

# Positive pathways for young people in remote communities: What works?



## PART 2: APPENDICES

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## **APPENDIX 1: YOUTH ATTAINMENT AND TRANSITION NATIONAL NETWORK**

The research was commissioned and supported by the Youth Attainment and Transitions (YAT) National Networks and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). The YAT National Networks consist of representatives from the DEEWR funded Youth Connections and School Business Community Partnership Broker Programs.

The Youth Connections Program helps young people who have left school, or who are thinking of leaving school, to continue with their education and ultimately gain a Year 12 (or equivalent) level education. Service delivery is characterised by flexible and individualised case management to assist young people to remain engaged or re-engage with education, and to improve their ability to make positive life choices. Youth Connections providers also run outreach activities for young people in the community and work to strengthen services in their regions so young people are better supported.

School Business Community Partnership Brokers (Partnership Brokers) broker partnerships between and among schools, business and industry, parents and families and community groups to support student engagement and improve education and transition outcomes.

The YAT National Networks provide opportunities for collaboration between Youth Connections providers and Partnership Brokers to share best practice across provider networks. Working collaboratively enables providers to share innovative strategies for engaging young people, and spread successful strategies for delivering services across region boundaries.

Each State and Territory Network elects representatives to attend National Network meetings. From these representatives a Working Group was established to evaluate issues specific to delivering services to support youth attainment and transitions in remote locations across Australia. Members of the National Network Working group include:

### **Northern Territory:**

Jenny Dobson (Mission Australia), Peter Cain (Steps Group) and Catherine Philips (The Smith Family)

### **Queensland:**

Karen Phillips (United Synergies) and Bronwyn Dallow (Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Qld)

### **South Australia:**

Jenny Dobson (Mission Australia) and Gerrie Mitra (Service to Youth Council)

### **Western Australia:**

Jenny Allen (Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre)

## APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH PROPOSAL

### 1 Background and Purpose

A focused research project will be undertaken in four remote communities. The research will be conducted by local service providers, well known within the communities. Dr Delwyn Goodrick will be responsible for supporting the researchers through capacity building training and provision of templates for collating data. Formal analysis and reporting of the research findings will be undertaken by Delwyn will input from all researchers.

**The purpose of the research is to:**

- inform future Youth Attainment and Training Service Delivery in Remote communities
- identify critical and important components in effective service delivery in remote communities (including, but not limited to the role of partnership ways of working)
- inform further research in other remote communities

The process of the research will facilitate other outcomes that relate to capacity of service providers and the community. The process uses of the include:

- to enhance capacity of providers in research methods and documentation strategies that are appropriate for their work in remote communities
- to engage providers and communities in sharing their experiences/voices/stories
- to generate a robust and rich description of what works, for whom and in what circumstances for young people in remote communities

### 2 Core Research Question

**The central research question is:**

**What works to support positive pathways for young people in remote communities?**

### 3 Points of Clarification

The research question contains within it a number of assumptions. These were important to clarify before we proceeded with planning the research. Emerging questions and the group's response to these discussion points are included below:

- What do we mean by 'works'? What is the definition of effectiveness? What criteria are we using? Whose perspective? (that is, service providers, community agencies and groups, Community Boards, Indigenous participants in communities, Government?)

A community that supports the aspirations of young people. The research project will need to explore these issues in conversations with elders, young people, service providers.

"Encouraging young people to be the best they can be" through provision of opportunity and facilitating access to these opportunities.

- What is a positive pathway and from whose perspective?

A positive pathway from mainstream perspective includes school achievement, particularly attainment of qualifications and skills that allow young people to access opportunities for employment or further education. Pathways to this outcome may include attendance at school, and participation and engagement in school activities. These are not the only aspirations that may count for community and these will need to be explored with participants.

- What age range are we focusing on in terms of 'young people'?

It was agreed that for the purposes of this research the operational definition of young people will be 12-19 years and include boys and girls.

- What is classified as 'remote'? Which remote communities? Why these communities and not others? What do we believe that these communities will tell us? What is the context of each community (population, characteristics)?

Four communities were selected as focal contexts for the conduct of the research. They are Karalundi, Burringurrah, Maningrida and X (a fourth community that withdrew from the research.) These communities were selected because they are all classified as remote, but have differing characteristics that are of interest to us. Further, the researchers are well known in these communities. Accessing participants in these communities in a short time frame is likely to be facilitated through existing connections of service providers in these communities.

## **4 Research Parameters**

A series of research questions associated with the main research question were explored.

1. What works and in what circumstances and contexts for girls and boys in remote communities?
2. What are the communities views and perspectives about positive pathways and outcomes for young people? What does it look like from their perspective?
3. What does it take to work effectively in and with remote communities?
4. What facilitates or inhibits working together with community, and in community with other providers? What helps to maintain/sustain effective partnerships?<sup>1</sup>

## 5 Sources of Information

The research project will be undertaken in four remote communities. While these communities are all classified as remote, they differ in level of remoteness, population characteristics, local resources and services, and community features.

The research will draw from multiple data sources predominantly through the use of qualitative research approaches such as interviews, small group consultations and focus groups, photographs, and document analysis.

The research will be sensitive to appropriate cultural protocols and respectful of traditional owners groups in each community.

## 6 The Communities

Community and Context	Characteristics of the potential research sample	Sources of Information to Address Research Questions
<b>Karalundi</b> (Remote, 7th day Adventist school and Aboriginal community. 200 children. Children attend school with families close by, but less connection with community than other sites)	15 (12-19 year olds) 5-6 Community/Board members ? Providers	(ACROSS SITES where approp): -School staff -Young people
<b>Burringurrah</b> (originally 120 people, now 30-40 people living there. Natural environmental issues, that is floods have had an impact on the community)	10 (12-19 year olds) 15 community 4 education providers 3 health and other providers Up to 20 (reps for Government agencies)	-Health Clinic workers (where applicable) -Parents and community groups Providers
<b>Maningrida</b> (a growth town, 2704 in	Not discussed at this meeting	-Government/business managers (Human service

<sup>1</sup> Identify a typology of partnerships to inform analysis.

population, 2nd biggest remote community		Reg managers) -Leadership groups
Site 4 (Please note this site withdrew from the research)	Not discussed at the meeting	-Local government business

## 7 Project Risks and Management Strategies

The group brainstormed risks inherent to a project of this nature, and specific issues that may require careful management. These risks and our ideas about how to manage them were discussed and points outlined below.

