

# **INDIGENOUS YOUTH STRATEGY**

## **A guide for Indigenous communities**

“We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploration  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.”

T.S. Eliot, “Four Quartets”

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# INDIGENOUS YOUTH STRATEGY

## PREFACE

A vision of people in Indigenous communities in control of their lives and living environments demands an ambitious youth development strategy. If the young Indigenous people of Australia are to help shape the futures of their communities, they must be given the opportunities and the support to develop the attitudes, skills, knowledge and relationships necessary for success as Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders in the modern world. And, although many Indigenous communities are not like metropolitan areas of Australia, young Indigenous people must be given equitable opportunities and options to participate more fully in life, life that is rewarding and sustainable.

This strategy is about developing whole communities, not just the young people of the communities. It is about building on the positive aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Islander life, developing new attitudes for a contemporary world and having a vision for today's young people when they are adults.

For the strategy to succeed, there must be champions in the communities who will drive its implementation. These people will need to be committed and believe that individuals can change a society's circumstances for the better (one step at a time). They will have to be resilient and not lose heart when obstacles arise (as they will). Overall, the people in the communities must have the will to make the strategy work and, as a result, improve the lot of all Indigenous people in their region.

Every successful society has a common philosophy of life and shared values. In the past, Indigenous societies were no exception. For Indigenous societies to be successful today, it is most important that they start to develop community vision and values once again.

Recent times have been difficult for Indigenous people in Australia, as outside influences and forces have shaped their lives (mainly for the worse). Therefore, it is critical to develop a generation of young Indigenous people who can help change these circumstances.

While this strategy cannot be implemented overnight, nor can it generate instant success, Indigenous communities can make significant incremental gains, right now. The key is to work out what is important and tackle those elements first.

While the overall costs of implementing the strategy might seem high, they could be reduced to manageable bites for various funding agencies through creative partnerships. Of course, Indigenous communities will have to work hard to fund their youth development strategies over the next ten years. But, the richness and natural attraction of the physical environment in which many communities live, and the strong determination of many local Indigenous people to change their lives, should be key selling points.

This is a living strategy that should be reviewed regularly. Most importantly, it must evolve and keep pace with the changing needs and aspirations of Indigenous youth. It is critical that young people own this strategy and play a key role in implementing it. Otherwise, it risks being consigned to the waste paper basket along with the various strategies, reports and policies that peddled their own particular solutions to Indigenous problems but ignored the real needs and aspirations of the people.

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## OVERVIEW

This strategy is a master plan to guide the development and support of young Indigenous people so that they can help shape the economic and social futures of their communities. It is a key to Indigenous people regaining control of their lives and living environment. While the strategy focuses on young Indigenous people, generally between 5 and 30 years of age, it is the basis for a broader community development strategy.

The strategy addresses the need to develop appropriate attitudes and build skills, knowledge and relationships through a wide range of activities and programs. It also addresses the need for effective, ongoing support mechanisms.

The strategy suggests new ways of thinking, acting and approaching life, while recognising the importance of Indigenous culture and traditional values. It identifies the core, specialist, professional, trade and other skills that should be developed and it identifies the requirement to gain knowledge of traditional Indigenous Lore and Culture, Language and the contemporary environment. It highlights the importance of building relationships, networks and bridges at all levels of society. The strategy is a framework within which Indigenous communities can develop detailed plans and strategies over time.

### **Education, Programs and Activities**

The strategy highlights the importance of and identifies the key requirements for effective school-based education in the Indigenous communities. These include improved attendance and engagement, appropriate school environments, effective teaching, appropriate curricula, better parental and community support, specialised programs for students in their later high school years and effective leadership by school principals and school councils. The strategy recommends that local consultation and action by local Indigenous communities should determine the local needs for school-based education.

The strategy includes regular Lore and Culture activities including annual bush camps for the various age groups of young people. It recommends that Elders should run these camps so that they can impart their knowledge and build trust and a sense of unity through shared experiences with the young people.

The strategy suggests principles for constructing life-skills development programs and activities and recommends that they should be conducted out in the bush each year. It also recommends that the communities work with the schools to include more life-skills in the curriculum.

The strategy recommends that local Indigenous community learning centres and TAFE should deliver a range of specialist skills and business programs.

The strategy identifies the need for effective community-based partnerships and programs for transition to work, further education and adult life. It suggests a community career transition model and recommends that the Indigenous communities should take advantage of the career and transition initiatives being introduced and funded by the national Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECECF).

The strategy highlights the importance of developing more professionals and tradesmen in the Indigenous communities and recommends that the communities identify, encourage and support young people to undertake tertiary studies and trade training. It also recommends that the communities should target appropriate tertiary scholarships and exchange programs.

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The strategy recognises the benefits of exposing young Indigenous people to other cultures and societies, both in Australia and the wider world, and recommends a range of travel experiences and reciprocal exchange programs.

The strategy recommends establishing Indigenous communities' youth leadership programs and actively seeking greater involvement in regional, state and national leadership development programs. It also recommends increasing the emphasis on sport and recreation activities, and expanding opportunities for engagement in arts, crafts and media activities. It highlights the need for developing a strategy for closer contact, co-operation and involvement with Defence and environmental management organisations.

The strategy recommends conducting outdoor challenge activities to build confidence, self-esteem, teamwork and a sense of responsibility.

### Support Requirements

The programs and activities that motivate and develop the young people will not work without ongoing, effective support from the communities. To this end, the strategy encourages parents to support their children and recommends that Indigenous communities establish a role model and mentor program.

As many young Indigenous people consider the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs to be the biggest issue affecting their lives, the strategy strongly recommends that Indigenous communities take action to develop and implement an alcohol and drugs management strategy.

The strategy identifies effective co-ordination as a key to its success and recommends that Indigenous communities should appoint a youth strategy co-ordinator. It also recommends that the communities should seek government assistance to obtain an appropriate number of properly trained, prepared and supported youth workers.

The strategy highlights the critical need for after-school and after-work activities, homework support centres and youth activity centres in the communities. It recommends working closely with TAFE and community learning centres to maximise the vocational education services available through a combination of government and privately funded programs. It also identifies the need for child-care facilities at community learning centres.

There is a need for safe, short and long-term accommodation for young people in Indigenous communities. The strategy recommends that student accommodation be included in the plans for any new regional high schools.

While unemployment is a reality in Indigenous communities, there are often opportunities and potential opportunities for meaningful employment for young Indigenous people, particularly in the service, tourism, mining and building industries. The strategy recommends that the communities should work closely with local business and regional development organisations to develop local employment strategies.

The strategy identifies the need for older people in the communities to develop new attitudes, skills, knowledge and relationships if they are to support their young people. It recommends involving older people in youth strategy activities, encouraging young people to share their experiences and publicly celebrating and recognising successes.

The strategy highlights the need for adequate public transport, health and medical facilities, including mental health services, for young people in the Indigenous communities.

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## **Priorities and Resources**

The strategy suggests that Indigenous communities should develop a rolling five-year implementation plan and identifies those key elements that might be undertaken in the first year.

The strategy recommends that the funding for a youth strategy should come from Indigenous communities, industry sponsors and government programs.

While the strategy advises against depending too heavily on government funding for its implementation, it recommends seeking out a “one-stop shop” for accessing government programs and targeting those government programs that add real value.

Finally, the strategy recommends that the communities should identify (or establish) an appropriate entity or partnership (eg a non-profit making youth trust) that should be the point of contact with government and sponsors. This entity should source, hold and distribute funds for youth development.

## PART 1 – INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Indigenous people of Australia survived for thousands of years in a harsh and difficult land. They had adapted to their environment and they were, in effect, in control of their lives.

Today, many Indigenous people have very little control over their lives and living environment. There is a “learned helplessness” that is, to a large extent, the result of policies that controlled and excluded Indigenous people, an almost total dependence on welfare and a lack of options and choices. In many cases, this has led to apathy and social disintegration. And, in extreme cases is causing young people to commit suicide, the middle generation to seek roles in drugs and alcohol abuse and the older generation to feel disenfranchised and helpless.

While the contemporary environment is different from that of 150 years ago, there is no reason why Indigenous people can't, once again, be in control of their lives and living environment. To achieve this, Indigenous communities must build on the positive aspects of Indigenous Culture and develop new attitudes (fundamental ways of thinking and approaches to life), skills, knowledge and relationships.

Most importantly, Indigenous communities must address the development of their youth, as it is their young people who will shape the future.

### 1.2 VISION

The vision is “Indigenous communities with control over their lives and living environments”.

### 1.3 AIM OF THIS STRATEGY

The aim of this strategy is to “motivate, develop and support young Indigenous people so that they can help shape the economic and social futures of their communities”.

