



HealingFoundation

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People

OUR MEN OUR HEALING

Creating hope, respect and reconnection

**EVALUATION REPORT
NOVEMBER 2015**



Acknowledgement

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation is an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation with a focus on healing our community.

While the Healing Foundation has funded a number of men's healing projects, *Our Men Our Healing* is the first major program dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. It signifies greater recognition of the need for healing in our men, and marks the beginning of what is hoped to be a national initiative – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's healing, enabled and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men themselves.

The Healing Foundation gratefully acknowledges the financial support and partnership of the Department of Children and Families in the Northern Territory in developing this program.

The Healing Foundation also recognises the commitment and support of CatholicCare NT, Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation and Malabam Health Board Aboriginal Corporation who in Wurrumiyanga, Ngukurr and Maningrida partnered with the community to establish the three pilot projects that are the subject of this report. Indeed, we thank all partners and collaborating organisations for their commitment to making the objectives of *Our Men Our Healing* a reality.

Importantly, the Healing Foundation acknowledges the hard work and dedication of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men involved in *Our Men Our Healing*. It is their healing journey that is reflected here.

In identifying what works best in *Our Men Our Healing*, the Healing Foundation commissioned Social Compass to lead an evaluation process. This report is the combined effort of the evaluation team, being Dr John Prince (Social Compass), Benny Hodges (external consultant) and the Healing Foundation's project officer for *Our Men Our Healing*, Steven Torres-Carne. In undertaking the evaluation, the team journeyed with each community from co-design to implementation with a final field visit to each community in May 2015.

The evaluation team listened to many individual, family and community stories and we were honoured by the openness of the men, their families and communities. In 'translating' these stories into a form suitable for inclusion in an evaluation report, the team has sought to respect both the story and the storyteller.

To the Traditional Owners, Elders and community members in each community, we hope we respected your land and country and that we walked lightly on it on the occasions we were there.



CONTENTS

Acknowledgement	2
Executive Summary	4
Background	7
Phases of implementation	11
Healing that strengthens	15
Findings	18
<i>Wurrumiyanga – Tiwi Men’s Healing Program</i>	19
<i>Background</i>	19
<i>The story so far</i>	20
<i>What the community has to say!</i>	25
<i>Gurrutu Raypirri Men’s Healing Program (Maningrida)</i>	33
<i>Background</i>	33
<i>The story so far</i>	36
<i>What the community has to say!</i>	39
<i>Ngukurr Men’s Cultural Healing Program</i>	42
<i>Background</i>	42
<i>The story so far</i>	45
<i>What the community has to say!</i>	47
Conclusions	50
Appendix 1: Co-design workshop questions	54
Appendix 2: Knowledge Circle members	55
Appendix 3: Field trip interview guide	57

Men have found their connections where they can go and feel safe, whereas before they would have stayed home and become more stressed but are realising there is more help at the centre for men ... men are showing more good leadership within their families and the community.

KEY STATISTICS

- 14 Indigenous men have been employed in the program
- 448 men have consistently and directly participated in program activities, with many more attending community events run by the men
- Almost 40 per cent of participants have been under the age of 18
- All three communities have delivered counselling services, family support, advocacy and cultural brokerage, case management and coordination, cultural day trips (e.g. fishing trips), camps and group programs, yarning groups and community events and celebrations

Executive Summary

This report evaluates the implementation and early development of *Our Men Our Healing*, three pilot men's healing projects in the remote Northern Territory communities of Maningrida, Ngukurr and Wurrumiyanga from 2013 to 2015.

In remote areas community level trauma and intergenerational suffering, geographical isolation and inconsistent delivery of support services have led to negative outcomes for communities. Men in these communities acknowledge their uncertainty about their traditional role and disengagement from culture and identity. The result has been devastating for men, their families and their communities. The negative outcomes include disempowerment and low self-esteem, alcohol and other drug use, family and domestic violence, unemployment and economic disadvantage, incarceration and recidivism and self-harm and suicide.

Our Men Our Healing is designed to strengthen, support and empower Aboriginal men through cultural, education and therapeutic healing activities. It assists men to engage more effectively with support services, increase their confidence and capacity to gain meaningful employment and overcome issues such as family and domestic violence, alcohol and other drug use, self-harm, incarceration and poor health and social and emotional wellbeing.

By putting into practice culturally sound methodologies and approaches *Our Men Our Healing* aims to re-establish holistic wellbeing allowing men to see themselves as:

1. nurturers who are nurturing and growing their children strong and healthy
2. teachers who are teaching and taking care of cultural knowledge
3. protectors who are protecting and caring for their families and keeping their communities safe.

This evaluation finds strong evidence that the program is already creating significant and sustained change at the community, family and individual levels at each site.

Key program achievements include:

- a reported decrease in incidence of family and domestic violence and less violence generally in communities
- reduced observable rates of self-harm and suicide during the life of the program in two of the communities
- at Wurrumiyanga where the program has been running the longest, a reported 50 per cent reduction in the number of men registered with the NT Department of Correctional Services and a significant reduction in rates of recidivism and reoffending over the life of the program
- women feeling safer and more supported by the men in their families and communities
- increased health and emotional wellbeing among men in the communities and increased leadership as men take responsibility for their past, present and future
- an increased re-emergence of cultural celebrations and ceremonies, some of which had not occurred in the communities for decades.

Many of the men do not reoffend and the pleasing thing is that many of the men still stay in the program and the change is remarkable ... there has been an amazing transformation in the last couple of years (Service Provider)

Critical factors in the success of Our Men Our Healing include:

- projects designed and run by the men, with support, allow them to lead the way in their own healing. Co-design ensures community ownership and a continued commitment to local needs, culture and knowledge systems
- connection to country, culture and identity increase empowerment and confidence to: take the cultural lead with younger men, provide increased safety for families and take up employment
- focus on holistic wellbeing taking into account the social, spiritual and emotional needs of the men
- a safe men's space for healing, meetings, activities etc
- support of an auspicing organisation in each community
- extensive community engagement and consultation before the projects were implemented, to assess local needs, gaps in existing healing efforts and how the community wanted the men's healing project to run

There has been so much work put in. There was a time there where we had 21 suicides in one year and in the last 12 months we have only had one. Most of the difference is being seen in the last 18 months to two years (Service Provider)

Of these factors co-design is seen as the most significant. Co-design ensures:

- ownership and agency within the solutions and design of each of the programs including the development of program logics
- continued commitment to the needs, solutions and activities being developed by the men for the men
- men address how they view themselves and this becomes a key driver for change as the men became the agents of change
- men are given tools and resources to support the program while at the same time have culture and knowledge system acknowledged, valued, respected and incorporated. This leads to increased confidence of sustained support and that the “solutions would work best if the men owned them and took responsibility for them.”

Young boys 16 to 20 have started singing ceremony song as they are realising on the men's camps that culture is important with the Elders saying how important it is ... they have to know story and song for country ... since the program started and got underway the men have been wanting to learn and sing the old songs

Within the co-design work eight healing themes were identified to strengthen and keep safe men's spirits, families, culture, communities and roles. These include education, employment, healing, identity, law, relationships, resources and safety. All of these are outcomes of the *Our Men Our Healing* program.

The program has enabled men from Wurrumiyanga, Maningrida and Ngukurr to take ownership of the challenges and the solutions, and the resulting change is so significant that women, other community members and service providers are persuaded by it.

In a relatively short time a sense of disengagement, disconnection, and a feeling of being disempowered with a loss of hope has – for some men – been replaced by reconnection, empowerment, responsibility, ownership and hope.

It is clear that as a result of men healing and strengthening themselves and others, families and communities are beginning to heal at each of the three sites. There is a strong certainty that this change can be sustained over time at community, family and individual levels.

These projects were made possible through a \$600,000 contribution from the Northern Territory Department of Children and Families. This evaluation was commissioned by the Healing Foundation and undertaken by Social Compass.



Background

This report presents the findings from the evaluation of three men’s healing projects that together form the Healing Foundation’s *Our Men Our Healing* program. The three projects were established between June 2013 and June 2015 in the remote Northern Territory communities of Maningrida, Ngukurr and Wurrumiyanga. Planning and design of the projects began in 2012.

Our Men Our Healing is the first Healing Foundation program dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and was made possible through a \$600,000 contribution from the Northern Territory Department of Children and Families.

Since its establishment in 2009, the Healing Foundation has done a significant amount of work on the link between colonisation, past government practices and the breakdown of cultural knowledge systems, which have caused unresolved trauma and pain for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.

In remote areas, consequences are widespread. Opportunities for more positive cycles and outcomes get frustrated by group trauma and intergenerational suffering, geographical isolation and inconsistent delivery of support services. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men themselves have acknowledged their uncertainty about their traditional role and their disengagement from both their culture and identity. The result has seen:

- poor social, spiritual, physical, mental and emotional wellbeing
- disempowerment and low self-esteem
- unemployment and economic disadvantage
- substance use and misuse
- child and family abuse, neglect and breakdown
- lateral and sexual community violence
- incarceration and recidivism
- self-harm and suicide.

By putting into practice culturally sound methodologies and approaches, *Our Men Our Healing* has aimed to re-establish / rebuild holistic wellbeing in culturally safe ways. The intent has been to reconnect men in their communities to culturally significant places as (in their own words):

4. nurturers who are nurturing and growing their children strong and healthy
5. teachers who are teaching and taking care of cultural knowledge
6. protectors who are protecting and caring for their families and keeping their communities safe.

Importantly, as the process of collaborative co-design developed for the *Our Men Our Healing* program, the men further identified eight themes they believe will strengthen and keep safe the spirits, families, culture, communities and roles of men. These themes are given significant attention and detail in later sections of this report as they are fully articulated and operationalised by the men. It is important to signpost them here since the evaluation findings are essentially given context through these themes which the men themselves identified:

- *Education*: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men taking their place as strong learners and teachers
- *Employment*: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men taking their place as strong providers
- *Health*: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men taking their place as strong men
- *Identity*: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men being stronger in themselves and their place as leaders

- *Law*: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men taking their place as positive role models
- *Relationships*: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men taking their place as nurturers
- *Resources*: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men being empowered to be strong in their various roles
- *Safety*: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men taking their place as protectors.

In the process of co-design and implementation, *Our Men Our Healing* recognised that the men in each of the three communities had to lead the way in their own healing. This approach has not been typical of projects supporting healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men – nor at times has it been easy for the men. Typically, projects of this nature have taken mainstream approaches and overlaid them with a veneer of Indigenous culture. The evidence suggests that such approaches have had limited success.

As a critical step in enabling men in communities to begin the complex and difficult process of healing, *Our Men Our Healing* was underpinned by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview and its design was driven through Indigenous cultural authority. Accordingly, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in the program were the influencers and change agents. This provided opportunities to safely address painful subjects and implement strategies that might bring to life enduring change.

Therefore, *Our Men Our Healing* has been framed from the very start in local knowledge and context, cultural authority and strengthened capacity.

- *Local knowledge and context*

Past government policies, including the forced removal of children, took different paths and forms in different parts of Australia. With that, the experiences of colonisation and its impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also different according to place. It is important to recognise this diversity in the way trauma has been felt in different communities and to explore the specific needs of communities in planning responsive healing programs.

Our Men Our Healing pilot projects, while operating within an overall program model of good practice, aimed to meet the specific needs of men in the context of their local communities. The men were acknowledged as experts in this context and with regard to outcome and needs.

- *Cultural frameworks for healing*

The program aimed to set up cultural scaffolding and practices to offer safety for the men to explore the complex issues of their personal trauma and address broader community experiences together. *Our Men Our Healing* aimed to bring together knowledge circles, yarning circles, use traditional art and hold meetings on country as examples of cultural ways to engage and maintain the men in healing. It was hoped these cultural activities would help ground the men in the strength of their cultural knowledge and identity.

- *Growing and strengthening capacity*

Growing a resilient local workforce by supporting the men to enhance their leadership and other skills would mean men might respond more effectively in community and wider society. This was seen as an essential enabler of change. Many of the activities planned in *Our Men Our Healing* were designed to allow the men to gain greater insight into their own experience of trauma and ways to manage this, thereby enabling men to experience true value in and from training and employment opportunities.