Potential Risks	Commentary on risk	Ways to Manage risk
<b>1. A very short timeframe for planning, data collection, analysis and reporting</b>	The design phase is limited to two workshop sessions. One with planning group and the second with providers responsible for conducting the research. Data will need to be collected in September and early October and Analysis (primarily by Del) scheduled for late October, Nov and December.	Clarify timelines and identify any potential events that could prevent completion of data collection by early October.
<b>2. Production of generic data - same old same old issues</b>	There is a risk in short term projects to produce what is already known and understood. A risk that service providers will raise generic issues such as lack of resources to address community needs etc. While these are important, this project seeks to explore issues in more depth and generate a new way at looking at remote service provision.	The quality of the data will depend on the rigour, relevance and quality of data collection. We will manage this risk through provision of a training workshop (capacity building) for researchers who will be involved in data collection. Ways to probe in more depth will be addressed.
<b>3. Failure to use the report findings by intended key audiences</b>	Unfortunately a lot of commissioned reports sit on desks or on shelves unread and un used. This may be due to judgements about the perceived relevance of the content or because policy	The project team will build use in from the early stages of the project through to its completion. Opportunities to promote the research will be sought and mechanisms for sharing emerging findings with

Potential Risks	Commentary on risk	Ways to Manage risk
	<p>decisions have shifted in another direction. There is a risk that this research project (due to its small scale nature) will not be taken seriously or merely be seen as additive information to the National Evaluation. This research is important to the planning group and to the Commonwealth. Strategies to enhance utility of the work and to promote it will need to be built into project planning and feedback processes.</p>	<p>key stakeholders including the Partnership group , the Commonwealth partners, the National Evaluators and local service providers.</p>
<p><b>4. Lack of dissemination of research findings to the communities that provided them</b></p>	<p>There is a danger that feedback to those participating in the research will be neglected due to our busyness and tendency to move onto the next piece of work. This project has commitment to feedback to those involved as an ethical right and as a mechanism for enhancing local knowledge.</p>	<p>The service providers who are conducting the research work within the communities and will provide informal feedback and more formal feedback on research outcomes.</p> <p>A brief pamphlet summarising key findings will also be prepared and shared with communities post project.</p>
<p><b>5. Failure to access communities (individuals parents, families, service providers)</b></p> <p><b>5a. Representation bias/social desirability bias</b></p>	<p>Existing relationships by service providers who are involved in conducting the research is a real strength. They already have developed working relationships with the communities of interest and make visits every fortnight or so to these communities. While the local service providers are a resource to the research project their dual role (service provider/researcher) may mean that participants may choose to moderate the information shared with the researcher.</p> <p>5a. Danger that participants may say what they believe the provider want to hear. Need for rigour.</p>	<p>We do not want to homogenise the research process, but we acknowledge the risks here.</p> <p>The research process will acknowledge this potential threat. Structured questions devised by the group (at the Alice Spring forum) will ensure some consistency in process and product. All participants will be assured that their participation is voluntary. They will also be informed about the purpose and use of the information they share.</p> <p>Participants will be provided with a concise summary of findings from across the four communities (see above).</p>



## 8 Conclusion and Summary

*These are Del's notes from our discussion at the National forum in Sydney in July. Please do let me know of an inaccuracies or misinterpretations at [delwyngoodrick@gmail.com](mailto:delwyngoodrick@gmail.com).*

*Look forward to seeing you all in Alice Springs!*

*Best wishes,*

*Delwyn*

## **APPENDIX 3: RESEARCH NOTES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING**

### **Introduction – Remote Research Project, Delwyn Goodrick**

Hello all,

It was great to start to get to meet you while in Alice Springs. This research project is small scale, but will be such an important piece of work. We believe it will send a clear and strong message to those who read it about:

The experiences of those who work in remote communities with young people

The views of those who live in remote communities about what is important for young people and what works— what does a successful pathway look like for young people? How can we better support these aspirations?, and

The factors that help and hinder effectiveness of work with young people in remote communities

About the research:

The research is supported by the National Network. Jenny Allen is the project manager and Delwyn Goodrick will be assisting in the design of the research and will be responsible for the substantive elements of the analysis and reporting of the research.

You are responsible for negotiating the research elements within your communities and for asking the questions and gathering the research data in a form that can be shared with Del (either through thorough notes or through tape recording of interviews and consultations).

Data collection will be qualitative- in the form of research yarns and interviews, and small group or focus group discussions. At our meeting in Alice we also talked about the value of photographs, stories and drawings. I have included a section about these forms of data collection in a later section of this set of templates.

It will be easy to generate loads and loads of information, but please remember the scope of this project means we must keep the research process and data collection very focused.

Timeframes for the research:

You will have September and October to collect data within the communities you are working with.

Del will need all the data by early November so she can analyse and write it up ready for submission mid December this year.

## Painting a rich picture of Remote communities

Delwyn will have the opportunity to visit Maningrida (thanks to Jenny Dobson and her team) so will get a very a snapshot of a remote community (but only a snapshot as it is a limited period of time). So, I will need to understand what your communities are like.

Please take photos of the community you are doing research/work in.

Good photos may be on entering the actual community, any buildings or fixtures, notices. We really want to paint a rich picture of remote communities. Focus on the elements you think are interesting or where people gather. (Please do check appropriateness of taking photos before you proceed). Portray the assets and aspects the community celebrates as well as the challenging aspects of the environment.

If you take photos of people you will need to get their permission for us to include them in the report (Jenny Allen has shared an example of a consent form. You may want to adapt this slightly for your use). Pictures of school buildings and photos of the land and the expanse of land may be useful as well.

## **Section 1 : Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of the research is to:

1. Inform future Youth Attainment and Transition Service Delivery in Remote communities
2. Identify critical and important components in effective service delivery in remote communities (including, but not limited to the role of partnership ways of working), and to
3. Inform further research in other remote communities

The preliminary planning group meeting in Sydney (at the commencement of the research project in July) also identified some other important process uses of the remote research project. These include:

- Enhancing the capacity of providers in research methods and documentation strategies that are appropriate for their work in remote communities
- Engaging service providers and communities in sharing their experiences/voices/stories, and
- Generating a robust and rich description of what works, for whom and in what circumstances for young people in remote communities

## **Key Research Questions**

Research questions are what we want to be able to talk/write about after the research is over. They are the big questions that orient our research, but are not the specific interview questions we will be asking participants. Having a clear idea about what we want to know about helps us identify who we will speak to and informs development of the questions we will ask them in interviews, focus groups or group discussions.

So...the main research question is:

- **What works to support positive pathways for young people (12-19 years) in remote communities?**

Important sub-questions to answer this main question are:

- **What works and in what circumstances and contexts for girls and boys in remote communities?**
- **What does the community (for example, service providers, Boards, Elders, school staff, young people) think about positive pathways and outcomes for young people (12-19 years)? What does it look like from their perspective?**
- **What does it take to work effectively in and with young Indigenous People in remote communities? How would we know our work was effective?**
- **What facilitates or inhibits working together with community, and in community with other service providers? What helps to maintain and sustain effective partnerships?**

## **Ethical Aspects of the Research**

The project did not seek formal ethics approval due to the very restrictive timeframes and the characteristics of the project, namely that service providers will be undertaking data collection within the communities they work alongside normal service delivery. This does not mean we do not take the ethical consequences of this work seriously.

A plain language statement about the research has been prepared and this is attached. Please share this with the people you will be seeking information and feedback from during the research process. There are a range of ethical issues to consider. Please consider these issues and questions before proceeding. It will be important to be clear about these issues before we begin the process of data collection. The issues are phrased as questions to stimulate your thinking.

Confidentiality – will participants feel comfortable and able to share information with you given the dual role as service provider and researcher? Will they be identifiable in the research from the stories they share and from the case study descriptions?

Use of the research findings – What will happen to the findings of the research? How will they be used? Why is the research being conducted? What difference will the research make to the people in the communities that participated?

### Some helpful Information

Who owns the research? The research is being sponsored by the National Network, but participants own their words and stories. Participants may choose to participate but we need to check that they feel ok about us sharing their perspectives with others through the written report.

