

# Job Aspirations

of Young Indigenous People in the  
East Kimberley: Making New Tracks

Research Project Report

September 2008



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# **JOB ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE EAST KIMBERLEY: *MAKING NEW TRACKS***

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**Kulunga Research Network  
Telethon Institute for Child Health Research**

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*The views contained within this report are not necessarily those held by the Wunan Foundation or East Kimberley Job Pathways (EKJP). This report is an independent research project commissioned by the Wunan Foundation.*

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Most importantly, we want to thank the many young Aboriginal people who participated in interviews, focus groups and formal and informal discussions. We appreciate their honesty and sincerity in discussing their hopes, dreams and aspirations as well as their perceptions regarding the barriers, supports and solutions necessary to achieve them. We respectfully acknowledge that their stories and responses ranged from very raw and disturbing experiences to hopeful, promising and inspiring aspirations. It was evident from the discussions that these young people's lives and experiences so far have already had negative and/or positive and productive impacts on their ability, aspirations and motivations. Some of their responses indicated complete resignation while others showed incredible resilience. Their willingness to share their experiences and insightful observations has provided very meaningful and important information which cannot be ignored and needs to be acted upon.

Hopefully, the findings based on young people's stories, together with the relevant literature, will provide all relevant stakeholders, including Aboriginal families and communities, with a greater understanding of the issues and a commitment to act.

Please note – throughout this report the terms 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' are used interchangeably and refer to those people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. The authors recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not a homogenous group. The term 'Indigenous' is used to reflect this diversity.

*Indigenous Australians dream of a future that results in getting a job that makes a difference to community and social issues, however, their perceptions of what is attainable are limited by external factors that seem to impede Indigenous students imagining (as a basis for shaping and creating) their preferred future. (Craven, Parente & Marsh 2003, p13.)*

*Youth participation must lie at the centre of the creation of policies for youth. Just as the recipient of any policy must be engaged to ensure their concerns are effectively addressed, youth are no exception. They must be viewed as partners in devising solutions to common concerns. Rather than being viewed as a problem or risk to be contained or solved, youth should be recognized as social actors with skills and capacities to bring about constructive resolutions to their own problems. Policy makers should not only invite young people into policy discussions but also listen and act upon their advice. (Youth Employment Network (YEN) 2007)*

# Executive Summary

The research was commissioned by East Kimberley Job Pathways (EKJP), a subsidiary of the Wunan Foundation Inc., in early 2007 to identify the study and career aspirations of Aboriginal young people and to better understand why they experience difficulties in accessing employment in the East Kimberley. Research was undertaken with Aboriginal people aged 15-25 years living in the towns of Wyndham, Kununurra, Halls Creek and the communities of Kulumburu and Warmun. The study findings and recommendations are informed by perspectives of Aboriginal young people representing the different family and language groups in the East Kimberley and relevant stakeholders.

The research findings reveal a range of complex issues regarding Indigenous people's aspirations for training and career options, especially the many barriers they experience. There is a range of external factors that impede the formation and realisation of Indigenous young people's job aspirations and goals and limit their capacity to maximise available opportunities. These factors include: educational status (literacy and numeracy ability); health status (physical and emotional wellbeing and levels of substance use); contact with the criminal justice system; cultural and community obligations; and, lack of knowledge, understanding or valuing of the relevance of the wider social systems on future outcomes. These interrelated factors impact directly on young Indigenous people's ability and capacity to define and solve problems, make informed choices, determine their own priorities and act on them, and actively engage in the social and economic opportunities within the wider society in order to contribute to meaningful and sustainable Aboriginal community futures.

## Key fieldwork findings—barriers

The fieldwork component of the research identified several factors that can be a significant barrier to Indigenous youth in the East Kimberley achieving their educational and employment aspirations. These include:

- lack of appropriate housing including supported accommodation;
- lack of transport to school or work;
- low literacy levels;
- lack of work opportunities that support Indigenous cultural values and lifestyles;
- the prevalence of racism and alienation;
- high levels of alcohol and substance use;
- teenage pregnancy;
- lack of parental support;
- lack of peer support; and,
- financial difficulties.

The lack of aspirations among both young females and males was evident in all sites across the East Kimberley. Many of the young girls still at school stated that their sole aspiration is to have children. They see having children early as a real job, and parent support and child allowances as the payment for that job so they do not worry about studying to get another job. Many of these young girls have very poor literacy and numeracy skills and did not appear to understand the long term implications of low school achievement. These findings reinforce a picture of continuing transgenerational disadvantage – as identified in the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS) findings which highlight that children whose parents have not achieved well at school and not worked are more likely to have poor academic outcomes (Zubrick et al 2006).

The direct payment of mining royalties to family groups rather than to community trusts for the benefit of all community members was also identified as a disincentive to Aboriginal young people's study and job aspirations. Several stakeholders were critical of existing arrangements that are 'promoting a new form of 'welfarism' which generates passivism' rather than enhancing 'individual and community work opportunities and sustainable community development'. They claim that part of the problem lies in the absence of a long term vision and strategic direction by the communities after 'decades of just living for survival'. One participant described the 'mix of this colonial legacy alongside the new monies as a potent recipe for disaster'. Some Indigenous stakeholders were critical of the lack of services and employment opportunities being developed for their community's benefit through existing mining agreements.

## Key fieldwork findings—solutions

Many of the issues and the solutions identified by young people were common to each of the five sites. For example, young people stressed the need for a range of positive, preventative strategies including:

- the need to focus on the early years, to 'catch the young people now'; 'do something with kids at primary school'; 'get them linked in before it's too late';
- early opportunities for young people to visit major cities to 'expand their horizons of what is possible in the future';
- health promotion at school (to prevent teenage pregnancies) and 'support young girls who are getting pregnant to stay at school';
- mentor and leadership programs;
- the establishment of scholarships, traineeships and apprenticeships linked with mentoring; and, supported accommodation;
- practical courses to promote life skills and build confidence and resilience;
- courses in all East Kimberley schools from K-12 which acknowledge and recognise the strengths of Aboriginal cultures 'to make young kids proud of their Aboriginality instead of shamed';
- greater access to communication and information for young people and their families about courses and career options and the steps needed to achieve these;
- greater focus on leadership initiatives to promote positive role models and opportunities;
- improved sport and recreation services and the employment of Aboriginal youth officers; and,
- 'provision of day care to get young mothers back into study and the workplace'.

Several young people stressed that the patterns of poor school attendance and poor academic performance are entrenched from a very early age, highlighting the need for strategies to engage Aboriginal families and communities. This is supported by the WAACHS, which outlines that it is vital that Aboriginal families participate in and provide children with early learning opportunities to prepare them for school (Zubrick et al. 2006).

Several participants identified the need to provide arts and drama scholarships for Aboriginal students as incentives to stay in high school, similar to the opportunities in football through the Clontarf Football Program. The benefits of such strategies are confirmed by international studies. An extended study in the US between 1987 and 1998 showed how non-school based arts programs in disadvantaged communities were effective in re-engaging young people with learning and with their communities (Heath, Soep & Roach 1998). Discussions with key stakeholders and young people indicate that radio

and media training is a viable option for job based training for Indigenous young people in the East Kimberley. It also presents a way for young people to express themselves and reconnect with learning and the wider community.

Young people in all sites identified the need for strategies, resources and programs to assist young people to reduce alcohol and substance abuse. There was general agreement that young people needed to:

- be given the opportunity to have culturally appropriate counselling and support;
- be encouraged to move from families who were drinking to live in supported accommodation;
- be aware that people 'worried about their drinking and were prepared to help them back on track'; and,
- attend camps to talk about culture and learn about things like painting, gathering bush food and bush medicine (females); hunting and mustering (males) 'so they can get a clear head and get strong in themselves'.

While there were many common themes, the findings also confirmed the diversity of aspirations and experiences among Indigenous young people in the different sites. The factors that support or inhibit goals often differed by site, hence different strategies were proposed by young people for maintaining or overcoming these factors, depending on where they lived. Young people in Kununurra and Wyndham identified the need for young people to have a greater voice and level of representation in decision making about youth issues in the East Kimberley.

## Key fieldwork findings—supports

Many of the young people emphasised the important role of their parents, family, teachers and peers in achieving their dreams and aspirations regarding study and work. Most participants agreed that 'getting a good education', 'parent support' and their 'own motivation and determination' are critical for their success. The majority of young people stated that both family and teacher support are important influences on educational achievement. Students who were participating and achieving well at school identified the importance of teachers who believe in and respect them on their own terms, but at the same time set high expectations to participate in the mainstream society.

## Future opportunities and challenges

The study findings and recommendations confirm the relevance of existing projects developed under the East Kimberley Regional Partnership Agreements (EK RPA). The EK RPA aims to place at least 300 additional Indigenous people in jobs each year over a five year period, to reduce unemployment by 50 percent by 2011 and equalise Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment rates within 10 years (HREOC 2006, Ch3). Five projects have been established to achieve these targets with additional projects to be developed during the course of the agreement. These projects and programs are intended to improve education and training, motivation and mentoring, business development and childcare. The projects focus on education, training and apprenticeships, as well as programs to develop long-term skills that will build broad community capacity and contribute to the sustainable economic development of the region. Training in areas such as engineering, building and maintenance will be targeted to enable individuals to service current mining operations and other aspects of community infrastructure.

The research findings and key reports of the Aboriginal Social and Economic Impacts Assessment (ASEIA) and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) (2006) in particular, affirm the need for genuine commitment by state and Australian government agencies to adopt, apply and promote the use of the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage (OID) framework in developing, monitoring and assessing all local programs and initiatives pertaining to Indigenous education, health employment and wellbeing outcomes (Appendix 1). This will require a broad, whole of community, whole of government approach – involving partnerships between communities, local, state and Australian government and non-government agencies and Aboriginal community organisations in order to provide the necessary preventative strategies and interventions at key transition points in the transgenerational and human capability development continuum (see Appendix 2: Model for Investment in Human Capability Expansion).

The research findings are based on extensive consultation with Aboriginal groups affected by the agreements and should inform future implementation of the RPA. They provide crucial information for monitoring and assessing the outcomes against the targets set out in the employment projects developed under the EK RPA. Several stakeholders identified a lack of human and financial resources as a barrier to their effective participation and delivery. The HREOC report on the EK RPA recommends:

- an assessment of resource allocations to ensure that Aboriginal community organisations can participate fully and effectively in ongoing negotiations to achieve the EK RPA objectives and meet the increased administrative workloads and reporting requirements of the RPA; and,
- a more effective and coordinated communication and dissemination strategy including resources and training to ensure that Indigenous organisations can understand and manage the information related to the RPA (HREOC 2006).

Both the field research and the literature confirm that community and family pressures and the high number of life stress events impact on young people's abilities to develop and pursue goals for their future (Zubrick et al 2006; Silburn et al 2006). Industry, other training and employment stakeholders and policy makers need to take these pressures into account when developing initiatives to engage Indigenous young people in vocational training and employment. There is a level of frustration and cynicism among stakeholders that even when they establish programs Aboriginal people 'just don't turn up'. There is ample literature to suggest that the reasons for apparent disengagement or lack of commitment need to be understood and considered within the broader social, cultural and historical contexts in which people live. According to one key informant the priority is 'family first, then family, then family, and then everything else after that—on any given day we can rate on the bottom of the priority list but there are ways of setting things up to accommodate these issues; just need to take it slow and be consistent and persistent'. The HREOC places these issues within a cultural rights framework and claims that:

*Ultimately all matters that potentially impede employment must be canvassed in the interests of assisting the Indigenous people of the East Kimberley to develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests. (HREOC 2006)*

While some of the literature highlights the negative or restrictive influence of cultural and community values on Indigenous young people's job aspirations, cultural factors can also play a positive role in the decisions Indigenous young people make about the types of training and employment they wish to pursue. The findings show that 'doing work to help my family/community' is a powerful motivating force for many young people. Several authors (Burgess, Johnson, Bowman & Whitehead 2005; Rose 1996; Smyth 1994) suggest that 'caring for country' encompasses more than the physical management of a geographical area—it involves looking after all of the values, places, resources, stories, and cultural obligations associated with that area, as well as associated processes of spiritual renewal, connecting with ancestors, food provision, and maintaining kin relations. They argue that there are a range of socio-cultural and economic benefits provided by the engagement of Indigenous people in land and sea

management. These include increased self-esteem and confidence, reduced social alienation and the promotion of health benefits in remote communities. Significantly, Burgess (2007) provides preliminary biomedical evidence that high levels of Indigenous engagement in natural and cultural resource management are associated with significantly better health outcomes for participants.

## Need for a system-wide, transgenerational approach to increase employment

Across the East Kimberley many young people appeared completely disengaged from any formal structures including school and the CDEP scheme. In some sites only a few young people are participating in a CDEP scheme while high numbers have left school and are unemployed. Many young people appear unaware of the education, training and employment options available for them, the majority come from families who have never left their community and do not work. They are reluctant to leave their community to access existing opportunities. The findings confirm a lack of role models, limited skills sets and a lack of confidence, and an absence of work culture with very few Aboriginal community adults engaging in training and employment. These factors, coupled with the pressures from family to stay in their communities and the limited education and training opportunities available within communities, are a powerful force working against young people's goal and aspiration formation.

Responses from young people and stakeholders in the communities and towns confirm that young people's lack of confidence, poor academic outcomes, cultural and community obligations and lack of role models or work opportunities outside of CDEP are key determining factors and barriers to the formation of their job aspirations and to their decisions regarding education, training and employment. Furthermore, disadvantage with regard to employment starts early with low levels of school engagement and academic performance and is exacerbated where there is a lack of parental support, responsibility and community care for children's futures.

While the literature tends to focus on disengagement as an individual, private and personal problem, increasingly, research and programs regard disengagement as a public issue that implicates schools, families, communities and systems (Schlechty 2002). The study findings confirm the need for a system-wide, transgenerational approach to address the existing crisis and issues in Aboriginal education and employment in the East Kimberley. The reported levels of racism experienced by Aboriginal young people and the reported widespread lack of care by parents, agencies and the wider community suggests that wide-ranging strategies are needed which encompass: cross-cultural competence and cultural security training for all sectors of workforce; community-based training in positive parenting and early child development for Aboriginal families; commitment and enactment of culturally inclusive curriculum in all schools; and, community level intervention strategies to address alcohol and substance use among Indigenous people, targeting young people aged 12-25 years. The need for training in Indigenous governance and youth representation was also identified as critical to bring about positive change in education and employment outcomes in the future.

*The findings confirm that children's early years of schooling need to be incorporated in any strategy seeking to address the employment options for Indigenous people and their job aspirations, as well as the need to develop programs which address parent's literacy and numeracy needs and enhance their ability and capacity to engage with and support their children's education needs as an effective strategy to support young Indigenous people's futures.*



# Recommendations

There are a range of recommendations discussed throughout this report including those identified by young Indigenous people in the East Kimberley as well as those reiterated from other key reports and relevant research studies (such as the Aboriginal Social and Economic Impacts Assessment (ASEIA), HREOC 2006, and the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS) – all of which have been endorsed by Indigenous people). Many of the recommendations proposed here are tactical and need to be incorporated at a program level by service providers in education and employment. Others however, are strategic level recommendations and are relevant to a wider range of stakeholders in the East Kimberley.

The recommendations are designed to strengthen and widen the employment opportunities of Indigenous young people and to assist in building the job aspirations of this important East Kimberley group. It is recommended:

- That the recommendations from major reports of relevance to employment, education, human capacity building and social justice should be revisited by key stakeholders in government and non-government sectors to ensure they have been, or are being, implemented in existing programs and practices.
- That programs be developed and implemented that allow Indigenous young people in the East Kimberley to discover what employment and education opportunities exist within and outside the region. This includes opportunities under the East Kimberley RPA and Ord Enhancement Scheme agreements.
- That more hands-on information is provided to Indigenous young people to illustrate their education and employment options.
- That all key stakeholders address the existing crisis and issues in Aboriginal education and employment in the East Kimberley using a system-wide, transgenerational approach. This should draw on the recommendations and findings of the WAACHS, with particular regard for the principles outlined in the fourth volume (Strengthening the Capacity of Indigenous Children, Families and Communities).

## Youth representation

- That processes and structures are put in place to facilitate youth representation in each site and at the regional level to ensure youth engagement and input into youth programs and policies.

## Communication

- That effective systems for information sharing are established between government agencies and service and program providers to avoid duplication, identify continuing gaps and ensure young people are aware of their options for training and employment.

## Education and the early years

- That key stakeholders use the results of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) and National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (previously WALNA) to ascertain levels of vulnerability for young children at a population level in order to reorient services to support school readiness, child health and wellbeing and literacy attainment throughout the school years.

- That strategies seeking to address the employment options and job aspirations of Indigenous people incorporate initiatives that aim to improve outcomes for children in the early years of schooling.
- That programs which address parental literacy and numeracy needs and enhance their ability and capacity to engage with and support their children should be developed as a priority.
- That sustained effort is applied to lifting child and youth numeracy and literacy levels across the region.

### **Leadership and mentoring**

- That relevant government agencies provide increased financial support for leadership and mentor programs for Indigenous youth.

### **Pathways and choices**

- That community-level intervention strategies to address alcohol and substance use among Indigenous people should be supported – targeting young people aged 12-25 years.
- That self-protection programs be implemented with Indigenous youth across the region.
- That assistance and support is provided for Indigenous young people exploring education and employment opportunities outside the region. This includes planning career options for those returning from education experiences in other regions and states/territories.

### **Reconciliation and social justice**

- That wide-ranging strategies are implemented which encompass cross-cultural competence and cultural security training for all sectors of the workforce.
- That community-based training in positive parenting and early child development for Aboriginal families is implemented widely.
- That there is commitment and enactment of culturally inclusive curriculum in all schools.
- That training in Indigenous governance is delivered across the region to bring about positive change in education and employment outcomes in the future.

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFL	Australian Football League
AIEOs	Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers
ASEIA	Aboriginal Social and Economic Impacts Assessment
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CYPI	Cape York Policy Institute
DET	Western Australian Department of Education and Training
DEST	(former) Department of Education, Science and Training
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DIA	Western Australian Department of Indigenous Affairs
EK	East Kimberley
EKADC	East Kimberley Aboriginal Development Corporation
EKJP	East Kimberley Job Pathways
GATE	Gaining Access to Training and Employment
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
ICC	Indigenous Coordination Centre
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
KDT	Kimberley Dreamtime Tours
KGT	Kimberley Group Training
KLC	Kimberley Land Council
LORI	Level of Relative Isolation
MCA	Mineral Council of Australia
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MG	Miriuwung Gajerrong
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NBEET	National Board of Employment, Education and Training
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd
NT	Northern Territory

OECD	Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
OES	Ord Enhancement Scheme
OFA	Ord Final Agreement
OID	Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage
POWER	Parents Overcoming Work and Education Restrictions
RIADIC	Recommendations into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
RPA	Regional Partnership Agreement
TAFE	Training and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WA	Western Australia
WALFA	West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement
WAFL	Western Australian Football League
WAACHS	Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey
WA CHS	Western Australian Child Health Survey
YEN	Youth Employment Network

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# 1. Introduction

This research project was commissioned by the East Kimberley Job Pathways (EKJP), a subsidiary of the Wunan Foundation Inc., to better understand why Indigenous young people experience difficulties in accessing employment. Two recent studies undertaken by Wunan Foundation have identified the need for urgent action to increase sustainable employment outcomes to address high rates of unemployment among young Indigenous people across the East Kimberley (Goddard & Anderson 2006). At the time of the study the EKJP noted that of the estimated 843 young Indigenous people aged 15-24 years living in the East Kimberley region, some 79.3% were either unemployed or on CDEP (EKJP, 2006). Indigenous people comprise some 39% of the population and the overall unemployment figure for the East Kimberley is reported as 6.9%, making it apparent that Indigenous young people are significantly over represented in the unemployment figures.

At the same time, other studies have identified good long-term employment opportunities across a wide range of local industries (Stride Consulting Pty Ltd 2007). However, for a range of reasons Aboriginal people in the region are unable to access these employment opportunities to establish sustainable futures for themselves and their communities.

## 1.1 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference identified by Wunan Foundation are as follows:

1. Discuss and consult with Indigenous community members to obtain their views, aspirations and needs towards employment, both locally and out of the region;
2. Identify the barriers or concerns Indigenous people face with employment;
3. Identify 'natural' supports that individuals and groups may see as relevant and useful and provide ideas to strengthen these;
4. Identify training modes necessary to provide local Aboriginal young people with the skills to successfully gain jobs; and,
5. Provide all relevant stakeholders with a briefing on strategies needed to engage local Aboriginal people in education and/or training initiatives to enhance their employment opportunities.

## 1.2 Research aims

The main aim of the research was to identify the views, aspirations, motivations, and needs of Indigenous young people in the East Kimberley region towards employment, both locally and out of the region. The research also sought to identify and further understand the barriers or concerns that Indigenous young people face with employment, their existing supports and to develop possible solutions to improve Indigenous employment outcomes.

## 1.3 Methodology

The research methodology involved the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. In addition to conducting a comprehensive literature review, the Project Team undertook fieldwork to obtain the perspectives of young Indigenous people. Their perspectives were documented, collated and analysed to identify the diversities and similarities of local needs and circumstances within the five different case study sites.

In the initial phase of the research we sought advice and assistance from Indigenous personnel in the Kununurra Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC) and the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA), and through key Indigenous incorporated bodies. The Project Team consulted with a range of relevant stakeholders including Aboriginal community members, government agencies, service providers and key personnel linked to each of the communities and towns. Where possible, two team members participated in the fieldwork to enable the appropriate facilitation and recording of focus groups and key informant discussions.

The project team was committed to ensuring methodological appropriateness in the collection of all information throughout the research and worked to ensure that the process remained culturally secure and able to accommodate specific gender sensitivities.

A total of 110 Aboriginal young people participated in focus groups and 27 key informant interviews were held with relevant stakeholders.

### Qualitative data collection and analysis

Qualitative data provides contextual meaning and generates a legitimate evidence base to inform population studies and programmatic evaluations. The collection of qualitative data enabled the research team to identify the barriers to both accessing and providing appropriate education and employment outcomes for young Indigenous people in the East Kimberley. It also enabled the project team to find out what young people in the region know about education, training and career programs and initiatives currently available, and to obtain their views as to ways these could be enhanced.

The use of qualitative data enabled the team to identify and more accurately reflect the complexity of the issues relating to Aboriginal young people's experiences. The findings reveal the diversities and similarities of local needs and circumstances across the different sites and facilitates an examination of what processes could be used in different locations. An emphasis was placed on accessing a range of people to ensure an adequate account of people's different experiences and views.

### Fieldwork

The project team conducted the fieldwork in accordance with local cultural protocols and ethical guidelines for doing research in Indigenous contexts (NHMRC). Initial contact with communities was undertaken through the appropriate Aboriginal stakeholders. Field visits and interviews were arranged by phone, email or letter. Every attempt was made to consult with at least 25 Indigenous people and other key stakeholders in each of the five sites. The research team used a range of flexible and context sensitive data collection methods to gather information relevant to local circumstances; the particular situation; the nature of the information being sought; and, stakeholders involved. These methods included focus groups, small group workshops, one-to-one interviews and telephone interviews. Decisions regarding whether to hold focus group meetings or individual interviews were made on the basis of the availability, willingness and the informed consent of participants.

Focus groups and interviews were held with key stakeholders and Indigenous young people at schools, CDEP organisations, community centres, local Aboriginal corporations and youth-based service organisations. Open ended questions and interview prompts were used throughout each of these processes. The project team also invited a number of focus group participants to participate in further discussions about a range of issues. Most young people opted to participate in the focus groups.