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## 1.4 THE NEEDS

### 1.4.1 Attitudes

If Indigenous people are to regain control of their lives and living environment, many of them will have to think, act and approach life in new ways. This does not mean that they must give up their Culture and their holistic view of the world; rather they should build on it. To succeed, it is important that Indigenous people value education and training, Indigenous Lore and Culture, the traditional knowledge base of the Elders, purposeful work, a work ethic and economic independence. Without losing their traditional sense of community, family and sharing, individuals need to value themselves and their independent thought (rather than succumbing to peer pressure), the consequences of their actions, social harmony, enterprising spirit, self-sufficiency, and family and community responsibilities (including responsible approaches to alcohol and drugs).

A key factor contributing to the crisis of living for many Indigenous people and communities is the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs. Clearly, this must be tackled in the communities if the people and their society are to move forward.

### 1.4.2 Skills

For Indigenous people to succeed and prosper in the modern world, they will require a wide range of life, technical and professional skills. For example, effective communication skills are fundamental to any group in society striving to shape their own futures; conflict resolution and anger management skills are key requirements for people who are in dysfunctional and seemingly helpless environments; and skills in group processes, group dynamics and facilitation (counselling, training, economic development etc) are essential for communities that want to change.

#### 1.4.2.1 Core Skills

Every young Indigenous person should gain the following core life-skills if they are to play an effective role in progressing their lives and their communities:

- Literacy and numeracy skills
- Communication skills
- Conflict resolution and anger management skills
- Skills for managing drugs and alcohol
- Analytical skills
- Basic financial management skills
- Relationship skills
- Family life skills (including skills for raising children)
- Decision making skills
- Teamwork skills
- Skills in managing basic daily affairs
- Vehicle driving skills
- Skills in caring for the environment

## 1.4.2.2 Specialist Skills

For Indigenous communities to function effectively as communities, some young Indigenous people within the communities should gain the following specialist skills (in addition to the core skills):

- Negotiating skills
- Group process and meeting skills
- Counselling skills
- Skills in financial planning and advice
- Information technology skills
- Leadership skills
- Corporate governance skills

## 1.4.2.3 Professional Skills

Remote communities often have difficulty attracting professionals such as doctors, medical specialists and lawyers etc to live and practise in the local area. Experience has shown that financial and other incentives are not the answer. What works is encouraging and supporting young people from the community, who have their roots and families in the community, to become qualified in the professions. These young people, particularly Indigenous people who have very strong connection to family and country, are more likely to want to live and practise in remote locations like those of many Indigenous communities. Some of the key professions that Indigenous communities need are:

- Medical (doctors, specialists, nurses etc)
- Legal (lawyers, clerks etc)
- Teaching
- Financial planning
- Community development
- Town planning

## 1.4.2.4 Trade Skills

As for the professions, the Indigenous communities need a range of qualified tradespeople. Similarly, the best outcome for the local community will come from training young local people in a number of trades, for example:

- Building trades, including plumbing and electrical trades
- Mechanical trades
- Electrical trades
- Plant operator trades
- Mine services trades

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## 1.4.2.5 Other Skills

For Indigenous society to become richer, there must be opportunities for young people to express themselves and develop skills, self-esteem and confidence in a wide range of other areas. Often, engagement in these sorts of activities also stimulates an interest in further learning and education. Activities and programs that are likely to interest young people in the Indigenous communities include:

Art

Performing Arts

Music

Media (eg broadcasting etc)

Sport

Conducting tourism enterprises

Running a small business (including pastoral properties)

Running an agribusiness

Jackeroo/jillaroo programs

Rodeo skills development programs

## 1.4.3 Knowledge

One of the fundamentals of Indigenous society is identity with Lore and Culture. Therefore, it is critical that all young Indigenous people value their Elders, Dreamtime Lore, and connection to country. It is also critical that many young Indigenous people understand the contemporary environment that Indigenous society must master. This includes gaining knowledge of local, regional, national and wider international environments. In addition, young people need to develop knowledge in other areas, such as health etc, if they are to participate in a functional society.

All young Indigenous people should develop a thorough knowledge of:

Lore and Culture

Language

Suicide/depression awareness/indicators

Health and nutrition matters (including Cultural health, sex education etc)

Careers, work requirements and employment opportunities

In addition, many young Indigenous people should develop an understanding of the local and regional environment and national and international issues impacting on the local and regional environment.

### 1.4.4 Relationships

The essence of any functional human society is relationships - that is, relationships at all levels from individual, family and community to relationships at regional, national and international levels. In the past, Indigenous society was successful because it was based on sometimes complex but very effective relationships.

If Indigenous people are to function successfully in today's world, they must work on building relationships, networks and bridges at all levels. First though, the people must work on understanding themselves (that is, who they are and what they want) before they try to understand others. Knowing themselves will put them in a better position to comprehend and make the changes required to move the Indigenous communities forward in ways that will meet their expectations and aspirations.

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## PART 2 - STRATEGY

### 2.1 GENERAL

The aim of this strategy is “to motivate, develop and support young Indigenous people so that they can help shape the futures of their communities”. The strategy, which comprises a range of activities, programs and supporting mechanisms, is a framework (or master plan) within which Indigenous communities can develop detailed plans and strategies over time. Of course, Indigenous communities cannot implement this whole strategy immediately. But, they can start a number of key things right away, while they make detailed plans and find the necessary resources for the rest.

Indigenous communities should adopt the following broad principles for implementing the strategy:

A representative community partnership organisation should be responsible for implementing the strategy.

Young people must be involved in the planning, design and implementation of all aspects of this strategy.

All young Indigenous people in the communities should participate in the various activities and programs involved in the strategy.

Young people from other regional Indigenous communities should participate in activities and programs where practicable.

There should be progressive development for young Indigenous people in the communities from the age of 5 years until well into their 20s.

Local indigenous people should be trained to deliver as many of the activities and programs as possible.

Communities and education and training providers should conduct as many activities and programs as possible out in the bush (ie experiential learning).

The first part of the strategy focuses on motivating the young people and developing the required attitudes, skills, knowledge and relationships through a wide range of activities and programs.

## 2.2 MOTIVATING AND DEVELOPING YOUNG PEOPLE

### 2.2.1 Effective School-Based Education

In his book, *The Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela makes a point that is most relevant to Indigenous society:

“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become head of the mine, that a child of a farm worker can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we've got, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.”

So that they may have life-choices, young Indigenous people need the attitudes, skills and knowledge that an effective school-based education can provide. The emphasis is on “effective” school-based education because ineffective education destroys the desire to learn. The challenge is to find the balance between the learning styles and world-view of Indigenous students and the demands of the education systems and processes.

For young Indigenous people to succeed in school-based education, as it is structured today, they must attend regularly and engage consistently, they must be taught well and they must be supported and encouraged by their parents and the community. They must also speak Standard Australian English fluently.

This strategy highlights those things that are considered important for effective school-based education in the Indigenous communities; it does not attempt to suggest how to restructure the education system or its processes.

#### 2.2.1.1 Attendance and Engagement

If young Indigenous people are to benefit from school-based education and training, they must attend school and engage regularly. And, they must be encouraged and supported to attend and engage regularly. Initially, they may need incentives (and this has worked dramatically in a non-government school in the Kimberley where non-attendance has gone from 40% to 10% after the introduction of incentives). For example, young Aboriginal people like to go to school for sport and socialising, therefore these activities should be used as incentives for them to attend and engage.

Participation and achievement are likely to be improved if Indigenous culture is acknowledged and supported. One of the best ways to achieve this is through the employment or voluntary presence of Indigenous adults at the school. This is a tangible symbol of the commitment of both the school and the Indigenous community to the value of education. These Indigenous helpers should have well-defined roles and themselves have support and training for these roles (schools may have the capacity to fund this training through commitments from their Education Departments).

Providing students with life-skills, employment-related training and/or industry specific skills also encourages them to attend and remain at school, while also providing pathways into further education and training and employment. To this end, properly co-ordinated vocational education and training, structured workplace learning, school-based traineeship and school-based apprenticeship programs are essential.

Perhaps, in some locations, more creative and flexible restructuring of the school year might be more responsive to individual community needs and may have a positive effect on school attendance (for example, taking account of the wet season and associated flooding in the Indigenous communities in the north of Australia).

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Unfortunately, some young women in Indigenous communities are unable to continue to attend school once they become mothers (which is occurring more and more at a young age). So that these young women can continue with their education, schools and the communities should look at establishing child-minding facilities in schools or community learning centre complexes.

### **2.2.1.2 School Environments**

For Indigenous students to achieve acceptable outcomes in school-based education, it is important that they are given and develop respect; that is, self-respect and respect for others. Their Culture, and its relevant implications, should be acknowledged and respected. This means that aspects of Culture should be recognised and integrated into the education process. To achieve this, the communities and the schools must have active and effective relationships with one another.

