographs and testimonies both qualitative and quantitative which we recommend to the reader (http://www.shinetoday.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SHINE-2019-Annual-Report-Final.pdf). Data from the 2019 Annual Report included:

- 105 students benefiting from a safe learning environment
- 52% of students were Indigenous
- 12 SHINE students completed Year 12
- 33% of Indigenous students achieved over 90% school attendance
- 86% average school attendance across all programs
- 31 students had greater than 90% school attendance
- 6% of students had attendance below 40% (the program remained committed to supporting these girls)
- 19% increase in resilience and behaviour of Year 6 SHIMMER students
- 85% of SHINE students ranked as having good resilience at the end of the program

Outside the classroom

- 97% of SHINE girls achieved the personal goals they set themselves
- Approximately 4000 before-school breakfasts were provided
- 100% of SHINE students had health checks and were connected to health professionals
- Approximately 8300 lunches fuelled our girls to learn
- 45% of students engaged in part-time employment during the year
- 1580 drop-in visits from SHINE students outside of the SHINE program
- 3 SHINE alumnae attended 2 SHINE alumnae in traineeships
- Every SHINE student gave back to leadership and governance training with our program partners the community with eight community organisations receiving support from the SHINE girls, totalling over 200 contact hours

As a long-standing employer in the local community, it is so pleasing to see the girls develop a positive work ethic throughout the program, which through our mutually beneficial partnership, is enhanced through the career pathway opportunities we are able to provide them."

Courtney Ackland, *Narngulu Operations Manager Iluka Resources Limited*

Shooting Stars (Glass Jar Australia Ltd.)

Shooting Stars uses sport and other tools to encourage greater school engagement amongst young Aboriginal girls and women.

Shooting Stars is a school-based support program for Aboriginal girls. Shooting Stars enjoys the backing of Netball WA which has over 100 years of history and professional experience in advancing local communities and empowering women and girls. Netball WA is the governing body for the sport in Western Australia, incorporating the subsidiary entities of West Coast Fever Netball Club and Glass Jar Australia. Founded in 2015 by Glass Jar Australia, the Shooting Stars program is now based in nine (9) regional and remote schools across Western Australia, reaching nearly 400 girls and young women.

Shooting Stars staff, 85% of whom are Aboriginal, adapt the Shooting Stars program to meet the needs of their community and its participants, providing sport, health and wellbeing sessions, and reward activities within a school-based framework of support, advocacy, and connection.

The program currently delivers services across regional/remote Western Australia in Halls Creek, Derby, Carnarvon, Meekatharra, Wiluna and Mullewa, Narrogin and Leonora with Laverton the newest Shooting Stars site.

In 2019 the 2016 – 21 Strategic Plan was comprehensively revised, clearly re-setting the organisation and our Program's focus through to 2021 around its four pillars: Our Programs, Our People, Our Profile and Our Performance (http://shootingstars.com.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/SS2019_Strat-Plan_Digital.pdf).

Research-based Curriculum Development

In 2019 Lotterywest funding contributed to the continuation of a Yarning with the Stars research project and the employment of new specialised staff including a new Curriculum Development Coordinator Lowana Corley.

Brand/Profile Review

During 2019, Shooting Stars conducted a brand review assisting in embedding the 'what, how and why' of the Shooting Stars Program and advocating the benefits of the Program across numerous stakeholder platforms.

Shooting Stars Program logic model (Whitau & Ockerby, 2019)

Figure #. The Shooting Stars program logic model: Program activities, outcomes, and evaluation tools

Program activities include:

- Assisting with breakfast club every day
- Providing regular in class support
- Running a Friday club's session
- Providing transport for students to and from school
- Providing recess and lunch
- Providing clean clothing, women's sanitary and hygiene items for participants
- Facilitating conflict resolution and mediation
- Supporting re-entry and mentoring for participants after long school absences
- Providing generally safe space where students can go to when escalating or when they are feeling low and want to talk to someone.

The netball hook

"The program comprises two netball and two health and wellbeing sessions per week per age group. Netball is used as a hook to engage potential participants. The health and wellbeing aspect of the Shooting Stars program is grounded within the Shooting Stars curriculum framework, underscored by the three values of the Shooting Stars program: pride, respect, and success" (Whitau & Ockerby, 2019).

Rewards-based

The Shooting Stars programs are rewards-based with participants gaining Stars for weekly tasks in four categories - Wellbeing, Social, Attendance and Community. Students can earn up to five stars per task translating to 100 Stars a term. At the end of each term, students are acknowledged for their participation with rewards from bush trips to sporting carnivals. Each sites website shows their Team Leader Board with the numbers of stars achieved to date.

More tasks mean more stars and more stars means improved realising their potential and making a positive impact on the community.

Teachers are encouraged to provide feedback to the Shooting Stars staff regarding behaviour.

Role in the School – Behaviour management

Shooting Stars staff work within the school, providing support for participants. As an example, staff will advocate for participants during behaviour management meetings and are regularly engaged by their host school to mitigate behaviour issues throughout the school day (Whitau & Ockerby, 2019).

Outcomes

More than 25% of participants improve attendance term on term, while 50% of participants maintain an average attendance rate of 80% or above.

Shooting Stars evaluates the efficacy of its services through collation of attendance data, participant case studies, and yarning circles (Whitau & Ockerby, 2019).

- Attendance data collection is straightforward: the data are taken directly from the Department of Education's Integris system.
- Participant case studies are shared only with the main funding body—the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC)—under strict confidentiality agreements.
- Data from Yarning circles
- Site reports on websites – show numbers of rewards stars achieved on a Leader Board as well as excursions and other activities

Annual report 2019

https://indd.adobe.com/view/3da3d2f5-f8a8-48a6-ab95-ecc8ab489ac8

Glass Jar's Annual Reports are comprehensive and provide specific data on each site detailing participant numbers, staff, rewards achieved, engagement activities, health and well-being sessions, collaboration with school and community and Yarning session topics. Each site also reports on the various roles they play in assisting the school such as supporting the AIEOs and attendance. In some sites the roles between AIEOs and the school staff and the Shooting Stars staff are shared. Each site also has its own website. Below are snap shots of some of the data included in the site reports.

Halls Creek (Starlets)

- 61-65 Shooting Star participants throughout the years
- Several positive attendance stats

"we had a restructure with our school attendance strategy and we saw a real decline in it and shooting Stars picked it up with the girls and goes out and picks up our girls and makes sure they're ready for school; making sure they are dressed, they're fed and, like those hierarchy of needs are met … I think that's really important."

– Shooting Stars Steering Committee Member

The Halls Creek Starlets recently travelled to Fitzroy Crossing to play a series of friendly netball games and engage in community learning by visiting the local women's resource centre. This trip was attended by attendees from Years 7-12. Years 5-6 students had the opportunity to learn and experience Gija culture in visitation to the Bungle Bungles nature park. All students achieved 80% and above attendance, inclusive of good behaviour.

Narrogin (Narrogin Wheatbelt Warriors)

In 2018, we were able to design a netball dress that we will wear when participating in netball carnivals. The dress is our own and has our own story, the final design was by Dakoda Bolton-Black with inspirations and Ashanti Abraham.

The Flames represent our Netball – Like the flames, we are fierce in our game, we are quick, we are bold, we are determined and motivated.

The Aboriginal Flag represents our heritage, our people, our identity … US. The colours flow throughout the dress as it will always be a part of us. The Aboriginal design represents our meeting place. Our Shooting Stars Journey, our successes and our many pathways and opportunities to come.

Shooting Stars commenced in Narrogin at the start of 2018 in partnership with Narrogin Senior High School. Shooting Stars is targeting 25 girls in years 7-9. "Our participants have enjoyed engaging with Latoya in our Shooting Stars room as well as being challenged in public speaking including leading the NAIDOC Week celebrations at school. Visits from West Coast Fever players has been a highlight for us so far!"

The Board and Staff (Glass Jar Australia Ltd)

The Shooting Stars Program is guided by Aboriginal women, staffed by Aboriginal women, for Aboriginal girls and young women.

At the end of 2019 Shooting Stars was fully staffed with 85% of employees being Aboriginal. The organisation sees this as a critical success factor as it is a powerful demonstration of the future possibilities for our participants who look up to these women as role models. As a normal course of business, Shooting Stars looks for Indigenous women to work in the Shooting Stars program. When the right person cannot be identified at a site, local Indigenous women are offered traineeships to ensure growth of local staff.