Where young people had low literacy levels the research team, often assisted by teachers, worked in small groups to brainstorm their ideas and write them up. As the discussions took place and students became more confident, individual student's answers developed considerably from their initial responses. Several schools conducted workshops with students prior to our visit to encourage young people to think about their job aspirations. Members of the research team also attended events such as career expo days and participated in workshops held by external facilitators to explore young people's aspirations.

In each location attempts were made to interview several key Aboriginal informants or representatives from local families, however, the final number of meetings and interviews were circumscribed by people's agreement, availability and willingness to participate within the scheduled visits. The consultative process was guided by the need to accommodate the capacity of community members to engage and participate. Stakeholders were invited to participate via e-mail. Follow-up was undertaken via telephone and email where necessary.

Participants were given a written and verbal explanation of the project and their prospective role within it. Informed consent was sought and participants were informed that they were free to withdraw themselves and/or their information from the research process at any time. All respondents were guaranteed anonymity within the research project and its outcomes.

Young Indigenous people were asked questions to identify:

- What they would like to be doing in the future?
- What they see as possible in relation to work?
- What opportunities they see?
- What things they think could get in the way of having a job and why?
- What things they believe help them reach their dreams?
- What things they think need to change or improve to help them achieve their dreams and aspirations in study or work.

## **Quantitative data analysis**

The report draws primarily on data from the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS) – a unique, large-scale survey of Aboriginal children aged under 18 years which was conducted throughout WA in 2000-2002. The survey examined the social determinants of health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people, including the factors enabling and hindering the labour force participation of young Aboriginal people. This report also examines the influence of carer characteristics on labour force participation, and carer's perceptions of access to services. These findings are supplemented by data from other surveys and include population and demographic characteristics from the ABS Census of Population and Housing.

## Level of Relative Isolation

The WAACHS uses the Level of Relative Isolation (LORI) classification to identify and compare how geographic location influences health, education, employment and wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal children, families and communities. There are five levels of relative isolation or LORI groups ranging from none in the Perth Metropolitan area to low (e.g. Geraldton, Kalgoorlie), to moderate (e.g. Broome) to High (e.g. Kalumburu) to Extreme (e.g. Ringers Soak, Mulan). Each of these groups reflects differences in cultures and access to services.

### 1.4 Ethics approval

Ethics approval was obtained through the University of Western Australia's Research Ethics Committee to carry out the research in accordance with the NHMRC research standards for conducting research in Indigenous contexts. All participants were provided with written information about the project and their prospective role within it. Their informed consent was obtained, and reassurance was given that they could withdraw themselves and/or their information from the process. All respondents were guaranteed anonymity.

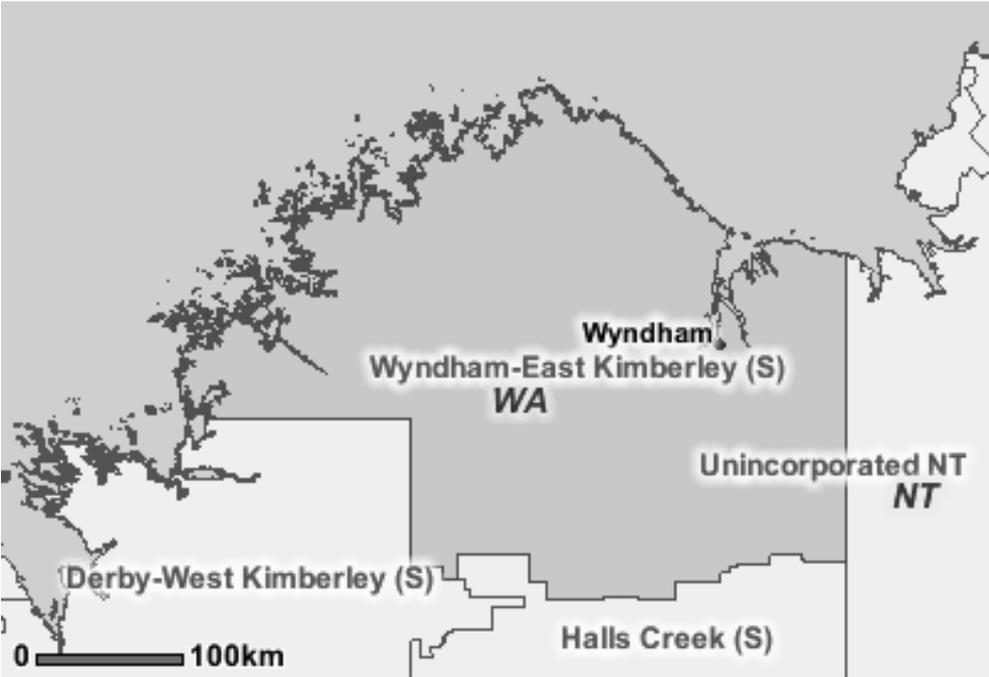
### 1.5 Unplanned benefits

One of the potential benefits of conducting community-based participatory research involves the active engagement and empowerment of the participants in the research process and information sharing and capacity building. While gathering information from several participants it became apparent that people were interested in finding out about Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and university courses in Aboriginal health, teacher education and community management. The research team provided information about various study block programs being offered through Curtin University, Notre Dame University and other universities.

This proved a valuable process—as a consequence of these discussions several people have expressed interest in applying for study in these courses. Further, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in two Aboriginal community organisations expressed an interest in supporting existing staff paid under CDEP arrangements to become involved in further study. Two young people in one community have subsequently been accepted into University.

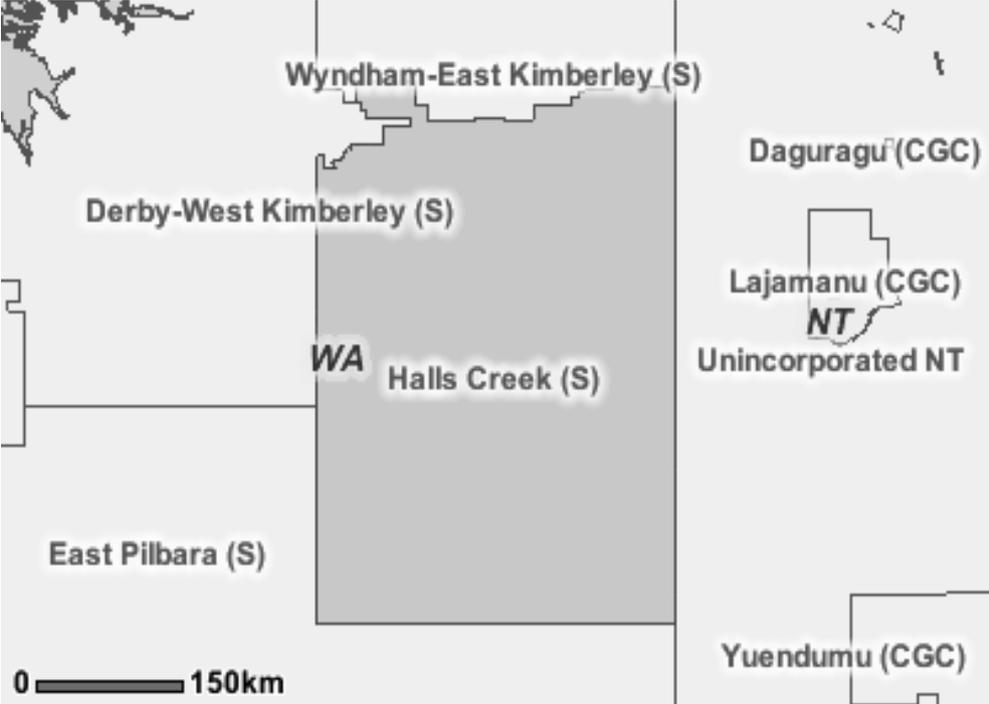
The following maps show the areas covered in the report.

**FIGURE 1: MAP OF WYNDHAM/EAST KIMBERLEY**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

**FIGURE 2: MAP OF THE HALLS CREEK REGION**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics.



## 2. The Local Context

This section examines the population size and geographic dispersion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in the East Kimberley region to provide a greater understanding of the implications for employment and economic and social development for the region. The East Kimberley region has a population of around 15,000 people, of which approximately 40 per cent are Indigenous people. The region has a particularly young population with approximately 40 per cent under the age of 25 years. Of those under 25 years, approximately 60 per cent are Indigenous people. Over the next decade, the Indigenous population in the region is projected to grow by around 35 per cent.

### 2.1 Profile of East Kimberley Aboriginal population

Population estimates from the census indicate that the total population in the Kununurra ICC region was 9,237 in 2006, of which approximately 47% (4,337) were Aboriginal. Although the proportion of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population in the Kununurra ICC region is fairly similar, the distribution of Aboriginal people within the Kununurra region varies between different geographic areas and levels of isolation.

Further, as shown in Figure 3 below, the distribution of Aboriginal children (aged 0-17 years) throughout the Kununurra ICC is notably different to the distribution within each LORI and ICC region across WA. For example, the majority of children 0-17 years in the Narrogin, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie ICC tend to be distributed in the lower LORI, while in the Broome, South Hedland, Derby and Kununurra ICC regions the majority of children live in the moderate LORI. Approximately 53 per cent of Aboriginal children in Kununurra tend to live in high or extreme LORI with Warburton the only ICC region in WA with a greater proportion of children in the extreme LORI. The high population distribution across the high and extreme LORI in the Kununurra ICC generates a unique set of challenges and opportunities for the strategic development of future employment and study opportunities for Indigenous young people.

**FIGURE 3: PROPORTION OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN BY ICC REGION & LORI**

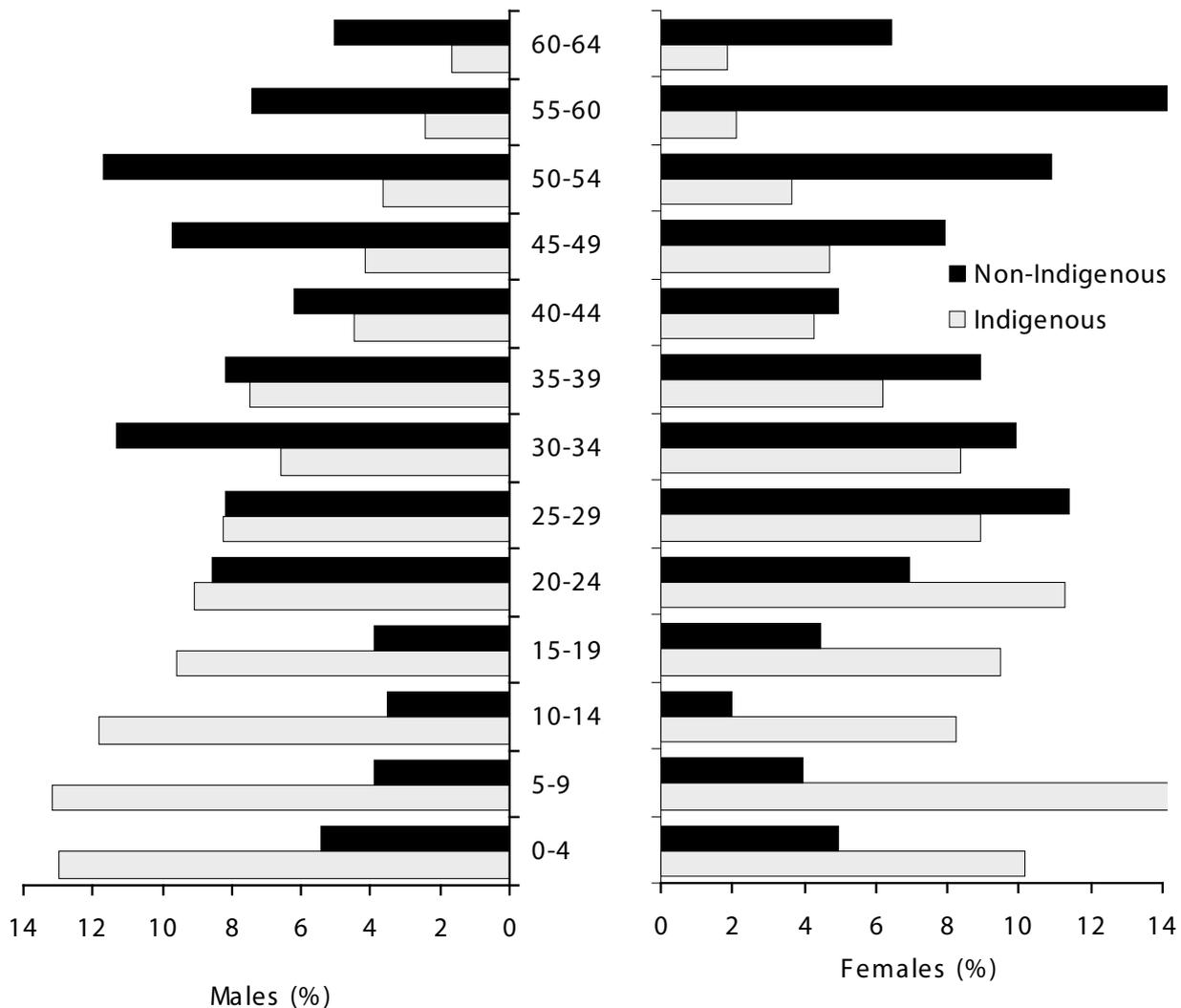
ICC region	None	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
	Proportion (%)				
Perth	94.9	5.1			
Narrogin		97.1	2.9		
Kalgoorlie		71.4	8.4	14.9	5.3
Geraldton		56.7	30.5	9.0	3.8
Broome			65.4	34.6	
South Hedland			69.9	30.1	
Derby			55.3	21.6	23.1
Kununurra			47.0	21.7	31.3
Warburton			1.3	19.4	79.3

Source: Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey 2006.

These are relatively small numbers of Aboriginal children when compared with the number of Aboriginal children and young people living in the metropolitan, Narrogin, Kalgoorlie and Geraldton ICCs. Nevertheless, a high proportion of Aboriginal children in the East Kimberley live in remote and extreme LORI which contributes to the issues and challenges that need to be addressed in overcoming barriers to increase the education, training and employment opportunities in the region.

The variations in the distribution of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population across age groups living in the Kununurra ICC region further highlights the issues, challenges and opportunities that need to be taken into account in addressing Indigenous employment. A considerably greater proportion of Aboriginal people were aged 0-24 years than non-Aboriginal people. Conversely, there is a greater concentration of non-Aboriginal people at older ages (particularly in the age groups above 45 years), partly reflecting the higher life expectancy of non-Aboriginal people.

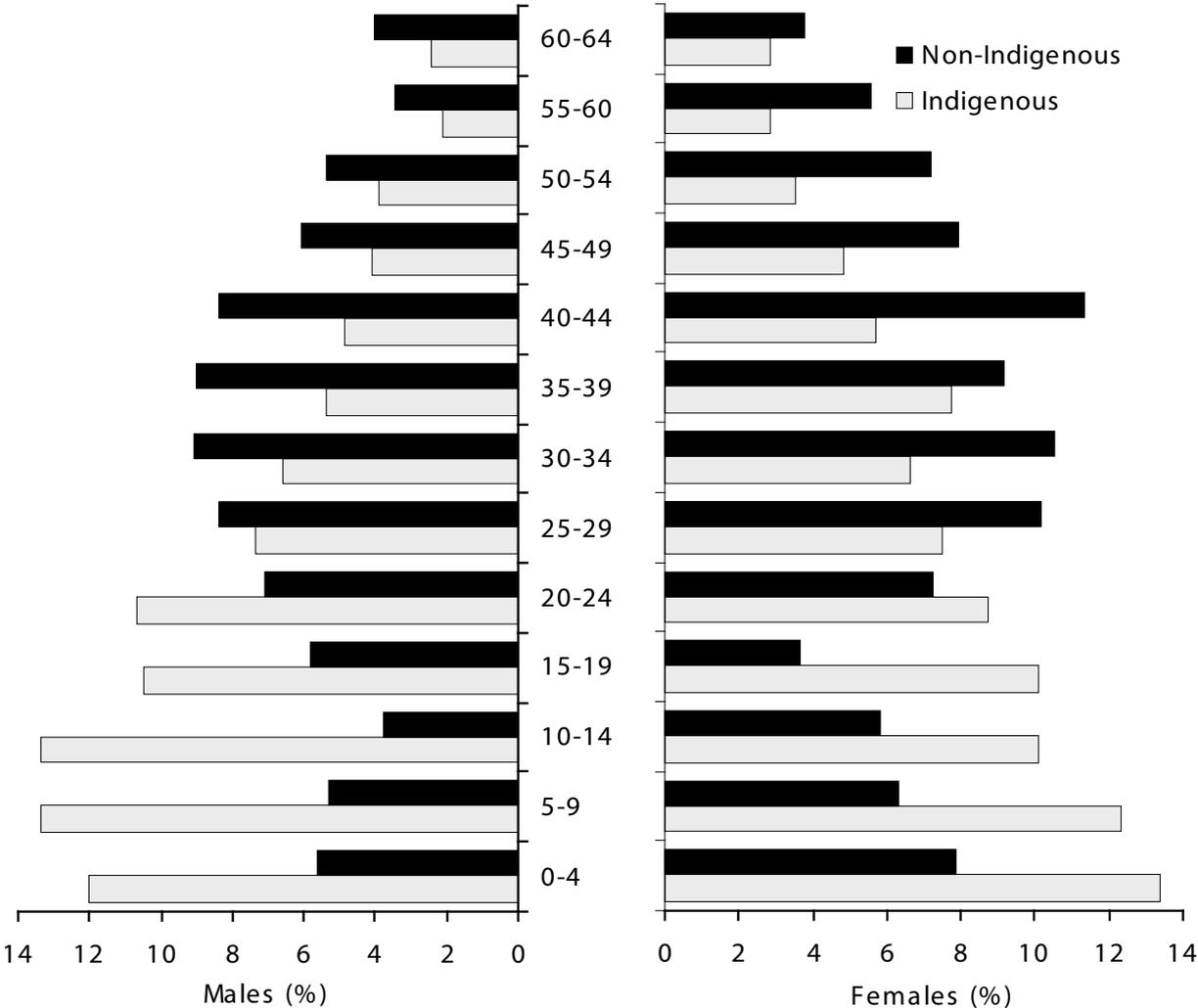
**FIGURE 4: HALLS CREEK INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS POPULATION**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

Figures 4 and 5 reveal that the ratio of adults to children is far greater within the non-Aboriginal population (approximately 3 adults to 1 child) than for Aboriginal people (1 adult for every child). As the WAACHS Volume 4 findings illustrate, the significant contrast in family structure and age composition has implications for the overall wellbeing and capacity building of the children, young people, families and communities (Silburn et al 2006).

**FIGURE 5: WYNDHAM-EAST KIMBERLEY INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS POPULATION**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

This situation raises questions about who is able to provide the 'natural' supports to Aboriginal children and young people in the early development years and as they make their transition through school and into the workforce. There are many less people in the 30-54 years age group in the Aboriginal population who are able to care, nurture and support Aboriginal children and young people and encourage their productive and sustained motivation, engagement and participation with the wider society so that they can enjoy the same opportunities as other Australians.

Just as importantly, the significant increase in the proportion of non-Aboriginal population living in and visiting the East Kimberley has had a significant negative impact on the cultural continuity of Aboriginal groups in the region (ASIEA 2006). There is evidence that Aboriginal people are more likely to experience racism and marginalisation when the increased proportion and dominance of the non-Aboriginal population occurs to support their own interests and priorities as has taken place in the East Kimberley in the past 40 years.

**FIGURE 6: 2006 ABORIGINAL POPULATION, KUNUNURRA ICC REGION – AGE BY SEX**

		Age (years)									Total
		0-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50+	
Number	Males	809	206	197	160	140	144	94	84	256	<b>2,090</b>
	Females	782	211	223	192	171	151	119	109	288	<b>2,246</b>
Proportion	Males	51%	49%	47%	45%	45%	49%	44%	44%	47%	<b>48%</b>
	Females	49%	51%	53%	55%	55%	51%	56%	56%	53%	<b>52%</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

The statistics highlight the training and employment potential for Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley region. The higher proportion of women in each age group highlights the need to develop employment opportunities for young women as well as men. However, the high proportion of young women 15-24 years with children confirms the need to establish culturally relevant child care to enable young women to participate in education, employment and training.

## 3. Perspectives of Aboriginal Young People and Stakeholders

This chapter summarises the qualitative information gathered during the fieldwork. It gives priority to the voices and perspectives of Aboriginal young people across the East Kimberley. This Chapter discusses the key barriers, supports and solutions influencing Indigenous aspirations drawing on the fieldwork findings, the relevant findings from the WAACHS and the literature review.

It focuses on their future work and study aspirations, the barriers and support issues and concerns they perceive, as well as their views on solutions to improve the situation for Indigenous people. It also describes the perspectives of representatives of community organisations, government agencies and parents, carers and stakeholders who work with young Indigenous people.

The perceptions and views of the young females and males are only reported separately where there are evident or important differences along gender lines. Similarly, the responses by participants in all sites have been grouped together and are only reported separately where there are distinct differences based on geographic or community lines.

### 3.1 Field work overview and analysis

A total of 127 people from the five study sites participated in focus groups or key informant interviews. There were 110 Aboriginal young people representative of the different family groups in each town and community (58 females aged between 14-25 years and 52 of males 14-25 years) and 17 stakeholders involved in the research.

### 3.2 Young people's dreams and aspirations

Across the East Kimberley many young people revealed a complete disengagement from formal structures including school and the CDEP scheme. In some sites there are only a few young people participating in the CDEP scheme despite the high number who have left school and are unemployed. The findings suggest that most young people are unaware of the options that are available for them in further education, training and employment and are reluctant to leave their community. The majority of young people come from families who have never left their community and do not work and, as a result, a 'culture of work' across the community is largely absent. These findings also confirm a lack of role models, limited skills sets, and lack of confidence. These factors, coupled with the pressures from family to stay in their communities and the limited opportunities currently available within the community for further education and training, are proving to be a powerful force working against young people's goal and aspiration formation.

Discussions with teachers and training providers confirmed that many young people aspire to jobs they see within their communities such as teachers, wardens, gardeners and nurses.

*While they talked about jobs within their immediate frame of reference students often found it difficult to think outside of what is available in their communities and needed help to understand the concept of a 'career'. Inevitably, their worldview is defined, and limited, by what they know and experience.*

In most cases, with some prompting, students would talk about their 'big' dreams such as being a pilot and other possibilities although they did not know what would be required to achieve their dreams and aspirations. Several stakeholders stated that young people's aspirations are influenced by the fact that many live in families where most family members are unemployed, on CDEP and have limited education or training.

Overall, young people's key aspirations included working to help their community, family or children. Many of the young men said they would like to get a job that would allow them to look after their family and community, or look after their land and keep their culture alive, or do coaching to 'keep young ones on track' or 'help them sort themselves out'. When questioned further most young people's responses seemed to relate to the underlying aim of helping their family and /or community. In an in-depth study of Indigenous students' aspirations, Craven et al (2003) also found that many young people's dreams involve getting a job 'that makes a difference to community and social issues', however, as with young people in the East Kimberley, their perceptions of what is attainable are limited by external factors that impede their imagining of their preferred futures.