People learn differently, but the classroom can be enjoyable, exciting and profitable for everyone if schools take time to analyse both students and settings and make sure there is not a mismatch. It is most important that the methodologies used by the schools in Indigenous communities don't largely exclude Indigenous students, thereby dooming them to a poor education experience with very limited outcomes.

However, current education systems are competitive. This can cause problems for Indigenous students who have grown up in an environment where "big shame", "embarrassment", "peer pressure" etc are the norm (even though many of these behaviours may well have been learnt). While it is unrealistic to expect the broader education system to change overnight, it is important that, in the Indigenous communities, school councils should investigate this issue and develop solutions if required (these may involve changing attitudes in both the schools and the communities).

The attitudes and behaviours of some Indigenous students often distract and hold back those who want to engage and progress at school. Perhaps, the schools might look at separating these groups of students and providing appropriate programs and curricula for those with special needs. These "problem" students are more likely to respond better to programs that focus on life-skills and functional literacy.

Students learn better if they are healthy and have adequate nutrition. To this end, it is important that the schools in the Indigenous communities work together with parents to ensure that health and nutrition are an integral part of daily life.

### **2.2.1.3 Effective Teaching**

Indigenous children must be taught well – that is, there must be good positive relationships, trust, flexibility, individual concern and problem solving, perseverance, thoughtful observation, careful investigation of best teaching strategies and possibilities, and knowledge of students' backgrounds etc.

Continuity of quality teaching is also a key requirement for young Indigenous people. One of the problems in remote communities in general is getting quality teachers who will stay for long periods of time. While there are incentives in place in the Government schools in some States (eg 22 weeks holiday after 4 years), the best solution would be, as for other professions, to encourage local Indigenous people to qualify as teachers and work with the education systems to stay on in their communities' schools. Of course, this would need to be balanced with the requirement for cross-fertilisation of ideas and injection of "new blood" into the communities' schools teaching staff.

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So that non-Indigenous teachers have the required knowledge and understanding of Indigenous students and their cultures, and therefore develop appropriate attitudes, it is most important that they undertake professional development focused on community engagement and cultural awareness. The Indigenous communities should achieve this primarily through annual programs (which should be conducted out in the bush) where non-Indigenous teachers, Indigenous education officers, students and parents learn from each other. As these are most important activities, the schools must plan them around specific objectives (ie they should not just be camps).

A team comprised of an Indigenous education officer and a non-Indigenous teacher, each contributing their particular knowledge equally, is a most valuable asset for effective and successful teaching. Together, they are able to provide higher teacher expectations of students' success and more intensive classroom support, both of which are critical factors in improving outcomes. Indigenous education officers also provide a pool of talent from which to develop qualified teachers for the Indigenous communities. The schools and the communities should look at ways of putting more Indigenous education officers in the schools.

Given the extent of the challenges that exist in Indigenous communities, it is essential that all people working in the area of education and training in the communities must share a fundamental and fixed belief in the value of what they are doing. If they don't, they should not be employed there.

### 2.2.1.4 Appropriate Curricula

There are traits that are significant in the culture of Indigenous people that affect the way they learn. For example, most Indigenous students need a context for learning; that is, they learn best when the subject or topic is related to a community/real life context. And, Indigenous children respond better to physically based programs rather than static activities.

All young Indigenous people need to be proficient in literacy and numeracy skills (including Standard Australian English) as these skills are the keys to learning and ultimately gaining control of their lives. Standard Australian English is most important, because it is the power language.

Indigenous communities value their own Language and it should be a core component of the school curriculum for all Indigenous students.

All of these points must be considered when framing appropriate curricula for the schools in Indigenous communities. The challenge is to meet both the needs of the formal education systems and the needs of the Indigenous people of the communities.

Ernie Grant, an Elder of North Queensland's Jirribal tribe, makes the following observations in his booklet "My Land, My Tracks":

"Indigenous communities have a holistic view of the world, which incorporates the vital link between Land, Language and Culture. This view is significantly different from what is considered the norm in Western society."

"There is a significant difference between the Western and Indigenous approaches to the acquisition and application of knowledge. Western thinking generally adopts a holistic approach to the wider issues, while its approach in more localised issues is compartmentalised. The end result of this is that most information in schools and institutions – whether it be oral or written – is organised in a way that reflects this.

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On the other hand, largely because of the people's dependence on the spoken word and observation for sharing knowledge about their own world, the Indigenous approach is quite the opposite. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people look at the whole picture and identify relationships and links within it, whereas their Western counterparts often focus on the detail of the individual parts without considering their possible interaction with others. This apparent conflict can be quite confusing and frustrating for all those involved in sharing the knowledge."

### **2.2.1.5 Parental and Community Support/Involvement**

Lack of parental support for students in Indigenous communities is a pressing concern. For Indigenous students to succeed in school-based education, their parents and their communities must value education and the values of education, and parents must involve themselves in the education of their children. This means parents need to be full partners in their children's education; for example, parent helpers add significant value in the schools.

There may be value in attempting to position the schools at the centre of some communities, both physically and conceptually. It would be worth looking at making the schools hubs of the communities; for example, there could be before and after-school programs, learning activities for parents and families, the allocation of specific spaces in the school environs for parent or family centres, and schools as community centres. Extending the traditional role of the schools to incorporate other initiatives, such as adult education and the co-ordination and integration of various child and family services, would bring more members of the wider community into contact with the school. This would help develop connections between families, schools and the wider communities leading to improved communication, co-operation and sharing of resources. The Indigenous communities should ensure that they take full advantage of the construction of any new schools to implement these sorts of initiatives.

The ability for many students to complete their homework effectively is an issue; one regional non-government school has had success with sending a resource back pack home with the students to help the parents understand the homework requirements. There is a need for homework centres, located in the communities with tutors, food and drink etc available, where young Indigenous students can go after school to complete their assigned work and study in a safe and supportive environment.

### **2.2.1.6 Later High School Years**

A number of parents in Indigenous communities send their students away to boarding schools to finish their secondary education. A preparatory program, like the Education, Training and Employment Program currently funded by the Polly Farmer Foundation and Leedal through the emerging Indigenous communities Youth Trust in the Fitzroy Valley of the Kimberley, is a key for the success of these students.

While sending senior students away from the communities for study or sport is valuable for a number of reasons, it does leave the Indigenous communities and schools short on young role models in the local area. This is a difficult issue and one that should be recognised and addressed locally.

### 2.2.1.7 General

While there is a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, and its goals are generally appropriate for the Indigenous communities, social circumstances are local (ie not uniform). Therefore, the local needs for school-based education must be determined through local consultation and dealt with by local Indigenous action. The processes for school-based education are much more important than the content.

It appears that the structural and cultural impediments may not be as strong as they once were to the concept of thinking globally and acting locally with regard to education. Therefore, there are opportunities for the communities (through school councils) to become more involved in governance and the processes of school-based education. Given the high costs of infrastructure etc, this approach may be preferable to a community school approach.

For these school-based education initiatives to succeed, school principals and school councils in the Indigenous communities must provide effective leadership.

### 2.2.1.8 Actions

The schools and the community should work together to ensure the following occurs/is occurring in school-based education in the Indigenous communities:

Parents, communities and the schools must encourage and support young people to attend school and engage with school activities regularly. A system of incentives and rewards should be developed.

Indigenous parents and other Indigenous adults should be employed at the schools or act in a voluntary capacity at the schools.

The schools should include life-skills, employment-related skills and industry-specific skills in their curricula.

The communities and the schools should undertake studies to see whether restructuring the school year might have a positive effect on school attendance and engagement.

Education departments, in conjunction with the schools and the communities, should look at establishing crèches within regional high school facilities.

The school-based education process should recognise and integrate Indigenous Culture.

The schools should test their methodologies to see that they don't, to a large extent, exclude Indigenous students.

School councils should map the issues and come up with solutions to the problems for Indigenous students created by a competitive education system.

The schools should work with parents to ensure adequate health and nutrition for Indigenous students.

The communities and schools should encourage and support young Indigenous people to become qualified as teachers and then return to teach in the Indigenous communities.

All non-Indigenous teachers in the Indigenous communities' schools should develop cultural awareness and build relationships and understanding through regular professional development activities including annual bush programs with Indigenous education officers, students and parents.

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Teaching teams of a non-Indigenous teacher and an Indigenous education officer should work together as much as possible.

The schools and the communities should look at ways of putting more Indigenous education officers into the schools.

The schools should ensure that their curricula take account of the way Indigenous people learn and use contextual learning and experiential programs where possible.

All young Indigenous people must become proficient in literacy and numeracy skills, including Standard Australian English.

The schools should include Indigenous language as a core subject in their curricula.

Parents should become full partners in their children's education.

Schools and the communities should look at the advantages of and the opportunities to position the schools at the centre of the communities and extend their roles to engage the whole community.

Communities should ensure that they take full advantage of the construction any new schools in their regions to implement these initiatives.