The Board

Dr Glenda Kickett is the current Chair and was appointed in 2019. Dr Kickett's professional commitments and community activities are extensive and her work has been recognised by awards and scholarships. Her achievements also include academic success in social work and history research, undertaken alongside her work and other commitments, and she is a published author.

Dr Richard Walley (OAM) is a proud Nyoongar man who was born in Meekatharra in 1953 and grew up in bush camps south of Perth. At 23 he chaired the Aboriginal Advisory Board and was actively involved in the formation or operation of the Aboriginal Housing Board, Aboriginal Medical Service, Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal Alcoholism Committee, Aboriginal Sports Foundation and the New Era Aboriginal Fellowship.

Robyn Smith Walley is a Nyoongar woman, with family connections throughout Wilman, Kaneang and Bibbelman regions in Nyoongar country. She is a Director within her family-owned business Aboriginal Productions and Promotions (APP) for the past 23 years.

Rishelle Hume has over 25 years' experience in Aboriginal engagement ranging from employment, education, justice and health, and is actively involved in the Aboriginal community within the Perth region.

Emma Chinnery is a commercial lawyer at Jackson McDonald with almost 10 years' experience working with a broad range of clients including Indigenous trusts and corporations and private clients. A netballer herself for over 20 years, Ms Chinnery is a life member of UWA Netball Club.

Carol Innes is a cultural advocate with extensive experience in the government as a mentor, consultant, Board Director and project manager. She is currently Co-Chair of Reconciliation WA, Board member North Metropolitan Health Service and is an advisory member to Kalamunda Arts Committee.

Stars Foundation

https://starsfoundation.org.au

The Stars Foundation is incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001 and is a company limited by guarantee.

> *Stars Foundation was established to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and young women have access to the same level of support as boys and young men.*

Stars acquires Federal funding January 07 2021

Stars Foundation was awarded a Federal Government (NIAA – IAS) contract to expand its First Nations girls' programs across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Victoria and South Australia. The $10m, three-year contract comes after a competitive tender process and will see Stars expand to manage 20 further programs in the NT and WA, and to establish new programs in VIC and SA.

Origins

Founder and CEO Andrea Goddard established Stars Foundation in 2015 because of the gender inequity in funding for mentoring programs supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Previously Ms Goddard had been CEO of Clontarf for 10 years. Significant investment has been directed into a national mentoring support program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys – Clontarf Foundation – but there has been no matching investment in a national program for the development of girls.

What works for boys: the Clontarf model

Not surprisingly, Stars has adopted Clontarf's approach, using sport as a vehicle to achieve improved attendance and engagement.

> *Stars has adapted what has been shown to work for boys into a program tailored to address the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls*

The program claims that educational engagement programs, primarily using sport as a vehicle, have been shown to be effective in engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys, with some good outcomes in attendance and engagement. The research is not cited and literature that raises questions about this assumption is not discussed nor is its transference to girls.

Outcomes 2019 Annual Report

The 2019 Annual Report (https://starsfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/StarsFoundation_Annual-Report2019_WEB-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf) showed that:

- Average attendances were above baseline in all locations, with Year 12 completions over 90%, graduate transitions over 90%
- 2016–18 cohort still achieving in education or employment (although the specifics of what this means were not made clear)
- Alumni group was continuing to expand
- In 2019, Stars students attended school at a significantly higher rate than Indigenous students not taking part in the program
- As at December 2019, 87% of 2018 Stars Graduates had transitioned successfully and remained in full-time employment, training or tertiary education
- 91% of senior Stars completed Year 12 in 2019

Board and staff

Stars Foundation is a public company limited by guarantee and is overseen by an Indigenous-led, seven-member Board of Directors, many with high level health based and or corporate careers.

Donisha Duff (Chair) has over 20 years' experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, particularly health. She was Advisor on Indigenous health to a former Federal Health Minister.

Grant O'Brien (Director) spent more than 25 years with Woolworths and was appointed Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer in 2011 before retiring in 2016.

Olga Havnen (Director) is of Western Arrernte descent. She grew up in Tennant Creek and has been CEO of Danila Dilba Health Service since 2013.

Dr Mark Wenitong (Director) is from the Kabi Kabi tribal group of south Queensland. He is currently the Aboriginal Public Health Medical Officer at Apunipima Cape York Health Council.

Graham Goldsmith (AO) (Director) was Vice Chairman and a Managing Director at Goldman Sachs Australia. He retired in 2012 after a 25-year career with the firm in Australia.

Staff

- 66% of staff at Stars are Indigenous
- 93% of staff (program-facing) work in program roles that directly support the participants
- 70% of program-facing staff are Indigenous, and 88% are women

Program facing staff include program managers and full-time on site mentors (at a ratio of one staff member to 20 students) and transition managers (offering post-school support options).

The Stars Programs

https://starsfoundation.org.au/our-model/

Stars operates full-time, intensive support programs for Indigenous girls in schools, with the aim of improving health and education outcomes for this cohort. During 2019, Stars programs operated in in 17 schools in the Northern Territory, Queensland, WA and Victoria.

Northern Territory

- Sanderson, Dripstone and Nightcliff Middle Schools (Darwin)
- Casuarina Senior College (Darwin)
- Haileybury Rendall School (Darwin)

- Moulden Park and Driver Primary Schools (Palmerston)
- Jabiru Area School
- Katherine High School
- Nhulunbuy High School
- Tennant Creek High School
- Yirrkala School

Queensland

- Heatley Secondary College
- Pimlico State High School
- Thuringowa State High School

Victoria

- Chaffey Secondary College
- Mildura Senior College

Western Australia

- Butler College
- Newman Senior High School

Each program provides activities based on the four pillars of personal development:

- Education, Training and Employment
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Wellbeing
- Community, Culture and Leadership

At the beginning of the year each Stars student works with their Mentor to develop a holistic plan to identify her goals and develop an achievement plan.

The Education, Training and Employment pillar

905 Education and employment activities conducted in 2019

Focuses on supporting First Nations young women to remain engaged in their education and develop positive plans for a successful transition into full-time employment or further education. Stars Mentors arrange and coordinate workplace tours, workshops, guest speakers and university visits to provide participants with exposure to a wide range of employment and education opportunities. Dedicated Transitions Managers help participants prepare for life after completing Year 12. Support from Transitions Managers continues after school, which helps graduates to transition successfully into full-time employment or further study.

The Healthy Lifestyles pillar

1228 Healthy Lifestyle activities conducted in 2019

Activities centre around sport and physical activities, nutrition and maintaining good health. Physical activities include yoga, dance, gym, walking, abseiling, kayaking and swimming, as well as a range of sports, such as netball, AFL, basketball, softball, cricket and golf. Other sessions are about nutritious, low-sugar diets and how to shop for and prepare healthy meals. Regular healthy cook-ups take place in the Stars Room.

The Wellbeing pillar

767 wellbeing activities conducted in 2019

The aim of this work is to support personal wellbeing and mental health. Activities are designed to nurture social and emotional development, with a strong emphasis on developing a growth mindset, learning to manage stress and building positive relationships. Wellbeing sessions help to connect with the participants and identify any who may be struggling with difficult issues outside of school. Bullying, cyberbullying and safe social media practices are areas of focus.

The Stars Room provides a culturally safe, nurturing space where our young women know that they can come at any time and be welcomed and supported.

The Community, Culture and Leadership pillar

737 community, culture and leadership activities in 2019

The goal of this work is to celebrate culture, be active within communities, and develop leadership skills. A range of cultural and community activities including NAIDOC and Harmony Day celebrations, International Women's Day and Anzac Day events, and community barbeques and other local happenings. They also take part in volunteer work as a way of giving back to their communities. Elders are invited into programs, to share their art, their stories and other cultural knowledge.

Outcomes

The Foundation measures its performance through the number of students who engage, improve attendance, remain at school and the achievement rates of the girls participating in the program. The 2019 statistics are:

- 91% Year 12 completion
- 91% successful transition to work or study (2019 graduates as at 2020)
- 84% average attendance
- 90+ % funding spent directly on programs

Despite the impact of COVID-19, Stars achieved a 98% Year 12 completion rate in 2020 among the senior students in our programs. As of November 2020, 91% of our 2019 graduates had successfully transitioned into work or further study.