Our Men Our Healing has aimed, in design and implementation, to incorporate the elements and drivers of quality healing programs.



In keeping with quality healing programs, the Healing Foundation committed to tracking and evaluating the pilot programs to ensure intended outcomes could be built upon, unintended outcomes would be captured, and lessons learned were documented. The evaluation approach was to assess and reaffirm what works in Indigenous men's healing programs.

Accordingly, in early 2013 the Healing Foundation commissioned Social Compass to guide the evaluation process. While there were aspects of the evaluation that sought to identify intended and unintended outcomes, as the pilot projects developed and were then implemented, it became obvious that the evaluation needed to capture processes of implementation as much as outcomes.

Notably, reporting purposes were established in line with the feedback being received from the Knowledge Circle established at the start of the program (more details are provided below) and the men at the three pilot sites during the early stages of consultation. Performance reports included reporting of the following:

- number of Indigenous people employed in the program
- number of participants (by age split for over and under 18 years of age)
- types of services (e.g. counselling, family support, case management, cultural activities)
- program satisfaction for participants
- program activities
- National Outcome 1: Improved family relationships and engagement with the community
- National Outcome 2: Improved participation of men in cultural activities
- National Outcome 3: Improved and strengthened safe functioning of men and communities
- National Outcome 4: Improved service coordination
- achievements, challenges
- case studies
- financial reporting.

The approach to establishing *Our Men Our Healing* has been to offer a sound theory of change and robust evaluation leading to a systematically developed understanding of what works in healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. It has also guided thoughtful and flexible program development. Elements include cultivating program leaders and champions in communities, working through a serialised process with identifiable phases, and including purposeful, active and integrated strategies moving from knowing the challenges to practicing the solutions.

The next section outlines the processes of implementation.



Phases of implementation

In 2010 the Department of Finance and Deregulation’s strategic review of Indigenous expenditure (Australian Government, 2010) acknowledged that the primary challenge in closing the gap between Indigenous and other Australians is not so much in developing policy but in more effectively implementing and delivering highly dependable services.

Accordingly, the Healing Foundation gave considerable thought and invested significant time into the planning, design and development of the implementation phases for the *Our Men Our Healing* program. The Foundation aimed to take what was known to be effective in Indigenous men’s healing and put the evidence into practice for sustained benefits for the men, their families and communities. Accordingly, *Our Men Our Healing* set three vital elements of sound implementation as foundation stones for the program:

- including program leaders and champions to provide advice, financial and moral support, technical assistance and a voice for the program
- working through a serialised process with identifiable phases, rather than viewing implementation as an event in and of itself
- including purposeful, active and integrated program strategies for a minimum of two years that support the program and help bridge the gap between knowledge and practice.¹

The implementation of Our Men Our Healing was guided by the following phases:

- **Exploring and adopting** — this involved mapping the needs of the men, exploring possible interventions, building an understanding of the local context, and assessing the extent to which local support for the program could be mobilised
- **Installing** — this phase involved securing essential resources for the program, establishing safe referral mechanisms and setting up reporting and evaluation frameworks and expectations for outcomes
- **Implementing** — this involved commencing program service delivery and managing the complexities of start-up, anticipating challenges and risks, developing risk mitigation and embedding evaluation
- **Operating** — this involved developing implementation plans with sites, strengthening and supporting men’s aspirations, inlaying activities for success in skills training and effective mentoring and development and tying these in with other supporting agencies (i.e. employment services)
- **Innovating** — this involved being flexible to adjust activity plans with the men to enhance existing features of the program and/or include new features
- **Sustaining** — that is, ensuring program and project activities remain consistent with government policy and priorities and positioning them to achieve ongoing support.

The following provides the steps for each phase of the implementation process.

i Appointment and induction of a project officer

In November 2012, the Healing Foundation appointed a project officer with relevant experience in working with Indigenous men. Steven Torres-Carne was appointed and introduced to both the Healing Foundation and the Our Men Our Healing program concept and stakeholders. Early discussions were had to begin the process of mapping needs, exploring possible interventions and drafting a design, implementation and evaluation strategy. A working outline was prepared for consulting with men, women and organisations at potential pilot sites to further map needs, explore interventions and mobilise support.

¹ See Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. A., and Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, the National Implementation Network.

ii *Establish a Knowledge Circle*

The Healing Foundation moved to activate sustainable support for *Our Men Our Healing*. After seeking a funding commitment for the program from the Northern Territory Department of Children and Families, the Healing Foundation prepared terms of reference to establish a Knowledge Circle. Expressions of interest were sought nationally and Knowledge Circle participants were appointed and initially gathered in February 2013. During this meeting, needs were further mapped, hopes explored and reflections and knowledge shared for understanding context and barriers. Plans were also made for a 'Thinkers' workshop in Darwin.

(See Appendix 2 for Knowledge Circle participants)

iii *Pilot site visits*

In early 2013, the *Our Men Our Healing* project officer visited potential pilot sites to further map needs, explore interventions and mobilise support. During these visits, a draft program outline for consulting with men, women and organisations was presented. Women at the pilot locations were consulted separately, as they would be at various times across the life of the projects. This began the extensive community engagement and consultation that took place prior to the implementation of programs in January 2014. Strategies for engaging the men at the pilot sites in healing their spirits were documented during this phase.

iv. *'Thinkers' workshop (Darwin – May 2013)*

In May 2013, a workshop was held in Darwin to set the strategy for design and implementation of *Our Men Our Healing* - according to the results of the earlier mapping exercises. Proposed interventions were explored using an external facilitator. This workshop brought together the Knowledge Circle and Northern Territory representatives, including men from potential pilot sites, healing industry workers and other stakeholders. The purpose was to connect the issues facing the men to their needs and assess gaps in existing healing efforts to inform the design of the program. In doing this, the gathering took into account the Healing Foundation's sfunding agreement and strategic vision to see that the program:

- was driven by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview that guided the design, development and implementation of effective strategies for engaging men in remote contexts
- offered a place and space for men to find their capacity to be strong, positive role models and champions for their families and communities
- increased opportunities for men to identify their challenges and lead and develop their own responses to their trauma, grief and loss
- supported men at the pilot sites to begin a committed process of healing and enhance their resilience and wellbeing
- upheld appropriate evaluation principles and practices including sharing findings
- contributed to the knowledge and experience of the Healing Foundation in men's healing.

Using this information, the gathering developed the program logic and design for *Our Men Our Healing*, documented the program description and performance measures and planned implementation.

The result of the workshop was that *Our Men Our Healing* became focused on the men's need for holistic wellbeing. It did this by recognising the particular social, spiritual and emotional needs of men and anchored the program in cultural healing ways and safe practices. Programs would engage with and focus on survivors of abuse and neglect, address issues of alcohol and drug misuse, violence, incarceration, self-harm and suicide, and connect men with trauma informed services.

Significantly, *Our Men Our Healing* aimed to uphold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's ownership of the issues affecting them so they could positively lead and sustain their own responses.

v. *Identification of pilot sites*

The Healing Foundation completed the mapping exercise with the Northern Territory and Federal governments agreeing to the pilot sites of Maningrida, Ngukurr and Wurrumiyanga. The decision to proceed with these sites was based on their efficacy, motivation, training and readiness for engagement.

The project officer visited each pilot site for further consultation and to workshop and document individual site project logics and implementation plans. To assist this, feedback from the ‘Thinkers’ workshop was shared and the program’s implementation plan and evaluation strategy were reviewed.

At the same time, an engagement strategy was developed for mobilising support from community members and organisations / agencies associated with the three program sites, including auspicing partners (see the Findings section below for information on partnering and collaborating organisations).

Another Knowledge Circle was convened and consultation material from each site was reviewed and perspectives and advice shared.

vi *Crab Claw Island workshop*

In August 2013, men from two of the three pilot sites² came together to present and share the project logic for *Our Men Our Healing* in their community. The individual project data sheets and project logics for each site are provided in the Findings section below.

During the workshop there was remarkable consistency between the communities in terms of how the men view what currently weakens them and what will make them stronger. *Our Men Our Healing* focuses on supporting men to rise up in their role as nurturers, teachers, providers, protectors and carers. To achieve this, the men explored two critical questions:

(i) What weakens us from taking our role as nurturers, teachers, protectors and providers?

(ii) What healing will strengthen us to positively reclaim our role?

In answering the first question, 19 elements were identified that were fuelling unresolved pain and trauma, in turn weakening spirits and the role of the men in their families and communities. These elements were the starting point for addressing the second question – what healing will strengthen our men to positively reclaim their place? It was with regard to this question that the eight themes to strengthen and keep safe the spirits, families, culture, communities and roles of the men emerged.

vii *Operationalising project sites*

Post the Crab Claw workshop, the project officer worked with each of the pilot sites and the auspicing organisations to prepare individual funding agreements and service delivery plans for each project. These included project description and objectives, components and activities, and evaluation and reporting measures. They were linked to the program logic developed by each community and confirmed at Crab Claw Island. The service agreements and project work plans documented the project reporting requirements which were to identify progress against outcomes, highlight challenges and successes, and outline the strategies for the next 12 months.

As part of the Healing Foundation’s due diligence for the program, potential challenges, risks and risk mitigation strategies were identified.

.....
2 Men from one site had to cancel their participation due to pressing matters in their community

What weakens our role as nurturers, teachers, protectors and providers?

- Absence of appropriate men's place/space and other resources
- Alcohol and other drug misuse
- Boredom and crime rates among young men
- Family and domestic relationship disharmony and violence
- Few counsellors, mentors and wellbeing programs
- Few men's cultural healing and therapeutic programs
- Few opportunities for meaningful education, training and employment
- Grief, sorrow and loss
- High unemployment rates
- Lateral violence and community conflict
- Limited transfer of cultural knowledge from Elders to young men
- Need for cultural activities and involvement in language
- Need for recognising family or kinship connection in community
- Need for respect for Elders, self or community
- Need for knowledge and practice of culture and tribal lore
- Negative interaction with the legal/justice system
- Poor mental health and social and emotional pain
- Poor parenting
- Poor physical health
- Self-harm, suicide ideation and suicide

viii Our Men Our Healing begins

In January 2014 *Our Men Our Healing* became operational with an implementation process based on a fundamental assumption that there was strength in the process of co-design whereby implementation could then build sustainable change from the ground up. It was anticipated at this point that co-design would allow the men to address how they viewed themselves and that this would be the key driver for change as the men became the agents of change.

The implementation process also aimed to enable men to continue an open discussion about how to support their community to address issues of safety, equality and care for themselves and their families.

The next section is the final section before the evaluation findings are presented. It outlines in detail the eight themes for healing the men identified would strengthen their role as nurturers, teachers, providers, protectors and carers. This provides the broader framework and context by which the evaluation findings can be measured.

Healing that strengthens

From a growing body of Australian and international research, including that undertaken and commissioned by the Healing Foundation, it is clear that cultural and traditional practice is a critical pathway to healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Improved social and emotional wellbeing appears to be an outcome of the renewal of cultural practices that builds cultural and community strength and personal identity with pride and dignity.

As noted earlier, *Our Men Our Healing* co-design work identified eight healing themes to strengthen and keep safe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's spirits, families, culture, communities and roles.

The story emerging in the eight themes is that the men want to find ways to overcome current contextual barriers and strengthen their education and employment opportunities, experience better health, renew their cultural identity, build a more virtuous cycle with the law, have better relationships, access and use the resources they need, and live in safety. The path in these thematic passages to healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men has been discovered through their own knowledge circles.

Set against the key indicators of strong spirit, strong family, strong culture and strong community, the co-design of the men's healing program was guided by the operationalisation of each theme within a logic frame of the four key indicators.