Schools should provide homework resource packs for parents.

The communities and the schools should establish community homework centres that provide tuition, food and drink for students after school hours.

Communities should seek to establish preparatory programs for students who leave their communities to study at boarding school.

Communities should address the issue of a lack of young role models caused by students going away for study or sport in their senior years of schooling.

The local communities should determine the needs and act to provide for school-based education as much as possible through strong and effective school councils.

Communities should encourage the school councils and principals to provide the effective community leadership required for the success of these initiatives.

### **2.2.2 Lore and Culture Events**

In many communities, Elders are most concerned about the rapidly increasing loss of values, identity with Indigenous Lore and Culture and the connection with country. To address this, communities should hold regular Lore and Culture activities out bush in country.

Elders should run these activities for young Indigenous people in the various age groups, primarily during school holidays. These activities should be dynamic and not seen as "one-off" events. They must also be placed in context of daily life as young people often see them as irrelevant once they come back into town.

These activities should complement any whole-of-community Lore and Culture events that might be conducted infrequently.

A valuable outcome from these activities is the shared experiences between the younger and the older people. This helps overcome distrust and builds a sense of unity in the community. It also helps build communication between the young and old.

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### 2.2.2.1 Actions

Elders in the communities should run Lore and Culture Camps (incorporating life-skills development activities) for young people. These should be held out in the bush during the school holidays.

Each year, Indigenous communities should run separate Lore and Culture and life-skills camps of one-week duration for 5 to 10 year old girls and 5 to 10 year old boys.

Each year Indigenous communities should run a ten-day Lore and Culture and life-skill camp for 11 to 16 year old boys and girls.

Indigenous communities should develop a program of Lore and Culture activities that can be held between camps to ensure that Lore and Culture becomes a part of daily life.

Indigenous communities should consider conducting a whole-of-community Lore and Culture activity each year.

### 2.2.3 Life-Skills Development Programs and Activities

While some of the required life-skills can be developed at school, life-skills programs and activities are essential for young Indigenous people to develop the attitudes, skills, knowledge and relationships necessary to function effectively as Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in today's world. The following principles should be used when constructing these programs and activities:

As young Indigenous people enjoy doing things and are more responsive in the bush, the programs and activities should be conducted out bush, in country, wherever possible.

Young Indigenous people should help define their own interests and needs – for example, community issues may provide the basis for the content of the activities.

The programs and activities should support cultural identity and develop self-esteem.

The programs and activities should be based around problem solving or discovery education – that is, experiential learning.

The programs and activities should empower young Indigenous people to own the consequences of their actions and solve their own problems.

Exercises and activities should get young Indigenous minds thinking about what it means to be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander living and working in today's changing world. They should discover that they could have the best of both worlds, by making their lives a success through work and expressing themselves as an Indigenous person at the same time.

Strong and authoritative Indigenous people (preferably known to and accepted by the community at large) should act as instructors and staff on the programs and activities.

Elders and other influential Indigenous community members should participate actively in these activities.

The communities should support those young people where relevant background issues, such as levels of literacy in English, health matters, juvenile justice, pressing financial demands, family problems and other personal issues may limit their involvement and engagement in these programs and activities.

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Life-skills programs or activities for young Indigenous people aged from 5 to 10 years should include the **basics** of:

Communication skills

Family life skills including conflict resolution and anger management skills

Analytical skills

Relationship skills

Decision making skills

Teamwork skills

Health and Nutrition

Skills in caring for the environment

When designing programs and activities for this 5 to 10 year age group, it is important to “let kids be kids” and discover things for themselves. Therefore, the activities should be enjoyable and fun.

Life-skills programs or activities for young Indigenous people aged from 11 to 16 years should include more advanced development in communication skills, conflict resolution and anger management skills, analytical skills, relationship skills, family life skills, decision making skills, teamwork skills and skills in caring for the environment. In addition, they should include:

Skills in managing basic daily affairs

Basic skills for managing money

Skills for managing drugs and alcohol

Knowledge of suicide/depression awareness/indicators

Knowledge of health matters (including Cultural health, mental health, sex education)

Vehicle driving skills

Knowledge of careers, work requirements and employment opportunities

Skills for public speaking (should give talks to their community)

Skills for raising children (because many are having families too young)

Life-skills programs or activities for Indigenous people aged 17 years and over should include all of the above skills and knowledge and place a real focus on taking responsibility for their own actions.

### 2.2.3.1 Actions

Indigenous communities should run life-skills development activities and programs each year, in conjunction with Lore and Culture camps, in the bush during the school holidays. That is, each year, Indigenous communities should run separate camps of one-week duration for 5 to 10 year old girls and 5 to 10 year old boys, and a ten-day camp for 11 to 16 year old boys and girls.

Each year, Indigenous communities should run a two-week life-skills camp for young people over 17 years of age.

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Communities should complement the bush camps with short development sessions on life-skills, after-school or after work, throughout the year.

Communities should build the programs and activities around the principles and the life-skills described in this strategy.

Communities should work with the schools to develop curricula that include life-skills.

### 2.2.4 Specialist Skills Programs

Each Indigenous community should have young people who are competent in the following:

Leadership skills

Negotiating skills

Group process skills

Skills in conducting meetings

Counselling skills

Skills in financial planning

Information technology skills

Corporate governance skills

There may be appropriate external programs currently available that can be delivered in the communities or regions. While outside providers might be required to deliver these programs initially, local community learning centres and TAFE should deliver them in due course. Of course, both community learning centres and TAFE would require sufficient lead times to allow them to obtain the required funds, staff and housing etc.

#### 2.2.4.1 Actions

Indigenous communities should work with community learning centres and TAFE to identify and deliver the specialist skills programs in this strategy.

Where community learning centres and TAFE cannot deliver these programs, Indigenous communities should seek outside providers (either to deliver the programs in the communities or in the regions).

### 2.2.5 Transition to Work/Further Education

Key elements for effective transition to work/further education are:

good functional levels of literacy in Standard Australian English;

continuing attendance and engagement with school during the secondary years;

clear and accessible pathways to futures in further education, training or employment; and

access to services through and beyond school that assist them to:

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make informed choices when selecting schools, courses and post-school opportunities;

connect education and training pathways with career choices and employment prospects; and

access the broad range of community services and specialist support available to them.

A model for effective career and transition services includes the following elements:

Each Indigenous student should develop a transition plan, based on his/her own skills and interests, to guide him/her from school to further education, training or employment. This transition plan should include the following three components:

A **Learning Pathways Plan**, which students will begin to develop in their middle years of schooling by setting goals and relating them to vocational learning opportunities and intended pathways after school. It will include curriculum choice, recognition of necessary skill development, proposed career pathways, goals and strategies for achieving those goals. This Plan should be revised and up dated as the student moves through school.

A **Transition Portfolio**, to document and showcase the skills and abilities that students have developed in school, the workplace and community activities.

An **Exit Map**, to outline where they plan to go when they leave school and to link them with a range of service providers who can assist them to achieve their goals.

Communities should work with a range of agencies and organisations to identify and secure opportunities for meaningful, realistic and sustainable employment for their young people.

Schools, government agencies and community organisations should provide guidance and assist young people to develop a broad and accurate knowledge of careers and work.

Communities should identify mentors in business for young people and help provide opportunities for them to undertake work placement with mentors.

Young people should have the opportunities to participate in a range of vocational education experiences including:

vocational education programs in schools,

structured work placements, and

community based learning activities.

Communities and parents should support young people in their transitions from school to employment or further study, including those young people who have left the school, further education and employment systems prematurely.

To get more young Indigenous people into the workforce, not just as labourers or as support personnel in the government sector but as professionals or as members of the private sector setting up their own businesses, Indigenous communities need to work to establish effective career transition programs.

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Currently, the CDEP system offers few incentives and is a major contributor to attitudes of low work ethic and “learned helplessness”, particularly as CDEP is often seen as a career path. While there are major structural and social issues around changing the CDEP processes, the communities should look closely at how CDEP is impacting on community attitudes and ultimately on the ability of the communities to shape their own future. Similarly, transition from school to work or further education is very difficult in many current dysfunctional family/community environments. Again, this needs to be addressed if Indigenous youth are to make the most of opportunities available in further education and employment.

Parents and the communities need to be involved through engagement in school-to-work program management and promotion; participation as mentors; knowledge of current careers and work; and knowledge of young peoples’ skills and abilities.

Business and industry need to be involved through employment of young Indigenous people; provision of work placement opportunities for young Indigenous people; and better knowledge of Indigenous organisations, communities, and individuals.

One organisation that is helping with transition from school to work in Indigenous communities is the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEF). This Foundation has been established by the Commonwealth Government to help reshape the schooling system so that it better prepares young people to make an effective transition into adult life. It seeks to work with relevant community, business, education and government bodies to establish local coalitions that support young people. ECEF has a particular mandate to help young Indigenous Australians. One of its goals is to eliminate or reduce factors that inhibit their successful transition to further education or work.