Summary and concluding remarks

This review is necessarily only a snapshot of the data and information publicly available about these programs. Further information is available on each of their websites. The desktop review has identified exemplars of practice amongst the seven girls' programs that were reviewed. Whilst the Girls Academy was initially included in this review as it has had demonstrable impact over a number of years, the recent discontinuation of funding has meant the program is currently on hold whilst its Board considers its future options.

Evidence-based best practice optimising culturally appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal girls

Introduction

The purpose of this section of the report is to present from the literature reviewed 'evidence-based' examples of best practices that optimise culturally appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal girls.

Methodology

Academic databases were searched using standard search terms and strategies to source relevant peer-reviewed papers that considered support programs for Aboriginal girls and young women. Nine databases including ProQuest Central, A+ Education, ERIC and Sage Journals were systematically searched for research concerning school-based programs or activities that supported young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with the goals of improving school attendance rates, school retention rates, school completion rates and successful transitions to post-school destinations such as VET or university studies. Twenty-four government publications and peer-reviewed, academic research papers were then considered to provide context to this evaluation. Of these, the oldest was published in 2007 and six were published in 2020. Ten publications were sourced from peer-reviewed academic journals. Seven papers were government publications and four were sourced from either university-supported think tanks, non-government organisations or charities.

Fortuitously, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) released its *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future Report* – in which the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and women were researched extensively across Australia - late in 2020 and much of its information was used in in support of this project. This report was jointly funded by the Australian government's NIAA and the AHRC, so that the information and evidence gathered could help to inform and shape key Australian Government policies and programs around future investment under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the Fourth Action Plan under the National Plan for Reducing Violence against Women and their Children. It would also ensure all Government action to support Australian women reflects the specific interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls (NIAA, 2020). Its key findings and recommendations are thus entirely pertinent to this review.

> *The report is an extensive whole-of-life report that captures the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, the principles they think ought to be enshrined in the design of policy and programs, and the measures they recommend ought to be taken to effectively promote the enjoyment of their human rights in the future.*
>
> (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020)
>
> https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/projects/wiyi-yani-u-thangani-womens

Search terms included used to find publications included:

- Aboriginal girls programs
- Aboriginal mentoring programs
- Support programs Aboriginal schools
- Aboriginal empowerment programs

- Programs improve Aboriginal school attendance
- Aboriginal cultural safety at school
- Yarning circles Aboriginal cultural safety at school

Summary of major themes

There is a reasonable amount of peer-reviewed research that investigates topics such as Indigenous resilience in boarding schools, improving retention and attendance among low socio-economic groups, limited and occasional case studies that focus on Aboriginal boys' programs, but there is almost zero peer-reviewed academic research that exmanines the efficacy or implementioatn of support programs, and in particular, very rare amounts of research for high school aged Aboriginal girls. The four main themes that emerged across the publications were:

- **Co-design and self-determination are keys to success**: Aboriginal peoples, their knowledges and experiences should be at the forefront of all research and programs that involve them (co-design and self-determination).
- **Localised and relevant programs work best**: programs should be localised, reflexive and relevant to each Aboriginal community. They should include English as an Additional Language (EALD) teaching in communities where English is not the first language spoken. Yarning circles and culturally safe spaces are key to these programs.
- **More funding for girls**: more funding for girls' programs is needed to ensure that tailored and flexible support for young women is provided, given that young Aboriginal women are often those who provide fundamental supports to their families and communities.
- **More research & better evidence is required**: more research – especially longitudinal - is required to establish the best strategies for continuous, long-lasting Indigenous student successes in the existing schooling system, including the efficacy of sports programs. There is a dearth of robust evaluation and evidence about the efficacy of programs for Aboriginal children, including sports programs.

The first three themes address the requirement to present what has been found as examples of evidence-based best practice for Aboriginal girls' support programs. The evidence that has been found in this review of publications is complex as there are many factors that affect Aboriginal girls' successes that are not always easily measurable or quantifiable. Therefore, the evidence used here is multifaceted.

Co-design and self-determination

Aboriginal children continue to suffer the legacy of colonisation wherein their cultures, identities, histories and languages have been denied. It is an understatement to say that more needs to be done to make schooling relevant, culturally appropriate and engaging (Cassells, Dockery, Duncan, & Seymour, 2017) for Aboriginal children. Not for the first time, academic research and government publications such as those examined for this project emphasised the need for Aboriginal people to be front and centre of programs, policies and research which affect them (AITSL, 2020; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020; Dept of Prime Minister & Cabinet, 2020; Maughan, 2012; Productivity Commission, 2020a, 2020b; Wilson et al., 2019).

Programs that are delivered by and developed for Aboriginal people are central to the notion of self-determination and co-design. Co-design is key to empowerment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples so it is unacceptable and inappropriate that successive government policies have often taken a 'one size fits all' strategy for addressing education and employment opportunities for young people with limited

opportunity for local input. Such singular and 'top-down' approaches have limited the abilities of a community to drive local solutions for its people (Productivity Commission, 2020b).

Support for the principles of co-design and the benefits have grown in government policy statements recently with, for example, the Dept of Prime Minister & Cabinet (2020) is premised on the belief that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a "genuine say in the design and delivery of services that affect them, better life outcomes are achieved". However, according to the Australian Human Rights Commission (2020), despite rhetoric from organisations, women were not seeing genuine examples of co-design for localised programs, leading to distrust when engaging with government bodies: "Women and girls identified the failure of successive governments to work with us on establishing mechanisms for genuine representation and partnership as a key factor in perpetuating and worsening inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples." (p. 80)

Aboriginal people have a fundamental right to clear and easily accessed opportunities for self-determination and leadership of localised support programs: "Enhancing control is a strong correlate with positive wellbeing outcomes and can have significant implications for addressing existing challenges within communities." (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 25). Empowerment, according to (Wilson et al., 2019), is key, and the more a program can empower its participants, the more likely it is to succeed.

The majority of Indigenous students in Australia attend mainstream schools that are not oriented to infusing Aboriginal culture, history and involvement (Maughan, 2012). There is a significant amount of research that demonstrates Aboriginal students failing in Western systems that were not designed to suit Aboriginal children according to the Australian government's peak body that drives teaching and learning in Australia (AITSL, 2020). Education practices that rely on regular attendance and Westernised pedagogies keep Indigenous cultures and knowledges side-lined, and this type of systemic racism will always negatively affect Indigenous attendance and engagement at school (Dunstan, Hewitt, & Tomaszewski, 2017). Indeed, Aboriginal women have highlighted the need for substantial effort required to ensure the school system in Australia is appropriately designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and is appreciative of their strengths.

A sole focus on Westernised learning and assessment frameworks can fail to recognise the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and can too easily marginalise them and limit their educational potential. (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020). Priority two of the Dept of Prime Minister & Cabinet (2020)'s Closing the Gap report is to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector to deliver services. This priority represents Federal, State and Territory governments recognition that community-controlled services achieve better results than Westernised services and are an act of self-determination. This is a new policy framework and so it remains to be seen how this priority will be enacted in the real world and in real policies and programs. Research and data are clear that policy should be developed by collaborative processes that engage and draw strength from community ownership, so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, cultures and knowledges are infused throughout (Wilson et al., 2019).

Localised and relevant programs

In the past, Government policies have taken a 'one size fits all' strategy for addressing education and employment opportunities for young people in remote communities, which limits communities' abilities to drive local solutions (Productivity Commission, 2020b). It has been argued that support programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth do not fully contextualise the cultural, socio-political and societal

pressures that face their participants and therefore fail to capitalise on the unique cultural assets and strengths those youth possess (Fitch, Ma'ayah, Harms, & Guilfoyle, 2017).

However, the Education Council (2015)'s National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy stressed that approaches to education should be as localised as possible and that proficiencies in areas such as literacy and numeracy are best developed by "applying proven, culturally inclusive, responsive and personalised approaches to learning" (p. 5). Indeed, the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) agreement on education clearly states that engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families must be: "… based on the principles of shared decision-making, place-based responses and regional decision-making, evidence, evaluation and accountability, targeted investment, and integrated systems" (p. 16).

The Australian Human Rights Commission is similarly aligned about what works best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: "The types of programs that I heard of as being most successful in improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students engagement at school where those that were: locally-designed and led programs; delivered by elders; practically-based; were delivered on country; actively applied our knowledge about ecology, plant medicines and sciences to the world around us" (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 462). Certainly, a more localised approach would engender a more culturally nourishing or safe school for Indigenous students. When a localised model of leadership, pedagogies, engagement and student voices is enacted, a higher quality of education is provided that is responsive to local Aboriginal communities (Lowe et al., 2020).