Voluntary and Informed Consent – Participants need to know about the purpose of the research, why they were selected to be involved, the level of confidentiality, and how the information they share will be used. How do we communicate to all participants that there will be no adverse consequences for them if they do NOT want to participate in the research project? Attached is a form you make like to use or adapt to gain consent from people who are participating. If anyone you speak with is at all concerned or reticent to participate please do not coerce them- how people feel about research is also important information for the project.

People you speak to in the communities where the research is based may have other questions that relate to the research project. Please share these with the other researchers in the team and with Del. Many of the questions that emerge early on will likely come up for others in other communities as well.

### **Who Should I talk to if I have questions?**

In the first instance we can keep in touch about issues like this and others through an email written to Del and copied to all. Del can then reply to all with thoughts and advice and others can then provide their thoughts as well.

Del's email is [delwyngoodrick@gmail.com](mailto:delwyngoodrick@gmail.com)

For the Researchers

### Your Thoughts about the Research:

The space below can be used to write down your questions, thoughts or musings about the research. What am I anxious or concerned about? What am I excited about? What else do I need before I begin?

## Section 2: Research Explanation – Plain Language

### What is this section about?

*This section explains the research and may be used with key groups you are planning to conduct the research with, and/or those who need to know about the research in the community.*

### For school staff, service providers, Boards

We are interesting in conducting research in four remote communities so we can better understand what works for young people aged 12-19 years in this community. We have gained approval from the National Network to undertake a small research project as part of our work in these communities.

The purpose of the research is to:

- A. Identify critical and important components of effective service delivery in remote communities with young people, and to
- B. Inform further research in other remote communities

The report that will result from the research will be used to inform future work with young people in remote communities.

We want to know what those in remote communities think about what works for young people from their experience. We also want to speak with young people we work with about what has helped them to feel they can achieve what they want. The research is not focused on gaps or what doesn't work, but we realise that these issues may come up in our discussions. We are going to rely on generating information from interviews, small group discussions and yarns to gather the information, but we may also use art and photographs as well to provide opportunities for participants to express their views in other ways. We think these approaches will be particularly valuable in connecting with young people.

We want everyone we speak to feel comfortable with participating in the research project so we will explain the purpose and also let them know they have a choice about whether they participate or not. We want them to feel ok to share whatever they want with us, and we will make sure they know they can withdraw from participating in the research at any time, even after our interviews or discussions.

A brief summary of the research findings across the four communities will be provided to everyone that participates. They will also have the option of getting a copy of the full report if they wish. We

only have a short time to conduct this research, and our plan is to complete it all and have it written up by December. The full report will be sent to the National Network. We hope the research will help shape understandings about service delivery in remote communities and what best supports young people in these communities.

Is there anything else you would like to know about our research?

## Section 3: Guidelines for Group Discussions and Group Yarns

### What is this section about?

*What to do before you conduct a group session – planning and setting up*

#### **Before the session-Planning and Setting up:**

- **Participants:** Work out who will be in the group (the sample). For everyone to feel comfortable to have a say they need to feel they can be heard. Think of existing community politics. Would it be better to hold two or more separate groups rather than pull everyone together in one group. It is good to know about the politics beforehand as, if not managed well, these can limit the discussion.
- **Information rich:** Make sure the group of people you have selected/asked to participate are able to speak about the topic at hand. Do they have the knowledge and/or experience in the community to comment?
- **Number of participants and length:** Think about how many will be in the group and how long the session will be. Larger groups (more than 10) are often more challenging to manage. You need to be prepared, but the group you ask to participate needs to know how long the session will be as well. Most group discussions are scheduled for 30-90 minutes. If you plan your group session to go longer than an hour make sure you include a brief break for a cuppa and an informal chat.
- **Be realistic:** It may not always be possible to schedule a session for more than about 20 - 30 minutes. For example meeting with teachers for longer than this may be challenging due to their time constraints. Similarly you may be conducting a group session as part of another meeting and may not be allocated more than this amount of time. It is possible to gather some valuable data in this time frame if you are well organised and, if possible, request further opportunity to follow up on specific comments with individuals. You may also like to leave your email address so they can contact you directly with additional comments.
- **To tape record or not- that is the question:** Work out if it is appropriate to tape record the discussion or if detailed notes will be more appropriate. If tape recording, make sure the batteries are charged and that people who will be attending the group discussion know that it will be taped and they are ok with that.
- **Ethics and Informed Consent:** Most often people will be concerned about tape recording if they are not clear about the purpose of use of the information gathered through the research. So, make sure you cover this well at the beginning of the group.



- Questions to ask: Look at the questions (in Section 7). You can adapt these to suit your group of course and add additional questions.
- As Del does not know the individuals this is appropriate, but please do cover the key questions otherwise Del will find it difficult to synthesise the data across communities.
- Make sure if you include other questions that you note down or record these questions too.

## Section 4: Good Questions and Good Processes – Some tips

### What is this section about?

*This section provides a few tips on developing good questions for focus group or group consultations and running the sessions. If you are experienced as a group facilitator feel free to skip this section. If you are new to this role settle down with a cuppa and have a read.*

*I have included a list of possible questions for the group discussions. These are included in section 8. However these may need adjusting to suit your community and you may want to include one or two other questions as well.*

### Developing Good Questions

In a one to two hour focus group consider developing 5-8 questions with associated probes (e.g. 'Tell me more', or 'Can you give me an example of that?') If you have a shorter period of time, adjust question number accordingly. In a twenty minute session you may only get through 3 key questions. That's ok, just make sure they are the ones that count and that they generate rich information. If they are not working, try rephrasing the question or ask for elaboration.

Brainstorm questions with colleagues or with community representatives before running the group. You can refine the questions after you have a complete list. I have provided some key questions, but you may need to adapt these to suit your stakeholder group (service provider, young people, school staff etc.)

There are a number of different question types you might consider including in a focus group or group consultation process, including:

- The probing question...e.g. 'Can you say a little more about how you felt when that occurred?'
- The devil's advocate question...e.g. 'Let me take another perspective on that...some people consider that (opposite or alternative view)'- This one is best left for late in an interview or with people who feel very comfortable with you.
- The hypothetical question...e.g. 'Imagine you were a service provider in this community what would you tell them young people need here?'

- The projective question...e.g. 'Think forward - it is now 2012...what is happening in the community?' or 'If you had a crystal ball and could develop the perfect program for young people..what would it look like?'
- Feeling questions...e.g. 'How did that feel when that happened?'
- Thinking questions...e.g. 'What do you think are the strengths of the program?'
- Retrospective questions...e.g. 'Take me back to the first time you walked into this school, what was that like?' Depending on who you are asking, this question could generate some tension (e.g. school staff).
- The knowledge question...e.g. 'What is the process for recommending services or programs for young people here? for young people here in this school?'

Check the questions are predominantly open ended (like the ones above). Open ended questions encourage participants to explore views and perspectives from their own positioning and tend to provide fuller answers than closed end questions (for example, closed ended questions may be framed as, 'Do you think young people are on positive pathways?', 'Did you like the program?' 'Are programs working here?')

### **Managing the Focus Group Process**

Let's assume you have planned the groups, invited the participants and given them information confirming the time and where the group session will be held. You have also arranged the venue and refreshments and finalised the focus group questions. Now, how do you manage the focus group as the facilitator? Some considerations are noted below.