1. Education: Men taking their place as strong learners and teachers.

- Strong spirit: building a sense of value through participating in meaningful education and training opportunities, developing basic literacy, numeracy and other skills
- Strong family: learning parenting and relationship skills and how to manage work life and family life, teaching young people the 'right way' and to identify family through culture and kinship
- Strong culture: transferring cultural assets and knowledge to keep alive the ancient pathways, re-educating in language and culture from Elders through to young men, rebuilding knowledge of tribal lore, creating present and future mentors, and educating for bringing about generational change
- Strong community: reaffirming knowledge circles for sharing and preserving cultural knowledge and as a platform for creating an ongoing support network

2. Employment: Men taking their place as strong providers.

- Strong spirit: engaging and being productive, enhancing support for men to participate in services that provide pathways to meaningful employment, empowered and seeking help for job readiness, reducing unemployment
- Strong family: understanding the importance of food, shelter and love and the actions that lead to responsibility in homes
- Strong culture: finding opportunities to value employment in cultural traditions and building on our cultural strengths for equity
- Strong community: creating a safe place in which men can work and be respected in the community for contributing to working life



3. Health: Men taking their place as strong men.

- Strong spirit: developing physical and mental wellbeing and strong spirit, increasing positive energy, participating in health check-ups and increasing referrals and uptake for support services, transforming into stronger men by taking responsibility for self-care and health
- Strong family: enhancing emotional wellbeing and learning the balance between feeling and behaviour
- Strong culture: growing a healthy and abiding relationship to cultural ways and norms and connecting to culture for vitality
- Strong community: building a healthy social status and positive and supportive social relationships

4. Identity: Men being stronger in themselves and their place as leaders.

- Strong spirit: seeing the truth about their hurt and trauma, addressing grief and despair (without shame) and making peace with themselves, overcoming feelings of inferiority, developing pride and respect in themselves and resilience by reconnecting to who they are through ancestry and culture, making healthy and valuable spirits, minds and bodies
- Strong family: re-establishing kinship and family lines and reaffirming family identity, transforming our roles being positive in family, culture and community, living the healing to resolve conflict and violence
- Strong culture: recognising the shared pain in our history, connecting to our cultural identity and country, knowing where we come from and using our language, participating in ceremony and cultural healing to strengthen cultural identity and unity, showing respect for the cultural role and identity of Elders and young men, transferring cultural identity to future generations
- Strong community: respecting community as an extension of identity, finding a place of belonging and knowing men fit in, giving and being given respect in the community, engaging positively in the community and leading the way for young men to find strength in building their spiritual, familial, cultural and social identities

5. Law: Men taking their place as positive role models.

- Strong spirit: learning self-discipline, the role of rites of passage, rehabilitating, understanding the rules of engagement and the law, learning to take responsibility for actions, becoming better citizens, establishing more positive racial identity within the legal system and understanding alternatives to jail
- Strong family: stepping up to being positive role models in families and for children, respecting family law and removing violence from families and homes
- Strong culture: having opportunities to reduce boredom and increase engagement in positive activities, going back to bush to learn culture, respect and ceremony, learning cultural and tribal lore and how to create peace
- Strong community: decreasing the numbers of men interacting with the legal system, respecting authority, reconciling with and giving back to community, having more people in the community talk about issues, reducing violence in communities, and building more effective relationships with the justice system



6. Relationships: Men taking their place as nurturers.

- Strong spirit: owning mistakes without shame, men developing a stronger relationship with each other to help participate in relationships with others
- Strong family: looking after children and families, improving skills to cope with stresses in family relationships, seeking support for nurturing functional family relationships, communicating with, caring for and staying true to families
- Strong culture: knowing and respecting relationship with culture, being able to participate in and grow healthy cultural relationships with Elders, each other and young people
- Strong community: finding acceptance within the community, participating in community, building support networks and mentoring, improving relationships with people and agencies within and outside community

7. Resources: Men being empowered to be strong in various roles.

- Strong spirit: owning problems and taking opportunities to access male-friendly counselling, mental and physical health services and cultural healing activities
- Strong family: finding opportunities for building capability around financial matters and parenting, accessing opportunities for family healing services, and having “safe” places to go to deal with stressors
- Strong culture: using language, understanding the role of connecting to culture for healing, building opportunities and action for participating in culturally appropriate healing activities
- Strong community: bringing back men’s places/spaces for collaborating, using knowledge circles for seeking support and discussion, seeking out men’s programs from around Australia and sharing the positive stories, accessing sporting and diversionary activities (for young men)

8. Safety: Men taking their place as protectors.

- Strong spirit: kicking addiction by understanding that alcohol and other drugs are harmful forms of self-medicating pain and trauma that weaken the spirit, improving mental health and being able to find options other than suicide or harming ourselves and others, becoming secure in individual sexual identity
- Strong family: overcoming jealousy by building confidence in identity, adopting safe behaviours in the home and with partners and children as protectors and overturning harm and violence as established ways
- Strong culture: understanding and applying the cultural meaning of “right relationships”, keeping culture safe by living safely, and protecting our spirit, relationships, Elders and young people
- Strong community: building confidence and wellbeing in themselves, families and culture so communities become safer and free from the negative outcomes of alcohol, substance abuse, intra-racial jealousy and violence; accessing resources and services including “cooling off” places and support from other men

These themes and the indicators established against spirit, family, culture and community have become important measures by which the success of *Our Men Our Healing* can be determined. The next section provides the findings of the evaluation ahead of making conclusions with regard to the three pilot projects and the overall *Our Men Our Healing* program.

The final section of this report presents recommendations.



Findings

Each of the men's healing projects at the three pilot sites was designed to strengthen, support and empower men. The aim is to develop the capacity of all men through cultural, educational and therapeutic healing activities. Importantly the projects provide reconnection to traditional ways and respected Elders within the communities for men.

Through the various activities men would be enabled to strengthen their spirits, minds, bodies and cultural knowledge and customary practices. The healing activities provided aimed to assist men to overcome issues that affect them and engage more effectively with the relevant support services. This would increase their confidence and capacity to gain meaningful employment and overcome issues such as family and domestic violence, incarceration, poor health and social and emotional wellbeing, suicide and alcohol and other drug abuse.

The activities also aimed to strengthen and empower men to support others in need.

The following sections provide background and findings to each of the programs as they took place in the respective communities.



Wurrumiyanga – Tiwi Men’s Healing Program

Background

Prior to a group of men from Wurrumiyanga attending the Crab Claw Island workshop in August 2013, and the community being confirmed as one of the three pilot sites, the *Our Men Our Healing* project officer had made two visits to the community. During these visits, significant consultation and engagement with the community took place as part of the co-design of the program.

During the first visit in 2013, the following consultations took place:

- CatholicCare NT
- Wurrumiyanga Strong Men’s Group fishing trip
- North Australian Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service
- Department of Children and Families.

The outcomes of this visit included acknowledgement of the need for men’s healing and determination of the role of the Healing Foundation in establishing the program. Strong cultural and ‘safe’ men were identified to engage in the project for advice around traditional healing and Tiwi men were identified who may possibly be employed through the project to implement or deliver ‘healing’ programs or activities.

Possible partnerships with interested agencies or providers (e.g. CatholicCare NT) were identified along with some healing needs of the men around trauma and FDV issues. Overall, there was interest in the need for safe spaces or places for men and the need for men to be engaged in healing through ‘cultural healing’ activities. A process was set up with the Department of Children and Families for safety checks on men identified to assist or be involved with the project, and effective engagement and connection with Tiwi men for input into the project was established.

Appropriate persons and processes were also identified to engage with the Tiwi women about men’s healing. Overall, it was noted that there was significant enthusiasm for the establishment of a men’s healing project.

During the second visit in 2013, consultations included:

- Government Business Manager – FaHCSIA
- Manager Tiwi Youth Diversion Unit and Skin Groups
- Tiwi Skin Groups Mediator
- Department of Children and Families CEO Tiwi Shire
- CatholicCare NT.

According to the project officer, the visit to Wurrumiyanga *“was very productive in terms of creating more awareness of the project and gaining support from key people within the community including services”*.

The Government Engagement Coordinator (FaHCSIA) was informed about the project and provided support and guidance. Further, the visit established contact with and gained support from key agency worker and local community member Kevin Doolan as well as senior Tiwi Elder Andrew Kelamantumama. Cultural and spiritual healing needs for men to deal with FDV issues and other problems such as AOD (especially ‘ganja’) were identified as were possible representatives for the men’s healing design workshop at Crab Claw. Insight was also gained into Tiwi cultural ways of working and possible healing centres and spaces.

Finally, CatholicCare NT was reaffirmed as the preferred agency to auspice the project.

With the coming together of men from Wurrumiyanga with those from Maningrida at Crab Claw Island in August 2013, the Tiwi Men’s Healing Program was essentially established.

During the process of co-design, the program logic framework was developed by the men. This provided the reference frame for implementation.

Importantly, the logic framework articulates a project aimed at males aged 16 - 60+ years of age and a pre-existing context of:

- lack of appropriate men's place / space and other resources for men including transport
- lack of respect for following lore and culture or custom by young men
- not enough counsellors, mentors and therapeutic programs for men
- high levels of FDV and lateral violence and community conflict
- high prevalence of relationship problems between partners
- not enough transferring and re-education of cultural knowledge from Elders to young people
- high AOD abuse among men – particularly 'ganga'
- limited cultural healing activities and involvement in language and culture by old and young men
- high numbers of suicides due to mental health issues and social and emotional causal factors
- lack of appropriate or meaningful education, employment and training opportunities.

The goals of the project were stated as:

1. Strong and healthy men in heart, body, mind (mentally), spirit and culture
2. Families and community are safer, happier, healthier and stronger
3. Stronger connections and relationships within the community - including between different programs and employment services.

The story so far

Since the men's healing program formally began in Wurrumiyanga, it has been primarily driven by the Tiwi men in the community. However, the performance reports and field trip interviews demonstrate the significant support the program has received through the auspicing body – CatholicCare NT.

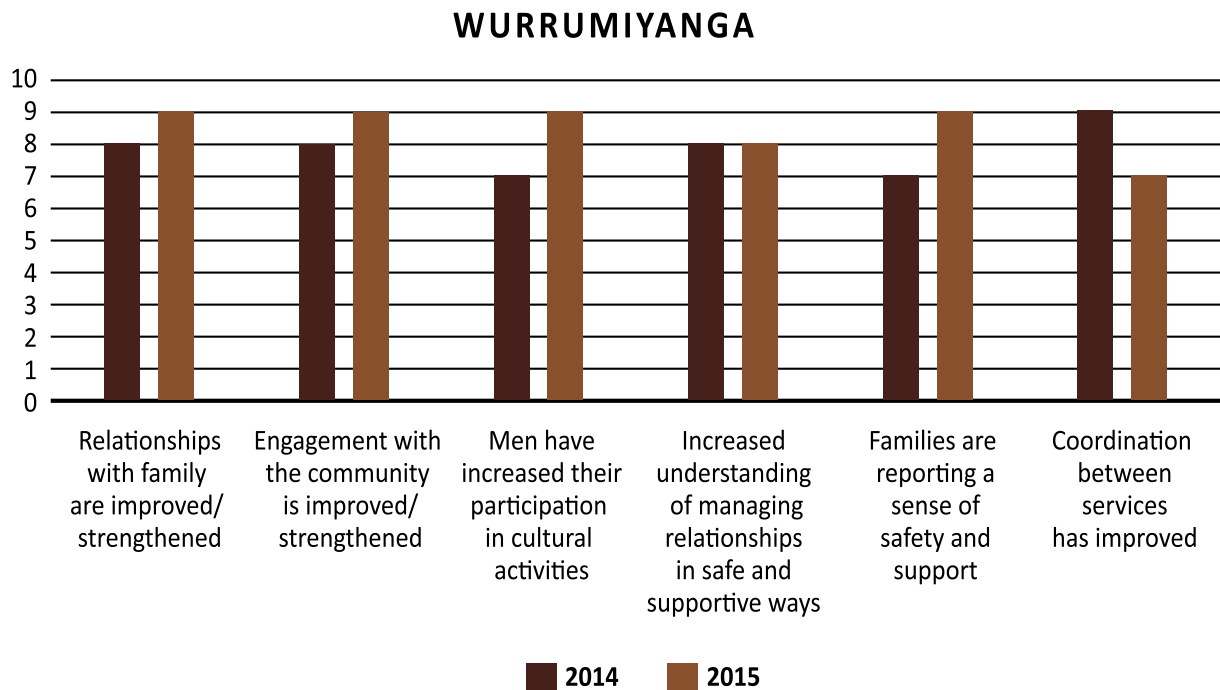
Over the life of the program, there have been two coordinators employed through CatholicCare NT to support the program, being Nick Joseph and Peter Ulbrick. Both have worked closely with the Tiwi men and both have demonstrated high levels of competency, respect and care in ensuring the program is delivered in a way that builds the capacity of the men to drive and own the program and its outcomes. Both were acknowledged by the men as important contributors to the overall success of the program.