Maughan (2012) found that Australian and international literature suggested that co-design, or models of shared governance between the school (principal, teachers, students), the community (parents, Elders, wider community) and others (education department personnel and researchers) would result in improved outcomes for Indigenous students. The breadth of Indigenous culture underpinning this would further suggest that those models would work best if they were localised and relevant to each community: "The diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities means that one-size-fits-all approaches are not appropriate in meeting the distinct needs and uniqueness of each community." (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 27).

According to The Smith Family (2014), there is some research that has identified key factors for programs which are effective in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and young women to stay engaged in school and then successfully transition from school to employment or further study. These include a range of localised support strategies:

- Flexibly meeting the personal support, learning and development needs of participants and proactively addressing barriers to engagement
- Reinforcing positive aspirations, high expectations and goal setting
- Offering exposure to a wide range of opportunities, including in education, employment and career options

School-based and school-designed programs target at-risk students through presentation of relevant and engaging curricular responses to 'the many complexities of these students' lives and the reality that the role of and identity as a "student" is only one of many and often the least meaningful to them (Purdie & Buckley, 2010). Also, in their review of the literature for their 2014 research project into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes for young women, The Smith Family (2014) considered a study that examined factors associated with the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people which raised a number of issues related to poorer educational outcomes. The paper suggested that the benefits of education may

be less apparent to those living in communities with fewer or poorer employment opportunities and for those young people who live with adults who have low education levels.

More funding for girls' support programs

Throughout the research and publications examined for this project, a clear theme was the lack of funding recognition and parity that was afforded to programs for young Aboriginal women, and this was evident in Federal Government and national publications, as well as in smaller scale studies. The desktop review for this project found seven programs online that were specifically tailored for young Aboriginal women.

Only one program was found for boys, and its funding was more than that of all the girls' programs combined, a fact alluded to by the Productivity Commission (2020b): "there have been concerns raised that programs for girls and non-sports based programs do not receive the same recognition or funding [as boys' and sports programs do]" (p. 7.17). Indeed, the Commonwealth Government Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs (2017) went further, stating that there was an urgent need for additional funding to ensure that girls' programs were funded on a par with boys' programs, particularly for school-based programs. Four years have passed since that recommendation and questions could rightly be asked as to whether this recommendation has been acted upon by governments. Certainly for the young women interviewed for the Australian Human Rights Commission (2020)'s Wiyi Yani U Thangani Report, the consequences of funding disparity were keenly felt:

> *"Boys are getting more opportunities. More sporting programs, going away excursions … there's a huge difference between Clontarf. Get more than Girls Academy. More funding, excursions, staff get paid more. There isn't equity. They get more camps." (p. 475)*

> *"They have Clontarf for boys but nothing for the girls, let them have cultural camps. They got 70 thousand [dollars] for Clontarf. The boys get all the money and the girls get jack shit. They need programs in school for girls, like Clontarf. Where girls can have the opportunity to start looking at a future and options that lead to a future." (p. 476)*

Given that education is a key driver for lifelong successes, it is difficult to see how better, more culturally appropriate and reflexive programs for young women can truly do well without sufficient funding that provides strong, wrap-around services, with Aboriginal staff who can be role models and mentors.

More research is required

In both large government publications and small, peer reviewed studies, a common thread was the attention drawn to the lack of long-term, robust research that provided good evidence on the best strategies for long-lasting success for young Indigenous women at school and beyond. Some studies made the point that while engagement and retention of Aboriginal students at school were the primary themes of many programs, it was still largely difficult to pin down what success actually meant for Aboriginal students, given that in some circumstances, finishing year 12 or even staying at school was not always the best option: "A successful outcome cannot just be measured by Year 12 completion statistics. It is a much more complex issue which may require some broad strategies that target the organisational level (Government, Education Departments) combined with some localised strategies that schools can use." (Briggs, 2017, p. 40).

In Briggs (2017)'s small-scale study, it was found that compelling students to improve their attendance was unsuccessful, regardless of who did the compelling; and that forcing disengaged students to remain at school through pressure was unproductive. This is research that would benefit from further exploration in larger scale, longitudinal studies so that the results can be used to influence policy and decision making to a greater

degree than a single, small scale study could. However, impeding the design and roll out of effective policy is a lack of robust empirical evidence and appropriate theoretical frameworks that reflect the specific circumstances that Indigenous students continue to face (Prout Quicke & Biddle, 2017).

Briggs highlighted the dearth of research that focused on senior Indigenous students in urban schools as a particular area that needed attention and claimed that long-term studies that tracked Indigenous students over time could provide valuable evidence to indicate ongoing successes for students, and to establish best practice for future programs. It should be noted that short funding arrangements between governments and service providers (grant provisions are usually time limited to between 2-5 years) could affect the capacity of service providers to collect long-term data on efficacy and outcomes of program deliverables. "Indigenous-led research using culturally appropriate methods is an important way to decolonise research methodologies in order to achieve benefits from future research for people and communities." (Macniven, Canuto, Wilson, Bauman, & Evans, 2019, p. 1241)

Similarly, in Purdie and Buckley (2010), literature reviewed showed that good quality data and evidence was thin on the ground and rarely available publicly. Also, researchers contended that because program outcomes, goals and aims were not sufficiently specific, evidence and data that is available lacked rigour. Worryingly, the majority of programs reviewed in Purdie and Buckley (2010) either had no, or no publicly available, data or evidence about their evaluations or achievements of outcomes. Given that this paper was published a decade ago, it is still worrying that researchers also found limited publicly available data for the program websites reviewed for this Deadly Sista Girlz evaluation.

Maughan (2012) found a lack of rigour around the collecting and publishing of evidence which provided anecdotal or fuzzy data with regards to Aboriginal schooling in remote areas. They asserted that there was a great need for high quality evaluation of programs for Aboriginal students, based on continuous improvement where schools and communities share both the responsibility and the rewards for education achievements and goals. If, as the researchers asserted, that much is claimed but little proven, it is reasonable, then, for Purdie and Buckley (2010) to ask: "What constitutes reliable evidence to evaluate programs and initiatives so that good policy and actions can be formulated to effect change?" (p16). It is also reasonable to consider Maughan (2012)'s assertion that while specific programs may have so far proven to be anecdotally effective, many have not been rigorously evaluated and then results communicated to educators and policy makers.

The Australian Human Rights Commission (2020)'s landmark paper, Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future, urged its readers to ensure full community involvement in research, monitoring and evaluation practices so that genuine, best practices could be identified and learned from. The report also recommended that there is community-controlled data collection, monitoring and evaluation, with a greater focus on program and policy reviews to improve the design and implementation of services and ensure that there is accountability for outcomes and a reduction in the duplication of services. This was echoed in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy (2015), which advised that, alongside policies being informed by, and inclusive of, Aboriginal needs, they must also be properly built by evidence and research.

Oftentimes Aboriginal student support programs utilise sports as a means of engaging with and encouraging participants to stay in school, however, there are very, very few pieces of research that consider the benefits of sports programs on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. This research gap is important to address because so many programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth use sport as a 'hook' to keep children in school (Fitch et al., 2017). Qualitative research has also found benefits for participation in sport during high school for life skills and personal characteristics such as self-efficacy, confidence, leadership and

initiative but: "It has been argued that many programs fail to contextualise the cultural and socio-political realities for minority youth and in doing so not only fail to adequately understand the youth they serve, but also fail to capitalise on unique cultural assets and strengths." (Fitch et al., 2017, p. 25)

Final words

One of the requirements for this project was to find evidence-based examples of good practice in support programs for Aboriginal girls. The evidence that has been found is somewhat limited yet multi-faceted. Unfortunately, there is a lack of data and robust research evidence in academic literature that indicates definitively what works and what does not. However, there are some small-scale studies that indicate positive results for some types of programs.

While there is some research that evidences positive outcomes for Aboriginal children and for girls in particular, the overall picture from the literature reviewed for this project is one of policy enactment, program delivery and the wants of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at odds with each other. The literature showed that co-design and self-determination are vital for Aboriginal children to experience success and empowerment as individuals, and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people consider this to be a priority. However, the literature also revealed that while successive governments have made some of the appropriate noises about self-determined projects and policies, in reality Aboriginal stakeholders involved do not witness this on the ground or at the coalface of programs. Also, there is little research that has been co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to support or confirm what actually works for young Aboriginal women.