Indigenous communities should tap into appropriate ECEF programs and resources through its strategy for Creating Indigenous Learning Communities. Through this strategy, ECEF is piloting a Career and Transition Framework in selected Indigenous communities to develop local infrastructure to enhance the quality, quantity and diversity of transition services provided at the local level. This includes establishing local partnerships (including full-time co-ordinators) and facilitating community-based approaches to vocational learning initiatives.

### **2.2.5.1 Actions**

Communities should look closely at how CDEP impacts on community attitudes and on the ability to shape their own future.

Indigenous communities should develop career and transition programs, services and infrastructure to support all young people in their communities to make effective transitions through school and into work and further education. These should be based on the model set out in this strategy.

Communities should develop particular strategies to assist and support young people in dysfunctional family and community environments to transition through school and into work or further education.

Indigenous communities should develop an effective role model/mentor program for young people.

Indigenous communities should tap into ECEF programs and resources through its strategy for Creating Indigenous Learning Communities.

### **2.2.6 Tertiary Education**

For long-term benefits, Indigenous communities should aim to have local Indigenous people qualified in and practising the professions locally. To this end, it is important to encourage and support (including financially) bright young Indigenous people to undertake tertiary studies in:

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Medicine (doctors, specialists, nurses etc)

Law (lawyers, clerks etc)

Teaching

Financial Planning

Community Development

Town Planning

Information technology

While recognising that it will require a major leap forward from the current situation where there are very few tertiary qualified Indigenous people in the communities, the communities need to develop a plan for targeting, motivating and supporting young people to study for these professions. They also need to develop a system of incentives to encourage these people to practise in the Indigenous communities once they are qualified. Where the communities financially support individuals to undertake tertiary education, these people should be required (through a contract) to serve back in their communities for a period of time once they become qualified.

### **2.2.6.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should develop strategies to identify, encourage and support young people to undertake tertiary studies, particularly in the professions highlighted in this strategy.

Communities should develop a system of incentives to encourage these people to practise their professions in the communities.

### **2.2.7 Trade Training**

Given local demands for tradesmen, and the increasing requirements for tradesmen at mining operations near many Indigenous communities for example, it is most important that Indigenous communities encourage and support young people to take up apprenticeships/ traineeships in:

Building, plumbing, mechanical and electrical trades

Plant operator trades

Mine services trades

### **2.2.7.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should develop strategies to identify, encourage and support young people to undertake trade training, particularly in the trades highlighted in this strategy.

### **2.2.8 Tertiary Scholarship and Exchange Programs**

To assist with the objective of having local Indigenous people trained in the professions, it is important that Indigenous communities identify and target as many tertiary scholarships and educational exchange programs as possible.

### 2.2.8.1 Actions

Indigenous communities should identify and target appropriate tertiary scholarships and exchange programs.

### 2.2.9 Exposure to Other Cultures in Australia and Overseas

Indigenous people need an awareness of the other cultures and societies in Australia and the world. In particular, it is important to expand young peoples' awareness of the positive aspects of many Indigenous community environments as compared to many other places. It is also important to show young Indigenous people how other societies survive, and in some cases prosper, where there are no welfare systems.

Travelling away from home will broaden young Indigenous minds and help young Indigenous people build confidence and self esteem.

These trips should not be junkets or tourist-type activities; rather they should have clear objectives and show both the positive and negative sides of life in other societies. They should be designed so that there is maximum interaction and engagement with local people.

In addition, Indigenous communities should consider reciprocal programs through which young men and women from other cultures come to live with and learn from Indigenous communities.

#### 2.2.9.1 Actions

Where it is practicable to do so, Indigenous communities should consider taking a group of say 15 year olds on a trip to Sydney and Canberra. In Sydney, they should be exposed to social issues (particularly in places like Redfern and Kings Cross). In Canberra, they should visit Federal Parliament. Ideally, communities should try to conduct this activity each year so that as many young people as possible in the communities can benefit from the experience.

Every two or three years, Indigenous communities should aim to take a small group of people in their early 20s to a neighbouring country (eg Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand etc).

Indigenous communities should consider establishing reciprocal programs through which young men and women from other cultures come and stay in the communities for a period of time.

### 2.2.10 Leadership Programs and Scholarships

As an extension to life-skills programs and Lore and Culture events, Indigenous communities should conduct leadership development programs for youth who are in their late teens and early twenties. These should be run as experiential learning programs and should be conducted out in the bush. They should challenge the participants to look at themselves and their behaviours in a leadership setting. The following objectives should be the basis for Indigenous communities' youth leadership programs.

- develop participants' interest in and passion for leadership;

- develop participants' commitment to serve their communities through leadership roles;

- encourage participants to express their emotions and reflect on their leadership behaviours;

- challenge participants to examine their personal values and desires;

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- teach participants to take responsibility for their situations and lives;
- provide peer feedback on their leadership behaviours and provide opportunities for them to experiment with new behaviours;
- develop participants' confidence to take risks and challenge the status quo;
- improve participants' abilities to build strong, robust relationships for more effective leadership;
- raise participants' awareness of the need for effective practical, political and emotional support, and frank feedback, in leadership;
- assist participants to develop personal visions;
- introduce participants to the processes for developing shared values and shared vision;
- develop a sense of shared purpose and shared achievement; and
- give participants a memorable and challenging experience.

It is important to include Indigenous people from other regional communities, and perhaps some non-Indigenous people from industry (eg the mining industry), in these leadership programs. Experience has shown that local Indigenous people gained confidence and found that their knowledge was valued (that they were, in fact, peers) when non-Indigenous industry people participated with them on leadership programs. Fees for the industry participants might even contribute to paying for some of these programs. These programs would also be one way of helping to establish connections that might lead to industry mentors for local Indigenous people.

In addition, Indigenous communities would gain a lot from having young Indigenous people participate in existing national and state leadership development programs. Apart from gaining attitudes, skills and knowledge through participation in these external programs, selected Indigenous people would also develop important lifelong personal and business relationships as well as networks at regional, state and national levels. As these programs are competitive, potential participants need to be identified early and nurtured, encouraged and supported prior to applying for consideration.

The leadership programs that Indigenous communities should specifically target are:

- State and Regional Leadership Development Programs;
- Australian Indigenous Leadership Programs;
- Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Youth Leadership Program; and
- Australian Rural Leadership Program (for participants who are already in leadership roles and who have completed at least one of these other leadership development programs).

### 2.2.10.1 Actions

Indigenous communities should consider developing and conducting ten-day youth leadership programs, preferably once a year. The participants should be selected on the basis of their potential to lead in their communities and they should be between 17 and 30 years of age. After their first pilot program, Indigenous communities should look at including Indigenous participants from other communities and non-Indigenous participants from industry and government.

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Communities should seek out and engage an appropriate agency to assist with the design and delivery of these programs (although, over time, local Indigenous people should be trained to assist as facilitators).

Communities should design the leadership development programs around the objectives listed in this strategy.

Communities should identify and encourage young local Indigenous people to apply for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australia Youth Leadership Program.

Communities should identify and encourage young local Indigenous people to apply for the Australian Indigenous Leadership Program.

Communities should identify, encourage and support local Indigenous people who might have potential to apply for the Australian Rural Leadership Program.

### **2.2.11 Involvement in Defence and Similar Activities**

Young Indigenous people would benefit from greater involvement in Defence activities like Norforce and cadets, and in environmental care organisations like Western Australia's CALM Bushranger Cadet Unit. To this end, Indigenous communities should make contact with Defence and other appropriate agencies with the aim of developing strategies for closer contact, co-operation and involvement.

#### **2.2.11.1 Action**

Indigenous communities should make contact with Defence and other agencies with the aim of developing strategies for closer contact, co-operation and involvement with a view to providing opportunities for young people to participate in their activities.

### **2.2.12 Business Development Programs**

A series of business related development programs/courses would benefit Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities should work with the local community learning centres, TAFE and private providers with the aim of sourcing local courses in the following:

- establishing and running tourism enterprises;
- establishing and running small businesses;
- running agribusinesses (including pastoral properties);
- jackeroo/jillaroo programs; and
- rodeo skills.

Indigenous pastoral properties might be a good base for running jackeroo/jillaroo and rodeo skills programs.

Where Indigenous communities own local businesses (either wholly or partly), it makes sense to focus on training and preparing local Indigenous people to staff these organisations (often they are staffed substantially by non-Indigenous and transient people).

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## 2.2.12.1 Actions

Indigenous communities should work with local community learning centres, TAFE and private providers to deliver the business development programs described in this strategy.

Communities should focus on developing programs to train and prepare local Indigenous people for employment in any local Indigenous owned enterprises.