*Young people's aspirations are influenced by the fact that many live in families where most family members are unemployed or on CDEP.*

## **Work to help my community**

Several young people 15-25 years, both male and female, identified helping their community as their main aspiration. One young participant said they wanted to counsel young people to help them to overcome their disadvantage:

*My biggest aim is to help other Aboriginal families in the communities around here, that is, the communities outside of the main town. People in these communities have fewer opportunities than the town people. They need help to reach their goals. Many community kids seem to just do random courses – anything that goes.*

Another participant was studying hard and wanted to go to Perth or Darwin to do further study to become a psychologist to help young people who have suffered from abuse and are thinking about taking their lives.

*I lost my sister... she committed suicide because she had been abused, everyone I spoke to at boarding school had been abused so it's a big problem, all the girls I was at school with talked to me, I would just listen and talk to the girls and they would feel better just talking about it- so I know I would be good as a psychologist.*

## **Work for my family/children**

When asked about their dreams and aspirations many young women (aged 16-25 years) who had children made comments such as:

*Bringing up my children was my main goal.*

*Get a job when their kids were older.*

*I would work now but I don't have any day care.*

When prompted further most of these young women stated that they would like to do something to help their children in the future. Similarly, many young men with children centred their goals on making their children's lives better.

## Young women's dreams and aspirations

In four of the five sites focus groups were held with young girls from high school to ascertain their goals and aspirations. Their responses ranged from aspiring to having children through to pursuing university studies and professional careers. In most cases their responses appeared to be circumscribed by their sense of how well they were doing at school.

### Focus groups with young girls 14-17 years

In several groups many of the participants mentioned having children as their most important goal, they said things such as:

*Having 3 children*

*Having 2 girls and 2 boys*

*Having a family and a commodore*

*Having children and getting a house*

*Being a strong single mum.*

At the same time there was general agreement among these young girls that they needed to attend school and some acknowledged that 'getting a good education is important'. Many of the girls interviewed had been disengaged from school for significant amounts of time, and had very low levels of literacy and numeracy and poor academic performance. Some said that being in their current class was 'a good thing'. Some of these girls are working toward a General Education Attainment Certificate, which encompasses maths, literacy, computers, typing, budgeting and language. A number of girls said they would like to get a TAFE qualification after school. Interviews with several stakeholders confirmed the importance of having teachers who have understanding, empathy and respect and a belief in young people to help build their esteem and self belief. One participant said: 'They need to know someone believes in them'.

### Informant interviews and focus groups with students doing well at school

Several young females interviewed in most sites were involved in leadership programs or doing well at school. All of these young women had quite wide ranging goals and aspirations including nursing and psychology, theatre, dance and specialist music. However, only 5 of 12 participants believed that it would be possible to achieve their dreams.

They identified family as one of the main things likely to stop them. One student stated that her mum would not want her to leave without money and a place to stay in Perth. She would like to go away to study if she could get a scholarship and return to work with communities once she finished studying.

## Young men's dreams and aspirations

Focus groups with males 15-25 years were held in four of the sites and informant interviews were held in all sites to ascertain their goals and aspirations. Their responses ranged from 'doing something on CDEP', 'looking after their family', 'caring for community', to 'setting up their own business ventures', and pursuing university studies and professional careers. In most cases, as with the young women, their responses appeared to be delineated by their sense of how they were doing at school, their perceived opportunities and their motivation.

## Focus groups with young boys 15-18 years

Many of the young boys interviewed in each of the sites identified very similar ideas and goals about what they would like to do after leaving school. Several boys said they were interested in surveying, and found the potential to work in different places around Australia very appealing. While a few participants identified goals such as career counselling, being a butcher or truck driver, helping their community, doing fencing, helicopter mustering or cultural tourism. The most frequently cited goals were:

*Being a mechanic*

*Doing mining work at Argyle*

*Becoming a professional footballer.*

Being a mechanic appeared to be the most popular choice although when prompted almost as many stated that they would like to have football careers.

Very few people in town were interested in local council work, although this is one of the main areas of employment for young people who are on CDEP in the communities. One participant said that he:

*could get involved with community work with the Shire to keep the town tidy, although this sort of work would be a fallback option.*

Other participants said their families talk about community work and encourage them to keep the place tidy and do part-time jobs at the local shop but they 'haven't done this yet and probably won't'. A few young people did not appear to see the need or have the motivation to get a job.

### *Becoming a professional footballer*

Many young males aged 15 to 16 said that they would like to become professional footballers although they were not too sure of the process for following this path. Some thought that maybe Garnduwa sport/recreation or Auskick might be able to help. Others said that after some more study they could go to the Clontarf program and then to Perth to follow their dreams. One participant suggested that:

*Perhaps they would need to play in the WAFL before the AFL.*

Some indicated that being away from family would not stop them moving elsewhere to follow their dream. Another indicated that:

*Some of the boys have already travelled to Broome and Darwin in their life.*

Participants made various comments:

*Playing the sport you love is "deadly" – and would be ideal.*

*Playing football would be my first option to try – otherwise I will become a mechanic.*

*I would like to earn money first to support my family and then perhaps try a football career.*

*Playing would be good, later I could teach young fellas to play footy.*

The lack of certainty about how to pursue their dreams was evident in most focus groups, several participants said they would be interested in getting into the local Clontarf program, but didn't know how to do it. Another participant said he would like to do some training in Perth but didn't know how to make it happen or who to talk to about it.

## Working on the mines

One group stated that 'they know some people that work in the mines and it looked like quite a good option'. Some young people interviewed already worked at the mines because the money was good. One participant said they had undergone extensive training and been well supported by their employer. They saw it 'as a long-term thing' and planned to save to travel in the future. However, most participants were not sure about what educational pre-requisites were required to work in the mines and most agreed that they would need to make 'changes to their lives' to get a job in the mines. Several stakeholders said it was important that training providers do not focus solely on jobs in mining. One person commented that:

*It is important to get young people trained in working in pastoral and agricultural areas not just mining.*

Another participant made the point that:

*Mining doesn't suit many people, some people are reluctant to be away on a fly in fly out basis. They don't want to leave their families.*

The following table lists the main jobs/careers that young people identified during the focus groups and interviews.

**FIGURE 7: LIST OF DREAMS AND ASPIRATION OF YOUNG ABORIGINAL PEOPLE 15-25 YEARS**

Young women's dreams and aspirations 15-18 years (at school or left school)	Young men's dreams and aspirations 15-17 years (at school or left school)
<p><i>Getting married (18)</i></p> <p><i>Having children (25)</i></p> <p><i>Working in an office (5)</i></p> <p><i>Teaching (7)</i></p> <p><i>Sports coach (2)</i></p> <p><i>Psychologist (1)</i></p> <p><i>Nursing (5)</i></p> <p><i>A basketball player (6)</i></p> <p><i>A tourist guide (2)</i></p> <p><i>A teacher at a child care centre (6)</i></p> <p><i>Working in the mines (Argyle mine) (6),</i></p> <p><i>A policewoman (2)</i></p> <p><i>Helping older people (5)</i></p> <p><i>Helping communities (8)</i></p> <p><i>Drama/actor (2)</i></p> <p><i>Music performance (3)</i></p> <p><i>Using computers (4)</i></p> <p><i>Doing media (3)</i></p> <p><i>Modelling (2)</i></p>	<p><i>Professional footballers (12)</i></p> <p><i>Being a mechanic (9)</i></p> <p><i>Working at Argyle King George mines including operators, engineers, electronics, trade, auto electricians (10)</i></p> <p><i>Cultural tourism in the Kimberley (7)</i></p> <p><i>Apprenticeships through Kimberley Group Training (KGT)(6)</i></p> <p><i>Fencing work, landscaping (5)</i></p> <p><i>House building (7)</i></p> <p><i>Coaches local football</i></p> <p><i>Helicopter pilot (mustered, tourist flights</i></p> <p><i>Pilot</i></p> <p><i>Work in a bank</i></p> <p><i>Fitter/turner, welding, metal works (4)</i></p> <p><i>Boxer</i></p> <p><i>Actor (3)</i></p> <p><i>Clontarf football program</i></p> <p><i>Army soldier</i></p> <p><i>Help poor or sick people – get a big house for them all (3)</i></p> <p><i>Work in a hospital (2)</i></p> <p><i>Butcher (1)</i></p>
Young women 18-25 (CDEP, studying, working, or have children)	Young men 18-25 (CDEP, studying, working, or have children)
<p><i>Further study (3)</i></p> <p><i>Further training (6)</i></p> <p><i>A teacher at a child care centre (2)</i></p> <p><i>Working in the mines (Argyle mine) (3)</i></p> <p><i>Sports coach (1)</i></p> <p><i>Helping community kids (5)</i></p> <p><i>Youth worker (2)</i></p> <p><i>Counsellor (1)</i></p> <p><i>Child care worker (5)</i></p> <p><i>Administrator (4)</i></p> <p><i>Working in an office (4)</i></p> <p><i>Working with mums (3)</i></p> <p><i>Working with elders (2)</i></p>	<p><i>Sports and Recreation Officer (8)</i></p> <p><i>Youth workers (7)</i></p> <p><i>Mining surveying (5)</i></p> <p><i>Horse riding, mustering, stockman (7)</i></p> <p><i>Career counselling (1)</i></p> <p><i>Teacher (3)</i></p> <p><i>Run own community or station (2)</i></p> <p><i>Auto electrician (3)</i></p> <p><i>Diesel mechanic (1)</i></p> <p><i>Local radio (1)</i></p> <p><i>Caring for the land (5)</i></p> <p><i>Tourism (4)</i></p> <p><i>Horticulture (3)</i></p>

The list reflects an absence of jobs such as government positions, and very few community service jobs such as firemen, police, or ambulance drivers. Few young people indicated leadership positions although several indicated the importance of these types of jobs. Young people also rejected jobs such as taxi drivers, cleaners or council workers.

### 3.3 The main factors that support or enable young people's aspirations

When asked about the main things that support or enable their dreams many of the young people emphasised the important role of parents, family teachers and their peers in achieving their dreams and aspirations regarding study and work. Most participants agreed that 'getting a good education', 'parent support' and their 'own motivation and determination' are critical for their success. The majority of young people stated that both family and teacher support are important influences on educational achievement. Stakeholders and parents/carers interviewed expressed similar views to young Aboriginal people regarding the main factors that enable and support their aspirations.

#### Having family support

In two of the focus groups several young Aboriginal men discussed the importance of family support 'to get on with life'. Several stated they had worked away from their communities with family and community support and later returned to take up jobs. All of these participants had completed at least Year 10 education with the support of their parents. They agreed that this support had 'put them in a strong place' to pursue their goals in the future. One participant said that:

*My parents 'pushed' me through my education and helped me to find work opportunities – this was key.*

#### Key Informant Interviews: 14-16 year old high school students

Two young students interviewed aim to finish school and leave their communities to attend university and obtain qualifications. Both are doing well at school, one is undertaking extension classes. They both acknowledge the importance of parental support to help them achieve at school. Both have role models in their families who have careers 'outside'; or siblings who went away for schooling and employment and their parents are keen for them to do the same. One student talked of having friends with similar goals and a mentor (teacher) at school 'who is a great source of encouragement and support'; as well as being an active member of the school sports and athletics program.

They both acknowledged that there are few opportunities currently available to them where they live but are confident they can go away and come back to be a part of their family and communities. They are looking forward to leaving the community. In contrast, one student stated that many students their age do not want to leave the community and do not see the worth in doing well at school, and do not participate in sport in the community—their lives are limited by their lack of motivation and aspiration.

## Getting a good education

The majority of young people interviewed stated that getting a good education was important to achieve their goals or was their goal. In focus groups with 15-17 year old students in most study sites there was general agreement about the importance of education:

*You need to attend school every day and get an education.*

*You have to finish school to Year 12 – you can't stay dumb all your life.*

*You need a good education; going to school all the time; finishing Year 12; going to university; TAFE.*

Several students stated that attending TAFE one day a week 'was a good option' that kept them interested. They stated that completing a TAFE course was 'beneficial' and good for work experience in welding, mechanic, metal work, office work and landscaping. Some have also done horse riding, which they really enjoyed. Several participants have enrolled in or completed the local TAFE Certificate II horticulture program.

## Own motivation and attitudes

Several young people interviewed were already employed, some with partners and children, and were very keen to do more study. These young people stated that employment has been beneficial to their self-esteem and their income has provided choices. They see doing more study as a chance to improve their future opportunities. Several young people talked of the importance of setting your goals and then staying determined to get on with it. One young person summed it up this way:

*Don't drink, smoke or steal, no violence, stay away from police, stay out of trouble, no drugs, don't get a criminal record, don't wag school.*

When asked what had motivated them to work some of the young men said they already have young families to look after, as one participant said:

*I've got responsibility to my family, it's my job to look after them.*

Others stated that they 'just wanted to get on'. One participant said:

*I have seen what happens to these young fellas and I don't want that to happen to me.*

Several young people also discussed the importance of 'self-belief' and motivation. One young woman explained:

*It comes down to yourself, to your own determination to chase your dreams, believing in yourself, not worrying about what your friends, or even your family, say... Just need to ignore the humbug and get on with your own life.*

However, another young woman made the point that:

*It's easier to believe in yourself when others believe in you, it's harder when teachers don't believe in you and put you down and stuff.*

## Access to culturally appropriate training and support

In addition to identifying family support and self motivation as important to achieve their aspirations, many young people identified access to training opportunities through TAFE, or other Aboriginal training agencies as also being crucial to their success so far.

Generally, there was a lot of support for local Aboriginal resource agencies, Aboriginal Corporations and training through CDEP. In most places the local Aboriginal resource agency or Aboriginal organisations were identified as places that offer 'plenty of support', and 'where you can go to ask for help'. One participant said that:

*Waringarri gave me everything, I got my license and it is more friendly than other places. It should be 'open' to everyone.*

## On-the-job training

While education was seen as important, many young people thought that getting on-the-job training or going to TAFE was more relevant and had been of greater benefit than finishing Year 12. One person stated that:

*It is more appropriate, that's how we learn best, we can see its relevance, you can be learning and earning at the same time - that way you have more chance of staying on.*

One young woman whose training is limited to answering phones and filing paperwork said she 'would like to go to TAFE to acquire more skills in using computers'.

### Informant interviews with young men enrolled in TAFE

Several male participants spoke very positively about doing TAFE courses. They enjoyed computer-based learning. Others had started work doing carpentry and building houses. One participant said he was confident about his future and keen to pursue jobs and educational opportunities in Broome or Katherine although he wasn't sure what courses were available in these places.

Another young participant had completed Year 10 and had a job locally via a placement with CDEP. He said the job was 'awesome'. He too was confident and hopes to start his own cultural tourism business – taking people out to see the country in the top of the East Kimberley although he was 'not altogether clear yet about how to make it happen'. He doesn't believe there are any real barriers to starting his own business, although he felt that a few stations that cater to tourists may provide some competition. He thought he may 'need a "few helpers" to get it running, along with a lot of money (for purchasing tents, trucks, etc.)'. He intends to save money from his current job for this purpose. He likes the idea of being mobile and working in different places.

## Opportunity and support to study or work away

Young people in each of the sites were asked about going away for work or study. Several young people identified having the opportunity to go away as an important enabler, and essential for young people to succeed.

The majority of participants interviewed said that 'they could work outside their community'. Several felt it was important to 'go somewhere else to get a chance'. Most saw Broome as an attractive place to work (some had visited Broome, Darwin and Katherine). One participant who had moved to another state and trained in horse riding, worked with trucks, and achieved a skills training certificate had found the experience rewarding:

*I would be happy to work away, although outside of town was too boring – towns are much better. I am old enough to do my own thing and my family wouldn't care if I moved away.*

Others thought it:

*Would be beneficial for students and young people to visit other Aboriginal communities where "things are happening".*

Similarly, many young females at school said that they would like to go away to get a job. This was also the case where their initial responses were limited to 'having kids'. Several young women with very clear career aspirations said they would like to go to Perth to study. However, several young women who had left school stated that they would prefer to work in Kununurra, while others were reluctant to travel beyond their community. Most of these young women were not confident and did not have long term goals.

### **Participants who have returned after studying away**

Interviews were held with several participants who had completed their schooling in Perth and then returned to their communities. These young people agreed that going away for their final schooling had enabled them to 'have a better schooling experience', and 'avoid peer pressures to leave school or to not want to achieve'.

Most had completed training through TAFE or CDEP when they returned; some were employed in their communities. They had completed training courses including mechanics, administration, computing and early childcare. Several believe there are opportunities for training and work, but claim that many young Aboriginal people who have never been away lack the motivation and family support to take up these opportunities.

Many young people, especially those living in more isolated communities, indicated that families would not want them to go away. Some said it would be difficult to leave to study because of family and financial pressure. As one stakeholder stated:

*Many young people don't want to leave home - its hard to leave family - the community is a 'safeguard'. It can be very expensive and therefore prohibitive to leave, most don't have the money or a car if they do want to leave.*

Others stated that their families 'would not care too much either way' or 'would not care too much about their choices'. In one community however, several young parents indicated they would support their children's aspirations and thought it would be best if their children went away to study in Perth, Broome or Darwin.

### **Positive role models**

Several young people interviewed in each of the study sites who were doing well and had clear study or career goals emphasised the importance of role models. Most stated that having another member of the family enrolled in higher education provided inspiration and motivation to complete schooling. Several were keen to go to Perth, Darwin or Broome to study and could see the benefits of doing so, especially when members of their family and extended family are also studying. Participants said things such as:

*If you go to school then you can go to Perth and university.*

*Exposure to Aboriginal role models is important.*

*I have an aunty at University in Perth —this is a good thing.*

## Recognition of Aboriginal culture

Several young people and stakeholders interviewed believed that there was 'much cultural strength' for young people to build upon and to develop their dreams around. Several young people talked about Aboriginal culture in a positive way, and the need for teachers and employers to respect and recognise their culture:

*Where there is culture there is lots of pride.*

*There is a need for more things to pull community together like the Warmun community day.*

*You need to get young ones in community, especially the young men learning dance and art, and when they got their culture then they can go anywhere and they will always keep strong.*

*There should more culture, ceremony and celebrations, young ones need to learn dance and singing from the older women and then tying this to their school.*

*There are a lot of jobs that we can bring our cultural knowledge to, but people don't understand this very well.*

## 3.4 The main barriers to achieving young people's aspirations

There were consistent responses across focus groups and informant interviews in all communities and towns when asked about the things that could prevent young Aboriginal people from reaching their dreams and job aspirations. The most frequently cited barriers to achieving study and work aspirations among all male participants 15-25 years were: 'alcohol and drugs'; 'getting into trouble with the police'; 'getting on the wrong side'; and 'giving up on education'. Interviews with key relevant stakeholders and parents/carers expressed similar views to young people regarding the main issues and barriers for Aboriginal young people. However, they stated the main barriers for young women were having children too early and 'the lack of opportunities for young mothers to participate in training or employment due to a lack of child care'.

### Too much alcohol and gunjah

Young people and stakeholders throughout the East Kimberley made comments such as:

*Drugs, alcohol, gambling and card games are chronic across the communities.*

*Some people (men and women) are too drunk most of the time to get a job. They are too drunk to help their kids.*

*Alcohol and drugs are a real problem here. It leads to young people not having respect for elders. There needs to be more role models to steer kids away from this path.*

*Grog, gunjah and sniffing are big issues in this town ... but boredom is the catalyst for this.*

*There are many others without a job – sometimes this is because of alcohol and drugs (but mainly alcohol).*

*Boredom is a massive issue. There are strong links to crime and alcohol.*

*Smoking, drinking, fighting and reckless driving (speeding) getting in trouble, including trouble with police is a big problem ... other students act like 'gangsters' and aren't interested in study.*

The majority of males and females in focus groups agreed that too much alcohol and gunjah (marijuana) were what 'held many young ones back' from getting into the mines. As one participant observed:

*Because the mine sites give drug tests and health (eyesight) and fitness tests it can make it a bit hard to get a job and puts some blokes off trying.*

### **Children are getting into grog and gunjah as early as 12 years**

Young people in several focus groups expressed concerns that children (male and female) were 'getting into grog and gunjah as early as 12 years', and 'even younger'. They expressed serious concern about the extent of the alcohol and drug use and the young ages of people involved in drinking and smoking and getting into trouble with the police. Several groups said it was important to get these young people on track before it was too late. Many young people claimed that 10-11 year olds were stealing from houses and stealing cars and driving them to other towns. They made the point that these young children were no longer going to school.

### **Having children too early – teenage pregnancies**

Several young boys identified 'having a girlfriend or wife' and having an 'unexpected' child as potential barriers. Similarly, when asked about the things that may prevent them from reaching their dreams, several of the young girls in schools across the Kimberley also stated that 'drugs', 'having a husband', 'living it up young', and 'having a baby early' were the things most likely to get in the way. At the same time, these comments were often connected to the perception that there was nothing else to do and the lack of choices available. One of the girls said that she was:

*Much the same as all the other kids just hanging together on weekends and getting drunk, they [her friends] don't want to be different than the rest, and they would probably have kids early and have to wait till later to get a job.*

One stakeholder observed that:

*Many young girls regard having a baby as a reason to leave school and a better financial option than CDEP.*

### **Limited goals, aspirations and worldview**

Interviews with young Aboriginal participants and stakeholders confirmed that geographic isolation and lack of cross-cultural immersion can inhibit young people's ability and capacity to develop goals or become futures oriented. When asked about their future dreams and aspirations some young people's responses revealed that their understandings of the possibilities were quite limited and were also largely influenced by what their family and friends are doing. Some young people claimed that many other young people are 'scared to be independent', 'have a fear of people, of angry people', and 'they don't think that people will let them follow their dreams'.

In some of the more geographically isolated and discrete communities few people travel back and forth to the community. There is general agreement that young people who have spent their whole lives in the community have a limited world view of the options for their futures, which leads to a real loss of motivation and purpose. Several of the young girls at school talked about being bored, and not having any ideas for their future. Stakeholders made the following observations:

*Kids don't know what they want because they have a limited worldview. They are not aware of what they can or can't do. Letting them know what they can do is important.*

*Many young people have limited experiences outside of their community (only some have been to Kununurra). This can make it difficult to present and sell a vision to them.*

*Some young ones think there is nothing to work towards, they see no real purpose.*

*Many young people do not have goals or a real sense of time – that is they do not think about what they will do in the future.*

One young girl said:

*There's nothing I want to do.*

*Key stakeholders in every community and town emphasised the need to be able to take young people outside of their immediate community to broaden their horizons and increase their awareness of the opportunities that exist to give them a sense of hope and foster their aspirations.*

Individual and community attitudes towards education and employment can be major barriers. Across the East Kimberley region, boredom, a lack of motivation and a perception of education and employment having no significance or relevance are major obstacles to Indigenous young people's job aspiration formation and employment. In addition, limited labour markets and employment and training opportunities also contribute to young people's apathy towards remaining at school or in training and a lack of motivation to be employed.

Some young people agreed that young people are more likely to drink when they did not have 'big dreams' or when their dreams were circumscribed by their limited understanding of the possibilities available. The focus on drinking and smoking were often associated with 'nothing much else to do'. At the same time, alcohol and 'gunjah' or marijuana were seen as inhibiting young people's motivation and goals.

## **The effects of mining royalties on community attitudes**

Several stakeholders expressed concerns that a 'quasi-welfare system' or 'neo-welfare dependency' has developed in communities where mining royalties are paid to families which is proving to be a significant financial and motivational deterrent to young people's aspirations to do something with their lives and for their community.