The Australian Human Rights Commission (2020) report showed that, for any number of reasons, co-design and self-determination are key and essential components of any service, any organisation or policy/process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It also found that Aboriginal girls and women are vulnerable and need genuine, complex and authentic supports. Trauma-informed practice must be embedded and interwoven throughout any and all services, departments and institutions, as well as robust research and evaluations of policies and programs being both essential yet still mostly absent. Given that the Australian Human Rights Commission (2020)'s report demonstrates repeatedly that Aboriginal women want to design and run their own programs, with funding parity that matches programs available for boys, it was disappointing to note that the Commonwealth Government's response to the urgent recommendations for funding parity was to merely 'note' it rather than 'agree', which would have set the path for more immediate action.

An appropriate evaluation methodology based on Aboriginal protocols and methods

Introduction

The Deadly Sista Girlz External Evaluation (DSG Evaluation) was jointly funded by the Department of Education, Wirrpanda Foundation, Edith Cowan and Murdoch Universities. The overall purpose of the funding was to support the Foundation to develop a broader strategy, including the Department's Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework, to strengthen the existing Deadly Sista Girlz program. One of the Deadly Sista Girlz project deliverables was the development of an appropriate evaluation methodology based on Aboriginal protocols and ethics.

Deadly Sista Girlz evaluation methodology model

The Deadly Sista Girlz External Evaluation was conducted using a combination of Indigenous Research Methodologies and Educational Design Research principles. Commonly used ethical guidelines for research projects involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include the following:

- The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 77 [1];
- Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research [2];
- Keeping Research on Track: A Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples about Health Research Ethics [3];
- Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies [4].
- Aboriginal Health and Medical Centre's key principles [5].

(www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Indigenous%20guidelines/evaluation-literature-review-atsi-research-ethics.pdf)

The design of this evaluation has taken account of the above guidelines and of research literature establishing best practice in conducting research with Indigenous people and communities (Lowitja Institute, 2013).

Educational Design Research

Educational Design Research is a genre of research which focuses on the "iterative development of solutions to practical and complex educational problems" (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). The aim of EDR is the development of *usable knowledge* that is relevant for educational practice (Lagemann, 2002) This focus on practical solutions to complex, real world issues means that EDR uses multiple methods in authentic settings where possible. This provides both grounded and external validity as it is conducted under real world conditions (McKenney & Reeves, 2012).

In the project brief, these EDR principles were used to develop each phase beginning with a desktop review of programs for Aboriginals girls in Australia including relevant academic and grey literature. The design of the data collection methods emerged and adapted as the research team began to understand the nature of the program and its participants.

The project had four phases with key deliverables in each phase:

Deliverables	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
	• Desktop review of programs for Aboriginal girls across Australia • Letter of Introduction to all stakeholders	Development of an appropriate evaluation methodology based on Aboriginal protocols and ethics	• Site visits or Zoom/Skype meetings with stakeholders unable to host a site. • Regular email or phone follow up with all stakeholders	Final Evaluation Report
	Progress Report – June 30th 2020	Progress Report – September 30th 2020	Progress Report – December 30th 2020	Due February 2021

Indigenous Research Methodologies

This section examines key elements of Indigenous Research Methodologies that were utilised through-out the project evaluation. We discuss the research methods, tools and guiding principles and protocols that allowed the research team to gain insight in the Deadly Sista Girlz program.

Within the overall approach, Indigenous methodologies were enacted from a position of respect and inclusion as the guiding principles. The evaluation strategies utilised allowed for flexibility, simplicity, transparency, accountability and responsiveness which were employed in all stages of the project. These strategies privilege the voices of the participants. The Yarning circles provided a culturally responsive space in which information and data could be collected from the participants and importantly it was the space in which we as researchers could build relationships Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010).

Yarning is a two-way process, in which the dialogue goes to and fro, back and forth, and the discussion draws deeply on the knowledge system of the participants, all the while giving participants the freedom to express their views unreservedly without any judgement attached. Collecting information and data via Yarning recognises not only the diversity amongst the participant group but also the relatedness of their experiences as Deadly Sista Girlz employees. The researchers recorded the Yarning circles with the participants only to capture the depth of data: these recordings were transcribed with the participants remaining anonymous and the recordings securely housed. Notes were also made by the researchers throughout these sessions, again purely for anecdotal records and to capture common elements in relation to the DSG program.

Indigenous research methodologies and practices are as varied as Aboriginal peoples, their community contexts and the '*Country/s*' that ground them. The methodologies enacted in this project were done so with purpose — in order to engage with and understand the context in which the Deadly Sista Girlz programs operate within each particular school site and to engage the voices of the participants in this case the site co-ordinators, DSG staff at all levels and alumni.

Indigenous methodological approaches lend themselves to 'situational responsiveness' (Patton, 2015) and given the depth of the cultural diversity amongst Aboriginal peoples, their communities and their working

contexts, it was necessary and culturally appropriate to draw on a number of inquiry methods, while keeping in mind the Aboriginal protocols and school regulations that needed to be negotiated throughout this evaluation. Further, as we were working in 'localised' and authentic spaces, at all times we acknowledged that these spaces are grounded in "the politics, circumstances and economies of a particular moment, a particular time and place, a particular set of problems, struggles and desires [….] and possibility/s" (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008, p. 9).

By understanding and acknowledging the locality of space across sectors, it allowed the research team to empower the project participants—all of whom are key cultural brokers in their respective schools—to discuss the reality of their roles as DSG Site Coordinators, DSG Alumni and DSG employees on their own terms, in their own contexts, based on their existing skill level/s and context needs. A major element or central tenet of the project's methodology was the Aboriginal protocol of 'to sit and listen' (Jackson-Barrett, Price, Stomski, & Walker, 2015). That is, to listen to the voices of participants, all of whom have something worthwhile and important to say about the space they occupy within Aboriginal education. This is a space that over the last ten years at least has been continually acknowledged as having a key influence for Aboriginal students and their families.

As with any research it is essential to develop an understanding of the context and in this case, we needed to understand what the DSG Program is in its entirety and to understand the roles of DSG site coordinators in a daily context, as well as the contexts in which each were employed. By utilising Indigenous methodologies alongside design-based research we were able to collaborate with the participants through interconnected phases of data collection through yarning sessions.

In the initial research design, site visits were included so that we could meet and talk with site co-ordinators in the DSG rooms after hours. We had also planned to meet and yarn with the principals. This would have enabled us to consider the cultural safety of rooms and discuss in person what site co-ordinators felt were the pressing needs of their particular sites in order to allow the evaluation more understanding of the DSG program operates within each respective site. However, there were significant delays in acquiring ethics approval from the WA Department of Education, despite reworking of the application according to Department feedback the research has reduced in its scope. However, evaluators were given permission to visit DSG sites on Catholic Education school sites, with the Broome site being visited. Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions and Western Australia's hard border, the Victorian site could not be visited.

The evaluators are aware from the research team's extensive research experiences that 'unknowns' often appear, and thus the research needed to remain open and flexible, for it may be that the 'unknowns' that could alter and modify the direction and the method/s of the research (Creswell, 2012; Ezzy, 2013; Natalier, 2013). Combining Indigenous methodologies and design-based research readily gave us the space to accommodate 'unknowns' if and when they appeared.

Moreover, an interpretative approach allowed the flexibility for the methodology to strategically align the DSG program objectives and skills with each of the DSG sites grounded in the needs, roles and context of each site. This flexible approach added an authenticity to the research itself because it was based on the breadth and depth of site coordinators and Alumni's experiences.

Another central tenet of this research was enacted through a pedagogy of emancipation and empowerment (Rigney, 1997) that encouraged a 'shared approach' as participants were considered to be co-researchers— this 'sharing' required constant negotiation to ensure that the research was equitable and responsive to the needs and contexts of the DSG program.

The Indigenous methodologies deployed have been grounded upon previous research experiences undertaken by members of the research team. This allowed this project to start from a space where relationships were already established in a number of the contexts within which we needed to enter.

Additionally, Indigenous epistemological and axiological ways of conducting research is strongly realised through established relationships, for it cuts through the *'humbug'* of unfamiliarity. Given that this is an educational research project, it allowed us to [re]connect at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007) in this case with DSG site coordinators and Alumni who are situated at the cultural interface of the DSG program.

It is these established relationships that fostered the goodwill that began work on the planning for the DSG evaluation, and it was the hours of *yarning* from these relationships that morphed the ideas for the *recommendations* for this evaluation. It is here that Indigenous research methods through 'local' epistemological ways of knowing and doing were used to empower the participants in their roles site coordinators and DSG employees.