At the time of the field trip taken by the evaluation team (May 2015), the program was strong and acknowledged as valuable by the community and service providers/stakeholders.

The performance reports (reporting period April 2014- June 2015) are summarised on page 21.

WURRUMIYANGA		2014	2015
Indigenous staff employed		3	2
Participation		76	108
Services delivered	Counselling	Yes	Yes
	Family support	Yes	Yes
	Advocacy and cultural brokerage	Yes	Yes
	Case management and coordination	Yes	Yes
	Day trips / activities	Yes	Yes
	Group programs	Yes	Yes
	Camps	No	Yes
	Yarning groups	Yes	Yes
	Community events and celebrations	Yes	Yes

Participation continues to increase with over 100 men participating in the activities / program with a quarter of these being young men (under 18 years of age). Further, the services being delivered early in the program in 2014 included counselling, family support, advocacy and cultural brokerage, case management / coordination, group programs, yarning circles and events / celebrations. From late 2014 and into 2015, camps were taking place where cultural knowledge was being passed on.



Participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the activities. Relationships and engagement with families and community were deemed to be 'considerably improved' over time and safety and support within families was reportedly improved as was service coordination.

Key activities / events over the life of the program have included:

- Men's counselling group: The group has met on a consistent basis on Monday nights. There has been a steady increase in numbers and on the evening the evaluators attended the meeting in May 2015 there was over 35 men attending. The meetings have allowed men to discuss the issues that are most affecting them and their families and communities in a safe environment (there is a more detailed discussion about this activity below).
- White Ribbon Day: The men initiated a community event to acknowledge the women in the community as part of White Ribbon Day. The idea was for the men to umpire women's basketball games and then provide them with food after the games. The event attracted over 150 community members and gained a positive response from community members and service providers.

There were 15 men over 18 years helping out with the event and 10 under 18 years. The coordinator from CatholicCare NT reported the men "*felt empowered and proud to be putting on such an event*".

- End of year celebration: Thirteen men and respected Elders gathered on the beach to celebrate the achievements throughout the year. The Elders taught some traditional dancing, which "*left everyone feeling stronger and connected to culture*". The men were encouraged to remain positive over the Christmas period and continue to seek out ideas for the men's program the following year.
- Fishing trips: a number of trips were held on the local beach and outside the community in Tarntipi with on average 20 men attending. The aim of the trips was to break up the cycle of heavier discussions and give men a chance to get back to country.
- Youth camp: In collaboration with the Youth Diversion Services a youth bush camp was held in December 2014 at Tarntipi. Thirty nine men in total attended with 20 of these being men under 18 years of age.

This week's men's group counselling session was held at the bush camp where the men taught totem dances and song lines to the youth. During the camp one participant from the men's program spoke to the vulnerable youth attending about the importance of making good choices in life and shared his story of spending time in prison. Six older men taught the young men how to fish, hunt and change a car tyre in the bush while another delivered cultural education in the form of Tiwi dreaming storytelling.

- The Men's Shed: The establishment of the Men's Shed in 2014 through a partnership with the Remote Jobs and Community Program (RJCP) was a significant milestone for the Tiwi Men's Healing Program. More detail is provided in the section below.

With regard to the Men's Shed, it is important to note that it remained closed for all of January and the first two weeks of February (2015). This was due to the passing of Mr Tipiloura, who had been coordinating / facilitating the men's healing program. The required members of the community gathered to perform smoking ceremonies at the Men's Shed and Youth Diversion Office enabling the Men's Shed to become operational after the passing of Mr Tipiloura. Laminated photos of Mr Tipiloura's funeral ceremony were presented to his brothers-in-law (participants in the program) at the CCNT office.

- Scriptwriting: This workshop this was held at the Men's Shed (14 participants) to contribute to a short film organised by NAAJA with a focus on strong families and how people of the Tiwi Islands traditionally deal with issues relating to family violence, ganja, and gambling.

- Cultural education: Cultural day trips have been held regularly as a way of reaching out to many men. These included a fishing competition, a bush trip to collect timber for spear making and then making the spears at the Men's Shed, viewing of cultural videos and hunting trips.

In terms of the expected outcomes for the program, the performance reports provide ample evidence of change over time.

With regard to family relationships (National Outcome 1) the reports suggest the men's group has provided a forum for mentoring, discussion regarding family issues and the challenges of raising a family. By providing an environment where men feel safe to share their stories, they have been able to support one another and gain further understanding around the issues discussed.

In bringing their children to the meetings (on occasion) and taking them on cultural activities such as fishing and hunting trips, the men have been able to teach their children (or young relatives) about the bush and how to hunt. This has provided a bonding experience. Further, in being able to bring back bush foods to their families, the men reported they have found it to be an empowering experience in being able to fulfil the role of provider.

The performance reports suggest the program is building men's confidence to support and communicate effectively with their families and prioritise their family's needs.

Both the men's group and the Men's Shed have attracted a broad cross section of males from the community. This allows the men of different ages to interact, share perspectives and ideas and go back into community life with renewed vigour. By their actions they become respected role models for other males in the community.

Participants in the program have reported how the skills they have learned in the group allow them to feel more confident about lending support to others in the community, often referring and encouraging other vulnerable members of the community to attend the program.

The Men's Shed has an ongoing partnership with RJCP. Men have become more confident in speaking up and reaching out to employment services since participating in the program.

The performance reports suggest that filling in the gaps in cultural knowledge is a reoccurring topic of the men's group (National Outcome 2). The topic of culture is always at the forefront of conversation, particularly within a healing context. Activities such as hunting, spear making and bush trips are undertaken as often as can be arranged. A male Tiwi Elder is soon to be engaged to deliver cultural education as part of the program.

In conjunction with CatholicCare NT workers from *The Taking Action to Tackle Suicide (TATS)* project, there has been a lot of discussion around creating a healing space in addition to the Men's Shed. The idea is to open the space to all community members, with the focus being to support people who are mentally unwell. The concept behind it is to strengthen families through cultural healing, which will come in many different forms. The women in the community are extremely supportive of this idea.

Some of the men attending the program are referred from the Department of Correctional Services in relation to Domestic Violence Orders. A core aspect of the group work is to get men to identify where their anger comes from which leads to the violence. In doing this men are able to learn anger management strategies in a safe and controlled setting (National Outcome 3). An integral part of the Men's Shed is to create a 'time out space' for men so they have somewhere to go to release their tension. The shed is equipped with fitness gear to help achieve this outcome.





Types of trauma are discussed within the group setting to give the men the best chance of understanding how it can affect them physically and emotionally. The men's healing program strives to support the men and community as best it can by providing one on one counselling, group counselling, taking individuals back to country and initiating relevant discussions.

Death is common in community and as noted earlier in this section, in late 2014 the facilitator of the program passed away unexpectedly. The men have reported a gathered inner strength by uniting through the program on a regular basis and having the chance to discuss their grief and loss.

A foundational stone of the Tiwi Men's Healing Program is that a strong man helps to create a strong and safe family, which helps to build a strong and safe community. Participants at the Men's Shed have reflected on how they have utilised the space in order to remove themselves from a situation of potential verbal or physical conflict, allowing them to cool off and seek support from other men. Working on such projects as the 'Strong Families' NAAJA short film project created a space for a lot of discussion about what makes a strong father, strong family and a strong community traditionally as well as in a contemporary setting.

There is strong network of stakeholders and service providers involved in the program (National Outcome 4). CatholicCare NT and the Tiwi Men's Healing Program worked closely with the RJCP. The group also worked with Youth Diversion Services to help organise and assist with the youth camp. This relationship is based on working together to prevent men from continuing to come into contact with the justice system. The Tiwi Men's Healing Program works closely with the Department of Correctional Services in receiving referrals, and the men's healing program and the Department of Correctional Services maintain regular contact to discuss individual referral's level of engagement in the program.

More is discussed about service integration and coordination in the section below.

What the community has to say!

During May 2015, the evaluation team visited Wurrumiyanga and spent time with the men, women and community partners to the men's healing program. The interview guide for the conversations is included in the appendices to this document. The aim of the visit was to 'catch the story' of the healing program in the words and stories shared by community members and those working with some of the partner agencies.

The following reports the findings from the trip – primarily in the words of those the evaluation team spoke with.

- **What the men said ...**

During the visit the evaluation team spoke with many men that have been part of the program. This occurred both formally through arranged meetings and informally as the team moved through and with the community. A key time with the men was during the men's counselling meeting on Monday night. The men spoke proudly of their program and the changes it was bringing to the community.

At the individual level men spoke of the key aims of the project. These included separate statements from the men present at the meeting:

- *It's about sharing good things and bad, about building role models and helping the community ... they need us men ... to be a better community we have to get better ourselves*
- *We are learning about what violence is and what drives it and how we can heal as men and change. Without this program we would keep doing the same old thing. It's been wonderful to come out and build my spirit and find the answers. I'm getting a lot of value for myself and have a little family of my own*
- *It's private and supportive and we hold one another like we have not done before and it frees us and puts the good spirit in us*
- *The men's group brings it [trauma] out of us for family, community, culture and children. We have a lot of pain in ourselves and if the group was not here we could not tell our stories of domestic violence. They would not get talked about*
- *This is my first time here and I got a good feeling, I'm volunteering for a new direction and see what it's about, to stop going in the wrong direction*
- *It releases the spirit within ... that's what this program does, it builds the spirit and makes the connection with culture and that's what it's all about*
- *We unstick men who are stuck to help men become better men, better fathers and to be good to our families ... it helps cope with the ups and downs and understand things.*

Within these statements there is ownership of both the challenges and solutions. The men are claiming responsibility for past hurts, anger, pain and violence and all were committed to changing themselves and others. "Holding each other" was a common phrase that followed the evaluation team throughout the field trip as men spoke of the program.

The identification of the group and the associated activities being tied to cultural restoration was also a common theme:

- *The activities like fishing and hunting and camping help us connect. Going on country gives a good feeling, it's spiritual and everything is quiet, beautiful, bright and we communicate with the animals and we speak to our ancestors. It's like some of these men got 50 years of their lives back!*
- *We walk around and its special, emotional and more people go out on country because of this meeting, this group and more people are engaged with culture*
- *We are getting back to culture, things are starting to happen again and we are learning, respecting, understanding and it keep our minds off the bad things*
- *Keep dancing, keep the motion, we took the young guys out and kept them safe and made them strong and we learn from each other*
- *Ceremony is coming back, the practices are coming back again and men are taking their roles and responsibilities to maintain cultural practices ... ceremony is healing ... there was a time when the town was empty because everyone was on country and it can happen again ... it's starting to happen*
- *I am a strong man, a Tiwi man, because I am on my mother's country, my country*
- *The camps are important... we take the kids out and share the Dreaming and the kids fall asleep and then dream themselves and learn as they sleep from the ancestors.*

It is clear to the evaluation team that connection to country, culture and identity are intrinsically linked to the healing process. There is a two way relationship in that as healing commences, there is a drive to connect with country, culture, tradition, heritage and ceremony and as this journey begins, the healing process is reinforced.