## 2.2.13 Sporting Programs and Scholarships

Young Indigenous people love sport. The evidence of this is their enthusiasm for football, regional sporting festivals, interschool sports, cross-regional events etc. Sport is not only good for their fitness, but also helps build self esteem and confidence, provides a means of socialising, keeps young people occupied and teaches them responsibility.

It is important to build on this interest in sport in the Indigenous communities by working closely with sports associations and other relevant agencies to ensure that:

Sporting carnivals/cross regional events occur regularly and are well supported.

Sports funding is appropriate for the task.

Sporting programs continue to attract youth over 16 years of age (kids involved in sports programs are usually under 16 and at school – after 16, many drop out of sport).

There are regular sporting programs for girls/women and community attitudes that limit women playing sport (eg jealousy from some men) are addressed.

Particularly in the north of Australia, lights are installed on sporting fields to allow for night sporting activities, particularly in the hot months of the year (eg night football or touch football competitions).

In those communities where currently few parents etc are assisting with youth sporting activities, community attitudes to volunteering and helping with junior sports and recreation activities should be addressed.

Communities should appoint a coordinator/organiser for youth sport and recreation.

The major issue of insurances and public liability for sporting events and programs should be investigated and addressed.

Best use should be made of the various facilities currently available in the communities.

Sporting scholarships for talented individuals are valuable. They also help create an incentive for young people to play sport and travel. Indigenous communities should seek out such scholarships.

While engaging in sporting activities, participants are acquiring additional skills. These skills can be recognised by enrolling the participants in appropriate courses or programs, thereby making sport an integral part of adult education that could lead to formal qualifications. This was done by TAFE in Wyndham a few years ago when apparently the whole football team was enrolled in a number of sporting modules; for example, umpiring, working in groups, planning sporting events, occupational health and safety, conflict resolution, crowd control, problem solving etc.

### **2.2.13.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should develop strategies to address the sporting and recreation requirements of this youth strategy.

This sporting and recreation strategy must include sporting and recreation activities for young women.

Indigenous communities should seek out and target sports scholarships.

Communities should look at ways of integrating sport with education and training.

### **2.2.14 Arts, Crafts and Media Programs**

Engagement in the arts is likely to assist in the development of productive learning relationships and can enable young people to experience success on a regular and public basis; thereby encouraging increased motivation, attendance and participation. A focus on arts learning, which incorporates Indigenous culture and heritage, can also extend to other areas such as literacy, numeracy and employment related skills.

Arts education can be an important medium for development and expression of contemporary Indigenous cultural history and pride.

Arts programs in the school holidays are valuable and Indigenous communities should encourage them through local arts resource agencies.

Indigenous people are known for their unique style and quality of their music. Indigenous communities should look at building on this through supporting and encouraging music workshops (as after-school and school-holiday activities).

Crafts are popular with young and old people alike. Craft workshops would help develop skills and provide an opportunity for young and old people to share creative activities, thereby helping communication etc. Indigenous communities should look at establishing local craft centres (which could also be retail outlets for craft sales). There may also be opportunities to involve local schools in such craft centres.

#### **2.2.14.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should work with local arts resource agencies to develop after-school, after-work and school-holiday arts programs.

Communities should look at developing after-school/work and school-holiday music programs.

Communities should look at establishing local craft centres as retail outlets and venues for craft activities.

### **2.2.15 Outdoor Challenge Activities**

Outdoor challenge activities build motivation, confidence, self-esteem, teamwork and a sense of responsibility. As young Indigenous people are enthusiastic about these types of activities, outdoor challenge activities are good incentives/rewards for them to complete other preparatory training programs and activities. They are also a good way for them to develop further understanding of and connection with country.

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These activities allow young role models to be introduced and emerge, and this is fundamental to the overall process of developing Indigenous youth.

The communities should also encourage schools to conduct outdoor challenge activities for younger children.

### **2.2.15.1 Actions**

Communities should consider conducting outdoor challenge activities for selected Indigenous youth, say 18 to 20 years old. These should be planned and run by the young people themselves and include participants from other regional Indigenous communities.

Communities should encourage the schools to conduct outdoor challenge activities for younger children.

### **2.2.16 Girls' Confidence Building Programs**

Indigenous communities should conduct programs specifically for young girls, say under 10 years of age, to give them confidence and help build their self-esteem. Perhaps one camp a year (for a week or so during the school holidays) would be sufficient. This activity should include life-skills development.

Similarly, the girls from 11 to 16 would benefit from a camp for a week or so each year to include basic leadership skills and goals/aspirations etc.

The communities also need to work with the schools to ensure that they identify and address young girls' specific needs in school-based education.

#### **2.2.16.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should use annual Lore and Culture and life-skills camps for girls 5 to 10 years old as confidence building activities.

Communities should consider conducting a camp for a week or so each year, to include basic leadership skills and goals/aspirations etc, for girls from 11 to 16 years of age.

Indigenous communities should work with schools to ensure that they identify and address young girls' specific needs in school-based education.

### 2.3 SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE

The programs and activities that motivate and develop the young people will not work without ongoing, effective support from the community. Indigenous communities should seek to provide the following support for their young people:

#### 2.3.1 Mentor and Role Model Programs

It is critical that parents be encouraged to accept their responsibilities and support their children to undertake these programs (parents should be mentors and role models).

Elders who are feeling disenfranchised and helpless should start role model/mentor programs and work actively with the young people. This would require some older people changing their own attitudes (eg to alcohol) so that they could set an example.

Most importantly, Indigenous communities need young role models and mentors; that is, young leaders who are prepared to help other young people. Perhaps Indigenous communities should look at training some of their young football stars for a young mentor program.

##### 2.3.1.1 Actions

Indigenous communities should encourage parents to support their children to undertake the programs in this strategy.

Communities should establish Indigenous role model and mentor programs involving elders, parents and young leaders.

#### 2.3.2 Community Actions in Regard to Alcohol and Drug Abuse

For a youth strategy to have any chance of working, the Indigenous communities must take positive action in regard to alcohol and drug abuse. In the Kimberley, for example, young people consider the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs to be the biggest issue affecting their lives. It is essential, therefore, that the communities address alcohol and drug abuse if their youth are to progress. For example, many families are spending their child support payments on alcohol and, in the extreme case of youth suicides, drugs and alcohol are recognised as key factors.

Prohibition doesn't work, but responsible approaches, including radically reducing access, to alcohol and drugs might, as shown by the positive changes some communities when restrictions have been in place during sporting festivals and floods etc. First though, the communities need the will to change attitudes and the leaders in the communities need to set the example. It is a sad situation when some young Indigenous people aspire to going on to CDEP and drinking all day, just like they see their community role models doing. As football players are often local heroes, they might be encouraged to set an example.

As a start, the Indigenous communities should map the extent of the abuse of alcohol and drugs and determine the effects (both direct and indirect) on their youth. Then a community task force (in partnership with the suppliers of alcohol and the police) should tackle the issue. While it is not going to be easy to address the problems of alcohol and drug abuse, community concern and the will to take action, along with perhaps an alcohol and drug rehabilitation program, is a good start.

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## 2.3.2.1 Actions

Indigenous communities should come together with other local communities to map the extent of alcohol and drugs abuse in their region.

Communities (in conjunction with the police and suppliers of alcohol) should establish a community task force to tackle the abuse of alcohol and drugs.

Communities should develop and implement a community alcohol and drugs strategy.

## 2.3.3 Youth Co-ordinators, Workers, Counsellors, Advisers, and Facilitators

Effective co-ordination is a key to the success of this Indigenous youth strategy. Appropriate individuals or organisations are needed to co-ordinate and harness the potential of the various agencies within and outside the Indigenous communities. Often, there appears to be very little communication between the various support groups in some communities and regions; for example, there is often competition for funding and delivery of services instead of co-operation.

Indigenous communities need a youth strategy co-ordinator. This person should be passionate about helping develop young Indigenous people and should have the skills and knowledge to do the following:

- develop plans, programs and activities to implement the Indigenous youth strategy;
- review the Youth strategy to ensure that it is dynamic and continues to meet the needs and aspirations of young Indigenous people and the Indigenous communities;
- recommend changes to the youth strategy as required;
- establish and develop a network of contacts, co-ordinators and helpers for youth activities in each of the regional Indigenous communities;
- find and engage delivery agencies for programs and activities;
- work closely with support agencies to source funding for programs and activities;
- work closely with delivery agencies (eg Indigenous communities schools, learning centres, TAFE, outside providers etc) to make best use of the support available;
- work closely with co-ordinators of youth activities in the other Indigenous communities to conduct joint programs and activities where possible;
- engage with the leaders in the communities to ensure their continuing support for and involvement in implementing the strategy;
- promote the youth strategy; and
- undertake administration, financial accounting and corporate governance activities as required to ensure the success of the youth strategy.

The Indigenous youth strategy co-ordinator should be responsible directly to an Indigenous community council.