Additionally, our methods are encouraged in the spirit of co-design which is a flexible process applied at each and every step of the evaluation (Denzin et al., 2008; Lowitja Institute, 2013).

DSG Site Coordinator Yarning Circle

The process of co-design sets up a safe and respectful place that is conducive to the engagement, empowerment and input of the DSG community and it was with this context and framework that we met with site coordinators at the Wirrpanda Foundation. Once a safe space was established, we began with introductions, acknowledgments, and other important information about the session. We yarned through the process, starting the conversation with a yarning circle, ensuring that everybody was able to speak, with each speaker given time and respect to express themselves free of judgement.

This framework offered a starting point into specific approaches that work across borders to engage and privilege Indigenous voices, knowledges and experiences. Consultation with site coordinators was an essential component in the design, data collection, and reporting phases of the evaluation. As such, site coordinators are best placed to identify issues that might hinder or aid the Deadly Sista Girlz program and the associated evaluation of the program as they enact it daily. An important step in the yarning circle methodology was the planning and consultation that prepared the site coordinators to offer their thoughts on the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework and what they viewed as working well at the school level and importantly what could be improved. Each participant was given the opportunity to highlight across the three governing entities that affect their daily roles – Wirrpanda Foundation, Community and School.

We used a grounded approach asking the participants the general question of *What works well and what needs work?* in relation to the WF, the School and the Community (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). A grounded approach enables participants to put forward the issues that are of most concern to them without being directed or influenced by the researchers' pre-determined ideas. This means that ideas are generated through the yarning sessions by the participants who are the experts. The ideas that emerge may not have even been considered by the researchers, particularly as they are external to the program.

From these sessions we were able to draw out common themes across school sites. The researchers collated the ideas and succinctly summarized into categories related to the ACSF Indicators. These categories form the basis of the recommendations and reflect the views of the participants. Site coordinators were also given the ACSF document and asked to highlight across the five cultural standards where they believed their respective schools sat on the continuum. From there we were able to be more specific in relation to

drawing out further information. Site co-ordinators who were unable to attend the yarning sessions were sent a PDF of the ACSF and asked to 'mark up' the document by highlighting where they thought their school was positioned on the continuum across the five cultural standards. Follow up phone conversations were held with Site Coordinators also unable to attend.

Conclusion

COVID travel and hard border restrictions have affected this evaluation in a number of ways as research-related travel across WA was suspended under COVID 19 regulations during the majority of 2020.

The research team was unable to interview girls and their families who are current participants in the DSG programs, or Principals whose schools house the DSG program, due to the reduced research scope. This in turn has made it difficult to ascertain what culturally safe practices are in place at the school level as researchers did not have ethics clearance to enter schools and sight the rooms. Moreover, the literature on cultural safety suggests that only participants involved in programs are the ones to define their experiences of cultural safety. Evaluators were unable to physically access DSG sites and develop deep understandings of site-specific data with participants such as the current program participants and all site coordinators. Further longitudinal research is required in this area. The findings from the evaluation methodology support the importance of co-design methodology and the importance of listening to the participants.

Appendices

Appendix A: example curriculum model plus links to good resources

The following is a brief overview of some areas within the current curriculum that the evaluators consider could be further developed. Our key recommendation is that the WF employ an appropriately qualified senior Curriculum Developer to oversee a renewal of the curriculum. It appears from our brief review of the current curriculum that many of the units of content as they stand are overly prescriptive and repetitive. This limits the capacity for localised modification to suit different cohorts of participants. For example, the same six themes for each year group tends to be repetitive. Variable theme-based modules for different levels of interest and need would be more appropriate.

The content provided seems to be framed to be presented in an 'adult-led' didactic way where participants are more often than not passive observers. What is missing is opportunities for students to share their own knowledge, and actively participate in real life learning situations. It would be beneficial to seek areas within the mainstream ACARA curriculum where there is overlap – in for example the Health curriculum but also areas of ACARA the focus on vocational education or other areas of interest to the girls. The DSG curriculum could enhance aspects of these.

The six current themes are:

1. Deadly Sista Girlz: introduction to the program and creating culturally safe spaces
2. Solid Connections: to self, culture and community
3. Lil Women's Business: healthy lifestyles, women's health, mental health
4. Standing Tall and Proud: resilience, confidence, good relationships
5. Deadly Futures: employment and future pathways
6. Kickin' Goals: incentive activities

1. Deadly Sista Girlz

Certainly, for Year 7s, theme 1 is necessary but it would be reasonable to ask whether senior students and older participants require a re-introduction across several weeks about the program. It may be worth considering a peer-mentoring element here, where more senior participants mentor newer girls to the program. Not much documentation about this theme was sighted by evaluators. The small amount of documentation could be seen as a positive, in that it gives DSG staff at each site the freedom to set up the safe spaces and develop foundational relationships as they best see fit for their own participants.

2. Solid Connections

This theme is divided up into three areas, self, culture and community.

a) **Self**: encourages girls to investigate their own mob and their family trees. This is interwoven with learning about Indigenous kinship systems and how they differ to Western systems of kinship and family

b) **Culture**: in which participants are encouraged to look at significant days in contemporary Indigenous history, talk about issues related to Aboriginal culture, and to name ongoing issues for Aboriginal Australians that derive from colonisation. It could be said that a sticking point with this section is that the girls are not being tasked with more complex or critical ideas and issues as they progress

through school. While there is great value in looking at all aspects of culture, it is worth considering what participants do with the new knowledge they acquire and how they might apply their knowledge and opinions to engender change and empower themselves further.

c) **Community**: in which girls participate in activities such as meeting local Elders, running fundraisers, and contributing to significant events such as NAIDOC week. This could be enhanced by discussions that consider the reasons behind fundraisers for local charities. It is again worth considering the deeper consequences of activities such as this, that is to say, what should the participants do with the new knowledge they acquire and how should they build on it? For example, could they participate in a significant event in Y9 then be encouraged to lead one in Y11-12 (this is missing from the programming)? How can they involve the Elders they met in Y8? What social action can come from this that will empower these participants and their families? This is where a well qualified curriculum developer can help.

3. Lil Women's Business

Much of what is covered in this section is also covered in health lessons in mainstream curriculum so it is pertinent to ask, what is it that this section could bring to young Indigenous women? Rather than taking a prescriptive approach, it may be more appropriate to hand content control to the staff at each site so that they can deliver what's relevant and important to their cohorts, loosely under the themes of 'healthy mind, healthy body' or some such.

4. Standing Tall and Proud

There are four sections in this theme. As per theme 3, there are topics covered in this section that are already covered in the health curriculum.

a) **Relationship building**: given how much time and energy today's young people expend online, it seems a shame that online relationships and cyber-bullying are not touched on here. Cyber-bullying featured in the DSG site reports examined for this project, both from the perspectives of aggressor and victim.

b) **Building resilience**: this is a good section in that the topics covered are relevant, if poorly sequenced.

c) **Building self-confidence & self-reliance**: this section has the capacity to extend well past 'what does it mean to have self-confidence and what does it look like?' Beyond this, how might young Indigenous women use their self-confidence and self-reliance to empower themselves in this world?

d) **Deportment & grooming**: this topic is also covered in Theme 3 and fits better there. There may also be a question around what is appropriate in terms of grooming and dressing for employment for girls on a rural or remote site who live in a community rather than in an urban setting.

5. Deadly Futures (pathways)

This theme is divided into four sections, that consider aspects of setting goals for the immediate post-school future and medium-term goals.

a) **Pathways planning**: the logistical topic wherein participants learn how to set achievable goals and then aim to set goals for chosen career or life paths.

b) **Work ready**: another logistical topic focused on aspects of preparing for employment such as writing resumes, obtaining relevant paperwork such as a Tax File Number, and positive workplace behaviours. What this section omits is helping girls with strategies for when they face conflict and

racism in the workplace. How might girls negotiate conflict with a work colleague, or a boss who will only give them minimum shifts in a week but they want more, for example?

c) **Leadership**: this section needs more specific details about what leadership might mean for these young women and how they can develop the necessary skills. The topic content is the same for Years 10-12.

d) **Capacity building**: This section would strengthen the girls skills for a range of jobs and roles including social skills and workplace communication, community engagement and leadership.