Case study 1 - Dillon

Dillon is 35 year old community man who was released from prison in early December 2014, having attended the Crab Claw workshop before being incarcerated. He resumed his attendance at the men's group meeting at the earliest opportunity (December 8th 2014). He had a violent past and had spent several spells in prison as a result of his behaviour. He advised that during his last period of incarceration, he would think about the men's healing program, write down his ideas and integrate what he had previously learned from the program into his daily life, despite being incarcerated.

It is evident that the program is very important to him. Since engaging in the program Dillon no longer drinks alcohol or smokes marijuana and has sworn off violent and aggressive behaviour. He has shown himself to be a natural leader and facilitator of the men's group meetings and a positive emerging leader of the community. He has also been strong in engaging vulnerable members of the community and getting them involved in the program. The community and service providers maintain that Dillon has made some amazing, positive changes to his life and is using the men's healing program as a vehicle to facilitate this change.

Dillon is now employed through the Art Centre as a tour guide and his employers can't speak highly enough of him.

The change in Dillon is significant because it allows him to create a future that is divergent from the previous path he was walking and shows how seeds were sown in the men's group prior to his latest and final incarceration. These seeds took root and emerged when he found himself back in prison once again. This gave him an opportunity to take what he had learnt and reflect on it to enable him to change his behaviour and consequently want to help and support other members of his community to do the same.

The work Dillon has undertaken around anger management allows him to be a calmer, happier person in general. The lifestyle changes he has made allow him to prosper financially through his employment, grow into his new identity as a respected role model/emerging leader in the community, enjoy a loving relationship with his partner and actively contribute to his community in a positive way, while encouraging others to join him.

This new positive path that Dillon is walking allows him to build a prosperous future for himself, one with a substantially reduced risk of incarceration. The current cultural and community leaders in Wurrumiyanga are getting old and few. The time for new leaders to rise to the elevated community positions is not far off and Dillon is paving his way to holding one of those positions.

Establishing a space – the Men's Shed – for healing, meeting, activities, etc. has been seen as critical to the success of the program. The men spoke of its importance:

- *It's our place and we came up with the rules ourselves. It is important to have this place where the men can go and relax and stop the volcano erupting*
- *We can talk about what's happening, cool off and share our story with others there*
- *It's a place to think, play music, get healthy, and a place of recreation. A place where we can hold each other together.*

The Men's Shed had, at the time of the field visit become synonymous with the Tiwi Men's Healing Program. There had previously been a men's shed program that was defunded and due to lack of resolution about who could / should maintain the space the NT Government had closed it. Through the *Our Men Our Healing* program, the "space that had been taken away has opened up again". There was a general feeling that having this space was leading to a reduction in domestic violence (according to the men and the women in the community) as it allowed for a "cooling down where healthier decisions can be made".

The importance of a space that is owned and known to be for the men in the community was seen as critical, and as the evaluation team travelled to other sites where no such space had yet been established, its importance gained increasing salience and currency.

It was clear that the men were aware that challenges still lay ahead. Alcohol, violence, suicide and jealousy were not absent from the community. Not all men were participating and if the group continued to grow the Men's Shed (a space no larger than a good sized lounge room) would be insufficient to cater for the needs and size of the group.

The leadership within the group talked about a history of programs and people coming and going and interest in programs dwindling over time – though momentum is clearly heading in a positive direction at the time of writing.

Notably, in the words of one of the group: *“we will face challenges in the days ahead. Challenges will come and we will lose some of our people ... we know that”*.

A key challenge in the previous six months had been the unexpected loss of the group facilitator:

- *We lost our friend but the group helped us to grieve. It did not replace the healing process but it complemented it. We could meet straight away*
- *We were strong during that time, strengthened our solidarity and brought a unity, a oneness, we shared our suffering.*

During the field visit, stories were told of the contribution Mr Tipiloura (Mino) had made to the community through his work in the healing program. His family and community were proud of what he had achieved. Shirts were made up for the men to wear that acknowledged the work he had done and the order of service for his funeral included the following:

Mino was proud when he started working with CatholicCare in early 2014 and took on a mentoring role and would take the men out on hunting trips and offer support to them when they were experiencing problems. Culture and family were important to Mino and he enjoyed being able to support young people in the community and was highly respected by many.

One man best articulated where the program had come from and where it yet needed to go:

This program has emerged from nothing and we are climbing the mountain. We are not sure whether we are near the top or not but we will keep climbing and bring others up here with us.

Finally, the men at the Monday night meeting were asked to describe in just one word what *Our Men Our Healing* meant to them. The following table provides their responses in their entirety.

Strong	Change	Awesome	Relationships	Encouraging
Hope	Faith	Respect	Identity	Great
Helpful	Commitment (family)	Employment	Commitment (community)	Listening
Polite	Leadership	Peaceful	Love	Fun
Power	Empowered	Trust	Belief	Supportive
Healthy	Participation	Forgiveness	Friendship	Better
Unity	Education	Brave	Dedication	Calm

- **What the women said ...**

During the visit to Wurrumiyanga the evaluation team had the opportunity to speak with some of the women in the community or those representing the views of women. There were a number of themes that emerged and are best represented by the following quotes from the women:

- *It's a strong story in the community, there is talk of the story, that time when the men went to Crab Claw. Everyone was waiting to see what they would come back with ... how they would come ... we all remember that*
- *White Ribbon Day was really good. The men did the BBQ and umpired and they really spoilt the women. They showed respect and catered for over a hundred people. There was a lot of laughing*
- *They learnt from the women not to go too fast. The men's and women's groups work in as far as possible [cultural avoidance] and comfort between men and women's groups has increased over the last two years*
- *As women we can go to strong men... men who have grown in real honest way in community. Men who are good role models and speak up for those that want them to*
- *The program has been really successful with men speaking more and owning their mistakes. They are open about their mistakes and willing to share them for the benefit of others. Tyson [pseudonym] has gone to apologise to his neighbours for disturbing them which would never have happened before...*
- *Justin has gone on to be a more devoted father and was the first father to come to Families as First Teachers. Now other dads are coming. Also some of the men have gone on to employment as confidence and influence increases*
- *The men in our community are now hearing good strong messages and engaging strongly in cultural celebrations. Cultural practices have certainly been strengthened especially because the men are coming so consistently*
- *The men in that program are becoming cultural brokers*
- *Men are getting stronger as they speak up now with confidence even if they know they will be criticised. They are confident*

- *The program is important because it helps the men connect to the land and they need that. They need to get the men back to their own culture. They go hunting, gathering and get involved in ceremonies again ... they are going back to men as providers*
- *They have more confidence and self-esteem. The men are smiling and happy and have somewhere to go.*

There is significant evidence in the interviews with women in the community that they are beginning to see changes in 'their' men and such changes are welcome. There was anecdotal evidence in these interviews that rates of DFV had decreased since the establishment of the men's program. This was strengthened during interviews with stakeholders and service providers.

- **What the service providers said ...**

During the field visit to Wurrumiyanga, a number of service providers were consulted including a number of government agencies. The evaluation team was particularly interested in understanding how the referral process through the Department of Correctional Services worked and whether the men's program was having any impact on the rates of recidivism.

The local police suggested that the Wurrumiyanga men's healing program was having a significant impact:

- *Most of the men have been pretty good. They get referred mostly for domestic violence situations and few about anger management. If they really engage with the program they come out different blokes. Most have been pretty good and most do not re-offend*
- *It's not the revolving door that it used to be that's for sure ...*
- *It's showing its success in change of attitudes and demonstrating and talking about wrong behaviours. Blokes previously in the thick of it [violent situations] are now helping calm situations down*
- *The group is helping bring culture back. The men involved are getting back to cultural things and then passing it on. Ceremonies are starting to happen again... we used to have four a year and then it got back to one but they are emerging again. It's too early to say yet about the contribution to healing but it will happen as culture is passed on to the younger age groups.*

The local police also reinforced the importance of the Men's Shed noting it was the only place for men to meet and a great place where they can meet *"that does not involve gambling and alcohol ... it's a place where the blokes can walk away and go to the men's shed and cool down and talk about it"*.

There is certainly still scope for the relationship between the men's group and the police to be strengthened and the possibility of the police speaking at /with the men's group should be explored.

Perhaps the strongest endorsement for the Tiwi Men's Healing Program came from the Northern Territory Department of Correctional Services.

In terms of tangible and quantifiable data, the department reported that over a 2 year period the number of men from the community registered with the Department of Correctional Services had reduced from 80 to 40 men. Of these 40, 20 had been referred to the Wurrumiyanga men's healing program. Importantly, *"many of the men do not reoffend and the pleasing thing is that many of the men still stay in the program and the change is remarkable ... there has been an amazing transformation in the last couple of years"*.

The best thing about the program according to the Department is the open and honest way of dealing with things they have not dealt with before and talking about issues that are important to them. The importance of culture, being on country and the sustainability of the program were also key themes:



Like Comment



Tiwi Islands Men's Program - Wurrumiyanga

Last night was a particularly uplifting Men's Group, despite some pretty heavy topics of discussion. It was excellent to hear contributions from every single person in the room.

The people of this community sure are good at supporting one another.

Like · Comment · Share · July 14

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- *It's not all about culture but taking the men off alcohol and drugs and replacing it with the spiritual and cultural aspects is important of course. It allows the men to free themselves and then mentor others*
- *CatholicCare support has been important ... I rate what they do and it's led by good honourable men [referring to Peter Ulbrick and Nick Joseph before him]. Peter is building the capacity of the blokes to do himself out of a job. The program would continue on I am sure if Pete was not there. It is sustainable now as resolve and reliance have been built. The fact that Pete is one week on and one week off forces capacity to be built. There are emerging leaders now ... and in some cases these are men that have done horrific crimes and turned themselves around.*

Importantly, both the police and the Department of Correctional Services made reference to the overall progress the community had made in the past two years and (potential) contribution the men's healing program had made to such progress:

- *There has been so much work put in. There was a time there where we had 21 suicides in one year and in the last 12 months we have only had one. Most of the difference is being seen in the last 18 months to two years*
- *Tiwi hit rock bottom a couple of years ago ... there was so much going on and the Elders were dying and culture was dying. Then we saw some of the next generation beginning to step up ... guys in their mid-30s who became genuine role models.*

In conclusion, it is clear that all service providers, stakeholders and community members are supportive of the Tiwi Men's Healing Program. There is a genuine belief that change is happening but it is also clear people understand that there is a cycle of life and there will be relapses along the way - though service providers have increasing confidence that such relapses will become less frequent.

The key elements of success of the program are:

- the ownership of mistakes by the men
- the responsibility of the changed future being with the men
- sharing both of these with other men for the benefit of other community members
- the support of Peter Ulbrick (and Nick Joseph before him) through CatholicCare NT
- a place to meet – the Men's Shed and going on country
- the interaction between older and younger men
- a clear focus on capacity building and sustainability
- partnerships with other groups and agencies.

More analysis of the Wurrumiyanga men's healing program is provided in the 'Conclusions' section where all three programs are analysed together.



Gurrutu Raypirri Men's Healing Program (Maningrida)



Background

Prior to a group of men from Maningrida attending the Crab Claw Island workshop in August 2013 and Maningrida being confirmed as one of the three pilot sites, the *Our Men Our Healing* project officer made three visits to the community (between April and July 2013). During these visits, significant consultation and engagement with the community took place.

During the first visit the following departments, agencies and people were consulted:

- Child Abuse Task Force Team
- Greater Youth Service Maningrida
- Department of Correctional Services (Indigenous Family Violence Program)
- Top End Mental Health
- Department of Children and Families FaHCSIA (GEC and IEO)
- CDEP
- David Jones (Traditional Owner)
- Sam Gumugun (cultural healer)



According to the project officer's report from the trip, the outcome of this visit was *"unanimous and widespread support from all of the persons and agencies consulted for a men's healing program to address the problems that men were facing around social and emotional wellbeing issues"*.

Key agencies and individuals interested in potential partnerships to deliver healing programs for men were identified, as were local male 'cultural healers' and existing cultural healing activities.

One month later, the project officer was invited back to the community by Baru Pascoe (Indigenous Engagement Officer- then FaHCSIA) and Marcus Sandford to attend the Maningrida Local Reference Group (LRG) meeting. During this visit there was also a separate meeting with various senior and young lore men and some agency representatives.

