

I refer to the discussion paper for the review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education that highlights key educational challenges and issues that impact on the learning outcomes of regional, rural and remote students. It aims to create a springboard for fresh ideas to improve outcomes for these students.

Across Australia Indigenous communities are being impacted by the implementation of the Native Title outcomes such as the Indigenous Land Usage Agreements (ILUA). It has been well recorded that Native Title implications see the transfer of various parcels of land across to the Traditional Owners in various land tenures. This transfer of land places enormous responsibility upon the Aboriginal communities to manage the land and Indigenous community organisations are being pressured into becoming land managers without proper accreditation or skill sets. Hence the development of the Nyoongar NRM Pathway project being trailed in the Wheatbelt region of the Single Nyoongar Claimant area in the South West of Western Australia.

The Nyoongar NRM Pathway project is to rationalise the existing educational resources available and to increase cultural knowledge into the school curriculum to partner up with the scientific knowledge in regard to land management specifically targeting the regional industries such as agriculture, environment, culture and civil construction. The long-term targets are renewable energy and food security but to establish these four pillars of education and to enable the Nyoongar community to become leaders and major participants within these sectors a large investment is required to build the Nyoongar community's capacity in land management. This project will encourage the development of partnerships with the schools, local government, TAFES, higher education providers, specialist program schools in agriculture, NGO's, government and the Aboriginal community.

We wished to present our Nyoongar NRM Pathway (NNP) pilot project as an example of the kind of approach to regional education for Indigenous students we believe should be encouraged. Particularly in response to questions under sections 6.1 (Curriculum), 6.4 (Community) and 6.8 (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders).

The importance of place in the design and implementation of education in the Melbourne Declaration and repeated in Professor Halsey's discussion paper is welcomed. We know that any pathway to economic development requires investment in education. Indeed, education is investment in the human capital that is vital for robust and sustainable development. For this to be successful, education should support the current and future needs of students and their communities with the importance of place at the centre.

Education investment for future of Aboriginal communities in regional Australia must consider the ~~role~~ consequences and impacts of Native Title. In the context of Aboriginal communities and any future utilisation or benefit from Native Title, that education investment should be guided by long term considerations of

natural and social capital as well:

- **Social Capital Investment:** Education that recognises the role and importance of culture and fosters improved networks and community partnerships.
- **Natural Capital Investment:** Education that improves the ability for communities to maintain their natural assets, manage resources in a sustainable way, that supports economic independence and derives benefit from ecosystem services.

For Australia's First Nation peoples, their social and natural capital is already deeply embedded within their culture through their cultural responsibility to care for country. Therefore, education pathways that support sustainable development and capitalising on Native Title must successfully weave culture, community and the natural sciences into the education journey of future generations.

The NNP pilot seeks to establish education pathways that maximise the human and social capital within the next generation to assume the cultural, economic and ecological responsibilities of future land management. These pathways integrate local traditional ecological knowledge and cultural connections with education, scholarship, training and employment programs for local Nyoongar youths to develop them into future land managers, business owners and teachers who can take advantage of future opportunities in agriculture, NRM and regional economies while maintaining their cultural ties.

The project seeks to harness four important assumptions together:

1. **Caring for Country:** Participating in caring for country tied to improvements in social, economic and environmental wellbeing;
2. **Education:** Investment in education and skills is vital to sustainable and equitable economic development;
3. **Traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge are complementary.** They are not mutually exclusive, and should be harnessed together; and
4. **Capacity and authority:** Local leadership, cultural authority and knowledge and partnerships are the necessary base for successful implementation.

Each of these assumptions is evidence based from research both here in Australia and overseas and we believe to be mutually supporting of one and other.

The project will endeavour to instil cultural change within the Ballardong Nyoongar community by the following processes:

- The intergenerational transfer of traditional cultural knowledge from the Elders

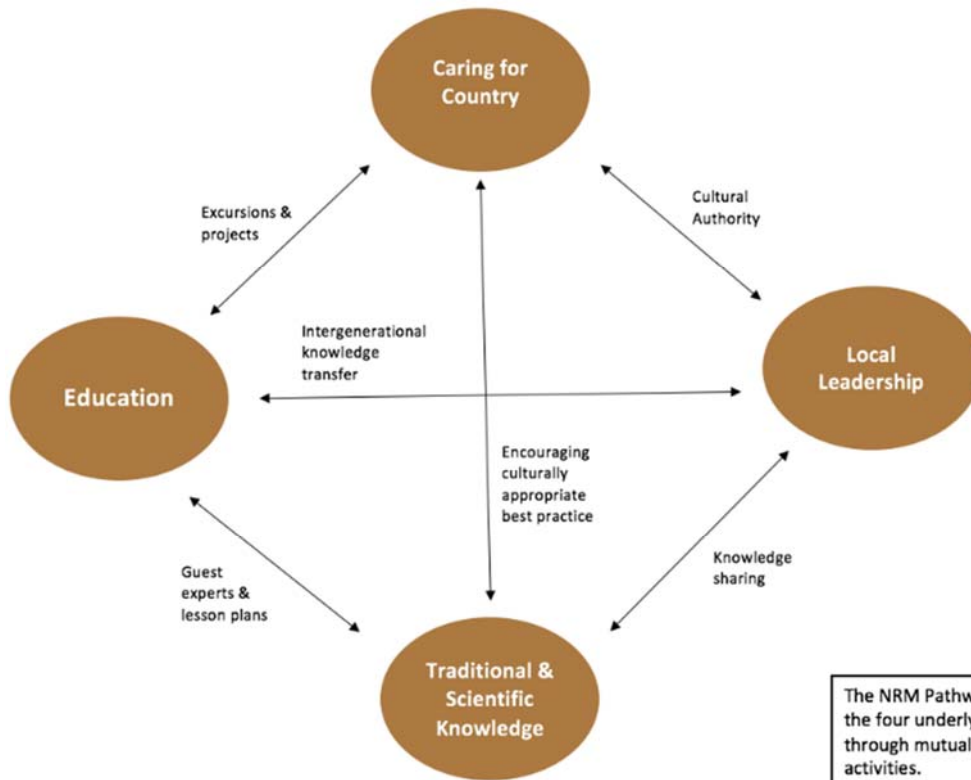
to the young people to ensure the protection of the Nyoongar culture

- The cooperation and support of the local school to include Nyoongar culture into the school and class plans over 2017 and 2018
- The establishment of the Ballardong Elders Council to provide an authoritative focus for cultural knowledge and protocols and which will encourage and support the Nyoongar NRM Pathway project.

Current Pilot Project Interventions:

1. Recruiting and engaging teachers, initially Quairading District High School, to incorporate local traditional knowledge along with the natural sciences into classroom activities and lessons.
2. Establishing linkages between schools, local organisations, university scientists and Elders through:
 - a) Forming Ballardong Elders' Council to guide activities, advise teachers and provide cultural authority to various regional development and NRM activities.
 - b) Signing MOUs with local government, schools and businesses to secure ongoing support and participation.
 - c) Class incursions and excursions with elders, academics and community leaders.
3. Establishing formal pathways across primary, secondary and tertiary education, including Muresk College, that:
 - a) Support the retainment of skills and employment opportunities on Ballardong country
 - b) Provide clear options and pathways to employment and tertiary education
 - c) Foster innovation, entrepreneurship and business skills in future Nyoongar generations.

These interventions are designed to bring together the four key assumptions outlined above:



The NRM Pathways project exploits the four underlying convictions through mutually reinforcing activities.