Are you a first time group facilitator? If so, it may be a good idea to observe others conducting group sessions and review what works and what doesn't. If you can conduct a test run or pilot interview with some trusted colleagues or community members you can gain some frank feedback on your style and on the questions.

If you are an experienced facilitator still consider asking a colleague to come along and attend the group as a notetaker and to provide back up support. This person can take notes of the non-verbal signs occurring through the discussion and note down the room structure/seating arrangement so this can be reviewed later. This individual can also check the tape recorder is working and change tapes if necessary. Digital recorders do take the stress out of running out of tape and are less intrusive, but make sure you bring extra batteries or the device is well charged before you start.

If possible, tape record the group interview. As noted, it can be helpful to have someone else take notes and record the path of conversation in the group. This is particularly useful when preparing

transcripts as shifts in voices cannot always be easily recognised. Just ask them to note down the person's initials and the first few lines of their comments so you can later trace who responded. If you decide it is not appropriate to tape record the notes will need to be very thorough. Capture as much as people are saying in their own words. Keep track of who said what and how the conversation shifts across the session.

The initial questions are introductory and framing questions, warming the participants up to the discussion. The facilitator then moves the discussion into the key questions, encouraging participants to discuss among themselves not to direct all comments to the facilitator. (It's not really a focus group discussion if all the responses come back to the facilitator like a question and answer session).

Refreshments are often provided to participants following the session as a way of acknowledging their time and contribution to the research.

### **The Most Important Factor in a Good Focus Group...**

The person who facilitates or runs the group (often called a moderator) is arguably the most critical ingredient to an effective group discussion. The importance of his or her skills to an effective session cannot be underestimated. The moderator must be able to maintain the flow of the session, address problematic group dynamics (should they occur), and ensure that participants feel comfortable in discussing issues. The moderator guides the interview process, but should not be the centre of the process. The group may be limited if all responses are directed to the moderator rather than discussed with others in the group or if the researcher (moderator) appears more interested or enthusiastic about some responses more than others.

**Tip:** If you are finding that participants are focusing on you as the facilitator and answering directly to you rather than really engaging and discussing the issues with other group members try this strategy if appropriate: When they address questions instead of engaging with the group, gently drop your gaze away from direct eye contact or look down and take some notes. Usually the person focusing on making contact with you will try to find another person in the group to make eye contact with. There are, of course, cultural differences in terms of eye contact to be aware of, but this is often a useful way to encourage group discussion and reduces the back and forth question answer pattern that can occur.

As the facilitator you will need to be able to effectively manage a group of people. Situations you may encounter in focus groups may include, conflict among members in the group, an individual who continues to dominate discussion, or a person who becomes distressed. These situations can pose some real challenges to facilitators and influence the quality of the information generated. Some tips for dealing with the most common situations are attached in Section 6.

One final point – make some notes straight after the focus group or group discussion about your impressions. Which questions did participants struggle with? Did you sense any underlying issues? Between the lines? Make notes of these thoughts and interpretations, but make it clear that these comments were not generated in the group discussion.

## Section 5: Note Taking in Groups

### What is this section about?

*This section provides some tips on taking notes in focus groups and group discussions. These will be particularly helpful if tape recording is not possible.*

As noted in the previous section, in focus group discussions there is often a facilitator (also called a moderator) and a note taker.

The facilitator or moderator of the focus group is responsible for managing the group dynamics and asking the key questions. For an hour group discussion with about 6-10 people usually there are 5-6 questions.

The aim is to generate a discussion that captures the diversity and range of views, not to reach closure or seek consensus: Seeking consensus is not the aim of a focus group.

Your task as note taker is to ensure the tape recorder is set up and working well, take notes as fully as possible of what was said in the group by the participants in response to the questions, and to capture the group's discussion of the issues.

This can be quite tricky, as of course people often speak fast and we can only take notes of that discussion; we probably cannot capture the whole conversation. In the section below some tips are provided for good note taking.

### Note taking is important for three reasons:

1. If the tape does not capture some of the comments, or worse still fails for some reason, your notes will exist as the record of the conversation. It is not good to rely on memory, as our memory of what people said tends to be selective – we tend to focus on the quotable quotes and we might miss the range of perspectives shared in the group.
2. Notes supplement the tape as the tape won't pick up who is talking and when the conversation shifts from one person to another. Some people sound the same, which makes it tricky to differentiate speakers on a tape or in the transcript of the tape recording. This adds extra time and an added level of frustration to the analysis process.
3. Note takers can capture the non-verbal elements of groups that are often very important but are missed in tape recording. For example, if there are a lot of people nodding in agreement to someone's comment, then the notes can capture these non-verbal signs- the tape cannot unless the facilitator points this observation out and it is recorded on tape.

**Tip 1:**

**Don't panic.** Hopefully the focus group is also being recorded on tape; your notes will supplement the tape. That means the final product will not be totally reliant on your skills in note taking, but your notes are still important. Of course if you are not able to tape record the discussion your notes ARE the only record of the discussion.

**Tip 2:**

**Start with a clean sheet of paper, and draw the seating arrangement, that is where people are sitting from left to right or around a circle.** Even if you only capture their first name or initial (as people are introducing themselves), this is helpful as the person analysing the information can refer back to this or refer to it alongside the transcript of the interview. I (Del) will be responsible for formal analysis and this document can help me quickly see who participated and the extent. It is also quite helpful if participants shift their views during the group discussion. This often happens in groups as people share their insights and they spark reflections by others.

Record the date and time of the interview and the participant group (e.g., participants, Aboriginal service providers etc).

**Try and write as much as possible. If tape recording, write at least the first few comments of each individual as they contribute to the discussion.** This helps later in working out who said what and when and can help the person analysing the information link the transcript or tape to the comments. You may need to practice writing rapidly – **Remember - the analysis will only be as good as the data we have!**

**Jot down key messages from participants and record body language.** Watch the participants and note their body language – level of agreement or disagreement gestured through nodding or shaking of the head, expressed interest (or otherwise) with the topic, and body language cues such as expressions of being puzzled or confused, level of understanding of the questions and discussion etc.

**Try and write as legibly and clearly as possible.** This is less important if you plan to type up your own notes, but quite important if you are going to pass them onto someone else to use for analysis. It can be hard to read someone else's handwriting, and notational devices. If possible type up your notes as soon as you can as leaving it may mean you can't later read or understand some of your shorthand. And, it goes without saying that if you can't understand your notes it will be very hard for anyone else to make sense of them.

*Note: It may be useful to give the participants a short demographic survey/one page form to fill in at the end of the focus group. This would capture information such as, their age, community they live in, number of children, services they use, role etc. This will be helpful for later analysis. You can go through these verbally with the group or allow them to fill it in if appropriate.*

*During the pilot of these materials Jenny and Rose captured these additional demographics - their role in the community, how long they had been there, in some cases a bit about their previous experience in remote communities.*

**Immediately after the focus group write some of your own notes or reflections of the key messages that you heard during the discussion.** This provides another source of evidence along with the notes, and with the facilitator's impressions. Note the time from the start to finish (e.g. two hours).

**Have fun (well as much as possible when you are taking notes!).** Note taking is exhausting, but you do get better and faster with practice. You get to hear what participants think and hear that in the way they wish to express it, which will be helpful in understanding good practice and opportunities we can extend in future.