Some stakeholders and community members were critical of existing agreements between mining companies and individual families of traditional owners which, in some cases, means that large sums of money are received by individual family groups. Several stakeholders commented that young people in these families have no incentive to participate in CDEP or community activity, making the point that this takes away from the economic and social development of these communities rather than contributing to it. They stated that many of the potential Aboriginal role models in a community are not working and 'not involved in CDEP because there is no need because of the royalties they receive'. One stakeholder stated that existing arrangements are:

*Creating groups of 'haves and have nots' within Aboriginal communities, it is a new form of welfarism.*

Discussion with other stakeholders indicated that new agreements are now being paid into a trust to benefit all Aboriginal community members. Several stakeholders suggested that mining companies and communities need to employ community development workers to facilitate a sense of community vision and purpose and strategic direction.

## Low literacy skills and leaving school early

Approximately 60 Aboriginal young people 14-18 years interviewed in schools and special programs were identified as having low literacy skills and/or leaving school early. Many young people indicated that literacy was a big issue impacting on their own and other young people's ability to participate at school or to get a job. Several stakeholders agreed that low literacy skills seriously affected young people's ability to follow their dreams or to even 'dare to dream in the first place'.

Several young people 20-25 years who had stayed in their community all their life stated that they had left school very young, and not participated in any further training, education or the CDEP scheme. Some stated that they have been unemployed for several years; are bored; lack motivation; do not have any future goals; and do not see any possibility to change their situation. They agree their options are limited by their lack of confidence and lack of reading and writing skills.

*Some young people in communities would like more help to improve their reading and writing so they could get a job but are too shy to ask and do not want their peers to know about their literacy levels or their 'secret dreams' for fear of being put down.*

In three sites special programs are offered for young people who have low literacy levels, and have been disengaged from school for a long time. Many have literacy, numeracy and general comprehension levels considerably below age appropriateness as well as low self-esteem and limited aspirations, motivation and hope. Comments by stakeholders in communities reinforced the fact that low literacy levels are a real barrier for young people and for community futures.

*Communities are unable to have anything other than Certificate 1 or 2 courses offered through TAFE – this affects community capacity and sustainability.*

*Some of the boys mainly speak Aboriginal language and Kriol and that can get in the way... you need to be able to meet standards for a job or TAFE.*

One teacher stated that the level of intense catch-up requires Aboriginal role models in the classroom, and more Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers (AIEOs) to work with small groups to provide the level of remedial and pastoral support to help these young people to catch up.

*Another stakeholder said it would be possible to address literacy and numeracy across the East Kimberley, but 'it would require some radical thinking as what we have been doing so far throughout school is clearly not working'.*

## Focus groups and Informant interviews with 15-16 year olds who had left school

Discussions with young people in focus groups and informant interviews identified a range of reasons for leaving school early including: having a baby; unable to cope because of low literacy levels; experiencing bullying; boredom; school not meeting their expectations; and, lack of relevance of curriculum.

One young person left school at 15 because they felt that the curriculum 'was extremely limited and repetitive', they wanted to do more science based subjects but as they were not available they could not see any point in continuing. Another had left school at 13 because of their low literacy skills – both were now 'at risk' according to the definition used by some service providers.

Other participants were either too young for CDEP or participating in CDEP but not enjoying the work. Most do not know what they want to do in the future. They are bored and recognise that without further training their options for the future are limited. They do not want to return to school and would be interested in going to TAFE but do not have any information about options at TAFE, and are unsure how to go about getting information. Their parents are not able to assist.

### *Interviews with young people 'at risk' and service providers*

Some of the participants interviewed had left school before the school leaving age and are not yet eligible for CDEP or any other work based program. Other young people now aged 16-20 years are not studying or working on a regular basis. Both of these groups are classified 'at-risk'. In one town, according to a key informant, there are approximately 60 young people who are 'at-risk' based on these criteria. According to several stakeholders interviewed there are very few programs or services and very limited options available for these 'at-risk' young people.

## Key informant interviews with CDEP participants

Key informant Interviews with CDEP participants in several communities highlighted a number of points. Most of these students had not been doing well at school and believed that their parents thought they were wasting their time staying at school. Several of these participants both male and female had not wanted to leave school early. Very few parents had encouraged these students to get additional tutorial support. Rather, their parents had encouraged/pressured them to leave school to contribute to the household income and/or to acquire experience and training towards a full time mainstream position when they are older. Most of these participants claimed they were not enjoying their work and have no idea what they would like to do in the future or what might be possible in the future. In their current work situations they had not yet had any opportunity for career counselling but that might come in the future.

The research shows that many of the employment and training opportunities available to Indigenous young people across the East Kimberley are limited to or contingent on the existence of CDEP-based organisations. Businesses also rely on CDEP to fill positions they cannot otherwise afford. According to several stakeholders many young people do not have the opportunity or capacity to shift out of these positions and are not being adequately trained to obtain paid employment. In Warmun, CDEP is being used effectively to provide young people with a range of skills to undertake work within the community. Several young people are working on outstations. Nevertheless, the community is concerned about the lack of job opportunities within the community to be able to employ young people despite the desire to become a fully sustainable community.

The findings suggest that among young Indigenous people there is a strong culture of leaving school early for CDEP, with many young people with limited skills and school qualifications viewing it as their

best option for accessing financial assistance and remaining in their communities. In addition, many experience pressures from their families to leave school to join CDEP and contribute to the household income.

Stakeholders in several communities indicated that changes to CDEP had created additional pressure to obtain targets to get young people into 'real work' in communities where there are limited options. Several stakeholders emphasised that many jobs young Aboriginal people are doing in communities are 'real jobs' that are not being given the appropriate recognition or payment under existing structures. Several stressed the importance of study courses where students can learn skills to take up positions in teaching, community health, environmental health and management and administration. These findings show that CDEP is a very important factor in Indigenous young people's decision making regarding education and employment, and therefore should be an important consideration in any program endeavouring to address Indigenous career aspirations.

*Consideration of the influence of CDEP on young people's job aspirations and the barriers to employment that they experience is critical because the program continues to be seen as a major source of employment opportunity in itself, and a legitimate career aspiration.*

As such, CDEP plays a crucial role in the context of the types of education and training young people think they require for their future. Yet in reality, pathways to careers are virtually non-existent in the CDEP scheme with the motivation for further training and qualifications becoming irrelevant among those in the scheme and aspiring to it.

## **Lack of appropriate courses and skilled teachers**

According to some young key informants and other stakeholders, several schools are struggling to maintain the engagement of older students because of the lack of teachers with appropriate cross-cultural skills and understandings and a lack of facilities to provide a culturally inclusive and relevant curriculum.

According to one stakeholder:

*Without the resources or instructors the schools cannot provide for young people's stated interests which in themselves could generate further training and employment among the younger people and encourage them to continue with their schooling.*

## **Lack of information about education and training options**

Responses by focus group participants revealed that while young people see the importance of education the majority have little understanding of what study options are available to them or what they would need to do to become eligible to do them. Many young people indicated that they would like to go to TAFE (locally) but were not sure what was available.

*I would need to undergo an apprenticeship or traineeship to become an auto electrician. I would need some level of education before that but not sure how much.*

One participant, interested in on the job training at the local radio, has no knowledge of how that might happen. Others stated that they knew a few people that had a job at Argyle – they had on-the-job training, including some in Perth. While most young men said they liked the idea of on the job training they were not sure what was required to pursue their goals – or how long it would take. Some participants were aware that TAFE offers Certificate 3-4 level training but most were only aware of Certificate 1-2 level training options. Several participants made comments such as:

*I don't think there is enough information about what is available.*

Similarly, most groups had only limited understanding about what was involved in doing apprenticeships although some believed that doing an apprenticeship through Kimberley Group Training (KGT) is an easier way to get a job. Some said they would do an apprenticeship first before getting a job, highlighting that they did not understand that an apprenticeship was a viable pathway to the job.

## **Lack of relevant job opportunities in town**

Several participants identified a lack of relevant job opportunities for young people, (especially women in communities) as a key barrier to developing or pursuing their dreams and aspirations. Participants believed that with the exception of Kununurra most communities and towns have limited employment and training opportunities available for young people. Stakeholders stated that CDEP is one of the only employment options available for young Aboriginal people living in communities. In some towns and communities students stated that their 'aspiration' is to shift to CDEP on leaving school. However, in some communities, very few young people are taking up CDEP placements. According to key informant interviews this is due to a range of factors including: the low youth wage rates; the type of work involved; lack of support from parents to participate (especially when they are not participating); and, a lack of motivation due to a perception about the lack of financial necessity or worth in working.

Several participants said most young men with families would not want to work away at the mines, they would like to have jobs around town, but there were not many 'real jobs' outside of CDEP. Many were doing real jobs such as administration or teacher assistant on CDEP because the local organisations and government were not adequately funded to support their positions. One participant stated that his family believe Kununurra has no jobs for young Aboriginal people. There was also agreement that:

*There is little on offer for women in the community.*

*There is not much in town for these kids – jobs are mostly casual and there are not many activities for them to do. There are plenty of teenagers in town neither in work or education. Most of these kids just need a little push to get started. At first most of these young people have no clue about what they want to do in the future – they all want to play football and basketball.*

While several people expressed interest in doing mining work at Argyle (as an operator, engineer, electronics work, trade, etc.) they said that Argyle only take a few people each year for these types of jobs.

Several people commented that local opportunities should go to the local mob rather than advertised to 'outsiders'. Several stakeholders talked about the lack of opportunities and the importance of programs that get kids into job placements in the mines, at the Home Valley station and on the cattle ships – as they 'love this sort of work'.

## **Racism**

The majority of participants and stakeholders attributed the lack of job opportunities for young Aboriginal people in the towns to racism. All of the groups observed that it was difficult to get a real job around town because of the level of racism. One key informant commented that:

*Even when people have their hospitality certificate they still can't get a job at the hotels around town – these places would rather employ tourists travelling around than employ an Aboriginal person.*

This observation was confirmed by several key stakeholders in towns. One stakeholder made the following points about the racism and general neglect in the EK:

*It's blatant! It's disgraceful, something needs to happen, but it's been going on for years, non-Aboriginal come and go year after year and nothing happens to build capacity for the local mob. It's their country and a lot of people just wipe their hands of the problems when they go. People talk about Aboriginal people being the problem – we're the problem.*

## Low self-esteem and social and emotional wellbeing

Parents and young people also agreed that low self-esteem was identified as 'a big problem' in every community in the study. The reasons for this are complex and were identified as lack of self-regard and lack of other regard. Low self-esteem is also tied to racism and alcohol and marijuana use and lack of any sense of goals or future direction. Many young people linked low self esteem with a lack of social and emotional wellbeing and suicidal thoughts and actual suicides.

### Focus group and key informant interview participants 18-25 years

Participants talked a lot about Aboriginal people 'not feeling good about themselves' because of how people in town treat them. One participant said:

*Many Aboriginal people are 'holding a weight on their shoulders'. It's 'hard to get out of the house in the morning when you are down'.*

*...maybe it's easier for people to go to the grog shop when you are feeling this way – it's easier to 'ruin your life than get help for your life'.*

*It gets too hard for some people that's why they commit suicide. There is too much of that around here.*

Another participant made a similar point:

*There are significant safety issues for kids and mums: some young kids are turning to suicide because they can't go back to home. Some kids are living with 30 people and are not safe. Many mums are waiting for their husbands to get back from gaol.*

*One Aboriginal participant talked of how social and emotional wellbeing is connected to loss of culture and pride.*

## Lack of parental and community care

Lack of parental and community care was raised as a barrier for young people in focus groups and interviews with young people and stakeholders across the East Kimberley. Several participants stated that some parents needed to take more responsibility for their kids getting drunk and were concerned that many parents do not appear to see it as a problem, and in some case even drink with their kids. Young people were also concerned that parents did not think schooling was important. They made comments such as:

*There are many young kids who are wagging school – although their families think they are at school. There is a lot of this going on. This is a problem because you need to get a good education – otherwise you don't know where they'll be.*

*Many parents do not support their children's schooling, after school activities, or get involved with their lives in a meaningful way.*

Many young people across the Kimberley were also critical about the lack of action by schools to keep young people at school.

*Schools should care more when kids wag.*

Several people commented on the apathy of Kununurra as a town, and the failure to focus on young people. One key stakeholder interviewed made the following comment:

*As far as I can see the real issue here is that this town does not care about its kids — Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.*

The lack of community care towards young people was also identified in other towns and communities with the exception of Warmun.

*Most sporting and community events involving young people (with the exception of football) are not well supported by families.*

*People everywhere see what's happening but are not doing anything.*

## **Lack of family and community capacity**

Several young people and stakeholders also commented that it was not so much that parents did not care, rather they did not have the capacity or ability to provide the necessary support for young people because of their own lack of education, low literacy levels, alcohol and substance use, ill health, financial difficulties, trauma and stress. Participants made the following comments:

*People are just falling into poverty – they are not choosing it!*

*Parents aren't strong so kids struggle as a result.*

*More kids would go to school if their home life was better. Some are worried about their parents.*

*There are parenting problems – behaviour management is particularly poor. Parents do not have the capacity for good parenting.*

*Gambling (cards) is a huge issue in the community.*

*Some young men are looking after siblings and this prevents them from going to school.*

Young women in the focus groups also agreed that something needs to happen, they stated that they want somebody to take an interest and help, and that most of the people including parents and elders who should be helping young people have problems with alcohol themselves. Several participants with children expressed concerns for young Aboriginal children and their futures:

*Most kids leave school at Year 8 or 9. Some of these kids are often drunk in town. Some are walking around 'lost'. There are not enough Aboriginal youth workers to look out for these youth.*

## **Issues relating to community mobility**

The research confirmed that many young Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley face considerable family and peer pressure to stay in their communities rather than leave to pursue training, education or employment opportunities. There was agreement among key stakeholders that the lack of exposure to experiences outside of the community at a young age directly contributes to many young people's lack of confidence or desire to leave their community.

Many young people lack adequate information or understanding about what employment and further training opportunities are available outside of the community and how to pursue these options. There are also a lack of role models and mentors within the community who can support young Aboriginal people who wish to pursue study, employment or training options that require them to leave their community. In addition, limited jobs, skill sets, and lack of confidence and boredom and disinterest are further obstacles that contribute to poor employment outcomes.

There was broad agreement among stakeholders and several young Aboriginal people that there is an urgent need for an extension of work placement schemes and other programs that enable young people to leave their community and gain exposure to other communities and towns and cities. The work placement scheme at Kalumburu is proving effective for many young people and has a high retention rate.

Interviews with young people confirmed that the majority who had left their communities during their childhood or early teens recognised the value of leaving their community 'to get more experience and a better education'. These people play a valuable role in the community when they return; with some taking up decision-making positions or participating in paid or voluntary positions to engage young people in the community. Discussions with some young people confirm that many people return to their communities to take up powerful or useful jobs. Some of these young people have very positive role models within their family. They talk about their parents, brothers, sisters or cousins who had left their communities to undertake further study or training and then returned to take up full time positions in community and mainstream jobs. These young people are also aware (and in some instances were critical) that many of their peers are living with their parents, have children of their own and have been unemployed since leaving school.

*...there needs to be videos showing some of the success stories across the communities so parents and communities could feel proud that young people who were going away to study and work were really part of getting Aboriginal community control over their own futures.*

### 3.5 Solutions – what needs to happen to make things better?

There was general agreement by all participants about the key areas that need to improve. One stakeholder stated that the solutions have been identified over and over again in all the reports that have been written including the Recommendations into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RIADIC) through to the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage (OID) report and the Aboriginal Social and Economic Impacts Assessment (ASEIA).

People talked of the need for genuine commitment from everyone, including all government and non-government sectors, in order to change the situation. Some people acknowledged that these are very complex issues but stated that this should not prevent people from trying to change things for the better. One person said:

*Take us out of the too hard basket!*

Several participants highlighted the need for more community policing, more Aboriginal police liaison officers and special wardens to support the change process. A few people commented that 'the situation would take at least a decade to turn around'. A key theme was the need to build capacity among young people and to promote Aboriginal governance and leadership among Aboriginal community groups including MG but also 'across the board'.

There were common themes amongst young people and stakeholders in all communities and towns about what solutions were needed. While most young people had strong ideas about what needed to change, in some of the more remote communities some of the young people did not seem to think they could change things for the better, others made comments like 'get some more help', 'get some sports in town', and, 'get people off the grog'.

## Implementing prevention and early intervention programs/strategies

A number of stakeholders and some young people 20-25 years stated that they need to start by engaging parents and children while they are young. They identified the need for a range of programs to be implemented to provide young Aboriginal people with skills and knowledge to change their lives and build individual and community capacity.

*There are some interventions and programs that only seem to be available in prison – these should be accessible before people get into the prison system.*

### Focus groups: young men and women 17-25 years

When asked what would have to happen to motivate people to stop drinking and smoking gunjah so they could get a job people generally grinned and shook their heads or shrugged. One of the older males in one group said:

*It would take a lot – these young blokes are into the grog too much and smoking gunjah too.*

*You have to get these young blokes out onto a station and get them working everyday. I was heading down that way when I was about 14. The way I was going I'd be dead now or in gaol at least... I was taken out to a station, I wasn't given an option. That saved me from my lifestyle.*

*After about 4 weeks I started to feel pretty good in myself and I started to look forward to getting up in the morning and getting out working with these older blokes. I liked the feeling. It put me on the right track. I have never looked back.*

*That's what these young ones need – to get out of town away from the grog, to get close to the land and have some of these older fellas help them sort out their futures. Gunjah takes away everything.*

One participant suggested that:

*Parents don't get the government family payment if their kids don't go to school – but this doesn't seem to help. What would help is: camps (they should have these regularly and start at Year 8; link to attendance), reward systems (summer camps), and raffles of donated goods.*

## Supporting Aboriginal governance and leadership

Many participants felt there should be more work and study opportunities available for young people to support Aboriginal governance and leadership. They stressed the need to offer courses that will develop leadership capacity, respect and promote culture and provide employment in the remote communities. Participants made statements such as:

*We need to 'invest in kids' futures'. Things could get worse. There needs to be more Aboriginal women in Aboriginal organisations. More women should be trained-up to take lead roles.*

*Communities need Aboriginal control and to look at ways to engage more young Aboriginal people in working in the community, they need to make options for real employment (not just CDEP) it can be difficult to engage young people in CDEP.*

Several participants agreed that there should be:

*Better Aboriginal self-governance and greater access to their lands.*

*More Aboriginal people should be controlling the offices in Aboriginal organisations.*

*More jobs created to specifically support Aboriginal people to get past this terrible situation.*

## Increasing work opportunities

In terms of increasing the employment opportunities for young people in some communities, stakeholders talked of the need for business feasibility studies to identify potential business opportunities to create culturally relevant employment for young people that could be supported by TAFE and other work based training courses. It was widely agreed that market gardens, cultural tourism, hospitality, art and crafts and pastoralism are potentially sustainable business opportunities that could create work and a culture of work for young people so they would not have to leave their families or community. Several stakeholders suggested that new business ventures could be linked to school and CDEP for training purposes and provide a good source of income while maintaining cultural integrity.

Several stakeholders including young people interviewed, stated that there is a genuine need for Aboriginal wardens, truancy officers, drivers, art and cultural activity coordinators, child care workers, and teaching assistants to facilitate activities to make Aboriginal communities both vibrant and economically viable. Some suggested that these positions could be incorporated within the CDEP or a school based training program with top up for CDEP wages as an incentive to young Aboriginal people to participate.

The need for wardens, child care workers, sport and recreation officers, youth workers, interpreters, police and hospital liaison officers, cultural interpreters and tour guides were reinforced by several young people who made suggestions such as:

*Responsible mums could act as wardens in local parks – perhaps this could be made part of the CDEP program, and the workers could be paid as child care workers.*

*We need a program that helps teach how to be a good mother. And one that helps young fathers and teaches them how to be more responsible.*

There was broad agreement among participants and stakeholders along the lines that:

*If the Shire and the government and Aboriginal organisations around town were really committed to increasing Aboriginal employment they should be thinking about the areas around town that need an Aboriginal workforce to change things and not just send people off to the mines or out of town.*

One young person said:

*Everyone who comes to work in Kununurra in the schools and hospitals and police, and the mine or even Coles should have to learn about Aboriginal history and culture. They should have to do a course - they (Argyle) bring people in from Perth to do cultural awareness training we have cultural experts everywhere in town.*

## Increasing access to flexible study options

Several young people highlighted the need for more flexible study options:

*Having greater access to TAFE consultants and greater understanding of what is available at TAFE and through Online study is seen as a positive option because of isolation and reluctance to travel outside of the community.*

*No programs available. Young people want shorter-term programs because they get bored quickly – 6 month TAFE courses are too long. They need education that incorporates visual elements and role play activities.*

*Need programs like 'Save the Children' to engage young people in TAFE if their literacy is too low.*

*Support several young people to enroll in courses so they provide peer support to each other and create synergy etc...it would mean training up more people to take up relief while people are away studying.*

*Job training needs to be flexible – for example, young mums should be able to take their young children.*

## **Implementing strategies to enhance opportunities to study/work away**

Both young people and stakeholders across the East Kimberley identified the need for strategies to support and enhance opportunities for young people to study or work away. These included the establishment and provision of supported accommodation, financial support and increased opportunities to experience travel early.

### *Providing supported accommodation*

Several stakeholders stated that young people who went to Kununurra to study or work had difficulties continuing because of the lack of safe, supported accommodation. There was general agreement among stakeholders that supported accommodation is critical for young people from isolated communities to have greater study and work opportunities. They also stated that young people need a lot of support and mentoring within their families and communities to build their confidence to enable them to leave their community.

### *Increasing support and information to study away*

In focus groups and key informant interviews in towns and communities young women 16- 25 years talked about their dreams for themselves and their children. The majority of young women said they believed it was important for young people to finish their education to year 12. They stressed the need for more support, encouragement and information to assist their children to study away. They wanted to send their young children to school in Perth or Broome once they reach high school age or even earlier 'so that our children have a chance'.

Some were concerned that:

*Young girls who stay in the community and don't go away to study end up having babies very young and just get stuck in the community.*

### *Supporting interschool visits at primary school*

Some stakeholders stressed the need for region-wide programs to be implemented in primary school so that students can see the opportunities available to them and develop the confidence to avail them. One teacher commented:

*Many young people are initially fearful to travel to other communities or towns for sporting events and they miss home. However, students enjoy the activities when they travel away and are very keen to have another opportunity to travel again and see another town.*

## **Improving community and town facilities**

Many young people identified a range of obstacles that they think contribute to the general problems as well as suggested solutions to address these. Several young women were critical of the lack of local amenities for Aboriginal people and the effect it has upon general feelings of marginalisation experienced by Aboriginal people. Key issues identified in towns and communities included the lack of sports and recreation facilities and amenities for young people, as well as a lack of appropriate safe parks and child care facilities for young women.

*The parks in the town are shocking. They need to be made more family friendly and child safe. Kiddy-safe fences are needed.*

*Drunks frequent the places where their kids play.*

*They should take down trees in the town parks and replace with shade cloths. This would take away suicide options. There have been a number of suicides in local parks and this obviously has scared many kids.*

*There needs to be an "after hours club" – there are some people sleeping rough.*

### ***Increasing Indigenous child care options in communities and towns***

Young women in the focus groups agreed that lack of child care was a serious barrier for employment and training for young mums. One participant stated that:

*An Indigenous child care centre is needed. I would rather have an Indigenous person looking after my kid. Some mums don't understand what the non-Indigenous carers are saying.*

Another stated that:

*A child care centre should run programs for the mums, such as home economics, skills acquisition and life skills. Centres need to be friendlier places for local Aboriginal people. Some Aboriginal women feel awkward because there are a lot of rules and guidelines.*

*There needs to be a drop-in centre or refuge for young mums – somewhere that is safe and non-judgemental.*

### **Focus groups and informant interviews with young mums**

Several young mums in communities emphasised the need to increase day care options in communities. They said they would like to see more part time job options made available at the community clinics and shops for young women who did not finish their studies and had babies young. They did not think these jobs should be seen and paid as CDEP jobs but as real jobs with real wages.