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Many areas in Australia have a range of youth workers etc, but often there are few in the Indigenous communities. Each community needs counselling/support mechanisms. In particular, communities need structures and processes to help young people take advantages of opportunities. The Indigenous communities should work with Departments of Family and Community Services to address this need for youth workers and develop a team approach to the delivery of social services in the Indigenous communities.

It is most important that all people engaged in supporting Indigenous youth be trained and properly prepared for their roles; this includes undertaking ongoing professional development (including understanding Indigenous Lore and Culture). Often these people, particularly counsellors and mediators, have to be substitutes for ineffective parents.

There are some Indigenous people in the community who are currently helping out effectively and unofficially (eg concerned parents, safe houses etc). Indigenous communities should identify, recognise and support these people (with resources, including funding, if necessary).

### **2.3.3.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should appoint a youth strategy co-ordinator. This person should have the skills and knowledge required to carry out the role described in this strategy. The youth strategy co-ordinator should work directly to an Indigenous community council.

The Indigenous communities should seek government assistance to provide appropriate youth workers for the communities. Communities must insist and ensure that these youth workers are properly trained, prepared and supported.

Communities should work with support agencies to develop a team approach to the delivery of social services in the Indigenous communities.

Indigenous communities should identify and support unofficial youth helpers in their communities.

### **2.3.4 Youth Advisory Committees/Networks**

Where youth advisory committees and youth co-ordination networks (forums for people to come together to address issues, form working parties etc) exist, communities should engage and participate.

#### **2.3.4.1 Actions**

Communities should engage and participate in youth advisory committees and youth co-ordination networks where they exist.

### **2.3.5 After-School and After-Work Activities**

It is important that young Indigenous people have access to a range of after-school and after-work activities such as sport, arts, crafts, music, media, information technology etc. Programs to develop interests and skills in these areas, for example, should be conducted as after-school and after-work activities. That is, they should be made available to all members of the community, including those who attend school or work during the week.

The communities' youth strategy co-ordinator needs to co-ordinate this in conjunction with the communities and local delivering agencies.

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ABC Television ran a story on a successful Aboriginal community project based around go-carts. Participants were taught how to drive, service and maintain the vehicles. This program was run out of school hours and, in order to qualify, the school children had to meet certain targets of attendance and behaviour. School attendance improved and there was a substantial reduction in local crime. The program was pitched at school-aged children and older youths in the town. Perhaps something like this might work in other Indigenous communities.

### **2.3.5.1 Actions**

The communities' youth strategy co-ordinator should work with the communities and delivery agencies to ensure that programs to develop interests and skills in sport, art, music, crafts, media, information technology etc are made available as after-school and after-work activities.

### **2.3.6 Homework Support Centres**

Indigenous communities should make full use of any funding available to provide for homework support in the communities. Facilities should be established in the communities for students to attend after school to complete their homework in a safe and supportive environment. These facilities should be located in the communities rather than the school and they should have tutors, food and drinks available.

#### **2.3.6.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should determine the need for and establish effective homework support centres.

### **2.3.7 Youth Activity, Learning and Gathering Centres**

Young people should have access to facilities that they know are readily available to young people in many other places. That is, young people need places where they can meet and do things together (away from older people). The communities should seek to establish central youth activity, learning and gathering facilities.

These places need to have real energy and space and equipment for things that young people want to do (eg they could have pool tables and computer games etc). Committees comprised of young people (role models) should run the centres and they should set clear rules and guidelines (eg, no drink/drugs, respect for facilities and equipment etc). They should be places where young people can socialise and hang out. They may even attract useful youth support agencies that may open offices in the facilities.

Current government policies for the provision of housing in Aboriginal communities don't provide for provision of community infrastructure such as drop-in centres, youth centres, clinics etc. However, these facilities are essential for healthy, functional communities. Indigenous communities should lobby to have community infrastructure included in any new housing development proposals in the communities (perhaps there should be formula for facilities based on the number of houses).

#### **2.3.7.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should develop a strategy for establishing youth activity, learning and gathering centres.

Indigenous communities should lobby to have pro-rata community infrastructure (eg youth gathering and drop-in centres etc) included in any new housing development proposals in the communities.

### 2.3.8 Community Learning Centres

Harnessing the resources available for pre-school, school and post-school learning and focusing them on the specific needs of particular communities could be done through community learning centres. For youth, these community-learning centres need to be contextually based and responsive to local community needs. They should include vocational education and training services in settings where young people gather and are comfortable. They should be developed around partnerships involving youth and community agencies, schools, training providers and local employers. Approaches must be developed in consultation with young people.

Programs and activities should be designed to:

Grab young people's interest, get them into training as a way of life, engage them with training, and lead on to other things (in the initial stages it doesn't matter what it is as long as it interests them).

Engage young people who might not otherwise take up training/education (particularly through arts and crafts which would give them something creative/interesting to do).

Engage young people with lifelong-learning, develop a culture of training and give them options.

Be responsive in the first instance rather than worrying about whether the training leads to jobs in the long term.

Local learning centres should have the capacity to provide day care/child minding facilities so that young mothers can undertake courses.

#### 2.3.8.1 Actions

Indigenous communities should seek to establish local community learning centres that harness resources and focus them on the specific learning needs of the community.

Local learning centres should also give consideration to establishing day care/child minding facilities.

### 2.3.9 TAFE

Given the pressing requirements for post-school education and training for youth in the Indigenous communities, there is a need for TAFE to maximise its services and deliver them in ways that meet the communities' requirements. Often a centralised or regional approach makes it difficult for young people in the communities to participate.

#### 2.3.9.1 Actions

Indigenous communities should work with TAFE to maximise the post-school education and training services available for young people in the communities.

Communities should work with TAFE to ensure that the delivery of services meets the needs of the local communities.

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### **2.3.10 Youth Support and Accommodation Facilities**

Many young Indigenous people need safe havens away from violence, particularly family violence. There are also young Indigenous people who want to go to school and progress their lives, but find it too difficult as their parents won't/can't look after or support them. To address this, there should be accommodation in town, close to school for these young people. Where there are any plans for new regional high schools, the communities should ensure that student accommodation facilities are included in the planning.

There is a need in many communities for safe places for young men and women, where they can get support in times of crisis. Communities should look at establishing refuges for young women and men.

#### **2.3.10.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should develop strategies to establish youth support and safe accommodation facilities.

Where new schools are planned, communities should ensure that student accommodation facilities are included.

Communities should look at establishing refuges for young women and men.

### **2.3.11 Meaningful, Realistic Employment, Careers and Work Experience Opportunities**

Unemployment is a reality for many young Indigenous people in the communities. Yet, there are opportunities and potential opportunities for meaningful employment for young Indigenous people in many local regions, particularly in the service, tourism, mining and building industries. Currently, though, non-Indigenous and transient people fill most of the positions available, while the majority of Indigenous people receive their income from the Government (eg CDEP and the dole). Sadly, in some locations, 80% of the population is below the poverty line and many young people see no future beyond CDEP.

In some regions, the majority of Government services designed to address employment growth no longer have a local presence. Services are provided from regional centres and this has had a significant impact on local communities. This means that Indigenous communities will have to be the primary drivers in creating additional opportunities, and making the most of the opportunities currently available.

While there may be jobs available and potentially available, there are a number of issues that must be addressed before more local indigenous people are placed in meaningful employment.

In a recent employment workshop held in Fitzroy Crossing, in the Kimberley, the following issues were identified as barriers:

Low levels of literacy and numeracy skills;

Dysfunctional families;

Negative peer pressure;

Low work ethic and low strike rate for employers from trainees, ie return on investment;

Cultural and family pressures;

Lack of community and/or family support;

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The lack of appropriate accommodation in the community;

Negative attitudes of many in the 15 to 30 year old group;

CDEP workers are not recognised and paid for the skills and experience they bring to a position, reinforcing the entrenched welfare culture;

CDEP is viewed as an acceptable career path, rather than as an opportunity to develop skills that leads to full time employment opportunities. Kids lose their hopes and dreams at a certain age; they see CDEP as the way to go and peer pressure is a big issue. CDEP statistics continue to hide the real picture on unemployment;

Governments start projects and then cut the funding in 2 to 3 years;

Government policies that continue to be inappropriate for local circumstances; tortuous approval processes; far too many govt agencies to deal with;

The personal cost for local people to access training outside of the local area;

Lack of access to local public transport;

Employers are unable to provide opportunities to develop skills in all facets of some trades; ie a lack of technical capacity and training resources;

Access to adequate resources (tools and equipment) so that workers can do their jobs properly;

Co-ordination of any sort is very poor in many Indigenous communities; and

There is too much dependency on outside agencies; therefore there is nothing in place to provide support on the ground.

The workshop also identified the following actions that were needed to help remove these barriers and create meaningful and realistic employment opportunities:

Map what is currently happening in the communities, including the extent of government funding coming into the local economy and identify what these funds are being spent on.