## **Section 6: Managing Groups – Tips for dealing with common challenges in group discussions**

### **What is this section about?**

*This section provides some tips for managing challenging situations you may face in running group discussions or focus groups.*

### **How to deal with a participant who appears bored and disinterested**

Focus groups and group discussions work best if people want to be there and actually want to participate. Sometimes, however, participants may have been nominated by others to attend and may be resistant or unwilling to actively participate in the discussion. And, in the case of Indigenous communities they might be just plain sick of consultation!

If a participant appears bored, sighs often, glances repeatedly at their watch, or begins reading material they have brought with them, the facilitator needs to respond. In this situation it may be best briefly point out to participants that the topic under discussion may not be as equally fascinating or interesting to all participants.

As the facilitator you might also suggest a break – tea or coffee break – and at this point talk to the person who seems disinterested. If you ignore the person and his/her clearly visible signs of boredom or disinterest they may become more disruptive in the group. Chances are if you have picked up that they are unhappy or disinterested so have others and this will get in the way of good discussion.

When you approach the person individually during the break you might ask the person to share with you the reason he or she finds the discussion boring or disinteresting and then ask if they are willing to continue to be involved. Encourage the person to share their views even if they think their views are very different from others, but only do this if they do genuinely seem to have something they are willing to share. If this fails and the person still expresses disinterest you might suggest that they might feel happier not participating and give them the option to leave. Their energy will have a negative impact on the discussion if they are left to non-verbally (or verbally!) express their boredom or dissatisfaction.

Your credibility as the facilitator (and someone who can manage group processes) is on the line here. In one situation where someone opened up a newspaper in the group I quickly asked to see the paper to read out the daily horoscopes and then after reading a couple put the paper down beside me so it was no longer a distraction for the participant. This was done in a lighthearted manner, not in a mean-spirited way. This communicates that you are managing the group, but does

not single out the person in the form of a rebuke. Another strategy is to set some group rules or norms at the beginning of the group; this allows the group's agreed rules to moderate a participant's behaviour; they were part of the group that agreed to these principles. In this way it won't look like you are setting new rules.

### **How to deal with the participant who talks too much**

Focus groups offer participants an opportunity to speak about issues that are of importance or relevance to them. It is therefore not surprising that some people will have too much to say and not really to aid group discussion. The focus group is not an individual conversation or interview; it is a structured interview within a group. Participants should not feel their views are being crowded out by a dominating participant. Group rules established at the beginning of the group will clarify the importance of open space in which all people have the chance to talk. Non-verbal language can be very powerful here. While suggesting the need to hear from others, a hand gesture that closes off the dominating person can be useful. If possible I sit the likely dominant or talkative person near me in the circle. This person is no shrinking violet and will not need eye contact or non-verbal cues to talk. Using this strategy I can more easily block their contribution as they are closer to me in the circle.

One of the reasons some people are so anxious to get their perspective across may be because they believe this may be the only opportunity to do so. If you think this might be the case perhaps you could offer this individual the opportunity to participate in a follow up interview to allow the person an opportunity to share more fully their perspectives.

### **How to deal with a participant who seems nervous and shy**

Sometimes you can tell the participants that are nervous and shy by their behaviour as soon as they walk in the room. They appear diffident, tentative and unsure. When I am facilitating focus groups I often use name tags and as I put them on the seats (set up in a semi-circle) and I try to position the shy or nervous participant opposite me in the circle. This way I can use non verbal cues to encourage their participation during the discussion. It is also useful to be warm and encouraging to this individual before the group – perhaps while people are getting cups of tea or we are waiting for other participants to arrive.

It may not be possible in remote contexts to include some of these strategies, and I appreciate you know best how to engage the communities you work with. If I do not know the individuals I always try to engage them in a social yarn (as discussed by Dawn Bessarab) and try to make some connection with them. They will feel more able to contribute if they feel they know someone in the room who values them and their viewpoints.

The 'round robin' or introductory question at the start of the group gives them another opportunity to 'hear their voice' in the group and speak. After this initial round people seem more willing to talk up about their perspectives. The round robin question should not be knowledge based as this may be intimidating. Rather, it should be a general warm up question that gets people talking and ready for the group discussion.

### **How to deal with someone who becomes upset or appears distressed during the focus group discussion**

It is not surprising that some people may become distressed during the course of focus groups as some of the topics we discuss are potentially sensitive. Even when we don't consider that the topic is especially sensitive, discussion may raise issues or recollections that may be distressing for participants. If a member of the focus group seems uneasy or upset it is worth noting the sensitive nature of the conversation and to acknowledge that you are aware that the issues may be hard to discuss. It is better not to single out the person who seems upset when you say this otherwise they may feel put on the spot; what you are doing by sharing this with the group is showing that you recognise and acknowledge the sensitive nature of the discussion and you are communicating that this saying is ok.

It is important not to treat participants as if the group is a therapy group. In this project it isn't: It's a group that has an explicit research purpose. In general if someone appears visibly upset I do not move toward them or touch them, but I may make a packet of tissues available in an unobtrusive way.

If the person continues to be upset I suggest you call a short break to the group. During the break (offer coffee and tea perhaps), you can then talk with the person and see if they are willing to continue with the group discussion or whether they would like to withdraw.

Your ethical responsibility is to the participants in the group and you need to ensure their welfare while they are participating. Consider also offering a follow up debriefing opportunity or a referral to someone who has the professional skills to offer support after the session.

### **How to deal with conflict among participants in a focus group**

Since the purpose of focus groups is to generate a range of perspectives on a topic or issues, it is not surprising that participants can disagree with each other. Disagreement is fine and should be expected. The facilitator needs to acknowledge that group members are likely to have different perspectives and that no perspective is right or wrong. But what do you do in the situation where two or more participants start to be more aggressive in their response to others, or get into an argument in the group?

It is important to remind participants of the ground rules you established as a group in the introductory session. And remind participants that it is ok to disagree. You might consider saying something like: “ It is not surprising in groups like this for there to occasionally be conflict between members who hold different views. There seems to me to be a bit of tension in the group between x and y re your perspectives. It is ok to disagree, but let’s remind ourselves of why we are here today. We are here to generate a wide range of perspectives on this topic and it is not a matter of who is right or wrong, but rather what we can learn from these different views. Please remember the importance of respecting one another even if your views are poles apart.”

If this doesn’t work and the conflict keeps scaling up to an unacceptable level, suggest a short group break. Aggressive participants may need to be asked to leave or you may have to disband the group session and try another strategy (such as individual interview).

## Section 7: Data Collection

### Data Collection Template 1 - Groups

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SESSION. This information will help Del in the analysis phase.**

**What was the purpose of this particular group session?**

**How many people were invited?**

**How many attended?**

**Who was in the group?**

**Number of participants**

**Age (or age range)**

**Why were these people approached to participate? What do you believe they offer in improving our understanding of effective pathways for young people in remote communities?**

**Was anyone else invited who did not attend?**

**Was the session tape recorded or just notes?**

Circle:     Tape recorded     Notes only

**What do you think were the key messages coming from this group? What are they telling us about what works for young people in remote communities? (Take as much space as you need to comment on this question).**

## Data Collection Template 2 – for interviews with Agencies/Service providers

### Note for Interviews:

Interviews may be pre-organised or may occur as a result of social yarning that provides an opportunity to move into the research questions, especially when you are talking to Aboriginal community members. So be prepared at all times to “grab the moment”. If you say you will come back to interview the person later, the opportunity may have been missed. As described by Dawn Bessarab, ensure that the person is aware that you have moved into this form of yarning. Use a modified form of the Interview preamble below to help you do this.