They also stated that young mums could be encouraged to become involved in sports and coaching and young mums activities which talk about parenting skills and what young children need 'to get the best chance'. They felt these things would make many young mums 'feel better in themselves'.

### **Making schools/curriculum more culturally relevant and inclusive**

Many of the participants who had left school, were working or on CDEP and/or had young children emphasised the importance of strategies to keep young people at school and assist parents to understand the importance of early schooling to improve their children's education and life outcomes. They also emphasised the need for schools to be more welcoming for Aboriginal children and their parents/ carers.

In most towns young people had very strong views about the need for schools to be more culturally inclusive and relevant for young people. While some were very supportive of the initiatives being done at schools by AIEOs and by local education officers they felt that school teachers and principals still had to do a lot more, and that school environments needed to change. A number of participants said they thought Aboriginal kids in schools were not recognised or respected. Others highlighted the need for programs to get young people integrated into schools:

*Aboriginal kids should be mixed in with others in the school because kids have to get on with each other.*

One young participant stated that:

*It was really good that Barramundi school had been integrated into the school grounds instead of being right out of town and the teachers are really good.*

## **Catering for young girls with babies**

One participant concerned about the high percentage of young girls as young as 13 years leaving school to have babies suggested that:

*They should have some programs in high schools similar to what is available at Balga Senior High School to support young girls to stay at school with their babies.*

One key informant suggested that:

*Every young girl and young fella needs to have one of them baby dolls that are real life so they know that they are not ready to be parents. They have to look after it for a week or something but instead if they keep acting how they do they will drop that baby when they are drunk or maybe pass out and the baby will starve and then they have to know what a responsibility it is to being a parent. At the moment them young girls are just having babies and leaving them with their own mums or older sisters to look after. When they have that baby they get drunk and do it all again.*

*But they don't care because they get money then, see, they don't have to think about getting a job— that is their job. Need to make them understand they are just bringing that baby into a bad cycle to be poor and everything, and stopping their own chances to have a dream.*

## **Increasing health education**

Several participants believed there is a complete lack of knowledge among young people (and in some cases their carers) about the short and long term consequences of risk behaviours to their health, employment and education outcomes. One participant suggested that:

*There needs to be shock tactics to combat drug and alcohol use – for example, photos of people passed out on the street with the message, 'Is this where you want to be?'*

Another participant stated that:

*There needs to be more education for young people to highlight the dangers of drinking and to provide sex education. There would need to be cultural sensitivities to this type of education.*

Discussions with education stakeholders throughout the East Kimberley identified other solutions required to address some of the complex barriers. They highlighted the need for young people who are disengaged to:

- Have broad exposure to the wide range of possibilities and opportunities available to them;
- Have a clear understanding of what they needed to do at school to make this possible; and,
- Be encouraged and motivated to understand how they can change their circumstances.

## Improving local youth centres, sport and recreation facilities

In every community comments by young people reinforced the importance of having 'their space and place'. Several young people stated that:

*We need places to hang out.*

*We need safe recreation places, with adult guidance.*

*Kids have nothing to do, so there are a lot of break-ins and stealing. Need to engage young people in recreation and sporting activities that are free of drugs, alcohol, gambling and card games.*

*Young people and stakeholders in every community identified the need for youth, sport and recreation facilities to overcome boredom, provide a distraction, promote physical and emotional health and wellbeing and provide young people with alternatives to drugs and alcohol.*

Some participants said they would like to see more activities and events at the Performing Arts building at the Kununurra High School. Several young people in Kununurra agreed that the programs that used to operate at the local recreation centre had been good for young people and helped reduce stealing. They said that a new centre was being built and indicated that it would be good to start the programs up again.

*The Youth Centre used to take people fishing at Lake Argyle and have a BBQ – they don't do this anymore.*

*Set up a drop-in centre for playing pool and darts. There used to be a centre like this but it went out of business – had no people to run it.*

*Teach people music because there is nothing like this at the school or in the town; just have "something different".*

Young people in all sites suggested that they would like to see a range of things including:

*Some live shows, such as a circus or art/drawing competitions and displays.*

*Some sport carnivals and competitions run for the young people in town.*

*Opportunities for boxing.*

*A music shop.*

*Tenpin bowling would be great.*

Some young people observed that:

*All the sporting activities involve AFL football or basketball. Some young people would like to see alternatives, such as soccer, rugby and cricket.*

*Garnduwa type excursions might be good, like doing a trip to Perth colleges.*

Several young people agreed that the shire could be doing more for young people 'black and white'. One participant said:

*The Shire was a bit slack in this regard – there is too much focus on tourists and not enough on the youth in the area. I feel sorry for community kids – they need a place to go – agencies need to liaise with communities to work out what could be done.*

## Improving Centrelink services

Several participants claimed that Centrelink staff do not understand their situation or communicate well enough with clients. One participant made the following point:

*Young mums in particular need help to get back to work, this may mean support from a number of agencies. There are many issues that make this process difficult for young mums, such as the cost of buying uniforms.*

*Centrelink have cut some people off from CDEP because they have not turned up to work on the odd occasion. They don't seem to realise that some clients don't receive their mail or can't read it. Some Aboriginal people are too scared to ask for help at agencies like Centrelink or don't know how.*

Others agreed that they:

*Feel like they are "put down" when they go to Centrelink.*

*Aboriginal people need help with paperwork – there needs to be more of this here in Kununurra. Perhaps there could be a 'halfway office' for community people so they don't have to go all the way into town to do business.*

## Improving transport

Several young people and stakeholders identified transport issues as a barrier that needs addressing. Transport was an issue in terms of regular travel to and from school and also transport to take children to other communities for sports, camps and other activities. According on participant:

*There is no bus service for Aboriginal kids in communities east of Kununurra town, i.e. the bus service does not cover all communities. There are separate buses for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students – this is a good thing.*

## A brief snapshot of Kalumburu

At the time the project team were scheduled to travel to Kalumburu, the community had a number of public disclosures of child sexual abuse. As a result the visit was delayed for several weeks and we consulted widely with appropriate people before we resumed our research in the community. Everyone insisted that we continue with the interviews and that young people would welcome the opportunity to have their views, needs, issues and aspirations heard. While most of the findings of these young people are included with those of other young people in the East Kimberley this next section attempts to respectfully represent some of the specific issues that young people in Kalumburu are experiencing.

The community was still deeply affected by the disclosures when the team visited. Several stakeholders believe that the impact of these disclosures will have far reaching implications for the futures and possibilities for children, young people and families. While some people referred to the children and young people as 'amazingly resilient' others were concerned about the long term trauma and impact if their feelings and experiences were suppressed. They believed that the community needed a team of 6 trained counsellors to provide trauma counselling to avoid similar types of problems (i.e. child abuse issues) in future years. Others highlighted the need for intense community and social development programs to be implemented including a strength-based parental learning and early child development program to provide young people with parenting skills such as protective behaviours, nutrition and home care to promote a safe and healthy community. The existing playgroup was identified as a good initiative that effectively engaged parents of 0-4 year olds and something that could be built on.

Many of the senior high school students expressed interest in courses and careers that lend themselves to a curriculum that combines work readiness and skills based courses and training. Young women expressed interest in child care training and arts and crafts while young men identified mechanics, bike maintenance and welding. The school is only funded for primary years but caters for students up to Year 12. The community intends to create partnerships with TAFE – for example, training courses in welding. Some stakeholders identified the need for highly experienced teaching staff; a manual arts program and infrastructure for this - 'there are so many broken bikes in the community that you could run a workshop just on fixing them'. The Kalumburu Aboriginal Corporation has agreed to support the application of fines for student's non-attendance at High School or TAFE under their Shared Responsibility Agreement.

### *Future training and employment opportunities*

Stakeholders identified many opportunities for small businesses and employment: cultural tourism; market gardening; permaculture (abundance of space and land); horsemanship (take tourists out on horseback or stockman work); and small boat trips (sightseeing, crocodile sighting, fishing). An estimated 10,000 tourists visit Kalumburu each year providing scope for tourist-related ventures. Some of the local people have the skills and abilities to do some of this work. Fruit picking has proved a real success employing 25 local young people (mostly young men) aged 16-20 years. It pays well and is regarded as a better option than CDEP. The community has secured the services of the Army to create an independent base of around 400-500 people, to build houses, create a bitumen airstrip and roads, and improve services around the community. There is interest in cultural maintenance through language and cultural enhancement courses, however, only a few people speak the local language, many are frail and may need support to teach the younger ones. This highlights the urgent need to try to involve young people (for example LOTE teachers and AIEOs in helping document the language). There are good examples of this happening in Fitzroy Crossing and One Arm Point.

## 3.6 Examples of programs that are working

Stakeholders identified a number of local programs that are working quite well and experiencing some successes within the challenges and constraints of the contexts in which they are situated. Three of these are described below. Other programs are listed in Appendix 3.

### **Example 1: Warmun Community Cultural Celebration**

Several young people and other stakeholders commented that the celebration day introduced at Warmun a year ago had created an important focus for the whole community which had significant benefits for everyone. Several young people identified the positive processes as equally important as the outcomes that were already being achieved. They stated that the focus on the cultural celebration worked because it was about:

- restoring real community and cultural pride and celebrating achievements;
- encouraging young ones to be involved in Corroboree, learning dances and singing which was keeping cultural strong and connecting everyone - young people, the school and families and elders; and,
- recognising and celebrating the New Warmun Art Centre which in turn is:
  - creating employment and a market for paintings – young ones are learning from traditional artists;
  - attracting tourists who are exposed to education about art and culture and the community aspirations; and,
  - working with the school – children are learning to save money from paintings and learning about options for the future.

There are a few programs such as the Save the Children program, which operates in Kununurra and Wyndham, that reported they are having some success in providing skills for young people 'at risk'.

### **Example 2: Save the Children Program for Young People 'At Risk'**

The program offers a learning environment for the participants that is practical, combines recreational activities with life skills, work readiness skills and experiences and skills for healthier living. Young people are taken on camping trips and other activities, as well as provided with training for work (first aid, Occupational Health & Safety, obtaining drivers licenses, getting resume's together, etc.). The program helps to build young people's confidence and interest in learning. It focuses on improving self-esteem and ability to communicate – although does not address literacy and numeracy issues.

The program employs an intensive case management approach to its participants and is achieving outcomes on a limited budget. So far they have been successful obtaining 100% job placements. According to workers, demand for the program is high and if they had a second vehicle they could accommodate more young people and structure the program more effectively.

There are a few examples of programs that have been developed to support young people leaving their communities to undertake work training. The Work Placement Scheme at Kalumburu is an example of this.

### **Example 3: The Work Placement Scheme**

The Work Placement Scheme conducted at Kalumburu provides the support and opportunity for some young people (mainly young men) to leave the community and experience on the job training and earning an income. Participants are sent to South Australia and Queensland in collaboration with Cape York Partnerships. The scheme is having some success with participants continuing with the positions obtained after their first placement.

So far, only a few participants have returned to the community. Some young people have been sponsored to do schooling in Victoria, with some success. Local stakeholders stated that the Work Placement Scheme could be improved further by sending young people to closer towns such as Broome, Darwin or Kununurra. They stressed the need for young people to travel in groups – with other local young people of the same age to provide support for each other. Other stakeholders stressed that the success of the program resides in getting young people well away from extended family and negative peer influence.

## 4. Factors Influencing Young Indigenous People's Study and Job Participation

This Chapter describes the factors influencing the employment and education participation of young Aboriginal people in East Kimberley. The discussion draws on the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS) data which has been specifically customised for the regions which encompass the sites included this research – the Wyndham/East Kimberley region (see Figure 1), the Halls Creek region (see Figure 2), and the state of Western Australia.

While there is a prosperous regional economy, Indigenous people of the East Kimberley remain severely disadvantaged. The labour market indicators of the Indigenous population show high unemployment rates, falling participation rates in mainstream employment and poor literacy and numeracy. As already mentioned, the Indigenous population is very young with approximately 40 percent under the age of 15 years – foregrounding the need for urgent action to overcome the disadvantages and inequities currently being experienced by young Aboriginal people.

### 4.1 Employment rates

The 2001 Census data for the Kununurra region (includes both Wyndham and the Halls Creek Region) was used to examine the labour force participation rates. Participation in CDEP programs in the Kununurra region was highest for young Aboriginal people aged 15-24 years (34%) and gradually decreased across other age groups (31% for 25-34 year olds; 19% for 35-44 year olds; 11% for 45-54 year olds; 3% for 55-64 year olds; 1% for 65 year and over). Just over 1% of non-Aboriginal people living in the Kununurra region were involved in the CDEP program. Labour force participation rates of young Aboriginal people (15-24 years) by gender and type of labour force participation (per cent) are detailed in the table below.

**FIGURE 8: PARTICIPATION RATES OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE (15–24 YEARS) IN THE KUNUNURRA REGION**

	In Labour Force			Not In Labour Force	Not Stated	Total
	CDEP	Other	Unemployed			
Males	44	10	8	33	5	100
Females	24	11	4	56	5	100

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

### 4.2 Academic outcomes

The achievement of successful academic outcomes is considered a key factor influencing employment outcomes. In turn academic success is directly linked to school attendance. Results from the WAACHS found that attendance of Aboriginal students at school is significantly lower than that of non-Aboriginal students. The median number of days absent from school (i.e. the number of days of school missed by half of the students) for Aboriginal students was 26 days, compared with 8 days for non-Aboriginal students. (Zubrick et al p.161). The survey notes that 'Of those students who had missed school at least 26 days of the school year, over two-thirds (67.5 per cent) had a low academic performance' (op.cit).

In the Halls Creek region, 72 per cent of Aboriginal children aged 4 to 17 years were considered to have poor school attendance (26 days or more) and over 80 per cent were rated by their teacher as having low academic performance (i.e. were below age level). In the Wyndham region, 61% of Aboriginal children had poor school attendance and 75% were considered to have low academic performance.

Both areas were higher than for WA overall where 50% of Aboriginal children had poor school attendance and 58% were considered to have low academic performance. The differences between the percentage of students considered to have low academic performance in Halls Creek region and WA were statistically significant.

**FIGURE 9: LOW ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND POOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN ABORIGINAL STUDENTS**

		Wyndham	Halls Creek region	Western Australia
Low Academic Performance	Proportion	75	82	58
	Number	570	470	11 300
Poor School Attendance	Proportion	61	72	50
	Number	460	470	9830

Source: Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey.

Census data for the period 2001-2006 appear to indicate that more Aboriginal young people in Kununurra are staying in school for longer periods. As figure 10 shows, there are increased proportions of Aboriginal people completing Years 10, 11 and 12 in 2006 when compared with 2001. In addition, the proportion of people not attending school has decreased over this period.

**FIGURE 10: HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED BY ABORIGINAL PEOPLE (15–24 YEARS)**

	Year 8 or below	Year 9 or equivalent	Year 10 or equivalent	Year 11 or equivalent	Year 12 or equivalent	Still at school	Did not go to school	Not Stated	Total
2001 Census	23	15	26	8	7	3	12	7	100
2006 Census	17	11	29	11	11	n/a	8	13	100

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001 & 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

## 4.3 Factors enabling positive academic and employment outcomes

These results, which show an increase in Aboriginal people completing Years 10 and 12 may suggest that some of the existing strategies in place are successful. While school attendance is a critical factor that influences academic performance and consequently employment outcomes there are other factors which play an important role including carer education and employment characteristics.

### Carer's education and employment characteristics

The WAACHS results show that throughout WA the proportion of students with average or above average academic performance increased with increasing levels of education of the primary carer, and hence had an indirect benefit to employment outcomes. Moreover where the carer has been in paid employment the benefits associated with employment outcomes are even more direct.

Results from the WAACHS, for the Kununurra region, showed that at the time of the survey, 86% of primary carers had been in paid employment at some point during their life, 38% were currently unemployed and 48% were not in the labour force. Of those who were employed at the time of the survey, almost half (47%) were working for a CDEP. These WAACHS results are consistent with many of the statements by participants in this research.

## 4.4 Barriers to employment

The WAACHS findings revealed a number of barriers to employment for young Aboriginal people including their social and emotional wellbeing, including suicidal thoughts; and, health risk behaviours including alcohol and substance use. The WAACHS results discussed below confirm the self reports of young Aboriginal participants in the East Kimberley regarding their perceived barriers to work and study.

### Social and emotional wellbeing

The notion that social and emotional wellbeing is associated with economic wellbeing and labour force participation is supported by the WAACHS findings. The survey shows that the main factors associated with the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people include economic factors such as family circumstances, family financial strain, household factors and various social determinants, such as carer's income and education. Importantly, children and young people who have poor social and emotional wellbeing, or are considered to be at high or moderate risk of clinically significant emotional or behavioural difficulties have poorer economic and employment outcomes.

*In the Kununurra region at the time of the WAACHS survey 540 students (aged 4-17 years) were considered to be at high or moderate risk of clinically significant emotional or behavioural difficulties, of these 490 (90%) also had low academic performance. In addition, those young Aboriginal people (aged 12-17 years) were more likely to have had suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, and been involved in health risk behaviours, such as smoking tobacco and marijuana and drinking alcohol. Many of these young people are now aged between 18-24 years.*

As discussed above these factors impact on young people's ability to successfully participate in the labour force in a sustained and meaningful way. The statistics give a sense of the challenges facing both the young Indigenous people in attempting to participate in a meaningful engaged way in education and employment and the stakeholders involved in providing education and training options for young people.

### Youth suicidal thoughts

The WAACHS findings based on self reports of young Aboriginal people identified that approximately 21% of young Aboriginal people (aged 12–17 years) in the Wyndham area and some 16% in Halls Creek region had seriously thought about ending their own life in the previous 12 months. The proportion in WA as a whole was similar to Halls Creek, however it was significantly higher than for non-Aboriginal young people in WA.

**FIGURE 11:** PROPORTION OF ABORIGINAL YOUNG PEOPLE WHO REPORTED HAVING SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

	Wyndham	Halls Creek region	Western Australia
Proportion	22	16	16
Number	40	50	1420

The tragic and pervasive impact of such statistics on individual lives was brought home in the focus groups and interviews with young people during this research.

Several young people interviewed stated that they had lost young family members or friends through suicide. These deaths were attributed to young people 'having no hope for the future'; 'having depression that was not being addressed'; 'having no-one to turn to'; 'sexual abuse trauma'; and, 'lack of appropriate referral processes associated with the disclosure of sexual abuse'. Some young people noted the link between alcohol and/or drug use and depression.

## Alcohol use

According to the WAACHS, very few Aboriginal young people reported that they had drunk to excess on more than two occasions, i.e. they had vomited due to drinking too much alcohol.

The proportion of young Aboriginal people that reported drinking alcohol in the Halls Creek region (15%) and in Wyndham (12%) was considerably lower than WA as a whole (27%). However, these lower proportions were not reflected in the self reporting of young Aboriginal people (including those still going to school) and other stakeholders at the time of this research. As outlined in Chapter 3 'too much alcohol and gunja or marijuana' were frequently cited as a major barrier to achieving study and job aspirations amongst young Aboriginal people.

**FIGURE 12: YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DRANK ALCOHOL**

	Wyndham	Halls Creek Region	Western Australia
Proportion	12	15	27
Number	30	50	2480

## Marijuana use

Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug in Australia. The drug is widely considered to be as harmful as tobacco and has significant negative consequences, both on the user and the community. Marijuana has a number of negative effects such as depression and lack of motivation and decreases alertness—making it dangerous to drive a vehicle or operate machinery. It has also been associated with mental health issues.

Between a quarter and a third of young people in the WAACHS said that they had used marijuana (or gunja) at some time in the lives. About 12% of young people in Wyndham reported using marijuana at least weekly compared with 12% in WA and 6% in the Halls Creek region.

**FIGURE 13: PROPORTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO USE MARIJUANA**

	Wyndham	Halls Creek region	Western Australia
Ever used marijuana	23	17	30
Used marijuana at least weekly	12	6	12

The findings from interviews and focus groups with young Aboriginal people and stakeholders in this research indicated a substantially higher usage of both marijuana and alcohol abuse among young people in these age groups. Some students interviewed stated that as many as 75-90 percent of young people in their peer group were smoking 'gunja' and drinking to dangerous levels. Almost all young people and stakeholders cited alcohol and marijuana as key barriers for young people.

## Access to services

Although results are not available specifically for the Kununurra region, the overall results from WAACHS indicate that there are systematic differences in carer perceptions of a range of community and neighbourhood characteristics associated with variations in relative isolation.

The results of relevance to this report are those related to access to schools and work or work opportunities. While over 80% of primary carer's stated that they were happy with their access to schools, only 36% were happy with the access to school bus services. In focus groups in Kununurra and Wyndham access to transport was raised as a serious issue, with some young people including those with young siblings or children attributing lack of school bus services or negative and racist attitudes of bus drivers with the non school attendance or poor school attendance of some young children.

Only 41% of primary carers were satisfied with their level of access to work or work opportunities. A higher proportion of carers stated in more isolated areas reported being satisfied although this could be attributed to their involvement in CDEP.

**Forced separation**

The WAACHS research examined the association between forced separations and relocations and the social and emotional wellbeing of subsequent generations. The analysis provides evidence of the intergenerational effects of forced separation, confirming significant associations between the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal carers and their children, and the past policies and practices of forced separation of Aboriginal people from their natural families and/or traditional land.

In the Wyndham-East Kimberley area 4% of all Aboriginal parents/carers were forcibly separated from their natural families, while in the Halls Creek Region this proportion was twice as high (8%).

**FIGURE 14:** PROPORTION OF PARENTS/CARERS FORCIBLY SEPARATED FROM THEIR NATURAL FAMILY

		Wyndham-EK	Halls Creek region	Western Australia
Aboriginal parent or carer	Yes	4	8	12
forcibly separated from	No	95	92	83
their natural family	Did not want to answer	1	0	5

The effects of forced separation on primary carer's are long-lasting also affecting their children's social and emotional wellbeing. Almost one third (37%) of children whose carer was forcibly separated were at risk of developing clinically significant emotional or behavioural difficulties. These young people have two times greater risk than children whose carers had not been forcibly removed from their natural family (Zubrick et al 2005).

The lasting, transgenerational effects were evident in the interviews and focus group discussions with young Aboriginal people in this research especially where students stated that their parents had not gone to school and would rather that they did not go to school either.

Further, the transgenerational impact of forced removal from parents and/or country; and the associated loss of cultural traditions and language were identified by some key stakeholders as the reason for high levels of alcohol abuse and violence evident among some families.

*According to one key Aboriginal stakeholder 'when you look at the reasons why some young children are not coming to school and you look at what is happening for them you need to put it into its historical context. You need to look back to what happened to their great grand parents, even before that. Then you track back to their grandparents, and then their parents - and its all there - that's why you have to work with the whole family if you want to make things right for these kids, if you want to get these young kids to school'.*



## 5. Literature Review

The literature review covers a range of relevant topics which helped inform the categorisation of themes and issues for analysis of the qualitative data obtained in the field work research pertaining to Indigenous engagement, education and employment. The review covers a series of key themes and issues identified in relevant research studies undertaken in the East Kimberley, nationally and internationally. It explores and summarises the factors that impact on Indigenous young people's job aspirations; their perceptions and motivation and the realisation of their goals; their engagement in sustainable employment; the barriers they experience; and, the many issues linked to their employment. The review examines factors that enable sustained motivation, capacity building and engagement in the communities. Finally, the review identifies relevant best practice models and strategies to improve education and employment opportunities for Indigenous young people within the region. The review examines key reports of relevance, existing policies and programs that have been successful in the Kimberley or elsewhere in Australia to assist in identifying possible solutions.