Undertake a skills audit of local employers including small businesses, mining companies and government departments to identify the types of positions available and the skills required to fill these positions. Information from the skills audit could then be used to shape training programs and assist in placing local people in positions.

Establish a database that reflects the skills local people have to offer potential employers, which could then be made available to employers when they want to recruit.

Establish a pool of workers based on the principles of a labour force pool, which would be of assistance to employers to manage the seasonal peaks and troughs in business activity and provide assurances to prospective employers that an employee's cultural responsibilities would not unduly affect business activity.

Harness the any commitment local businesses and existing Indigenous organizations have for improving employment opportunities locally.

Establish group trainee schemes.

Create incentives for developers to invest in the local area.

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Develop an agreement between the local communities and Government agencies that will support the implementation of an employment strategy.

Support local people to access training outside of the community.

Develop young mentors and role models to relieve and change the peer pressures (identify Indigenous role models who can provide mentoring and support to Indigenous employees).

Get people ready for employment (make use of vocational education, work placement, school-based traineeship etc programs).

Find a “one stop” shop and develop a strategy to access govt funding; need a focal point.

Support access to training outside the community.

Pay decent wages; not just CDEP top up.

Establish partnerships between businesses and communities.

Develop cross-cultural training programs to help prospective employers better understand the cultural and family responsibilities indigenous employees are required to fulfil.

Consult with CDEP participants and the unemployed to identify their issues and deterrents to obtaining meaningful employment.

Indigenous communities should work with local Area Consultative Committees and other relevant agencies to develop local employment strategies.

### **2.3.11.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should work with local Area Consultative Committees and other relevant agencies to develop local employment strategies.

Communities should investigate successful CDEP operations in other parts of Australia to see if they have features that might be adopted in their own communities.

### **2.3.12 Changing the Attitudes and Developing the Skills, Knowledge and Relationships of Older Members of the Community**

Lack of respect by young people for their Elders and parents is a major issue. This is, in part, the result of a loss of role models and little in the way of shared values and beliefs. So that they can fully support the development of young Indigenous people, older people in the community also need to develop attitudes, skills, knowledge and relationships that are described in this strategy. Otherwise, the gap between young and old people will continue to widen and many young people will lose heart. This could lead to the failure of any youth development strategy.

Indigenous youth cannot be developed and supported in isolation of the rest of their community. It is critical that communities must be involved in and own the strategies. Otherwise, there is a danger that youth might blame their parents for the situation that currently exists and parents might start to feel even more isolated from their children.

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One of the hardest attitudes to develop will be that of “enterprise and opportunity”, while still retaining the essence of Indigenous culture which has a “hunter and gatherer” approach at its base. However, this shift is essential if older members of the communities are to set examples and become effective role models and mentors. Similarly, many parents don’t have the understandings and skills that are needed to be successful parents. However, while they may never totally gain the required knowledge and skills, parents can learn new attitudes to parenting.

Although developing the attitudes, skills, knowledge and relationships of the older members of the Indigenous communities most likely requires its own strategies, Indigenous communities should start by involving older people in some of the Youth strategy activities and programs (eg Lore and Culture activities). In addition, it is most important to ensure that the wider members of the communities are informed about the activities of the Youth strategy as it progresses. Young people should be encouraged to share their experiences and what they have learnt with their parents and relatives. Similarly, people from the communities need to make an effort to understand the young people and what they are doing.

For a Youth strategy to succeed, Indigenous communities need to be functioning communities in which major social behaviour problems are being actively addressed.

### **2.3.12.1 Actions**

Communities should involve older people in the some of the Youth strategy activities and programs.

Communities should ensure that wider members of their communities are kept informed about the initiatives and activities of the Youth strategy.

Communities should encourage young people to share their experiences and what they have learnt with their parents and relatives.

Communities should encourage and support older people to engage in programs of development themselves.

Communities must start to address the major social issues in the communities (eg abuse of alcohol and drugs, CDEP, misuse of child support money etc).

### **2.3.13 Celebrating Successes and Recognising Positive Actions and Results by Young People**

To help overcome the negative effects of peer pressure, build self-esteem and show young people that their achievements and efforts are valued, it is important that Indigenous communities celebrate the successes and recognise positive actions and results of their young people. This can be done through activities like school formals, community graduation ceremonies after various bush activities and programs, and celebrating successes in school-based education, adult education, trade training, tertiary education, sports, arts etc.

#### **2.3.13.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should celebrate successes and recognise positive actions and results of their young people through school formals, community graduation ceremonies after various bush activities and programs etc.

Communities should recognise successes in school-based education, adult education, trade training, tertiary education, sports, arts etc.

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### **2.3.14 Government Programs**

While Indigenous communities should aim to avoid dependence on governments for implementation of the Youth strategy, they will need to access a range of government programs to support the successful implementation of aspects of the strategy. It is important, therefore, that communities identify and pursue those government programs that add value to the strategy and not waste time chasing those that don't.

Communities must make sure that government programs support the real community needs for the development of Indigenous people rather than the needs of the supplier (ie government).

A "one-stop shop" for accessing government programs is essential. Currently, there are far too many agencies to deal with and the processes are complex and time consuming.

#### **2.3.14.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should seek out a "one-stop shop" for accessing government programs that will support implementation of the Youth strategy.

Communities should target only those government programs that add value to the strategy.

### **2.3.15 Public Transport**

Lack of public transport in many Indigenous communities is a major issue for young people as it restricts their ability to attend activities and programs. It can also create an impression in young minds that "they" (the older people who are supposedly responsible for such things) don't care about young people.

#### **2.3.15.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should seek to develop a community sponsored public transport program to support their Youth strategy.

### **2.3.16 Health and Medical Services**

While this strategy does not address the issues around provision of health and medical services in the Indigenous communities, it recognises that appropriate health and medical support, including mental health support, is essential if young people are to progress their lives.

#### **2.3.16.1 Actions**

Indigenous communities should seek to determine whether the current health and medical services, including mental health services, in the local area are adequate to support the development and well being of their young people.

## 2.4 FIRST THINGS FIRST

This strategy is a framework, or master plan, to guide Indigenous communities in developing their own youth development strategies and plans.

A suggested approach for communities is to develop a five-year youth development plan and roll it forward each year. This rolling five-year plan should include detailed plans for Year 1 and outline plans for Years 2 to 5.

### 2.4.1 Essential Preparation.

The following essential preparation will assist Indigenous communities in implementing a youth strategy:

Seek community champions and appoint a community steering committee.

Find funding for and appoint a community youth strategy co-ordinator.

Establish a community youth strategy co-ordination office.

Endorse and adopt elements of this youth strategy. This should involve obtaining community agreement (including that of the young people) for the broad concept (rather than agreement for the detail of the rolling five-year plans which can be agreed on a year by year basis by the overseeing body).

### 2.4.2 The First Year

In the first year, Indigenous communities should concentrate on the following aspects of the strategy:

involving young people in the detailed planning and development of the strategy;

getting some programs and community support activities off the ground (some may be run as pilot programs and activities);

developing local people as trainers or facilitators;

identifying and co-ordinating delivery agencies;

sourcing funds;

building community awareness and ownership of the strategy; and

developing the first five-year rolling plan.

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## PART 3 - RESOURCES

As they develop their Five-Year Rolling Plans, Indigenous communities will need to cost the detailed programs and activities of their youth strategies and determine where they will source the funds. Obviously costs of activities and programs will vary markedly from local area to local area.

### 3.1 FUNDING SOURCES

The funding for the Youth strategy should come from a combination of the Indigenous communities themselves, industry sponsors and government programs.

#### 3.1.1 Indigenous Communities' Youth Trusts

Because of their potential Public Benevolent Institution and Gift Recipient Status, Indigenous communities' youth trusts should be a key to seeking, holding and distributing funds for Indigenous communities youth activities, programs and support infrastructure. They should deal with sponsors and other agencies etc on behalf of the communities.

##### 3.1.1.1 Actions

Communities should consider establishing Indigenous youth trusts to be a point of contact with government and sponsors. These trusts should co-ordinate the sourcing, holding and distribution of funds.

#### 3.1.2 Government Programs

While Indigenous communities should aim to avoid dependence on governments for implementation of a youth strategy, they will need to access a range of government programs to support the successful implementation of aspects of the strategy. It is most likely that there are a large number of State and Federal Government programs that could provide funding for elements of a youth strategy (for activities, programs, support mechanisms and infrastructure).

The key to success in seeking out these programs is to find a "one-stop shop" or "point of contact" that can advise on appropriate programs that might be available across the whole of government (both State and Federal).

##### 3.1.2.1 Actions

Indigenous communities should seek out a "one-stop shop" or "point of contact" for advice on appropriate government programs that might be available to support their youth strategy.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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