1. Please record date when interview took place and how long the interview was as well as information about what group the person you interviewed came from (e.g. school, Board, Health Service, Elder group)
2. Remember to try to get as specific information and examples as possible. Otherwise we will only have generic information to report. We really want to get some nitty gritty detail and examples of what works to support young Aboriginal people. For example, if someone said, ‘partnerships help us to provide better for young people’ ask them to expand by asking follow up questions such as, ‘how do partnerships help you do this?’ Can you share an example of a partnership? What was it about this partnership that helps you?
3. Try to maintain good eye contact (if appropriate) throughout the interview (even if you are taking notes) and encourage the person to speak openly by expressing warmth and appreciation. Begin by explaining the purpose of the research (see interview preamble below) and thank them at the conclusion of the interview. Give them your number so they can contact you if they have any further questions. It may also be a good idea to give them Jenny Allen’s contact details as well. Sometimes people want to speak with someone ‘outside’ the direct process of the interview.

***Note to researchers: Remember before you start - organise tape recording or have note paper handy to capture questions and responses. Even if you are taping it is a good idea to take notes as well re specific points you hear, or comments you want to follow up on later. If you are relying solely on notes and a note template you will need to cut and paste these questions onto another blank sheet with spaces in between (see final Appendices for example).***

### **Interview Preamble:**

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. As I mentioned a group of service providers from four remote communities are undertaking a small research project. The purpose of the project is to gather information about what works to support positive pathways for young people in remote communities. You were selected to participate because of your role as xx. We are keen to explore what your views about positive pathways and outcomes for young Aboriginal people in this community look like, and to generate some compelling examples of what you think effective or promising practice looks like. The interview should take about 30-50 minutes and with your permission we would like to tape record the discussion. This is just to make sure we capture what you have to say accurately. Your name will not be associated with any of your comments and of course you can tell me at any time if you decide you don't want your comments included in the report. We have an external research partner who will be analyzing and writing the report about what works in working with young people from the four communities. She will be drawing information from our recordings and notes from groups discussions and interviews. Before we get going is there anything you would like to ask me about the research project?

### **Questions one to one interviews:**

To start with, how long have you been (working/living) in this community? What attracted you to the role?

Given your experience working with young Aboriginal people in this community, what words come to mind when you hear the term – a positive pathway?

What supports young Aboriginal people here in moving along this positive pathway here? What is it about this community that you think influences that? (prompt: context of the community, organisations and services, employment, support, characteristics of the pop, isolation etc).

Thinking back over the last 6 months to a year, can you think of an example when you thought that you were really making a difference in your work with young Aboriginal people? (prompt: What was going on then? Who was involved?)

Can you tell me why you think that was effective? What makes it effective? What does it take to work effectively with young people here?

What role do partnerships with other services and service providers play in effective ways of working? (possible prompts: Can you provide one or two examples of how partnerships have helped/hindered your work? What do you need to work effectively in this community?)

We have covered a lot of the elements that help you work more effectively, now can we turn to some of the challenges you face. What are the barriers to effective ways of working?

What are some things that might be done to reduce those barriers?

To sum up, what final messages would you like to give to those outside remote communities to help them understand how to work more effectively with young Aboriginal people in these areas?

**Other potential prompt questions** can be used if one of the questions above doesn't work well or doesn't seem to be generating rich information:

- What does it take to work effectively in remote communities? (prompt: What skills, attitudes, experience are required?)
- What other ways do you think would work more effectively with young people in this community?
- Thinking back to a time when you believe that a young person had really made a positive shift, can you describe that to me? What was happening then? What were the conditions that enabled that to happen?
- What has helped service providers in this community work well together? (Probe: re specific examples or stories).
- What assists in maintaining partnerships between service providers in this community?
- What hasn't worked so well or has reduced our effectiveness of your work with young Aboriginal people in this community?



## Most Significant Change Technique

At our meeting in Alice Springs we briefly spoke about The Most Significant Change Technique. This technique was pioneered by British Evaluator, Rick Davies. In Australia the most prominent practitioner in using this technique is Jessica Dart from Clear Horizons.

The Most Significant Change Technique is a participatory monitoring and evaluation approach. This technique can be used with individuals or in small group discussions. However, it is more likely we will get rich stories by using this technique with individuals rather than in groups.

Adaptation of MSC questions to this research project may assist us in generating stories of success and effectiveness of partnerships specifically through targeted interviews.

The questions I have developed below focuses on partnerships. My suggestion is we use the four questions below with those agency stakeholders that we and others partner with to progress outcomes for young people. These four questions will generate stories of change/success of partnerships that we can document in the report.

If the term most significant success works better than most significant change feel free to swap to suit.

### **Domain: Effectiveness of Partnerships**

Four key questions:

1. Thinking back over the last 6 months, what has been the most significant change for young people brought about by partnerships in this community?
2. Can you tell me why you think this is a significant change?
3. What was it about the partnership that created or lead to this change?
4. How sustainable do you think this change will be? How will the partnerships assist the sustainability of this change?

### **Preliminary Notes:**

As the age range focuses on those between 12-19 please try and get a good representation of young people within these ages.

Given the timeframe and scope of the research small group interviews (1 or 2) may be appropriate and a limited number of individual interviews (up to 5 in total).

Think carefully about how you will integrate the research into existing meetings with the young people. They do need to know the purpose of the research. I would probably reference this by saying it is their chance to have a say about what is important to them, and that this information will be written up and shared across the country. They, like others need to know and be clear that they do not have to participate/be involved and if they want to withdraw their comments at a later stage (after the interview) that is fine too.

If small groups please fill in the group template (Template 1). If individual interviews just record initials and age. If the young person is not Aboriginal or chooses not to self-designate their cultural background please indicate this as well on the template.

I trust your judgment and experience in the best ways to work with young people and what will work in your context. The points below are just ideas that may help us generate some rich information.

### **Drawing the tree**

Have materials available – texta pens, water based glue or sticky tape, white paper or canvas, local bark and leaves, pictures from magazines, of for example, Aboriginal flag, football, land, diagrams, employment, health images, food etc Whatever you believe may stimulate discussion and generate ideas.

Ask young people to choose some items and a piece of paper and to draw a tree in the middle of the page.

Explain that the base of the tree is where they have come from, their land, their culture, their family. Ask them to represent/draw what that is like for them? What images come to mind? What messages or feelings would they share about where they have come from?

Ask them then (after 5-10 mins) to now look at the core of the tree, the trunk. This is their strength, what keeps them going and strong. Ask them to write, draw or paste on images that tell us about what their strengths are, who they are as individuals.

After 5-10 minutes (or shorter or longer) ask them to draw some branches from the tree. This is where they are going, their future. Indicate that it is hard to know the future for all of us, but given their strengths and where they have come from, where do they think they could go, what would they do? What is the future? (It may be helpful to make sure that initial selection of images includes pictures represent health, jobs, employment, study, family, land, ""success"" as they might define it.)