### 5.1 Indigenous job aspiration formation

Numerous studies show how aspiration formation and career intentions influence occupational attainment. Although not Indigenous specific, the early international literature on aspiration formation still provides the basis for understanding the ways in which study and career aspirations are influenced and studied. It is recognised that the formation of aspirations, plans and intentions are:

- crucial to an individual's development (Punch & Sheridan 1985);
- related to personality types (Holland 1973);
- influenced by the interplay of the following nine variables:
  - Socioeconomic status - fathers occupational status, parents income
  - Cognitive ability
  - Educational attainment of parents
  - Parental encouragement
  - Community, neighbourhood, and school context effects
  - Gender
  - Social supports
  - Influence of significant others
  - Family structure (Sewell & Hauser 1975).

In a related study Hauser & Sewell suggest that the effects of socioeconomic background and mental ability on educational and occupational aspirations are mediated by academic performance and perceptions of social support from parents, encouragement from teachers, and peers for continuation in post-secondary schooling (the Winconsin Model). An individual's aspirations, in turn, mediate much of the influence of prior variables on post-secondary schooling and socioeconomic achievement (Hauser & Sewell 1986, p241).

Importantly, although mediated by cultural elements, these same nine variables have been identified as important and enduring influences on young Aboriginal people's aspirations and education and employment attainment in the research fieldwork findings (Chapter 3); the WAACHS results for the East Kimberley (Chapter 4) and recent studies conducted in Indigenous contexts in Australia (Craven et al).

In addition, Holland suggests that individuals attempt to identify congruence between themselves and their appropriate occupational environment. Holland outlined six personality types each of which could be matched to a particular work environment, job satisfaction and choice stability. The personality model popularly known by the acronym RIASEC, comprises a range of different areas of interest which are:

- Realistic (outdoor, practical);
- Investigative (scientific);
- Artistic (creative);
- Social (people contact);
- Enterprising (business); and,
- Conventional (clerical) interests (Holland 1973).

## 5.2 Key influences on Indigenous young people's study and job aspirations

The literature regarding the key influences on the formation and realisation of education and job aspirations of young Indigenous people's corresponds with existing mainstream models but also highlights the importance of taking the cultural context into account. The social and cultural context helps to explain the pervasiveness and persistence of key barriers to Indigenous access to education and employment opportunities, and the need for innovative and comprehensive solutions to address the barriers within culturally specific and diverse contexts.

### The importance of education

Studies in OECD countries provide substantial evidence of the links between educational attainment, qualifications and higher participation performance and employability and earning potential in the work force. Studies in Australia by the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) also confirm the relationship between education and employment prospects for Aboriginal people. The MCEETYA Report (2001) confirmed that:

- Completing Year 10 or 11 increases an Aboriginal person's chance of employment by 40 percent.
- Completing Year 12 increases employment prospects by a further 13 percent.
- Having a post-secondary qualification increases employment prospects by between 13 percent and 23 percent. (MCEETYA 2001).

Conversely, a detailed examination of the determinants of Indigenous employment outcomes, by Hunter (1997) identified education as critical.

*Education is the largest single factor associated with the current poor outcomes for Indigenous employment. Indeed, the influence of education dwarfs the influence of most demography, geography and social variables. (Hunter 1997 p. 189)*

Similarly, as discussed previously, the WAACHS findings highlight that the two key factors that enable participation of young Aboriginal people in the labour force are their educational attainment and their carer's own education level and participation in paid employment (Vol 3, 2006). Recent literature shows

that a focus on the early years of schooling is crucial to children's long term outcomes in education and employment. The development of a 'school culture', support for school attendance, and the development of Standard Australian English literacy skills in primary school children provide a strong foundation for a successful introduction to, and experience of, secondary school.

## Parent academic background

Research by Craven et al (2005) and Zubrick et al (2006) confirms that one of the barriers to young people's education and employment aspirations, is the impact of many Aboriginal parents or primary carers not having the level of academic skills or capacity to provide assistance and support for their children's education. The WAACHS data showed that the carer's own education level and previous employment have the greatest affect and positive influence on a young person's participation in the labour force.

It is widely accepted that the value parents place on education is a critical factor in children's success at school. Parental involvement and support for educational processes is recognised as being fundamental to a child's successful engagement and outcomes (Schwab, 2001, p. 4). Parents who have not had positive school experiences or who leave education early to look after their own children, and who have low self-esteem because of low levels of formal education and poor literacy and numeracy skills, or because of their marginalisation and disenfranchisement from the wider society are unable to provide this support to their children.

## 5.3 Barriers to achieving Indigenous young people's study and job aspirations

The study on Indigenous student's job aspirations undertaken by Craven, Parente & Marsh (2003) for the (then) Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), found that Indigenous students rated 9 potential barriers to achieving their future goals and aspirations. They identified lack of family support as the key barrier to achieving their aspirations, followed by the amount of career advice they had been given, their knowledge of what further education or job training they needed to do, and their academic achievement. Student's academic self concept is also a significant influence.

### Self-concept

Self-concept is described as the organisation of a multi-dimensional set of beliefs people have about the physical, emotional, social, and academic aspects of themselves. Self-concept is an important mediating factor that facilitates the attainment of learning, psychological and behavioural outcomes and, is especially relevant to young people's aspirations for their futures. The literature identifies academic self concepts as an important influence on aspirations relating to school and the future, as well as a causal impact on academic achievement and a variety of other outcomes (such as school attendance, course selection, going to university, VET participation and employment opportunities).

Craven et al (2003) found that Indigenous students have statistically significantly lower self-concepts about their academic (maths and verbal) abilities at school. Other studies have found that low self esteem has a devastating impact on Indigenous people. The Australian Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) Report identified low self-esteem as a critical variable contributing to Aboriginal disadvantage and deaths. As discussed earlier, the WAACHS study showed that in the East Kimberley some 540 Aboriginal students aged 12-17 years reported low social and emotional wellbeing which was associated with their poor school attendance and academic performance (Zubrick et al 2005).

A study by the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) (Groome & Hamilton 1995, p.2) found 'a significant number of Indigenous students had left schools, because they felt de-personalised and had lost self esteem' (op.cit p.45). Recognising the critical importance of this finding, the NBEET study concluded that Aboriginal students need to be given support to 'develop a strong sense of personal identity and self-esteem' highlighting the need for courses which assist students to develop a sense of identity (ibid p. xi). In a similar study Purdie et al (2000) suggests that enhancing self-concept is a vital tool for maximising Indigenous student's educational outcomes and potential in life.

## 5.4 Solutions to achieving study and career aspirations

In their study in 2005, 'Indigenous Students' aspirations: Dreams, perceptions and realities', Craven et al concluded that 'There is much work that needs to be done to address Indigenous young people's perceptions and make their dreams a reality'. They stressed the need to address and take into account the broader socioeconomic issues affecting Indigenous families in developing short-and long term strategies for improving Indigenous young people's aspirations. These strategies include optimising Indigenous family support and encouragement through the development of positive parenting programs to increase their understanding of how they can assist their children to form and achieve their aspirations; and provide them with strategies and information for supporting and encouraging their children. They emphasise the need to develop strategies for an intensive intervention approach to address barriers to Indigenous student's achieving their aspirations – highlighting the need for disseminating information about successful programs as best practice models. They recommended that schools:

- Enhance the self-concept of Indigenous students to achieve their aspirations by implementing strategies to optimise student resilience, academic self concept, and determination to succeed;
- Strengthen, rethink and redesign their curriculum and pathways for Indigenous children: to fully inform them of the relevance of schooling, and of subject requirements to attain their education and career aspirations; to provide advice on the range of career choices and academic and vocational pathway options available; and provide students with successful role models who describe strategies leading to success;
- Actively work to combat the presence and effects of racism across all aspects of student life including their dealings with other students and teachers; and, in the curricula content, pedagogy and assessment;
- Strengthen Indigenous students' psychological tools to enhance Indigenous students' resilience, academic self-concept, and determination to succeed by developing and implementing whole-school intervention programs, based on the adaptive strategies of successful students;
- Encourage teachers to have raised expectations of students and work towards having these raised; and,
- Offer strategic career advice earlier in secondary school which aims to widen student's choices.

Craven et al (2005) also emphasise the need for 'a very considered policy and resource response to meet the unique needs of Indigenous students who, having battled through the school system, then have to leave the cultural support of home and community and go to other culturally unfamiliar institutions (TAFE and university)'. They highlight the need for schools and government organisations to:

- strengthen and reconceptualise university recruitment strategies—by providing proactive career education throughout secondary schooling so as to ensure Indigenous students are given strategic career advice and access to information about entry requirements much earlier; and,
- develop strategies to enhance the quality of career advice available to Indigenous students by synthesizing career advice for a diversity of industries via a range of media (e.g. websites, printed publications); encouraging career advisors to provide information about the availability of these materials and, how to access internet resources; offering expert verbal advice tailored to individual needs (via, a free telephone consultation source); and promoting the availability of such resources in an accessible manner (e.g. T-shirts, stickers, bookmarks and posters).

## The impact of social structure, culture and community

Research shows that the social structure of society and various social and psychological variables influence the formation of adolescent aspirations. Several researchers in Australia, including Carpenter, Fleishman and Western (1989), Carpenter, Western and Foster (1980), Waugh and Punch (1980) make the following points:

- Social class is a major constraint on educational aspirations and achievements.
- Schooling affects young people's plans and achievement.
- Significant others such as parents, peers, teachers and older relatives, influence the aspirations and plans of adolescents.

Many researchers (Craven et al 2005; Purdie et al 2000) have undertaken studies to identify to what extent family and community expectations and obligations on young Indigenous people affect their capacity to pursue education, careers and attain an individualistic economic future.

The studies by Craven et al (2005) and Purdie et al (2000) confirm that family, community and culture play a significant, even determining role in shaping Indigenous people's aspirations regarding economic participation. These studies suggest that Indigenous cultural values shape attitudes towards a working lifestyle, earning an income and income distribution which in turn impact on young people's attitudes towards education, training and employment. Gender and culture are also important variables that influence aspiration formation.

## Cultural considerations – Indigenous mobility

The literature affirms that many young Indigenous people face pressure from within their communities and families to stay in their community which can constrain their aspirations. The reluctance to leave communities to pursue employment stems from the fact that there is very little history of such a practice, especially in the more remote areas, and as such, few role models for young people. In other communities, many of those who do leave their community to seek employment suffer ridicule and criticism. This can severely limit people's aspirations and opportunities.

*In seeking to counteract the negative perceptions towards those who leave their communities Noel Pearson stresses that a person who goes away for employment or education should not be assumed to be abandoning their community or Indigenous identity. He refers to this process as orbiting – 'orbiters' periodically return to their community and maintain their cultural heritage, identity and connections. These people have the confidence to leave – and to return.*

The Research undertaken by the Cape York Policy Institute (CYPI) shows a range of factors impacting on young people's ideas about employment-related mobility, including a lack of community encouragement, CDEP, racism and the perception of racism, a lack of accommodation, transport, alcohol and drug addiction and a general lack of confidence to living outside the community (2007 p.283).

In the recent report 'From Hand Out to Hand Up', the CYPI identifies the social and economic benefits for young people arising from their mobility. The report suggests that to overcome the current levels of disadvantage mobility needs to be seen by Indigenous communities and young people as advantageous and offering choice and opportunity. It also suggests that placing participants in other environments enables them to gain experience and insight into life outside their community, avoid the peer pressures and expectations of their families and community, as well as removing them from the influence of alcohol and drugs, crime, and low levels of achievement. The Report suggests that people become self reliant, confident and responsible and less inclined to drop out of jobs and training due to the distance away from home.

*While much of the literature on cultural and community values suggests a negative or restrictive influence on Indigenous young people's job aspirations there is also a need to consider the positive role cultural factors play in the decisions Indigenous young people are making about their future, and the types of training and employment they wish to pursue.*

## **Cultural considerations – alternative pathways**

Altman (2001, 2003) and Rowse (2002) have undertaken studies through the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) regarding alternative pathways to fulfil the employment and life aspirations of Indigenous Australians. They assert that many Indigenous people are making quite distinct choices about the types of jobs they wish to pursue, outside of mainstream options. These authors suggest that with increased access to traditional lands, many Indigenous people are placing an emphasis on continuing ties to country, and the customary social and economic activities that stem from this, rather than pursuing jobs in the mining and resource industry.

Several researchers suggest that Indigenous people are often not interested or able to take up the opportunities offered by the mining industry (Altman 2001, Trigger 2005, and Taylor and Scambray 2005). Furthermore, Indigenous people's aspirations remain diverse and often linked to tourism, natural and cultural resource management, national parks management, and the customary economy. Taylor and Scambray (2005) suggest that where these interests intersect with mining activity, as in the case of heritage work, they may provide a source of meaningful engagement and intermittent income. They also suggest there is a need to explore other means of commercialising the customary sector to facilitate, rather than erode, its sustainability.

Altman, Buchanan & Biddle (2006) challenges standard measures of economic activity as it relates to Indigenous people and suggests that the customary sector can provide economic opportunities and facilitate enhanced customary participation.

*Much of the discourse around employment and income equality for Indigenous people ignores the contribution made by the customary, non-market or Indigenous sector—the so called 'informal economy'—and the way that this sector links to the cultural aspirations of many Indigenous people (Altman et al 2006).*

Using the concept of the 'hybrid economy', Altman (2001) suggests that the customary sector is made up of a range of productive activities, such as Indigenous art, that take place outside a market economy, but can also attract a dollar value. The arts industry and cultural education are obvious examples, but land management (caring for country) and work in the Indigenous community and organisational sector may provide more labour intensive and potentially widespread opportunities.

Several authors (Burgess, Johnson, Bowman & Whitehead 2005; Rose 1996; Smyth 1994) suggest that 'caring for country' refers to more than the physical management of a geographical area—it encompasses looking after all of the values, places, resources, stories, and cultural obligations associated with that area, as well as associated processes of spiritual renewal, connecting with ancestors, food provision, and maintaining kin relations.

*These authors argue that there are a range of socio-cultural and economic benefits provided by the engagement of Indigenous people in land and sea management such as increased self-esteem and confidence, reduced social alienation and the promotion of health benefits in remote communities. Significantly, Burgess (2007) provides preliminary biomedical evidence that high levels of Indigenous engagement in natural and cultural resource management are associated with significantly better health outcomes for participants.*

Their research suggests that many opportunities to promote economic development through commercialisation of the customary sector have been overlooked, yet the potential economic opportunities it offers Indigenous people needs to be factored into any consideration of the scope of young people's aspirations for their future. This is especially so in the face of research documenting the commitments young people face with regard to community and culture. For Indigenous young people, the opportunity to work and develop skills in areas which can serve their cultures and communities can be an important way in which they can meet their commitments in a very tangible way – while providing an opportunity for communities to build their capacity to manage their own affairs.

Another alternative path for Indigenous young people exists in the multi-media arena. Youth multi-media programs allow young people to explore and define who they are while gaining a broad range of technical skills. International research has shown that arts-based projects have the capacity and potential to stimulate non-formal learning (Eidman-Aadahl 2002). An extended study in the US between 1987 and 1998 showed how non-school based arts programs in disadvantaged communities were effective in re-engaging young people with learning and with their communities (Heath, Soep & Roach 1998).

*Young people are often engaged in voluntary, informal community work including caring for sick and aged people and for young children. Many authors suggest that if this work counted as employment, not only would the unemployment rate be lower, it would also be the case that training programs, specifically the VET sector, could assist people to do this work more effectively, as well as be recognised as having gained valuable employment outcomes.*

## Training

Other researchers (Marika, Lane, Smith & Reinke 2004) have explored the relevance of the vocational education and training (VET) sector opportunities in supporting the goals and aspirations of Indigenous young people. They argue that while the vocational education and training (VET) system recognises that Indigenous people require specific strategies to enable them to achieve equitable outcomes, the outcomes are measured against performance-based indicators, including rates of

participation, satisfactory completion and successful placement outcomes. The system does not, however, 'acknowledge and encourage the development of the capabilities and attributes that enable "disadvantaged" groups, such as Indigenous people, to create, adapt and transform systems and situations to build positive learning cultures for their communities' (Marika et al 2004, pp.72-73). These authors highlight the need for:

- performance assessment based on how training fits within community structures;
- programs which respond to cultural and family responsibilities and encourage continued engagement; and,
- alternative community-based approaches to training which recognise the specific needs and capacities of each community.

Other reports have identified the major strategies necessary to overcome barriers to successful Indigenous participation in VET.

*Boughton and Durnan (1999) suggest that the problem with the VET sector for Indigenous young people relates to the lack of opportunities for appropriate participation. They argue that one aim of a national Aboriginal strategy should be to provide Aboriginal people with the education and training they need to be able to raise their living standards on their own lands and in their own communities.*

The Hands on the Future Report (2003) examined the experiences of 451 young Indigenous VET students to identify both the factors that constrain accessibility to VET in schools and good practice. The report showed that over 80 percent of all Indigenous students believed VET increased their career options and saw it as an opportunity to explore possible career directions. They also identified the important role played by mentors and role models and the need to have someone in the workplace they knew or felt comfortable asking for assistance, especially an Indigenous person. For some students the skills gained through the VET program were also seen as facilitating a means of contributing to their community, as well as their individual advancement.

Gelade and Stehlick (2004) found that the main differences in aspirations among urban, regional and remote Indigenous learners can be linked to the fundamental differences in the types of VET courses available. Urban and regional learners were enrolled in accredited VET Certificate programs in Aboriginal Community Management and Community Services, which are relevant to Indigenous students who want to get into community work and youth work in their particular region. These are also nationally recognised training packages that give Indigenous students a qualification that is transferable and has 'portability'. In contrast, the courses offered in the remote areas include bicycle maintenance, chain saw handling and filling out forms. One of the few courses leading to accreditation in remote areas was the Certificate II in Community Radio - an accredited training package that also provides relevant occupational opportunities and pathways to further training or employment in radio broadcasting. The authors note it stands alone as a learning area with wider application and transferability beyond the immediate community (p.50).

## Case Study: VET-in-School for Indigenous students

A study by Schwab (2001) identified two successful case studies that stretch the boundaries of VET-in-School for Indigenous students and ensure a close cultural fit between course delivery, content, student aspirations and local employment opportunities. The programs are community-based and focused on realistic employment outcomes considered relevant by both students and their communities. The first, Booroongen Djugun College in Kempsey, NSW, is focused on health care, while the second, St Mary's College in Broome, WA, covers hospitality and tourism.

Both programs arose out of clearly identified community need, have clearly defined goals and broad support; and competent and committed staff to assist in expanding and extending programs to meet the education and training needs of Indigenous people throughout their regions.

While many of the students had little previous success in mainstream schools, the opportunity to study in an institution recognised as an extension of the Indigenous community had a very positive effect in encouraging a sense of ownership of the programs both in communities and among students. Schwab identified ownership as closely tied to engagement and ultimately to successful outcomes. He suggests Indigenous students are often drawn to practical fields of study which allow them to return to their communities to work. In some cases this has to do with a lack of confidence in the workplace and a desire to work in settings that are culturally comfortable. In other cases it has to do with a deep desire to work for the betterment of one's community.

Other success factors identified in the case studies included the way in which staff articulated a clear approach to teaching that encouraged students by acknowledging and supporting their cultural heritage and providing course structures and materials that fitted their preferred learning styles. Firm expectations about attendance and participation were incorporated in the programs, and students had to fulfil highly specific, industry-defined requirements to complete their course.

Schwab acknowledges that enabling and facilitating the educational successes of young Indigenous people is a complex endeavour and it is difficult to identify any single ingredient that makes 'the' difference. However, he notes that the way the programs attain a cultural fit is the crucial success factor.

*The notion of cultural fit revolves around the alignment of curriculum, delivery and pedagogy with local Indigenous cultural assumptions, perceptions, values and needs (Schwab 1998; Schwab 2001). Schwab suggests that this alignment is essential for education and training to succeed.*

A systematic review of literature on Indigenous vocational education and training for Indigenous young people has identified seven key factors that are essential to improve Indigenous education outcomes, needs, aspirations and outcomes. These are:

- community ownership and involvement;
- the incorporation of Indigenous identities, cultures, knowledge and values;
- the establishment of 'true' partnerships;
- flexibility in course design, content and delivery;
- quality staff and committed advocacy;

- extensive student support services;
- appropriate funding that allows for sustainability (NCEVR).

Further Marika et al (2004) suggest that:

- Training built on all seven of these factors will lead to outcomes from VET that Indigenous Australians aspire to, including skills for self-development, employment, community development and self-determination. The absence of any one of these will lessen the likelihood of positive outcomes.
- That these seven factors should form the basis for program planning, design and evaluation. They are already linked with the charter developed by TAFE Directors Australia for Indigenous education and training, which has been designed to guide future activity in technical and further education (TAFE) institutes across the country.

A study by McGlusky & Thaker (2006) has identified a best practice model for Indigenous adult education which is designed to overcome many of the barriers identified in this study. The model is articulated in a publication designed for the VET Sector, 'Getting' into it! Working with Indigenous learners, DEST (2004). The model is underpinned by six key principles:

- Intercultural competence
- Respect
- Negotiation
- Meaningful outcomes
- Relationships
- Indigenisation.

The model incorporates an adult learning approach in which learners have control over their learning, and learning is

- experiential
- cooperative
- reflective
- undertaken in a flexible and culturally supportive.

The effectiveness of this model is confirmed by extensive research in Indigenous education and Indigenous students participating in the VET and university sectors across Australia (Burke et al 1997; McRae 2001; Walker 1999, 2004; Walker & Humphries 1999, Purdie et al 2000). McRae's study examined 83 projects across Australia and concluded that positive outcomes for Indigenous students depend on 'respect, a culturally supportive environment and good teaching practice' (cited in McGlusky & Thaker 2006).

Case studies that illustrate the effectiveness of this best practice model in delivering training in remote communities include the Gamarrwa Nuwul Landcare at Yirrakala.

*This study provides evidence that to achieve good outcomes training, address local needs and priorities, be relevant to the community and meet the expectations and aspirations of the student. Their findings suggest that the focus of training opportunities for Indigenous students in remote communities needs to shift from meeting industry needs to meeting community needs and training delivery needs to be flexible and valuing of Indigenous identities and culture (Marika et al 2004).*

This model has proven to be equally effective in urban contexts. There are several examples of effective outcomes being achieved with young Indigenous people who reengage with study where the program delivery is underpinned by the principles of adult learning and designed to meet Indigenous community needs and priorities within a culturally supportive learning environment. Examples include the program delivered at the Blacktown District Community College in Western Sydney (Govender 2000), a range of block release community based degree course courses delivered by the Centre for Aboriginal Studies, at Curtin University (Walker 2001) and programs run through Batchelor. Each of these course providers emphasise the importance of teacher-student relationship, onsite support, meeting community and student needs and expectations, and a culturally supportive environment, and respect for and building Indigenous cultural knowledge and experience and the employment of Indigenous staff along side non-Aboriginal staff.