The meeting with the LRG discussed the men's healing project with community representatives and obtained approval with all eight LRG members supportive of the project going ahead in Maningrida.

The Maningrida Strong Men's Group had nine men attend including a number of senior and young lore men and traditional land owners. Also in attendance were some agency representatives and staff including the Malabam CEO and two male nurses. One of the senior men (George Pascoe) suggested at the time that Malabam should be considered as the managing or auspicing agency for the project.

The outcomes of this visit included:

- overwhelming interest and support for the men's healing project in Maningrida by the Local Reference Group and Strong Men's Group
- identification of a possible auspicing agency
- engagement of senior and young lore men in the project
- information sharing and open communication with community members
- satisfied community protocols
- a program design preparation workshop be held in Maningrida (Djinkarr) to engage, seek input from and give ownership to a wider group of men from the community. This idea was supported by all men present.

The final community visit ahead of Crab Claw was for the Healing Foundation's project officer to attend the project design workshop at Djinkarr Ranger Station. This workshop was to allow a wider group of men to be involved in the design of the project and have input into the issues and needs affecting them.

Persons present at the Djinkarr workshop were:

Jack Bulman (Facilitator)	Baru Pascoe (IEO – FaHCSIA)
Michael Mungula (RAFCW)	Stanley Rankin (Maningrida School and Bunuwarra Lore Men)
Elias Wilson (CDEP)	Andre Pascoe (CDEP)
Nathan Wurrkidj (CDEP)	Kingsley Murphy (CDEP)
Hamish Garrgarrpa (CDEP)	Charlie Gunabara (Health/Malabam)
David Bamadurra (CDEP)	George Pascoe (Bunuwarra Lore Men)
Paul Djolpa McKenzie (Greater Youth Centre)	Brad Jones (Greater Youth Centre)
Sebastian Young (Greater Youth Centre)	Paul Kieghtly (CEPO)
Sebastian Mason (Greater Youth Centre)	Steven Torres-Carne (HF SPO)

Within the broader context of the workshop, four priority issues for the Strong Men’s Healing Program were identified. These were:

- family and relationships – to discipline the right way, create better futures, address bad parenting, turnaround the lack of respect for Elders and transfer of knowledge to young people
- family and domestic violence (FDV) – there was an identified and strong need to break the cycle
- cultural values – to address the lack of knowledge among young people and reinstate lore that includes marriage lore, respect, yirilya lore and untouchable lore. There was also a need to address the lack of cultural activities, discipline, ceremony, culture and respect, back to bush, re-educate young fellas, lack of mentors, law and order versus ‘lore and peace’, lack of communication, not listening, problems with police who don’t understand culture and have the power, healing
- AOD abuse – that leads to breaking the law, destroying life and FDV.

The workshop was an opportunity for the local men in Maningrida to get together and talk about their issues and healing needs in preparation for the program design workshop at Crab Claw Island.

Some men felt that the workshop enabled them to finally get things off their chests which made them feel better or empowered them, and they thanked the facilitators for going through this process with them.

Overall there seemed to be a good level of satisfaction with the workshop content and the way things ran, though it was observed that some of the young men may not have felt as comfortable in expressing their views openly.

With the coming together of men from Maningrida with those from Wurrumiyanga at Crab Claw Island in August 2013, the Gurrutu Raypirri Men’s Healing Project was essentially established.

During the process of co-design, the program logic framework was developed by the men. This provides the reference frame for implementation and the evaluation.



Baru Pascoe artwork

This painting of the cross section of a tree represents the ‘learning rings’ of an individual person. The core signifies the four dimensions of personal development: spiritual, emotional, physical and mental, while the outer rings illustrate the lifelong process of learning which begins at birth and continues through early childhood, yawarriny (youth) & adulthood. Learning is available in all stages of Yolngu life and takes place in formal and informal settings.

Importantly, the logic framework articulates a project aimed at males aged 16-60+ years of age and a pre-existing context of:

- lack of men's place and safe house / cooling off space and other resources for men
- lack of knowledge and respect for and practice of culture and tribal lore by young men
- lack of counsellors, mentors and men's cultural healing and therapeutic programs
- high levels of FDV and interaction with the legal / justice system
- high prevalence of family and relationship problems
- limited opportunities for transfer of or re-education of cultural knowledge from Elders to young men
- high AOD abuse and poor health and wellbeing among men
- lack of cultural activities and healing programs for men
- grief, sorrow and loss.

The stated goals of the program are:

1. Men that are strong and healthy – mentally, physically, spiritually and culturally
2. Community and families that are safe
3. Culturally appropriate programs in place, stronger connections between programs and stronger relationships within the community.

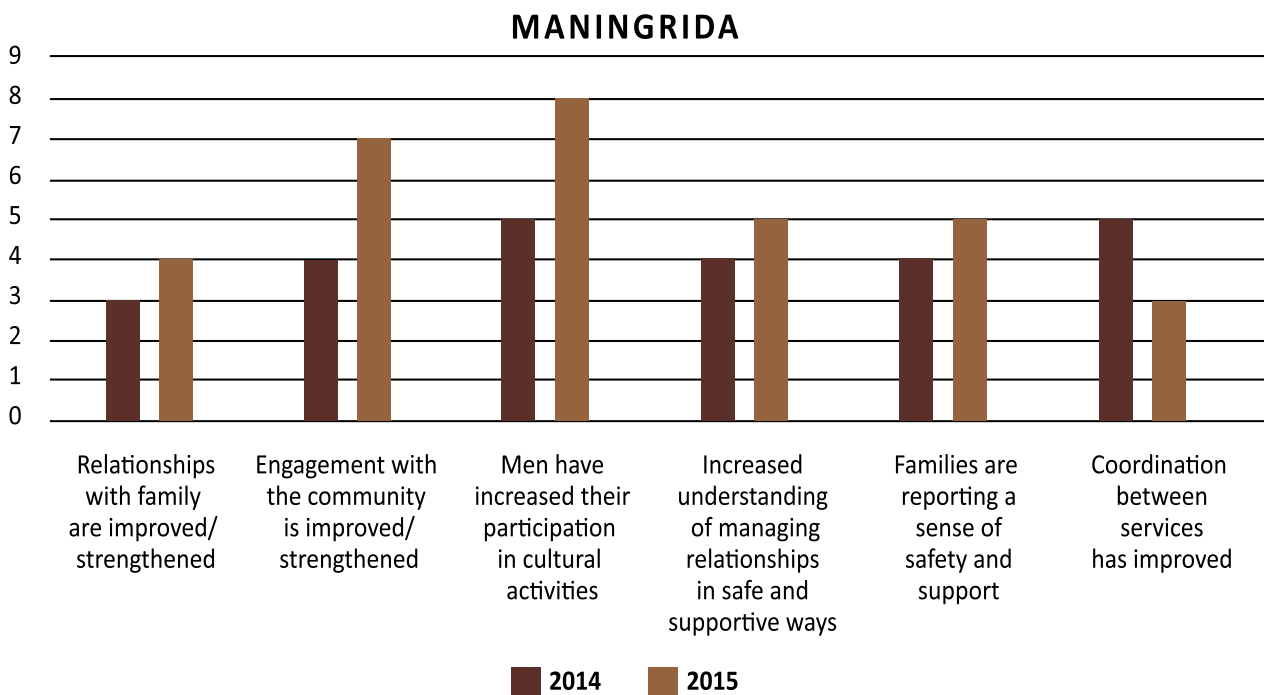
The story so far

Post the Crab Claw Island workshop, the men from Maningrida left with significant enthusiasm and potential to begin the delivery of a strong healing program. The program logic was confirmed and activities and leadership were in place. What was still required was confirmation of the auspicing organisation with Malabam Health Board Aboriginal Corporation still thought to be the best option.

There were significant challenges however in establishing the program in Maningrida and these are articulated more fully in the next section of this report.

Over the life of the program and according to the performance reports, there have been 20 men over the age of 18 involved in the program and 10 young men under the age of 18.

MANINGRIDA		2014	2015
Indigenous staff employed		6	1
Participation – older men over 18 years		20	20
Participation – younger men under 18 years		10	10
Services delivered	Counselling	No	Yes
	Family support	Yes	No
	Advocacy and cultural brokerage	Yes	Yes
	Case management and coordination	Yes	Yes
	Day trips / activities	Yes	Yes
	Group programs	Yes	Yes
	Camps	Yes	Yes
	Yarning groups	Yes	Yes
	Community events and celebrations	Yes	Yes



The services delivered have included some family support, advocacy and cultural brokerage, case management for one participant, day trips, camps, yarning circles and community events. Specific activities have included:

- arts activities at the Town Hall in Maningrida with on average 10 participants. This is currently the main activity of the program
- BBQ fishing trips to surrounding outstations
- Djinkarr Ranger Station was used in 2014 for the launch of the Gurrutu Raypirri Men's Healing Program (with 16 attendees) and an overnight camp and workshop program/s as well as a drum beat workshop.

Three key milestones have occurred since mid-2014. These are:

- confirmation of Malabam Health Board as the auspicing organisation for the Gurrutu Raypirri Men's Healing Program
- the appointment of Paul 'Djolpa' McKenzie as the coordinator of the Gurrutu Raypirri Men's Healing Program
- the launch of the Gurrutu Raypirri Men's Healing Program at Djinkarr Ranger Station.

Prior to these three milestones the healing program had stalled and shortly after these appointments and events took place the wet season descended on Maningrida and further stalled the program. Accordingly it was only with the dry season in March/April 2015 that momentum could be built again.

During the visit from the evaluation team it was clear that men are enjoying sitting together and having conversations. There was the beginning of engagement, with men who had retired from work or disengaged being encouraged to join a team where everyone is respected. Older men were observed to be talking to the young men about following their culture and maintaining their identity as strong leaders for the community.

Connections to community life including employment are beginning to emerge with employment created through selling art where all profits go to the artist. The group is willing to advocate for men who are keen to find work/training or need support to claim benefits from Centrelink as part of the work for the dole scheme.

In terms of how men are managing their anger, loss and grief and trauma in positive ways, the program is building trust and respectful ways to enable the men to talk with others facing similar issues as a means of relieving tension when it builds up.

With Paul McKenzie's appointment, collaborations are starting to emerge and during the visit from the evaluation team there were a number of discussions that strengthened the partnership approach of the program. The program is working with Team Health to deliver a workshop around families and wellbeing and the rangers continue to support the program by providing facilities to do camps and workshops. Yolngu Radio has provided a family violence chart to the program to assist with increasing clients' understanding about the cycle of violence that relates to the seasons of weather change.

As the next section highlights, there have been and remain some key challenges to enhancing success of the Gurrutu Raypirri Men's Healing Program.

What the community has to say!

During May 2015, the evaluation team visited Maningrida and spent time with the men, women and community partners to the men's healing program. The field visit highlighted that the Strong Men's Program in Maningrida had not reached the same level of maturity as the Wurrumiyanga program on the Tiwi Islands.

The following reports the findings under key themes as they emerged over the course of the three day visit. Some were barriers to establishing the program quickly and others might yet be enablers.

- **A slow start**

A surprising aspect of the Strong Men's Program at Maningrida is that the momentum with which the men left Crab Claw did not carry the men through to early delivery and establishment of the project. Over time momentum was lost and primarily it seems that this was due to the auspicing body for the program taking some time to confirm.

As noted in the previous section, and as the next section focusing on the program in Ngukurr will reinforce, the support of an auspicing organisation is a critical success factor to the pilot programs. It took some time (more than six months) for Malabam Health Board to be confirmed and then there was further delay in appointing the Coordinator. The circumstances that led to such a delay are not clear though there were at least six meetings held over the course of 12 months.

Indeed, it was in excess of a year between the meeting at Crab Claw Island and the appointment of the coordinator in October 2014 and as will be highlighted below the program only began some formalisation and structure with the end of the wet season in 2015. The coordinator was operating out of the Greater Youth Centre and meetings with the men were taking place either at the Centre or in the Town Hall located next to but within the wider youth complex.