6. Kickin' goals

The last theme for the curriculum is focused on reward days and incentives for DSG participants. There are two rewards days for each of Years 7-9 in the schedule. Also in the schedule is the Ken Wyatt Cup and a Pathways Intensive Workshop, along with DSG camps, football academies and 'other opportunities as they arise'. As this theme is more than likely scheduled for towards the conclusion of the school year, it makes good planning sense to wind things down with rewards, incentives and alternative activities.

Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes listed in the DSG measurement and evaluation framework as examples state:

- "(70%) Recall and discuss messages related to drugs:
- (70%) Recall and discuss messages related to woman's [sic] sexual health"

These are typical of activities that are seen at the lower order of Bloom's taxonomy (Krathwohl, Anderson, & Bloom, 2001) and it would be preferable that the participants are more actively challenged to reach a goal that embeds what they've learned in the DSG space about things like women's sexual health, rather than repeat messages, such as:

- Create an information poster about using condoms for young Aboriginal women (can also cover consent both giving, receiving and refusing it)
- Create a flow-chart of 'choose your own adventure' that demonstrates what happens when you make good choices about sex, average or bad choices and the consequences for those choices (can also cover consent both giving, receiving and refusing it; what makes a healthy relationship, red flags for an unhealthy relationship)
- Create a public service advertisement about the importance of a relevant area of sexual or mental health for young Aboriginal women

Challenging the girls to complete activities like these will also help them to meet community-focused targets in the program where participants are expected to connect with community and culture.

Example of planning

- Easily accessible and teachable for anyone to use
- Aligned with the ACARA standards for Health and Physical Education

Deadly futures			Y7	Y8	Y9
			Introduction to the DSG program, supporting each other in the transition to high school	What do you like doing (hobbies, reading)? What are good at doing? What do you want to do?	Pathways – setting SMART goals for after school
	Creating a yarning circles and culturally safe space		Who are you and what is your story/who is your mob?	Creating a vision board – what will it take to get to your destination?	Steps to your ideal career: the long-term vision
			Confidence building	Pathways – setting SMART goals with an eye on life after school	What is stopping you from getting a job and how can we remove/reduce the barriers?
			Listening skills & team building	Documentation for life administration & writing a resume – 2 sessions	Healthy preparation to be job-ready
			What do you like to do – subjects you like & why		Presentation & deportment for a job interview (eg, finding the right clothes & decent looking shoes)
			How to study effectively, & why this is important Teaming up with a DSG role model (Y10? Y11?)	Pairing up with alumni – role modelling – what works for them might work for you too (good study & life habits)	Connecting with your community and volunteering

Standing tall & proud	Y7	Y8	Y9
	Making friends in healthy ways, understanding boundaries	Digital footprints and cyber bullying – what to do when things go wrong	What does resilience mean & what tools/skills can we use?
Honouring the yarning circles and culturally safe space	Building good relationships: what does a good relationship look like to you?	Dealing with bullies and building self-confidence	Different ways to build self-reliance & confidence
	Healthy communication – dealing with conflict in friendships	Owning our emotions and understanding what affects them, how to process our feelings	Thinking about behaviours that might influence your health and wellbeing
	How to say no and how to accept no in a friendship (giving/refusing consent healthily)	What does resilience mean & what tools/skills can we use?	Thinking about what can affect your ability to make healthy decisions and safe choices
	Online friendships and cyber-safety	Different ways to build self-confidence	Connecting to your community

Lil Women's Business	Y7	Y8	Y9
	Defining puberty, identifying changes in puberty	Self-care, self-awareness & personal presentation	Learning about tobacco and other drugs
Maintaining the yarning circles and culturally safe space	Menstruation & hygiene	Identifying anxiety, stress & depression	Alcohol, drugs, saying no and risky situations
	Personal hygiene and what not to share	Impact of mental health on self and others	Correct terminology, standard drink sizes, where to get help
	Protective behaviours & body autonomy	Showing assertive behaviours & identifying passive/aggressive behaviours	Alcohol, drugs and the law
	Mental health & informed decision making	Things you can do to stay positive and keep good mental health	What to do if you or a friend makes a poor choice about alcohol, drugs or tobacco
	Services and support for your health	Setting up your own MH plan: who are your supporters?	Accessing support services & using your support network

Lil Women's Business

Asterix indicates a multi-area or multi-use resource that could be of high value in the Indigenous space.

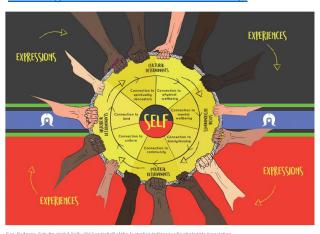|	
Mental health & informed decision making: creating your own MH plan	• Yarn Safe: https://headspace.org.au/yarn-safe/ * • Who is part of your wellness wheel? Draw/create yours. https://www.koorieyouthcouncil.org.au/news/the-aboriginal-social-and-wellbeing-wheel-world-mental-health-day/ Gee, Dudgeon, Schultz, Hart & Kelly, 2013 on behalf of the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association. Adapted by Jacob Komesaroff from original art by Tristan Schultz, RelativeCreative • WellMob "Healing our way" https://wellmob.org.au/ * • Background material for teachers: https://www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/resources/social- and-emotional-wellbeing-and-mental-health-policy-and-resources/ • Keep your spirit strong – CWG MH project for ATSI peoples https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-social-and- emotional-wellbeing-resources-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islanders-stakeholder-kit • Beyond Blue for Aboriginal Australians: https://www.beyondblue.org.au/who-does- it-affect/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people
Protective behaviours & body autonomy (consent – giving, receiving and refusing)	• Using the orange as a metaphor (do you want some orange? Go on, have some, you'll like it. etc)

	• https://www.safesecurekids.org/learn-together?topic=all – US-based and a little baby-ish but is a simple and effective explanation of consent and body autonomy • `Strong Spirit, Strong Mind': https://strongspiritstrongmind.com.au/resources- campaigns/metro-project/ • Resilience, rights and respectful relationships: https://education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/641993/NT_SEL_Middle Years_web-FINAL.pdf and the Y10+ version as well: https://education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/712497/NT_SEL_Senior -Years.PDF
Defining puberty, identifying changes in puberty	• Teacher resources – result of a 12-month project with Yolngu women in Qld about reproduction and sexual health: https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/respectful-relationships-education/respectful-relationships-resources-for-yolngu-women-and-girls/ • Puberty Part 1, lesson plan developed by the WA Health Dept: https://gdhr.wa.gov.au/-/puberty-part-1 • Use post-it notes to write words that describe how you feel about puberty and what some of the physical changes are. Add the post-it notes to your body shape outline (can draw or use outline from google images) • Use the pictures to sort out whether the changes happen to boys, girls or both: http://rse.fpv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SampleUnitsOfWork_AusVELS_5-6_web.pdf
Personal hygiene and what not to share	• Create 2 x two-cell cartoons of you and your friend talking about your personal hygiene. One is what happens if you over-share and one if you don't over-share. What is the difference between the two results?
Menstruation & hygiene	• Yarning about periods: https://www.jeanhailes.org.au/resources?audience=Aboriginal%20and%20Torre s%20Strait%20Islander • Libra and other companies provide free products to schools & students: https://lovelibra.com/libra-girl/starter-kits/ • Dos and don'ts in age-appropriate language: https://lovelibra.com/libra-girl/girl- zone/periods-101/ • Huge range of resources: http://www.amazingme.com.au/resources-puberty
Services and support for your health	• Teacher's resource: https://insight.qld.edu.au/shop/trauma-informed-care-and- practice-a-guide-to-working-well-with-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander- peoples

	• https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50061cbb84ae216bb5cb9339/t/5dfbebe7 0373223f2df3fa39/1576791040421/MTYG+6a+Mental+Health+ESSENTIALS.pdf • Feeling sad or worried? https://healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-topics/social-and-emotional-wellbeing/staying-strong/resources/41140/?title=Feeling%20sad%20or%20worried%3F&conten tid=41140_1