In their examination of the training pathways offered through the CDEP system, Schwab and Campbell (2001) argue that meaningful vocational education and training enables Indigenous individuals and families to maintain an adequate standard of living, as for all Australians. However, for many Indigenous people, maintaining a standard of living includes sustaining and managing social and cultural ties.

*The authors found that Indigenous people want to engage in training that prepares them for participation in broader economic activity and at the same time allows them to maintain a lifestyle that acknowledges and incorporates their cultural responsibilities.*

Generally training for Indigenous people is designed to enable them to contribute to the Australian workforce with little reference to Indigenous aspirations (p.113). The authors suggest that experiences with the CDEP scheme show a sense of Indigenous people wanting training, but not necessarily for a qualification. Schwab and Campbell argue that the key issue for many Indigenous people is the relevance of the training to what they are doing, rather than the qualifications gained themselves (2001, p.114). This raises the issue of Indigenous young people's attitudes to CDEP and its role in their aspiration formation and priorities regarding their community.

## 5.5 Influence of CDEP on Indigenous young people's job aspirations

The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) is a community based program managed by Aboriginal community organisations. In WA the CDEP operates primarily in rural and remote, regions. The program was initially designed to be based around each community's requirements, and to provide participants with the opportunity to develop work and employment skills; and to assist participants to move into mainstream employment if they so aspired.

Research suggests that Indigenous people are attracted to CDEP because of its ability to accommodate the type of alternative economic participation options they value. The CYPI report argues that participation in CDEP is not driven by financial reasons, rather people 'draw satisfaction from being employed in a program that is operated for the benefit of their community' (2007, p.248). Yet, the report also suggests, young people involved in CDEP have low work expectations and are paid above award rates for low skilled work. Furthermore, as levels of schooling are virtually irrelevant to CDEP participation, it becomes a viable option, if not the only option, early in a young person's decision making about their schooling and their employment future. The Cape York Policy Institute's report states:

*The existence of CDEP offers Indigenous people in remote communities an opportunity to gain very low-skilled employment at a young age and with limited education opportunities (with) the*

*concern being that the prospect of CDEP erodes a young Indigenous student's motivation for school or training from the moment they consider the program as a destination (2007, p. 246).*

There is evidence that CDEP limits people's skills, employment potential, and ability to shift to more substantial economic participation. Because CDEP participants invariably have very low education and skill levels, they do not have the capacity to undertake further training necessary to successfully make the transition to paid employment. Schwab and Campbell argue that despite the considerable skills CDEP participants may have acquired from looking after country, maintaining cultural continuity and managing family connections, these do not lead to recognised skills outside an Indigenous cultural context (2001, p.112). While these skills are important, without basic numeracy and English literacy skills, Indigenous young people have little chance of successfully completing training (op.cit, p.119).

The CYPI report further argues that CDEP is part of the welfare mix that acts as a disincentive for individuals to attain economic independence, and for communities to pursue economic development. The Institute highlights the negative role that welfare can play in Indigenous people's decision making with regard to education, training and employment, particularly over the longer term. It suggests that short term gains from welfare detract from any perceived benefits of the long term gains arising from education, training and employment. Influencing these perceptions is the fact that in many communities a majority of people are on welfare as opposed to those "demonstrating the benefits of pursuing education or work" (p.240). Furthermore, any employment income needs to be considerably higher than welfare payments to provide motivation or sufficient incentive for people to want to take up employment. Similarly, young people are far more likely to choose CDEP youth payments over Youth Allowance or ABSTUDY which provide far less financial incentive to enter these programs. These reports suggest that the relatively substantial nature of CDEP payments, coupled with people's poor educational outcomes, has real consequences in the long term decision making of Indigenous young people and their job aspirations.

## **Other factors influencing aspirations and labour force participation**

Other factors which influence Indigenous young people's employment options and job aspirations include behaviours that result in contact with the criminal justice system; or poor health outcomes. These issues emerge at different points in the education/work continuum for young people. The decisions and choices Indigenous people make at each of the key transition points along the school, further education, training and work continuum can be influenced by or determine where young people are positioned within the existing social system. One of the barriers is Indigenous young people's contacts with the criminal justice system.

### *Contact with the criminal justice system*

The CAEPR research highlights arrest rates as a major factor in low employment and education prospects for Indigenous youth. Hunter (1996) describes the causality as a vicious cycle where any one determinant - employment, education or arrest - impacts on the other and causes a negative spiralling effect. Hunter and Borland (1997) suggest that for Indigenous Australians, being arrested could reduce the probability of being employed by up to 20 percent for males and up to 13 percent for females (p.v). Incarceration of Indigenous juveniles has a costly effect on individuals and their aspirations, and on the long-term economic and social base of the Indigenous community. It establishes a devastating pattern of cause and effect which has far reaching intergenerational consequences for education and employment.

### *Health risk behaviours*

The research shows that the teenage years (12–19 years) represent an important period of social and emotional development for young people. The transition to adulthood brings a range of demands, pressures and temptations. Compared with earlier generations, young people are under greater

pressure today, with a more competitive labour market requiring higher educational standards and greater skills. Aboriginal young people—as with other groups in society who are marginalised and subject to discrimination—are potentially more vulnerable to engaging in harmful health risk behaviours, such as smoking, alcohol and marijuana use (Zubrick et al 2006). These harmful health risk behaviours hinder participation in the labour force in many ways, including through negative side effects, such as depression, lack of motivation and decreasing alertness, making it dangerous to drive a vehicle or operate machinery. Many jobs also require people to pass ‘fit for work’ tests.

## 5.6 Indigenous engagement

Engagement is an umbrella term that encompasses a complex array of thoughts, actions, and dispositions. While the concept embraces many important dimensions of learning and people’s experience, there are wide variations in the way it has been applied and assessed. The research suggests that effective engagement fosters a sense of belonging and self worth. According to Schlechty, engagement involves three dimensions:

- Behavioural Engagement is understood in terms of participation, where actions may to lead to certain visible outcomes, e.g. completing tasks, acquiring skills.
- Affective Engagement is understood in terms of commitment, where schooling engages individuals’ emotions, values and beliefs (such as enthusiasm, optimism and confidence) that inform their actions.
- Cognitive Engagement is understood in terms of investment, where tasks engage individuals’ thought processes and intellect (such as analysis, synthesis and persistence) in ways that may have meaning and hold interest.

Researchers have sought to define engagement beyond descriptive dimensions. Some researchers have advanced the concept of small ‘e’ engagement and big ‘E’ Engagement. Australian researchers Woodward and Munns (2003), for example, define small ‘e’ engagement as engaging in ‘substantive’ ways in activities which incorporate high levels of cognitive and operative (or behavioural) engagement. They defined big ‘E’ engagement as ‘an emotional attachment to and a commitment to something, for instance education, training or employment—the sense in which a person believes that activity to be meaningful to their life’ (p. 4). This form of engagement is one aspect of affective engagement. The authors suggest this level of engagement is crucial if people are to view education, training or employment as a powerful resource that is critical to their future.

In moving beyond limited conceptions of engagement, Schlechty (2002) seeks to characterise the actions and motivations underpinning varied forms of student engagement and identifies the following forms and levels of engagement and disengagement:

- *Engagement.* The person sees the task as meaningful, interesting, challenging and worthwhile. The student’s concern is to ‘get it right’. They are able learn at a high level, transfer the learning to other contexts and retain the learning.
- *Strategic compliance.* A person’s goals for undertaking work are instrumental. The motivations for engaging are extrinsic rather than intrinsic. While they may be able to learn at a high level, questions can be raised about the degree of transfer to other contexts and the retention of learning.
- *Ritual compliance.* A task has little meaning. The person is willing to put in the minimum effort required to complete the task and avoid negative consequences. Learning is superficial.
- *Retreatism.* The person does not participate and sees little relevance in the activities. Learning in relation to task goals is negligible.

- *Rebellion*. The person is disengaged from the goals of the task and acting in ways that disrupt others. Poor work habits and negative attitudes are common. Learning in relation to task goals is low.

Schlechty's broad characterisation provides a way of thinking about engagement that goes beyond the simple polarities of 'engaged' and 'disengaged'. In addition, it begins with reference to external expectations and norms, to extend thinking about disengagement beyond the individual to their families, communities and the broader society.

**FIGURE 15: LIST OF FACTORS AND INDICATORS OF ENGAGEMENT**

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
<i>Individual factors</i>	Poor self-esteem Low intelligence Psychological and psychiatric problems Physical ill-health and disability Poor academic performance Repeating a grade Specific learning problems e.g. poor literacy or numeracy Learning disabilities Behavioural problems Frequent or chronic school non-attendance
<i>Family factors</i>	Large family size Family dysfunction e.g. conflict and abuse Family break-up and the formation of new families High family mobility Separation from family Parental illness Low socio-economic status—low income and educational attainment, unemployment
<i>Social factors</i>	Gender—maleness Neighbourhood and regional characteristics—low socio-economic status, remote or rural location, negative community norms e.g. prevalence of anti-social behaviour
<i>School factors</i>	Transition from primary school to high school poorly managed Curriculum fragmented, irrelevant and lacking connection to students' lives School practices that constrain student autonomy and decision making Focus on academic achievement at the expense of students' social needs

Indicators of engagement or disengagement cannot be necessarily taken as cause and effect. It is not useful to automatically link student's unexplained non-attendance and truancy as indicators of disengagement from the schooling system. While these are certainly significant issues, such a link only points to the most obvious, observable forms of disengagement. It needs to be supplemented by other evidence, such as data on student satisfaction with schooling, the home environment and the education levels of their primary carer, to obtain a complete picture of a student's engagement and disengagement.

*Much of the literature on engagement has tended to focus on disengagement as an individual, private and personal problem. Increasingly, research and programs are identifying engagement as a public issue that implicates schools, families, communities and systems in student disengagement. (Schlechty 2002)*

## **Engaging Indigenous young people education and employment**

There is very little literature outlining evidence of viable and proven solutions to engaging Indigenous young people in schooling, training and other options that can enhance their employment opportunities and enable them to develop and fulfil their job aspirations. At the heart of engagement is the issue of significance – whether young people regard education, training and employment opportunities as relevant to their lives is crucial to their engagement. Establishing that significance or identifying activities that align with their priorities or are meaningful to Indigenous young people is a critical aspect to any engagement strategy.

In an article on capacity development in Indigenous Australia, Hunt (2005) suggests a human development approach to seeking to build human capabilities so that people can participate in and shape their own development and futures. This approach is concerned with enlarging people's choices through two key components - the individual and their 'enabling environment'.

The Enabling Environment involves consideration of an individual's environment, that is, the resources, systems, processes, policies and cultural contexts and how these affect their capacity to engage and develop their capacity. Hunt argues there is a need to respect local value systems while also challenging mindsets, building existing capacities, creating positive incentives in systems, maintaining accountability and remaining engaged. An individual's capacity to function effectively directly impacts on their ability to engage or be engaged. This is directly influenced by their capabilities: knowledge, skills, and attitudes and their competence to undertake the responsibilities assigned to them.

The second key component – the individual – involves consideration of the ability of individuals to define and solve problems, make informed choices, order their priorities and plan their futures, that is, the ability of the individual to actually perform the responsibilities assigned to them.

Hunt argues that developing people's capacities to assert their own values, determine their own priorities and enable them to act on these involves recognising, working with, and enhancing existing local human and other resources and building relationships. The approach in the International development context is to identify capacity gaps and attempt to fill these through training, education technical advice, and organisational reform.

The Career and Transition Services Framework, developed by the MCEETYA Taskforce on Transition from School, presents a range of options to support young people in making effective transitions through school and between school and post-school destinations. The Framework emphasises the need for governments, schools, community groups and industry to act collaboratively. The strategies of the framework are premised on the belief that young people achieve greater success in their transitions when there is shared responsibility across a range of stakeholders.

## **Creating sustainable traineeships and job pathways**

A study undertaken by Fran Brolsma as part of her university assignment on the factors which impact on students training and study in the East Kimberley in May 2007 identified many of the same issues and complexities as identified in this research. Forty-six respondents comprising 22 students, 8 training providers and 16 employers, were involved in Brolsma's study which made several recommendations that are also consistent with recommendations from this study including:

- that a booklet be produced with quality information about courses, school based traineeships and apprenticeships, greater promotion of opportunities and of the benefits of participating in courses;
- that funding be made available for trained guidance counsellors be able to work individually with students, parents, group trainers and host employers to identify school/ work or school to work pathways;
- that local business organisations profile success stories, as well as the opportunities available in their organisations through advertorials focusing on a different business each week and linking these to positive articles;
- that greater cooperation occurs between schools, group trainers and TAFE regarding training requirements for the following year;
- that greater focus is placed on developing 'quality work ready students' able to fully participate in the future economic and social development rather than the current emphasis on organisational needs.

Similarly, the research findings support some of the key findings of the research undertaken by Goddard and Anderson in December 2006. Their study of the pilot of the East Kimberley Employment Project found that while Job Pathways offered opportunities to the 50 percent of young people interested in the 'world or work', in a difficult and complex context in which potential recruits and trainees 'are the product of decade of unemployment and social dysfunction, results for all but the 5% of the very able and willing are slow and extremely support intensive' (Goddard & Anderson 2006, p10). They also note that the current funding process 'of annual and one-off grants creates uncertainty and diminishes outcome capacity' (ibid). They made a number of recommendations to enhance the future direction and sustainability of the project including:

- that continued links and support of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), the Western Australian Department of Education and Training (DET) and employers in the East Kimberley be maintained;
- that there is a commitment and access to long term funding for the management and administration through Wunan Foundation that will enable a focus on the '*now and survival*';
- that Job Pathways Management continue to be based on Aboriginal management, and Aboriginal identity and ownership, to ensure the prominence of Aboriginal culture and values to create the context in which people live and feel comfortable; and,
- that the principles underpinning the pilot, a quality outcome —start small and provide intensive personal and pastoral support with caseload of 1 staff to 10 recruits —will be necessary to attain a quality outcome as the project is extended across the East Kimberley.

## 5.7 Summary of key literature findings

In summary a number of key findings from the literature review and the statistical reports are particularly relevant to this study and consistent with the field research and the perceptions of young people in the East Kimberley. The majority of key findings reinforce or shed further light on young Aboriginal people's job aspirations, the perceived barriers, supports and solutions to achieve them, as identified in the fieldwork findings. These key findings are grouped into three main areas related to education, employment, and community and cultural context.

## Education

- Indigenous students face greater barriers than non-Indigenous students in achieving aspirations;
- Retention at secondary school is lower for Indigenous youth than non-Indigenous youth at every age level;
- Many Indigenous youth are participating in vocational education courses requiring low skill levels;
- For many Indigenous young people CDEP is considered a more viable alternative to completing secondary schooling;
- Enhancing self-concept is a vital tool for advancing the educational outcomes of Indigenous students and maximizing their potential in life; and,
- The engagement of parents in their children's education and their ability to support their children's education needs including their own literacy and numeracy, need to be considered in terms of effective strategies seeking to address the vocational pathways of young Indigenous people.

## Employment

- Indigenous young people aspire to work in domains other than those provided by the mainstream market economy, in particular the customary/cultural sector;
- Alternative career pathways or livelihoods receive inadequate support or recognition as real employment from the training sector and from government and industry;
- A high participation of youth in part-time, low-paid, insecure employment;
- There is a need for greater flexibility in the type of training available to Indigenous young people and the manner in which it is delivered; and,
- Many Indigenous people need a different set of education and training pathways which can include 'mainstream' options, but also fit with local and community based needs and priorities.

## Community and cultural context

- Remoteness contributes to the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous youth in terms of poorer educational outcomes, with employment outcomes supported by Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) in places where there would otherwise be few employment opportunities;
- The complex nature of Indigenous cultural and community values and expectations impact on Indigenous attitudes to economic participation and pursuing a career – especially outside of the community; and,
- A lack of family support hinders the capacity of Indigenous young people to fulfil training and employment opportunities.

## Future strategies/solutions

- The importance of adopting 'a life course approach', addressing many of the issues that impede education and employment outcomes throughout young people's lives in the early years.



## 6. Conclusion

This report details a range of strategies and solutions and best practice examples to improve Indigenous participation in the workforce and the local economy. The report also provides a comprehensive qualitative evidence base to assess the appropriateness of the various educational and employment strategies which have already been developed by individual groups and stakeholders and by industry and government and non-government stakeholders as part of their commitment to improving Indigenous employment and economic wellbeing under the East Kimberley Regional Partnership Agreement (EK RPA).

The findings suggest that there is some recognition among key stakeholders of the importance of the EK RPA to address the existing disadvantage among Indigenous people in the region, and the need to encourage broad participation in the agreement. However, as outlined in the HREOC Report, there is also widespread concern by parties regarding the poor strategic coordination and communication, and lack of Indigenous engagement in the negotiations, and lack of bipartisanship between the State and Australian Governments and continued uncertainty regarding their roles. These concerns were reiterated in several discussions with stakeholders in the research. The EK RPA was signed late 2006 – at the time of this study it was not possible to measure tangible outcomes for Indigenous stakeholders. Nevertheless, outcomes will need to be measured, monitored and assessed over time against targets such as those set out in the employment projects. The quantitative data will provide a baseline to measure change.

The HREOC report notes that a lack of community engagement has been 'described as a major and continuing concern by the majority of parties to the RPA' despite 'relatively extensive' consultations with Indigenous communities by the Wunan Foundation, one of the signatory Indigenous organisations. However, according to Gawler, the RPA is developed in direct response to local Indigenous community needs and is therefore radically different in its approach to Indigenous employment and business enterprise (Gawler, 2006 cited in HREOC, Ch 3). The HREOC report states:

*As a result of the lack of engagement with Indigenous people, there is a critical lack of understanding within the community about the RPA, and what it aims to deliver. ... as long as communities are uncertain about the nature of the RPA, they will be unable to take advantage of the opportunities it creates (2006).*

Moreover, the HREOC report notes that the success of the EK RPA in increasing Indigenous employment requires an appropriate whole of government and bilateral policy framework to support the effective implementation of the programs and projects that focus on more than education and training. This may involve modification of policies related to housing and welfare subsidies to support the transition from welfare to employment. Cooperation and change will need to occur across all government sectors and encompass a number of policy areas. Governments will need to be working closely with industry to ensure that they are not operating at cross purposes. According to HREOC:

*The accommodation of cultural rights, like the accommodation of housing interests may be required as a special measure to overcome Indigenous disadvantage.*

While cultural rights are not addressed in the current RPA there is potential for these to be considered by key stakeholders with an interest in improving Indigenous education and employment and wellbeing outcomes. According to the Honourable Justice Michael Kirby cultural rights are 'a vital attribute of human dignity, diversity, personality and freedom'. He stresses the importance of recognising cultural rights as part of human rights. The notion of cultural rights within human rights discourse is a complex, neglected and even conflicted topic. Celermajer (2005) argues that the necessity of cultural rights is based on the fundamental belief that 'the capacity for culture is tantamount to the capacity for humanity' and that 'to disregard the cultural context of a person's life amounts to a denial of one's full personhood, regardless of differences among specific cultures'. The recognition of "cultural identity"

is thus a necessary precondition for the exercise of human rights. Celermajer stresses that culture is not something to be tacked on to an otherwise complete range of human rights, but is in fact 'the organizing network within which those rights are held' (2005). Culture shapes the range and kinds of choices people make. Any failure to recognize cultural experience as intrinsic is a limit upon individual freedoms. Cultural rights are also collective rights and encompass the right to cultural identity, land, language, and transmission of cultural practices and knowledge to promote generational continuity. At the same time Nakata (2003) notes that cultural rights should not be imposed in a manner that prevents the opportunity for young Indigenous people to have access to and enjoy the same opportunities as the wider society.

It is important for the RPA to recognise that cultural responsibilities may affect Indigenous people's ability to meet work obligations at times.

The HREOC report concludes:

*The keys to the success of the East Kimberly RPA at this point are greater engagement with local Indigenous stakeholders and the development of processes to maintain momentum in the projects. The RPA is currently at a turning point, requiring the coordinators to establish mechanisms to drive action, to improve and maintain communication, to increase the number of Indigenous partners, and to develop procedures for formal evaluation of projects and the RPA.*

The findings from this research and several other studies previously undertaken in the East Kimberly emphasise the need for the development and funding of work transition and training projects and models which acknowledge and address the complex circumstances of young Aboriginal people in order to overcome the current level of disadvantage and contribute to the wider social circumstance. As the HREOC report concludes:

*Ultimately all matters that potentially impede employment must be canvassed in the interests of assisting the Indigenous people of the East Kimberley to develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests (2007).*

This report has done precisely this. The findings, based on the perspectives of young Indigenous people regarding the barriers and solutions to improve their education and employment outcomes, reinforce the need for all stakeholders to address the strategic areas for action and strategic change indicators identified within the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Framework (Appendix 2). Young people's voices provide both an opportunity and an imperative to listen and to hear what they are saying to get it right — to ensure sustainable, prosperous communities in which individuals and families can create and take up social, employment and business opportunities now and in the future.