- **No place to meet**

In as much as the support from CatholicCare NT was a critical success factor in the development of the program at Wurrumiyanga, so too was the establishment of a space for the men to meet. In Maningrida there had been a Men's Cooling Down Place which had been lost to the community and was now being used by the Department of Children and Families. This was considered a big loss by the community to the men:

- *It's not easy to run a men's healing program with no venue. We need that space back or a men's shed otherwise the men won't come. If you had your own place then heaps of men would come*
- *The problem is Paul /Djolpa is running the program and asking men to come to the Town Hall. But the men feel like that is the youth centre and their space and it's not appropriate for the men to meet and have kids coming in and out*
- *Something has to be done ... we have men who want to heal and get better ... we have men that want to talk and build their strength. They want a place to cool off and understand. It can happen on country and it happens best there but there has to be something here otherwise what happens*
- *We have nowhere to put ourselves to keep ourselves safe. The loss of that space is a big loss*
- *If we can't hang out we become alone and little problems become big problems. We need a place to be happy and loud.*

More comment will be made on this in later sections but this evaluation finds that without a designated space that is culturally safe, the men's programs will struggle to achieve the best outcomes for men, families and communities.

- **A great launch**

Djinkarr Ranger Station was used in late 2014 for the launch of the Gurrutu Raypirri Men's Healing Program. Sixteen men attended the overnight camp which included workshop program/s as well as a drum beat workshop. The camp reaffirmed the interest of the men in a healing program and specifically a time and space to discuss important issues and get back on country to enhance cultural connections and activities.

The men left the launch *"excited and waiting for what could happen"* and many men spoke of how this had motivated them to *"take responsibility and for the older guys to help the younger guys"*. The key outcome was to find ways for *"men to be the men they should be and be providers that support their families"*.

- **An emerging program**

The community and service providers in and to the community were in general agreement about the need for a men's healing program and that although the current program *"is a program in its infancy ... it's a baby program currently"* there are emerging benefits:

- *We are starting to see men more engaged. A men only BBQ and bush trips give men time out and it's the little stuff that is pretty big in the community. They are free from the things that bring them down*
- *The program allows the men to tackle the problems that are in their heads before they grow like a tumour. They can come and in a comfortable way talk about things with other men... it's the only program for men ... we have a lot of things for women but this is the only program for men. It keeps them occupied and they are yarning about what's in their heads and they might not know it but they are healing*
- *Some of the wives who have husbands in the program are already saying it's a good idea. They see the difference in their men*
- *Families are comfortable to refer people to the program and they trust Paul because he is local and understands how the lore and customs work in the community and on this country*
- *Without the work Djolpa is doing the men get lonely. It's an inclusive program but it's too early to talk about individual impacts. But they are starting to think about anger and frustration and connecting with culture and keeping them in the right direction*
- *The program is starting to preserve some things that have been lost. Its bringing culture back to life and teaching some young kids how to connect with and look after the land. We have a lot of sacred sites and the program brings the spirit near... you can feel the spirit when you go out to the bush*

It can be seen from these comments that what has been established in Wurrumiyanga is beginning to emerge in Maningrida for the men and the community.

Partnerships have yet to be fully established but there was evidence during the field visit of these beginning to form. There are efforts being made to integrate services into the men's program. The RJCP was being increasingly engaged, however with the current changes being implemented to the program and a move to a 'work for the dole' model there was pressure to be ready for the July 1st changes. Everyone noted there would be opportunities for the men's program to link in more substantially with employment and training opportunities.

Further, the Community Probation Parole Officer suggested that once there was more 'formalisation' in the program referrals could flow through in a more significant way. This requires a timetable and structure that is felt to be currently lacking.

Finally, the Government Engagement Coordinator (for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet) was beginning to strongly advocate for the program. The GEC was a regular attender of activities and was actively considering ways to support the program.

- **Two emerging and significant risks**

It became clear during the course of the field visit that there were some potential risks emerging to the continuation and sustainability of the Gurrutu Raypirri Men’s Healing Program. These will need to be monitored and addressed:

- *While the Gurrutu Raypirri Men’s Healing Program is being auspiced by Malabam Health Board, there is a sense that Paul Djolpa McKenzie is largely coordinating the program on his own.*
- *Support is provided by way of physical resources through the provision of a vehicle shared with the Youth Centre and office space in the Youth Centre. However, Paul himself acknowledges that at times there is a sense of isolation. The Healing Foundation’s project officer is the main source of strategic support and there was significant value in providing the means for Paul to spend time with the men in Wurrumiyanga and Peter Ulbrick in particular at the start of 2015.*
- *It should be noted that there is widespread community support for Paul who is highly trusted and well respected but as a part time position operating in a highly complex environment it is not certain to the evaluators that he will be able to establish and sustain the program on his own.*
- *Without a dedicated space being secured for the Gurrutu Raypirri Men’s Healing Program to locate itself and for the men to meet both formally and informally, it will be challenging for the program to maintain any momentum or sustainability. Without such a space current locations seem or are in reality temporary and therefore mean the program lacks permanency or even legitimacy.*

The evaluation finds that the Gurrutu Raypirri Men’s Healing Program has all the potential for success as it emerged from the Crab Claw Island workshop and as is emerging in Wurrumiyanga. The men that have attended the program so far have acknowledged its importance and have begun a healing journey aligned with their counterparts in Wurrumiyanga.

The co-design of the program has given the men ownership and they are willing to drive it but there is more support required before capacity building can take place and the men can take full control of the activities, program and evaluation.

In terms of the stated goals of the program the men are still committed to being stronger and healthier – mentally, physically, spiritually and culturally – and their community and families being safe. However, both are dependent on culturally appropriate programs being in place, stronger connections between programs and stronger relationships within the community. It is this work that needs to reach a deeper level of maturity and be the focus of support.



Ngukurr Men's Cultural Healing Program

Background

Prior to the Crab Claw Island workshop in August 2013, the *Our Men Our Healing* project officer made a number of visits to Ngukurr. During these visits, significant consultation and engagement with the community took place through workshops and forums.

At the first workshop / forum held in June 2013, there were 16 representatives from service providers and 15 community members (all men) present. Importantly, there was significant representation from Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation (SHS) – who over time became the auspicing organisation for the men's healing program.

The key discussion points with regard to a men's cultural healing program included:

- the first step in program design needed to be consultation with local men for their endorsement and to gain input and feedback about how the men saw the operation of the program and what services they wanted provided through the program
- a best practice model would be a non-clinical program and the SHS Board of Directors gave endorsement for SHS to take on the program
- cultural activities were required to assist in identity and / or self-esteem crises and there needed to be projects and / or activities to assist men in dealing with family and domestic violence (FDV) and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) issues and make men stronger (in body, mind and spirit)
- there needed to be a strong link to young men and an exchange between young men and older men in the community
- education, training and/or understanding of governance was required
- consideration could be given to the program conducting health checks, pre-employment training and Centrelink visits, and providing emergency accommodation
- the program could consider a similar model to the 'StrongBala' program currently operating in Katherine
- projects / activities could provide life skills, build self-esteem and confidence, and increase employment potential as a way to break down the 'shame job' around interfacing with service providers
- work could be undertaken to highlight the issues of community (women's) safety and child protection
- any program must be holistic in approach ensuring the men take responsibility and ownership.

In July 2013, the Ngukurr healing design workshop took place. In attendance were:

Jack Bulman (Facilitator)	Steven Torres-Carne (HF SPO)
Michael Joshua	Mark Thompson
Robin Rogers	Ian Gumbula (IEO)
Keith Rogers	Dallas Thompson
Eric Roberts	Zebulan Nayilidj
Walter Rogers	Stewart Innes (GEC)

Within the broader context of the workshop and detailed discussion, four priority issues were identified. These were:

1. Establish a safe house for men or a men's place where all services including counselling and dealing with DV issues take place, it would be a cultural meeting place
 There would also be two outstations to take men out of town as an extension of the men's place and an alternative to jail; the locations would be used as places to transfer knowledge, deal with AOD and substance abuse and undertake cultural activities
2. Key focus areas would be training and education for AOD, interpreting, legal education - NAAJA, literacy and numeracy, leadership and governance, men's health, mental health, cultural awareness education to services and deeper cultural education to young men
3. Create a youth and young men's program to provide alternatives to jail, diversionary activities, a sports and education program and sports administration training (e.g. to become umpires), and deal with boredom and a lack of communication with young people
4. Establish a social and emotional wellbeing program to help with generational change, bring two cultures together and address the lack of follow up for clients and the inadequate number of meaningful projects.

As noted earlier in this report, despite a group of men being identified to attend the Crab Claw Island workshop in August 2013 with the men from Wurrumiyanga and Maningrida, at the last minute community issues meant the Ngukurr men were not able to leave their community. As a result, a third community workshop was held in October 2013 to confirm the goals and activities of the Men's Cultural Healing Program.

These were aligned with the program logic that had already been developed.



Importantly, the logic framework articulates a project aimed at males aged 16 - 60+ years of age and a pre-existing context of:

- lack of a men's place, safe house/'cooling off' space and other resources for men including transport and permanent bush camp set up
- lack of knowledge, respect for and practice of culture and tribal lore by young men
- lack of social and emotional wellbeing programs including counsellors, mentors and men's cultural healing and therapeutic support
- high levels of FDV and other community violence (young men fighting) and interaction with legal/justice system
- relationship problems including bad parenting, no respect for community, self and Elders, and young men not recognising community members as family or kinship connection
- lack of male youth and young men's program for transfer of or re-education of cultural knowledge from Elders to young mens
- high AOD abuse including petrol sniffing
- lack of cultural activities, boredom and high crime rates among young men
- high unemployment and a lack of meaningful training, employment and education programs.



The stated goals of the program are:

1. Men are culturally stronger, healthier (socially, emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually and culturally) and proud leaders of family and community
2. Men are passing on cultural knowledge and have culturally strong and safe families and community (living in both worlds)
3. Men and community members have a strong cultural foundation stored in them and education is being passed on through ceremony and cultural educators

The story so far

As with the men's healing program at Maningrida, the program at Ngukurr began slowly. Auspiced by Sunrise Health Service, in the first 12 months the program provided counselling, advocacy, trips, camps and events. This was in the form of two camps at outstations, eight fishing trips and two ceremonies. In each case there were on average 15 men over 18 years of age in attendance and more than 25 men under the age of 18.

The two ceremonies involved many more men with almost 90 young men and 90 older men involved.

Since December 2014, family support, yarning circles and case management have been added as the program has gained momentum and grown. Activities have included 17 day trips; two camps; creating boomerangs, clapsticks, nulla nullas, spears and paintings; five barbeques; six information sessions and 48 one on one counselling sessions.