Then ask young people to share the story of their picture. Where did they come from? What are their strengths? Where are they going?

A discussion can then be generated about what will help them to get to the vision they have captured in the branches? What do they need to do this? What support will they need? Who will be able to help?

The pictures and the discussion will provide rich information for the project. If the young people would like to keep their pictures please ask them if it is ok for you to take a photo of it so we can possible include this in the report.

#### **Other Potential Questions for Young People**

- What has helped you get where you are now?
- Where do you think you be in 3-5 years time?
- What will you be doing? Who will you be with?
- What will help you to get here? (Where you want to be?) We all need support to get where we want to be. What support will you need?
- Some of the services that are available are here to support young people? What do they do that works for you? What makes you feel safe and comfortable to work with these service providers?
- What hasn't helped? What do you feel has stopped you moving forward? (I acknowledge that this may not be the right term here).
- What would you like to say to other Australians in other areas, towns and cities about what has helped you to be where you are now?

In some instances you may find young Aboriginal people may struggle to answer these questions. Jenny and Rose found that they may be able to identify what is important, what they may like to achieve, but struggle to explain the pathway, or how to get there.

As with the focus group immediately write some of your own notes or reflections of the key messages that you heard (or didn't hear). This provides another source of evidence along with the notes, and with the facilitator's impressions.

## Example Template: Questions for Interviews with Service Providers/Agency Stakeholders

*Research preamble about the purpose of the research and explanation of the use of findings. Explain what will happen to data and that names (and in some cases- roles) will not be associated with the material if this will identify the individual.*

1. To start with, how long have you been (working/living) in this community? What attracted you to the role?
2. Given your experience working with young Aboriginal people in this community, what words come to mind when you hear the term – a positive pathway?
3. What supports young Aboriginal people here in moving along this positive pathway here? What is it about this community that you think influences that? (prompt: context of the community, organisations and services, employment, support, characteristics of the pop, isolation etc).
4. Thinking back over the last 6 months to a year, can you think of an example when you thought that you were really making a difference in your work with young Aboriginal people? (prompt: What was going on then? Who was involved?)

5. Can you tell me why you think that was effective? What makes it effective? What does it take to work effectively with young people here?

6. What role do partnerships with other services and service providers play in effective ways of working? (possible prompts: Can you provide one or two examples of how partnerships have helped/hindered your work? What do you need to work effectively in this community?)

7. We have covered a lot of the elements that help you work more effectively, now can we turn to some of the challenges you face. What are the barriers to effective ways of working?

7a. What are some things that might be done to reduce those barriers?

8. To sum up, what final messages would you like to give to those outside remote communities to help them understand how to work more effectively with young Aboriginal people in these areas?

*Thank you so much for speaking with me. I really appreciate it. Do you have any questions of me after participating in the interview?*

## Example Consent Form

### Consent to Reproduce Photographs/Video Images and/or Editorial/Text/Tape Recordings for Promotional, Research and Evaluation Purposes

By signing this form you are indicating that you consent to the use of photographs and images voice recordings and your name and related information for publication or publications related to remote research project being undertaken by researchers and workers who are part of the National Partnership.

Note: If the individual is under the age of 14 years, the parent and/or guardian must also sign this form.

I agree to the use images, text, voice recordings and related information for the following purposes (but not limited to):

- Internal publications such as reports, brochures, newsletters, promotional materials and photoboards.
- External publications such as newspapers, research papers and reports.
- Electronic media that may be posted on our website, the world wide web, DVD's and power point presentations.

If there are exceptions please tell us. (These require ruling out and the signatory against each one by the participant or guardian.)

I understand that the researchers may use images, text and related information

Without paying me a fee or without seeking further approval

Please note every care will be taken with this material you share with us, however we are not responsible for any loss or damage or any claims that may arise out of the use of the images and related information, except to the extent that we may have contributed to any loss or damage. If the photograph is published on the internet we will have no control over its use or spread outside the boundaries of the research project.

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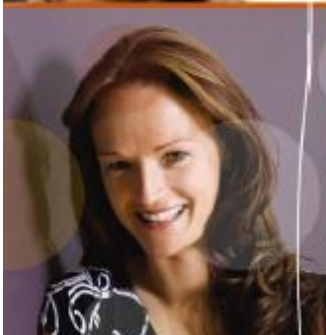
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## **APPENDIX 4: YAT FORUM FLYER**

The flyer that follows was used to promote the Youth Attainment and Transitions Forum, entitled Conversations, Connections and Community: Supporting positive pathways for young people in remote Australia. It was held in Alice Springs on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2011.



**YOUTH**  
ATTAINMENT  
AND TRANSITIONS

## Conversations, Connections & Community:

Supporting positive pathways for  
young people in remote Australia

Venue: Crowne Plaza, Alice Springs  
Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> August 2011

## Bus Timetable

Transfers from the airport to conference

11.55am

12.25pm

1.20pm

3.00pm

4.40pm

## PROGRAM

### Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011

3.00 – 5.00pm

Optional bus tour of Alice Springs including the lookout and the Telegraph Station  
(Email [mcunningham@syc.net.au](mailto:mcunningham@syc.net.au) to reserve a place on this tour.)

5.00 onwards

Registration tables open

6.30 – 10.00pm

#### Dinner

##### Welcome to country

“A personal perspective on remote education”

##### The Hon. Alison Anderson MLA

Alison Anderson was born in Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff), growing up in a number of communities including Hermannsburg and Papunya. A strong community person, fluent in several Aboriginal languages, Alison has spent her life trying to improve the conditions of people living in Central Australia. Alison has served as a highly effective representative for Central Australia on the Aboriginal Development Commission and later as ATSIC Commissioner. In 2004 Alison was selected by the Howard Government to represent Central Australia on the Round Table discussions on Aboriginal matters. In 2005 Alison Anderson was elected as the Labor Member for Macdonnell in the Martin Government. She was elevated to the Ministry in 2007 and filled a number of portfolios including Health and Indigenous Affairs. She resigned from the Labor Party in 2009 but remains a back bencher in Northern Territory Parliament.

A keen sports person, Alison excelled as a softball player for the Alice Springs Rebels. She now spends her spare time with her five children, grandchildren and her extended family across Central Australia. She is also a highly talented artist.

“Youth Attainment and Transitions – Engaging in a Remote Setting”

##### Helen McLaren

Helen McLaren has been with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations since early 2005 and is the Branch Manager, Youth Attainment and Transitions Branch. She has responsibility for a range of programs designed to help young people make successful transitions from school to further education or work, including programs to assist those young people who are disengaged and most at risk. She previously worked in the Vocational Education and Training area of the department with a particular focus on e-learning, information and communications technology and awards and recognition programs.

Prior to joining DEEWR Helen spent 10 years in telecommunications and information technology policy roles in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Communications, IT and the Arts. Helen has more than 20 years experience in public sector roles, including in the Prime Ministers

### Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011

8.00 – 10.00am

“Yarning - An Indigenous form of conversation”

##### Dawn Bessarab

Associate Professor Dawn Bessarab is an Aboriginal woman of Bardi (West Kimberley) and Yindjarbandi (Pilbara) descent who is a qualitative researcher engaged in Aboriginal health research at the Centre for Health Innovation Research Institute Curtin University. Dr Bessarab is a social worker who graduated with her PhD in 2007; her PhD explored the gendered experiences of Aboriginal women and men living in a regional and urban site in Western Australia and applied yarning as a research method in her interviews. Dawn has co-authored and published a paper on yarning. She has also run workshops on the use of yarning in research and has recently begun to explore the application of yarning circles in doing research with Aboriginal peoples.