Y9: Lil Women's Business

Learning about tobacco and other drugs	• A Smoke Free mob: https://aodknowledgecentre.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/resources/40844/?title=A%20solid%20Mob%20is%20a%20smoke%20free%20Mob%3A%20what%20impact%20has %20tobacco%20had%20on%20your%20life%3F&contentid=40844_1 • A range of activities for Aboriginal children about smoking and lung health: https://aodknowledgecentre.ecu.edu.au/healthinfonet/getContent.php?linkid=645444&title=Pangula+Mannamurna+Aboriginal+Corporation+Tackling+Indigenous+Smoking+Team&contentid=40672_1 • With a section specifically for ATSI peoples: https://yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/a-z-of-drugs/Pages/a-z-of-drugs.aspx
Alcohol, drugs, saying no and risky situations	• Design a poster/leaflet designed to help educate young Indigenous women about saying no to drugs/alcohol, or a comic strip about saying no to risky situations • This video commercial is part of *The Broome Gurrie youth gathering* resource project, created to address alcohol use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. This video shows negative situations which young people may encounter if they drink too much alcohol. Watch the video and talk about what you would do: https://vimeo.com/30118431 • A guide for parents about grog, written and produced by Koori peoples: https://yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/publicationdocuments/teensguide.pdf
Correct terminology, standard drink sizes, where to get help	• Mythbusters: let's yarn about alcohol and drugs: https://aodknowledgecentre.ecu.edu.au/healthinfonet/getContent.php?linkid=645444&title=Pangula+Mannamurna+Aboriginal+Corporation+Tackling+Indigenous+Smoking+Team&contentid=40672_1 • Games to test your knowledge about things like standard drink sizes: https://yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/games-and-tools/Pages/games-and-tools.aspx

Alcohol, drugs and the law	• https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/alcohol?utm_source=drinkingnightmare.gov.au&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=digital_transformation • The grog book: https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/09/the-grog-book-strengthening-indigenous-community-action-on-alcohol.pdf
What to do if you or a friend makes a poor choice about alcohol, drugs or tobacco	• Design a poster about what to do if something goes wrong/poor choices • Tjikita wanti – video about staying healthy and not smoking, features community from APY lands: https://aodknowledgecentre.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/resources/40758/?title=Tjikita%20wanti&contentid=40758_1 • This is us – young, deadly, free: a range of videos that deal with relationship and health issues for young ATSI people including looking after friends if they are drinking, having respect for yourself, family & community: https://youngdeadlyfree.org.au/resources/health-messages/this-is-us/ • •
Accessing support services & using your support network	• Grog: it's your call – Indigenous specific support services https://aodknowledgecentre.ecu.edu.au/healthinfonet/getContent.php?linkid=318101&title=Grog%3A+it%E2%80%99s+your+call&contentid=26848_1

Other resources that may be useful to other areas of this research project

- http://indigenousvoices.cdu.edu.au/support.html - Indigenous people talk about shame and support
- Student Wellbeing Hub a range of multi-media resources with some applicability to this curriculum - https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/
- Little J and Big Cuz! https://www.littlejandbigcuz.com.au/

- Indigenous community videos on demand – very wide range of video topics available: https://ictv.com.au/
- Teacher's resource: YAWG working with Young Aboriginal Women and Girls: http://www.yawg.info/index.html *
- Range of great resources that are Aboriginal specific, for teachers, parents/community and students: https://positivechoices.org.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/
- Teacher resources: helping young ATSI people with mental health
- https://mhfa.com.au/mental-health-first-aid-guidelines#mhfaatsi
- https://mhfa.com.au/sites/mhfa.com.au/files/ATSI_AdolecentHelp_eversion_2014.pdf
- https://healingfoundation.org.au/

Appendix B: Suggestions to improve website presence

Statistics provided on the website could be more specific and show key outcomes or achievements for the program

Some of the statistics would be better as body text as they do not really demonstrate efficacy of the program or reflect the enormous effort the mentors and coordinators put into their work.

Details about achievements and outcomes are easy to find

It may be worth considering having an individual or smaller annual report that is solely for DSG that is published on its page, so that visitors can easily access key and specific information that demonstrates impact and efficacy of the program. It may also be worth considering adding in relevant and regularly updated case studies to keep content fresh.

SEO 'reboot' to existing web presence

For DSG to achieve a more prominent web presence and increased prominence, it is recommended that images are given alt-text, audio and video have transcripts available, and links to relevant organisations and departments are provided as part of the logos (bottom of the page). Body text and other copy is re-written with the goal of higher search engine rankings and web presence, using key words and phrases that reflect what the program actually does on a day-to-day basis. It is worth considering adding in an FAQ section and other opportunities for users to connect with the organisation, eg, a feedback or 'fill in' section. Also worth considering is adding a tracker to the bottom of the page so that web traffic can be monitored. This will provide DSG with an opportunity to examine which phrases and websites create the most traffic to the site which can then be used to build the site's copy more accurately and to greater effect.

Resolve any copyright or infringement issues with similar pages or organisations

In order for web traffic to the Perth-based Deadly Sista Girlz to be increased and authentic, back-links with similar pages and organisations should be implemented.

Key Search Words and Phrases. Many people search by key word or phrase rather than exact titles when searching for a program or organisation. During the data collection a list of key words and phrases from each website was collated. The results were formulated into a word cloud, shown below:

Appendix C: Required changes and modifications to the Evaluation Brief

Phase	Original Brief	Modifications made
1	Evaluation: Evaluation of this phase comprises a review of the **literature** and a **desk top review** of similar culturally appropriate learning programs across Australia for Aboriginal girls. A desktop review of the Deadly Sista Girlz Program materials. A mapping of the Deadly Sister Girls program materials and of the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework. This will provide a contextualized background to the evaluation as well as opportunities to explore alternative models (Reeves and Hedberg, 2003). Report back to Wirrpanda Foundation as per schedule	Commenced on schedule and ongoing through the project as more data became available. Literature review and desk top review added to and refined as the researchers developed further understanding of the DSG program through analysis of the literature and yarning/interviews. This is in keeping with an iterative DBR process. Desk top review of other similar relevant contemporary Australian programs provided insights into different approaches that could inform the development of the DSG program Literature review provided published peer reviewed evidence of alternative/successful approaches that could inform the development of the DSG.
2	Evaluation: Evaluation of this phase comprises the development of a culturally appropriate methodology for working in the Aboriginal context of this project. This methodology will draw on the evaluators' previous knowledge and experience working in Aboriginal contexts (Jackson-Barrett et al., 2015). Secondly, contact will be made with all school representatives and mentors of Deadly Sista Girlz program, introducing ourselves and establishing contact times for site visits. Formative evaluation of the Deadly Sista Girlz model. These methods comprise formative evaluation function described by Reeves and Hedberg (2003). Report back to Wirrpanda Foundation as per schedule	Indigenous methodology: The researchers drew on their theoretical knowledge and prior experiences working in and alongside Aboriginal communities to plan the most appropriate, culturally safe and productive ways to gather and analyse data. In keeping with principles of Aboriginal research this too was an iterative process and required scope for adapting to the localized context and the needs of the Aboriginal participants (ie the DSG staff, Site Coordinators, Mentors and Alumni). This included flexibility in time frames, venues, individual vs group discussions, introductions, how questions would be framed. The methodologies used are presented in below. As per below unfortunately site visits were not permitted by the DETWA and so our ability to conduct research using Indigenous protocols was severely limited. Contact with school representatives. Prior to contacting school representatives (ie School Principals and /or School employees working with DSG program. Ethics clearances were required for DET and Catholic Ed schools. Ethics approval to interview

		Principals and visit DET school sites was sought on 24th April 2020 After several completed requests for amendments we were notified by email on 21st December 2020. The ethics application to the Catholic Education Office was submitted in September 2020 and approved October 5th 2020. This enabled a productive site visit and yarning at the Broome DSG site in early December 2020. Formative evaluation of the Deadly Sista Girlz model and analysis of the DSG program materials including program overview, lesson plans, etc made available to the researchers via the drop box began to be analysed providing an emerging picture of the program. These documents first required extensive sorting into a more usable format. Interviews with the Program manager and Pathways coordinator added to this formative evaluation stage.
3	Evaluation: Data collection to include site visits, informational focus groups, observations, content analysis program materials, and so on. Evaluation of this phase comprises *effectiveness* evaluations of the learning environments, the fourth evaluation function described by Reeves and Hedberg (2003). Report back to Wirrpanda Foundation as per schedule	As above other than the Catholic Education site in Broome we were not able to access DET school sites because of change in scope of the research. Thus, we were unable to effectively evaluate the learning environments in situ. We are therefore only able to make comment based on feedback from site coordinators and alumni and draw from the literature. Interviews, focus groups with DSG employees of site and content analysis continued.
4	Evaluation: Final writing of report, ready for submission. Report back to Wirrpanda Foundation as per schedule	Final report prepared

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