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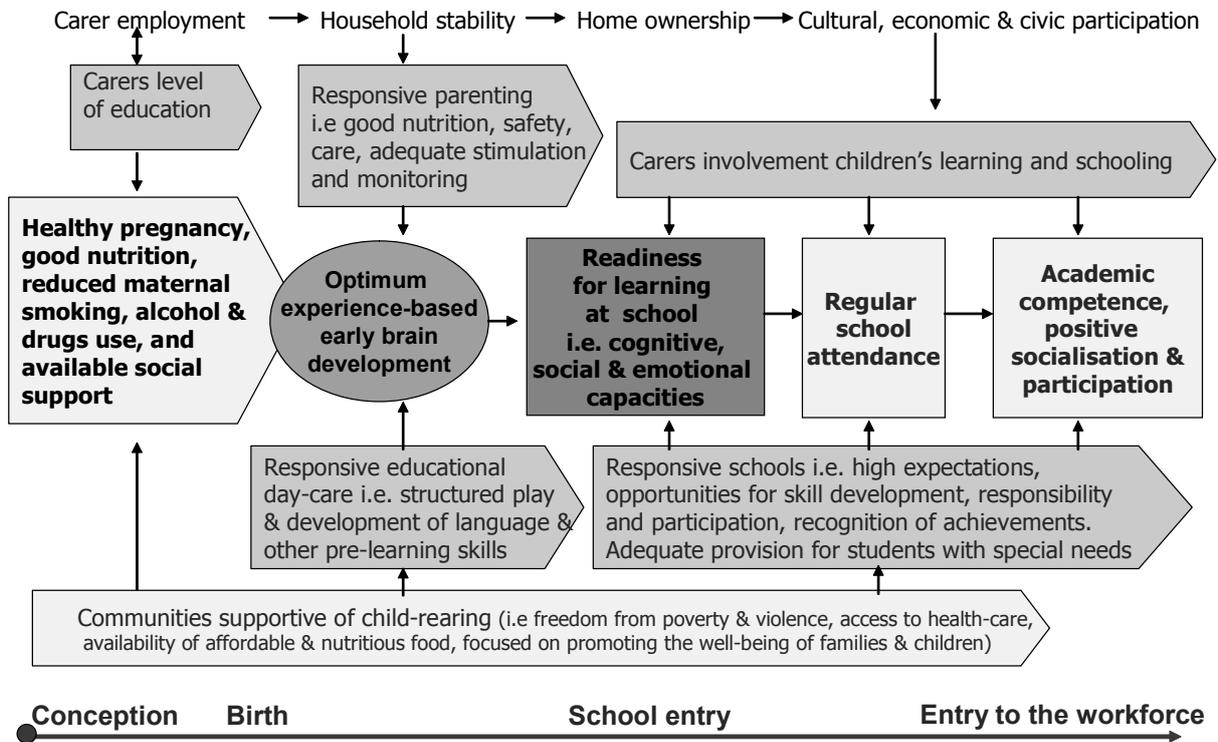
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# 8. Appendices

## Appendix 1: Investment in human capability expansion

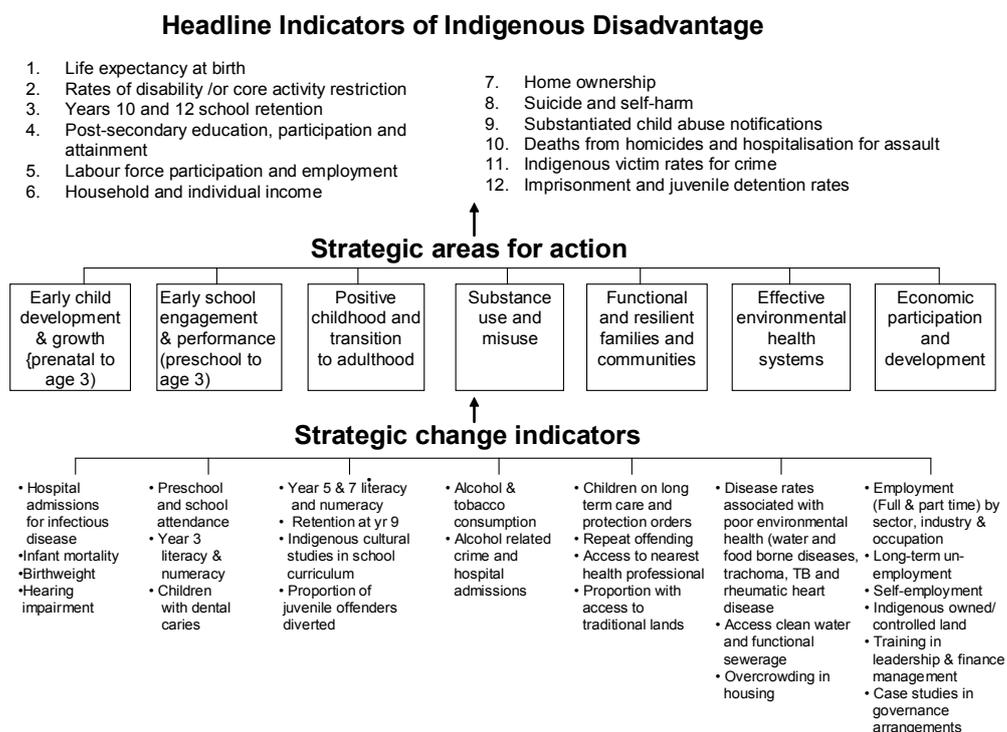


Source: Presentation of Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (Silburn et al 2006).

## Appendix 2: COAG Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Framework

The Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Framework details a list of headline indicators for change, strategic areas for action and strategic change indicators. The findings based on the perspectives of young Indigenous people regarding the barriers and solutions to enhance the education and employment outcomes encompass the majority of the strategic areas of action and reinforce the need for all stakeholders to address the headline indicators of Indigenous disadvantage.

### COAG Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Framework



Source: Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, November 2003

## Appendix 3: Local employment opportunities

The economic and employment opportunities in the East Kimberley, particularly Kununurra and its surrounds, are based in pastoral leases, tourism, mining and agriculture. There are also a range of untapped areas including agriculture and employment in the local services and small business sector.

Both the Ord River Development and the Argyle Mines have had a significant impact on local Aboriginal people. The more recent history of the region is one of continuing dislocation for the country and increasing marginalisation as the development has increased. Historically Indigenous people have not had positive relationships with the mining industry. There is ample evidence to show that Indigenous rights and interests have often been sacrificed at the expense of resource development and economic growth. While there are still many problems, there has been a shift in the way mining companies act

towards Indigenous communities. Increasingly in recent years, mining corporations have begun to formally recognise their obligations towards traditional land owners and local Indigenous communities and exercise social responsibility. Indigenous communities have also begun to recognise that mining operations present opportunities in terms of employment, infrastructure and services.

However, as the evidence in the next Chapter shows, Indigenous people have limited participation in these economic opportunities and Indigenous unemployment rates remain disproportionately high. The reasons for this are complex. The current literature shows that the existing levels of participation are largely influenced by the persistent and compounding barriers created by dispossession and intergenerational disadvantage. A national survey of unemployed Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over found that 90.5 percent had difficulties in finding work. They cited the main reasons for this as: insufficient education, training or skills, transport problems and distance, and a lack of jobs opportunities in their local area or line of work (ABS 2002).

The existing evidence discussed in the HREOC Report (2006) and the information gathered from young people in the East Kimberley, confirms the need to address these broader obstacles and identify and support existing strengths and potential in order to increase employment and education opportunities and outcomes. Several agreements and initiatives have been developed in the East Kimberley which provide the basis to do this.

## **Existing economic and employment agreements**

This section of the report provides a brief overview of the various regional agreements and initiatives which serve as a background and rationale to contextualise this research, its findings and conclusions. The agreements were developed under the Minerals Council of Australia Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the Ord River Development. The aim of the Regional Partnership Agreement (RPA) and MoU is to directly address the poor education, economic and employment outcomes for Indigenous people.

In June 2005 the Australian Government and the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) signed a MoU to work with Indigenous people to build sustainable, prosperous communities in which individuals and families can create and take up social, employment and business opportunities. The MoU was developed in response to the need for mining companies to carry out their commitments made through the Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs). The key objective of the MoU is to build partnerships between the mining sector and Indigenous communities to improve the flow of mutual benefits between regional employers, their Indigenous workers and the wider Indigenous community. The MoU also promotes collaboration across mining companies in the areas of human resources and Indigenous relations by pooling and coordinating resources, and increasing their capacity to provide employment training services.

According to the HREOC report (2006) the MoU negotiation process occurred through the Indigenous Leaders Dialogue forum which enabled local Indigenous leaders to advise the MCA about Indigenous aspirations and anticipated outcomes from the MoU. The MoU establishes broad principles to guide regional engagement with Indigenous communities. They are:

- collaboration and partnership between the parties based on mutual respect;
- collaboration and partnership between the parties and Indigenous communities based on shared responsibilities and respect for culture, customs and values;
- integration of sustainable development considerations within the MoU partnership decision-making process; and
- joint commitment to social, economic and institutional development of the communities with which the parties engage (HREOC 2006 Ch 3.).

These principles in turn guide the establishment of Regional Partnership Agreements (RPAs) between local mining companies, government bodies and community organisations. These RPAs are intended to:

- Operate as regional frameworks to coordinate strategies to increase the employment opportunities and the employment skills of Indigenous people;
- Foster Indigenous business enterprises; and
- Build prosperous communities, families and individuals that endure beyond the life of the mine.

The East Kimberley is one of 8 sites where a coordinated plan has been developed through a formal Regional Participation Agreement (RPA).

## **East Kimberley Regional Partnership Agreement**

After 18 months of discussion regarding employment and job pathways strategies The East Kimberley RPA was signed in November 2006 by 15 signatories listed in the table below. Talks initially focused on employment in the mining industry in the Kununurra region but later expanded to take in other communities and industries. The Agreement covers the towns of Kununurra, Halls Creek, Wyndham and the Warmun Indigenous Community and outstations, with a further regional extension of the services envisioned through the term of the Agreement.

The process was coordinated by Janina Gawler of Cooperative Change in conjunction with the Kununurra Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC). Other parties to negotiations included local industry members and interested businesses as well as Traditional Owners and Indigenous community organisations. RPA membership is flexible and may change over time as projects progress and activities expand.

Some parties involved in negotiations were critical of the process and are not signatories to the agreement. According to the HREOC (2006) some organisations have not become signatories because they fear they will lose control over their programs and initiatives by joining the RPA process. These organisations and groups are able to participate in communications and meetings relating to the RPA to stay informed of activities and opportunities that may arise. The Gelganyem Trust Traditional Owners group are not a party to the RPA but are active participants in discussions with possible involvement at a later stage.

PARTNERS TO THE EAST KIMBERLEY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT 2006

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Parties</i>	<i>Area of Responsibility</i>
<i>Government</i>	Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley WA State Government (East Kimberley DIA) Australian Government (Kununurra ICC)	To coordinate service delivery and development of project plans and actions with communities
<i>Industry</i>	Argyle Diamond Mine Voyages El Questro Roche	To participate in local leadership group of East Kimberley businesses to support actions and other local businesses that are committed to increasing employment of Indigenous people
<i>Employment and training providers</i>	Work Base Kimberley Group Training East Kimberley Job Pathways Kimberley TAFE East Kimberley CDEP	
<i>Indigenous organisations</i>	Wunan Foundation Ngoonjuwah Council Aboriginal Corporation Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation Warmun Community Incorporated	To coordinate and promote local efforts, informing and encouraging individuals to participate

The East Kimberley RPA aims to place at least 300 additional Indigenous people in jobs each year for the next 5 years. Based on current levels of Indigenous unemployment in the region, it is hoped this will reduce unemployment by 50 percent by 2011 and equalise Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment rates within 10 years (HREOC 2006, Ch3).

The East Kimberley RPA has established five projects to achieve these targets with additional projects expected to be developed during the course of the agreement which are described in the Table below. The projects and programs developed under the RPA are intended to improve education and training, motivation and mentoring, business development and childcare. The projects focus on education, training and apprenticeships, as well as programs to develop long-term skills that will build broad community capacity and contribute to the sustainable economic development of the region. Training in areas such as engineering, building and maintenance will be targeted to enable individuals to service current mining operations and other aspects of community infrastructure.

## EAST KIMBERLEY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT PROJECTS 2006

<b>Project</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>
<i>300 Club</i>	To increase Indigenous employment in the region. The project hopes be a driver for attitudinal change within the corporate community by linking local employers with one another and with Government and working with the RPA partners to achieve their targets.	The 300 Club, or the East Kimberley Corporate Leaders Group, will be established to engage local employers, support local business involvement, share labour market information, promote job matching and work experience opportunities.
<i>Work readiness (Coordination, Motivation and Mentoring)</i>	To improve links between employers, service providers and Indigenous people in the region in order to assist them to overcome barriers to employment such as poor literacy, numeracy and life skills.	Place case managers in certain communities to support Indigenous people to enter and remain in the workforce.  Motivation and mentoring between employers and employees.  Education and training options to enhance job readiness.
<i>Business development</i>	To support business development in order to create jobs, enhance the entrepreneurial climate in the community, retain businesses, accelerate local industry growth and diversify local economies.	Using a business incubation program, this project will work with both Traditional Owner and non-Traditional Owner groups to support business development opportunities
<i>Child care</i>	To overcome the barrier to employment posed by lack of child care	Create additional childcare places and more flexible childcare services in the region  Develop and implement a child care course at TAFE specifically designed for Indigenous women
<i>Building accommodation for trainees</i>	To address the lack of suitable accommodation in Kununurra which makes it difficult for young Indigenous people to take up training and employment opportunities.	Engage Indigenous apprentices and trainees to work alongside other trades people to build accommodation units that will later be utilised to provide accommodation for Indigenous trainees

## Argyle Diamonds – Regional Development and Community Participation

Argyle Diamonds plays an important role in the economic and social development of the East Kimberley region and the State of Western Australia. Argyle's Regional Development Project and Community Participation Project aim to promote the direct participation of local Aboriginal communities in mining operations; support regional business development; and improve regional employment options.

The Project encompasses four main elements—localisation, direct community participation and business development underpinned by the renewal of formal partnership agreement between Argyle Diamonds and Traditional Owners started in 2001. The Participation Agreement reflects respect and recognition between both parties, and trust and commitment to an ongoing relationship. This Agreement is essential to sustaining the relationship between Argyle Diamonds and the Indigenous people of the East Kimberley. In 2005, the National Native Title Tribunal formally registered the Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) between the Traditional Owners and Argyle. The Relationship Committee of Traditional Owners is responsible for the management and implementation of the Participation Agreement. The Participation Agreement and subsequent ILUA share a common philosophy and support Argyle Diamonds contribution to the sustainable development of the East Kimberley.

Historically, the majority of the Aboriginal population in the East Kimberley has experienced, and had to rely on 'passive welfare' which often has negative impacts associated with low degrees of limited economic participation. The Agreement is intended to address these negative impacts by promoting the direct participation of Aboriginal people in the workforce. However, the challenge remains in improving the skills and training of Indigenous employees.

### *Direct participation*

Argyle has set a target of 40 per cent Indigenous employment for its future underground operation. Indigenous people comprise 25 per cent of the current workforce.

In 2003, Argyle entered into a partnership agreement with the (then) Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to employ 150 Indigenous trainees and apprentices over the next five years, with the Federal Government providing Argyle with approximately one third of the salary and training costs. The initiative supports the objective of localised workforce to reduce the fly-in fly-out proportion of the workforce and is expected to develop a skilled local labour pool which will benefit other industries in the region.

### *Business development*

Argyle's mining operations can positively affect the future opportunities of the whole East Kimberley community. For example, Argyle's fuel demand underpins a local fuel depot at the port of Wyndham. The whole region benefits from lower fuel prices. East Kimberley goods and services expenditure grew to over \$30 million for 2005, with the potential to support a range of businesses and vital services to the region. Argyle has also employed a fulltime business development officer in Kununurra to explore business opportunities in the region.

### *Localisation*

Argyle is localising the site workforce. The company intends to recruit 80 per cent of the underground operation's workforce from the East Kimberley. The localisation programme encourages existing employees to move to the East Kimberley and recruits East Kimberley residents where possible. The Kimberley based workforce is currently 49 per cent.

## **The MG Ord Enhancement Scheme (OES)**

The MG Ord Enhancement Scheme (OES) is a partnership between the Yawoorroong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrgab Noong Dawang Aboriginal Corporation (MG Corporation) and the WA State Government. The OES commenced in mid 2006 and forms an important part of the Ord Final Agreement (OFA). The OES is a state funded program intended to address the adverse social and economic impacts that Ord Stage 1 and the associated development of the town of Kununurra has had, and continues to have, on the lives of Miriuwung Gajerrong peoples.

The priorities and strategic direction of the OES are directed by the MG Corporation. The committee includes 7 representatives of the MG Corporation (who formerly comprised the ASEIA Committee which was set up to drive the recommendations of the report during negotiations of the OFA) and the Director of the Kimberley Development Commission, representing the State Government.

The OES reports to both MG Corporation and the Hon Tom Stephens MLA, Member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara. The OES provides for joint decision-making processes involving Miriuwung Gajerrong peoples and government working together. The program operates through the development of partnerships between the OES/MG Corporation and public sector, not for profit and private sector organisations. The broad aim of the program is to achieve support for community driven initiatives leading to long-term, beneficial change in the community.

## *Purpose of the OES*

The OES intends to contribute to the following outcomes:

- enhanced services for Miriuwung Gajerrong peoples;
- enhanced Miriuwung Gajerrong participation in the determination of service priorities and the delivery of services in the East Kimberley;
- the social and cultural development of Miriuwung Gajerrong peoples;
- the positioning of Miriuwung Gajerrong peoples as partners in regional development;
- improved social cohesion and inclusiveness in the broader community.

The broad objectives of the OES are to:

- provide the MG Peoples with organisational and financial resources to effect the implementation of the recommendations from the Ord Stage 1 ASEIA Report (see below);
- facilitate the involvement of MG peoples in local and regional decision – making structures and processes that impact on their lives;
- provide a source of supplementary funding for the social and economic development of MG peoples in areas of identified need;
- establish a mechanism that enables service providers to regularly report on progress towards addressing needs identified in the ASEIA report;
- develop new and sustainable relationships and partnerships between MG peoples, government and the broader community.

## *Current priorities and projects*

Early priorities that have been identified by the OES Committee are:

- renal health and health education
- education
- early childhood learning and family support
- youth at risk
- cultural maintenance
- housing & infrastructure
- training & employment.

Strategies are being developed and partnerships negotiated to achieve long term better outcomes in each of these areas.

## **Wunan Foundation**

Wunan Foundation Incorporated was established in 1997 as a community-driven initiative by the elected representative body for Indigenous people in the East Kimberley, ATSIC Wunan Regional Council. This initiative is designed to assist Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley to develop a strong economic base which is independently sustainable.

The purpose of the Foundation is to build up capacity to sustain innovative and progressive programs for improving socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous people in the East Kimberley. Wunan Foundation is structured to protect the long-term viability of the Foundation as a significant

contribution to the future economic independence of Aboriginal people in the region. The Foundation encompasses the following entities:

- East Kimberley Job Pathways
- Kimberley Dreamtime Tours (KDT)

Wunan Foundation's current Strategic Plan outlines an expanded agenda to create employment pathways, address barriers to employment, support and enhance community governance, and assist the development of regional leadership.

This plan articulates strategies for implementing projects that provide pathways to greater economic independence combined with strong governance structures and knowledge systems that over time build sustainable Indigenous capacity. Recognising the particular challenges that many Indigenous people face in this region, these projects aim to fill gaps that currently impede sustainable progress.

## Kimberley Group Training

Kimberley Group Training (KGT) aims to increase the chances group training for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the Kimberley region, through providing sustainable training and employment opportunities.

This quality of life refers to a fuller engagement in the economic, social and cultural life in Australia, with the same range of choices as other Australians. KGT has a particularly strong focus on enhancing and increasing the opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

Services offered by Kimberley Group Training for Business and Industry:

- Selects trainees and apprentices with you to suit your business;
- Organises and manages the paperwork (payroll, tax, superannuation, workers compensation, dealing with government departments and TAFE's);
- Provides occupational safety and health training induction;
- Monitor trainee/apprentice's progress.

Services provided by KGT for the Community:

- Increases local employment
- Builds community support in training
- Provides information on vocational training
- Promotes opportunities for disadvantaged people

## Appendix 4: Key stakeholders

The following section provides details for each of the key stakeholders involved in the EK RPA which have been extracted from the websites in January 2008.

### Wunan Foundation

This region has a population of around 15,000 people, of which approximately 40% are Indigenous people. The region has a particularly 'young' population with approximately 40% under the age of 25 years. Of those under 25 years, approximately 60% are Indigenous people. Over the next decade, the Indigenous population in the region is projected to grow by around 35%.

Wunan Foundation Inc was established in 1997 as a community-driven initiative by the elected representative body for Indigenous people in the East Kimberley, ATSIC Wunan Regional Council. This initiative led by the Regional Council recognised that Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley need to develop a strong economic base which is independently sustainable.

The purpose of the Foundation is to build up capacity to sustain innovative and progressive programs for improving socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous people in the East Kimberley. A driving force of the Foundation is to build a solid organisation with robust management and board capabilities to be able to avoid the 'boom-bust' cycle that many Indigenous organisations suffer.

Wunan Foundation is structured to best protect the long-term viability of the Foundation as a significant contribution to the future economic independence of Aboriginal people in the region. The Foundation encompasses the following entities which combine to form the 'backbone' of the organisation:

- East Kimberley Aboriginal Development Corporation (EKADC)
- Kimberley Dreamtime Tours (KDT)

Wunan Foundation's current Strategic Plan outlines an expanded agenda to create employment pathways, address barriers to employment, support and enhance community governance, and assist the development of regional leadership.

This plan articulates strategies for implementing innovative projects that provide pathways to greater economic independence combined with strong governance structures and knowledge systems that over time build sustainable Indigenous capacity. Recognising the particular challenges that many Indigenous people face in this region, these projects aim to fill gaps that currently impede sustainable progress.

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Kimberley Group Training (KGT) aims to increase the chances for a better quality of life for people in the Kimberley region, both indigenous and non-Indigenous, through providing sustainable training and employment opportunities.

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Services offered by Kimberley Group Training for Business and Industry:

- Selects trainees and apprentices with you to suit your business;
- Organises and manages the paperwork (payroll, tax, superannuation, workers compensation, dealing with government departments and TAFE's);
- Provides occupational safety and health training induction;
- Monitor trainee/apprentice's progress.

Services provided by KGT for the Community:

- Increases local employment
- Builds community support in training
- Provides information on vocational training
- Promotes opportunities for disadvantaged people

## Save the Children

Save the Children Australia aims to ensure that all children, regardless of gender, race, country of origin or religious belief have the means for survival, receive protection and have access to nutrition, primary health care and basic education. Save the Children fights for children's rights. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

Save the Children provides both emergency relief and long-term development assistance, wherever possible working closely with local partners who passionately believe in providing children with the best possible start in life.

They provide major programs of work to secure the rights of children by bringing about sustainable and equitable development. Save the Children tackles key children's rights issues - health, education, nutrition and food security, gender discrimination, disability and early childhood development. They promote new and innovative solutions to problems facing children and their communities, and generate best practice models in key sectors wherever possible and support development activities within the following sectors:

- Health [primary health care, mother/child health, village based interventions, health education]
- Education [primary education, non-formal education, vocational training]
- Survival [community development, food production, micro credit, water supply]
- Protection [children at risk of abuse, exploitation and violence]
- Youth Participation [engaging youth in development activities]

## East Kimberley Programs

Save the Children Australia have a number of activities in the East Kimberley which aim to deliver lasting changes to the communities in which we work. These programs include:

- Communities for Children
- Deadly Blokes and Kids
- Wyndham Youth at Risk
- Kununurra Youth at Risk

## Yawoorroong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrgeb Noong Dawang Aboriginal Corporation (Miriuwung Gajerrong Corporation)

The Miriuwung Gajerrong People are signatories to the Ord Final Agreement, a broad package of measures which implements a platform for future partnerships between the Miriuwung Gajerrong People, WA State Government, industry and developers for the benefit of the wider community and the East Kimberley Region. (<http://yawoorroongmgcorp.com.au/>)

Initially, the MG People instructed the MG Global Negotiations Steering Committee to advise the WA State Government that they had no interest in negotiating on any development of the Ord Irrigation Project Stage 2 until such time that the impacts of Ord Irrigation Project Stage 1, caused by the building of Lake Kununurra and Lake Argyle dams, were addressed. In response to this the WA State Government funded the Kimberley Land Council (KLC) to initiate a consultation process whereby the impacts of Ord Stage 1 could be addressed. In June 2004 the Aboriginal Social and Economic Impacts Assessment (ASEIA) report was produced and, under the auspices of the Ord Enhancement Scheme (OES), is now being used to address those impacts.

The Agreement now recognises, through the ASEIA Report, the injustices of the past, in particular the ongoing impact of the flooding of Lake Argyle, whilst structurally shifting the MG People's social, economic and political position for the future

Miriuwung Gajerrong Corporation's mission is to improve the social, cultural and economic well-being of the Miriuwung Gajerrong people. The MG Corporation Economic Development Unit has been established to provide economic development service and advice at both micro and macro levels. This is to be achieved by:

- assisting MG People to obtain more local employment opportunities in existing and new developments occurring in the region, including identifying and facilitating relevant training;
- assisting MG People to establish small business enterprises, including facilitating relevant training, mentoring, business planning and management;
- liaising with local employers to encourage greater MG participation in the local labour force;
- identifying commercial business opportunities;
- sourcing high level expertise;
- sourcing alternative means of finance;
- assisting MG Corp in making sound financial decisions; and
- supporting MG Development Trust and MG Community Foundation in making sound investment and economic development decisions.







East Kimberley

# JOB PATHWAYS

• EMPLOYMENT • TRAINING • EDUCATION

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Australian Government



The Westpac Foundation

Supporting our communities