10.00 – 10.30am

Morning Tea

# Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011

## Concurrent workshops (Participants to select sessions of interest)

### 10.30 – 12.00 noon

What works to support positive pathways for young Aboriginal people living in remote communities?

#### Dr Delwyn Goodrick

As part of the YAT National Network agenda, Dr Delwyn Goodrick has been contracted to undertake a research project on the topic of what works to support positive pathways for young Aboriginal people in remote communities. This session (which is repeated after lunch) is your opportunity to participate in the research. Session participants will share their experiences in forming partnerships and providing services that support successful youth transitions in remote settings.

Beyond the conference Del will also be working with providers in identified communities to gather stories from young people, families, community members and other service providers. The stories and data collected from these consultations (and other focus group sessions, yarning sessions and interviews) will contribute to a resource that will inform current and future practice.

Delwyn is a psychologist who undertakes program evaluation and social research with a wide range of government and community sector client groups. She is an experienced facilitator who works in Australia and overseas. Del's enthusiasm for this project and her engaging style will ensure a dynamic and interactive session.

We'd love you to come along and share your views.

### 10.30 – 11.15am

Youth Justice and Youth Connections – a State and National Look! **Gerri Walker**

The presentation will:

1. Share the learnings from the South Australian specific contract re state-wide service to assist young people who are in or are exiting the Juvenile Justice system or who are deemed to be at imminent risk of engaging with the Juvenile Justice System. This will include information about:
    - Shared case management processes across agencies and within the Youth Training Centres
    - Provision of learning opportunities within the Youth Training Centres and in the community, including ongoing educational and engagement activities
    - Capacity building across South Australia, including issues that have been identified and are beginning to be addressed throughout the state.
  2. Share the preliminary work on Youth Justice as part of the Youth Connections/Partnership Brokers National Network
- Seek input from participants about common issues in this area for future development and consideration which may inform future policy and practice.

### 11.15 – 12.00 noon

Anyone for a cuppa? Tackling alcohol and substance abuse in remote communities. **Peter Cain and Stewart Willey**

Steps Tennant Creek is running a pilot program in the Barkly region of the Northern Territory focused on petrol sniffing and volatile substance abuse. Critical to the program is building strong partnerships with other providers, government agencies and the residents of remote communities. What is a successful partnership in remote areas and how do you make it work? How do you establish strong communication in areas without technology? How do you stay ahead of rapidly changing trends in volatile substance abuse? Steps doesn't confess to having all the answers – but maybe you do.

### 12.00 – 1.00

Lunch

### 1.00 – 2.30

### 1.00 – 1.45pm

## Concurrent workshops (Participants to select sessions of interest)

What works to support positive pathways for young Aboriginal people living in remote communities?

#### Repeat of previous session with Dr Delwyn Goodrick

Providers working in remote settings are encouraged to attend one of these sessions to ensure their voice is captured for the research project.

“School at the Centre and the World as a resource: Strategies for supporting successful educational outcomes in remote communities”

#### Tricia Rushton

The Smith Family will share how the School at the Centre approach, initiated in 2006 has impacted on the school readiness, attendance, participation and retention of NT students both within remote settings and through brokering national relationships.

The Smith Family will identify the 6 key best practice principles that guide our work both within the NT and nationally.

### 1.45 – 2.30pm

## Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011

2.30 – 3.00pm

Afternoon tea

3.00 – 3.40pm

### Girls at the Centre

#### Jodi Lennox & Michaela Peckham

Girls at the Centre aims to address the low rates of school attendance, participation and educational achievement amongst Indigenous girls in Alice Springs. Girls at the Centre has been operating at Centralian Middle School since 2008. Through a range of strategies and activities the program focuses on ensuring that Indigenous girls are assisted to overcome any barriers that would prevent them from achieving at school.

The four outcome areas of the program are:

- Improved literacy levels through improved school attendance and achievement;
- life goals, aspirations and positive pathway action plans and relationships;
- life skills and improved social and emotional wellbeing and resilience;
- communities, schools and workplaces that support “emerging women”.

3.40 – 4.20pm

### WorkReady model in Remote Communities of the Northern Territory

#### Coralie Boyd

GTNT has been running the NT DET funded WorkReady program since 2005 in urban contexts.

In the past two years the program has been trialled in remote Top End communities. GTNT have developed Strengthening Strengths to be incorporated in the model as a means of preparing the remote students to be able to fully participate in the “mainstream” WorkReady Program.

4.20 – 5.00pm

### Drum Atweme

#### Peter Lowson

Drum Atweme was formed to meet the needs of at risk Aboriginal town camp youth that were interested in music especially drumming and percussion. The drum program first started in February 2004 and have since performed at over three hundred community, conference and festival events. While Tangentyere Council provides strong support to the group providing a youth services space, finance department and transport, the Drum group are largely self funded, with all profits providing ongoing maintenance of equipment, clothing, sports, education, bedding, healthy food and costs towards performances and interstate excursions.

The members of Drum Atweme have full active roles in decision making regards performances, budgeting and creative input. All participants must be active in education and attend regularly at school. Drum Atweme ages range from 6 – 16 years old and are an exciting and dynamic group. Ninety percent of the group are young girls. The young drummers are developing songs and stories based on their own language and cultural identity. This has given these young people a very strong and

5.00 – 6.00pm

Cocktail event

6.00pm

Delegates free time – dinner at own expense

## Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2011

7.00am

Breakfast

7.30 – 8.15am

“Blood, sweat and tears; the challenge of singing from the same song sheet”

#### Sam Osborne

Looking at the challenges that exist in building remote partnerships for the common cause of social justice. Sam Osborne will be sharing from the experiences of building a remote school choir as a remote principal.

Sam Osborne lives in Alice Springs and has been working in Central Australia for the past 10 years. He began working in Aboriginal education in Adelaide in 1995 and worked in a range of schools, in particular, in Aboriginal language programs. After moving to Ernabella in 2002, he took up the positions of Deputy Principal and Principal in the remote Northwest of South Australia. Since moving to Alice Springs in 2009, he has been working on a PhD in remote educational leadership and also taking a number of roles including Central Australian consultant for Principals Australia, Dare to Lead project, consulting, interpreting and a range of research work. He is currently managing a community research program at Amata and Mimili in remote SA with Ninti one Ltd (based in Alice Springs at the Desert Knowledge precinct). Through his work, study and life, he is passionate about exploring the relationship between informed partnerships and social justice for young people in remote

8.15 – 8.30am

8.45am	10.00am	11.00am	12.00 noon
First bus leaves for airport (Perth delegates depart at 10.10am)	Second bus leaves for airport	Third bus leaves for airport	Final bus leaves for airport

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- Jenny Allen (Chair, Remote Services Working Party) • Peter Cain • Jenny Dobson • Gerrie Mitra • Catherine Phillips • Karen Phillips

Conference wrap up and close