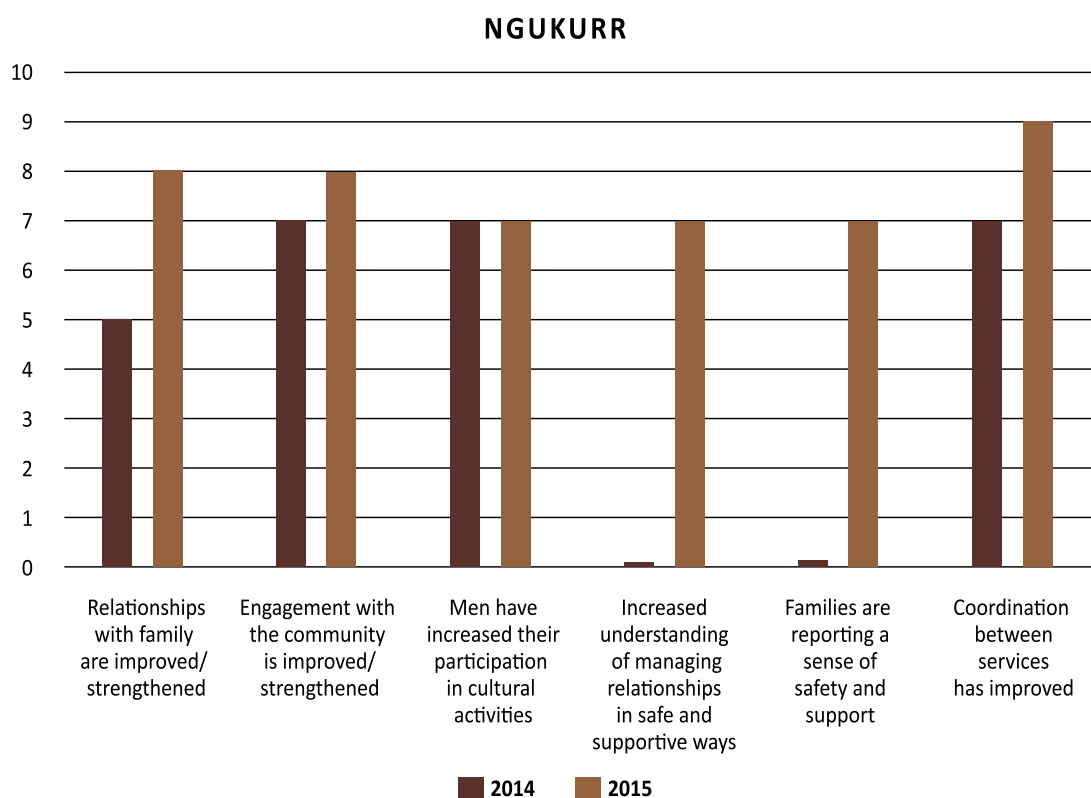
NGUKURR			
		2014	2015
Indigenous staff employed		1	1
Participation – older men over 18 years		38	60
Participation – younger men under 18 years		76	30
Services delivered	Counselling	Yes	Yes
	Family support	No	Yes
	Advocacy and cultural brokerage	Yes	Yes
	Case management and coordination	No	Yes
	Day trips / activities	Yes	Yes
	Group programs	No	Yes
	Camps	Yes	Yes
	Yarning groups	No	Yes
	Community events and celebrations	Yes	Yes

In terms of men being better able to relate to their families in a healthy or positive way (National Outcome 1), some men are receiving ongoing support for anger management and regular treatment for anxiety disorders. Young men are engaging with their sons in activities with some men learning to cook to support their families in a more positive way.

With regard to men being better able to engage with their community in a healthy or positive way, there are several men who have begun to move out of the confines of their homes to engage in community activities and some evidence that some men have cut down on the use of ganja and alcohol in order to participate in sport and other activities. As a result of a session on lateral violence, a number of men had begun to moderate their interactions within the family and community, resulting in a decrease in community violence.

Several of the men had begun to engage in RJCP and there is evidence of men going to the wellbeing centre of their own accord rather than being picked up. Older men are also now sharing their skills and knowledge with the younger men.

There is emerging evidence of men having a stronger connection to or practicing their culture (National Outcome 2) by participating in making artefacts and in the case of younger men, participating in Bungul (traditional dance). There is certainly a greater awareness of cultural obligation.



There is some emerging evidence of men managing their anger, loss and grief and trauma in positive ways, with one example of a man who has been able to reengage with employment and support his children at school. Workshops on anger management, communication skills, conflict resolution, stress management, mental illness and alcohol and other drugs have been well attended by community men.

Men are beginning to recognise when the stresses are getting too high and then seeking help and support before they cause harm and some men have developed self-care plans to avoid the build-up of stress in the home. There is growing evidence of men recognising the impacts of their behaviour on their families.

What the community has to say!

During May 2015, the evaluation team visited Ngukurr and spent time with the men, women and community partners to discuss the Men's Cultural Healing Program. As noted in the previous section, the interview guide for the conversations is included in the appendices to this document.

The following reports the findings under key themes as they emerged over the course of the three day visit. What was clear was that even with a slow start, when certain elements of program development are established things change quickly.

- **Holistic from beginning to end**

Across the interviews with the men and women in the community and service providers, the theme and even the word 'holistic' came through again and again. This reference came through in not only finding solutions but even in addressing the challenges and problems the community had been facing:

- *The men's healing program has been about helping to fix problems and we not only look at one or two problems but look at things holistically... since the men's program started the team has been working with the men in a holistic way*
- *We have branched out into holistic healing inclusive of mental health, leadership, family and community*
- *The focus has been on what is men's healing as a holistic approach and without the funding we would not have been able to target men ... we would not have been able to do this*

It is clear that the holistic approach to healing came from the careful and slow paced approach that was adopted in the early stages of program development. Indeed, one of the service providers relayed comments by the former Government Engagement Coordinator that *"the community consultation ... for the development of the men's healing program was the best community consultation process he had ever seen"*. As with the other two pilot sites, the *"consultation in itself had a great impact on the men and women"*.

It seems that the community had not previously experienced the level of consultation where families and community members were encouraged to share how they wanted the program to be run and set up. Previously, the community was consulted on needs and challenges and then *"the whitefella would provide what they thought was a good solution"*. For the men the success the program was achieving was due to the fact that *"when the program happened or started it reached out to men and showed an interest in them and that they are cared for"*.

- **Responsibility, leadership and capacity building = success**

- *With the co-design of the program, a key finding from the interviews at Ngukurr was one that was consistent across the program – men taking responsibility for actions (past, present and future) and demonstrating leadership:*
- *The men's healing program ensures men are taking responsibility for children when they break up with their girlfriend or partners ... it's allowing men to learn to be men and know what their responsibilities are ... they are emerging as leaders but they still need more direction ... they have to be good role models and take responsibility for self and help others in need*
- *We are learning to be a better man, looking after self, getting a proper job and being a good strong role model for other young men*
- *We are developing men that are leaders in their home and family so they understand their role*
- *We can see the positive outcomes in some men taking leadership and building capacity for men ... men have to work for themselves and by themselves so it is up to the person to make changes for themselves ... it's up to them to say I can't operate this way, I have to change.*

In terms of building capacity for the men to continue to drive the program, there was general acknowledgement that this process had started but there was more to be done. In general when community members were asked about recommendations, building the capacity of the men to “fill gaps and take over other positions” – or some similar sentiment was articulated. Leadership workshops were already in place with a focus on capacity building that “will contribute to good local programs and strong men and family and community”.

This is not to say that community members and service providers did not deem the program to be currently succeeding and certainly there were many expressions of such success:

- *At the moment the men’s program is working well*
- *We are seeing changes in others such as slowing down on drinking, smoking and violence and this has happened because of the men’s healing program*
- *There has been a significant change since the men’s healing program began six months ago and it is reaching people that need it knowing it’s here now*
- *The program is helping turn men back into men ... culturally, spiritually, mentally... the program is so important as it leads to working with men ... young and old and building up their self-esteem and looking after each other.*

With regard to some of the women who were interviewed, there was also acknowledgement of the program and the emerging success and change:

- *The men’s program is going good ... men know now where to go and get help and go hunting and fishing ... before the program started the men were lost but now they call out to staff to find out what’s going on*
- *Even little things help ... take the men out bush to talk about things in a confidential way... men are getting more and more comfortable engaging and coming to seek support in the men’s program*
- *Anything they want to talk about stays in the program and the good things are rubbing off on others, for example instead of bashing their wives the men go for a walk and cool down, cool off and calm themselves down*
- *Before the men’s program there was no opportunity to come together and talk and men would sit down and never left the community or their house, but now they walk around with their family and friends ... or they can go on a bush trip with the program and get away from stressing in the community*
- *Because of the men’s program there’s less alcohol use now as men have cut down in AOD overall and ask when their next trip is on and when they go they really appreciate it and can’t wait for the next trip*
- *Since the program things have settled down and calmed down so there has been a reduction in men beating up their missus... men are using music too as an outlet and to calm down*
- *The centre has been a real haven for men who come in angry and stressed but get a chair and sit down and calm down by themselves until they are ready to talk... men let their anger pass and be around people supporting them then go home*
- *Men have found their connections where they can go and feel safe, whereas before they would have stayed home and become more stressed but are realising there is more help at the centre for men ... men are showing more good leadership within their families and the community.*

Within these statements lies some of the reasons for success and being on country and connecting to culture was often mentioned as the reason for success.

- **Country and culture – the importance of reconnection**

While the ownership of the program that came through co-design is clearly a critical success factor in establishing a program that is beginning to make a difference, country and culture were often mentioned:

- *The program runs bush camps and culture days and men talk about whatever the age group need is ... the boys go out bush and the men talk to them about their issues and ask them why they are doing it ... the message is getting across on these topics when we take them out bush and sit around the camp fire like the old people used to do rather than in the community*
- *The men are more focused when they go out bush and feel spiritually like you are home as the country talks to you and makes you feel comfortable ... not a stranger ...*
- *Young boys 16 to 20 have started singing ceremony song as they are realising on the men's camps that culture is important with the Elders saying how important it is ... they have to know story and song for country otherwise the government will take the land from us ... since the program started and got underway the men have been wanting to learn and sing the old songs*
- *It's the first time in 10 years that men are making boomerangs and clap sticks again which is reconnecting them to culture and dreamtime stories ... while making cultural items men are learning the meaning and stories behind the clap sticks and boomerangs and young men are taught to look after them [stories and songs] and treat them with respect*
- *Going on camp with men ... we teach the young men and boys and take one of the Elders to teach cultural things such as learning about trees and animal names and country and do other cultural activities*
- *Yes it's a good program because we learn about culture and learn to be good role models and help people ... I like going out bush and listening to Elders telling their stories about the place which adds to my learning ... and we get together and talk about stopping drinking and drugs as it is not good for them ... it helps because young fellas listen carefully out bush and they pass the message on to the younger generation in the community and their families*
- *The culture trips are good for the men to get away from distractions and negative influences in town so they can relax and feel connected, learn about country and culture and it's healing for their spirits ...*
- *The significance of the bush trips stands out as it leads to a sense of empowering men culturally and spiritually and reinforces me to speak language, songs, learn about country and connect*
- *The more men are involved in other activities that strengthen them, then the stronger they became*
- *It's great taking the men out bush for hunting and fishing and getting bush medicine ... when they come back they are smiling and can't stop talking ... we [the women] can see the transformation in them and they are asking for the next trip ... this never used to happen because there wasn't a men's program*

There were sentiments expressed in Ngukurr that were highly consistent with the findings from the other two pilot programs. Perhaps on their own in a single community the reader may not classify them as generalised findings but in evaluating the three pilot programs, it is clear that the presence and absence of certain elements become enablers and barriers to success respectively.

The next section draws together the findings and makes conclusions across the three pilot sites with regard to the *Our Men Our Healing* program.

Conclusions

It is clear from previous sections that the *Our Men Our Healing* program is operating in different but equally challenging local contexts. All three programs identified some common challenges which included:

- lack of a place/space and other resources for men to meet, cool off and share story and belonging
- a disconnection from, and lack of respect for, culture and tribal lore and a breaking down of cultural practices and traditions (especially but not exclusively for young men in the community)
- limited opportunities for transfer of, or re-education of, cultural knowledge from Elders to young men
- a lack of cultural activities and healing programs for men and a lack of programs and resources (e.g. counsellors, mentors and men’s cultural healing and therapeutic programs) in the pilot communities
- high levels of FDV, increased and unacceptable rates of interaction with the legal/justice system, high AOD use and misuse and poor health and wellbeing among men
- a high prevalence of family and relationship problems which affect families and the community/communities more broadly
- past and present grief, sorrow and loss whereby men feel disconnected from, or unable to take up, their (traditional) roles as nurturers, protectors, providers, teachers and carers.

Within this context and through meaningful and culturally responsive and sensitive consultations *Our Men Our Healing* has – in a relatively short time – achieved some success in addressing some of these very significant challenges. A sense of disengagement, disconnection, lack of agency and a feeling of being disempowered with a loss of hope has – for some men – been replaced by reconnection, empowerment, agency, responsibility, ownership and hope.

Through the process of co-design, men from Wurrumiyanga, Maningrida and Ngukurr have been able to take ownership of the challenges and the solutions and the resulting change is so significant (albeit variable across the pilot sites) that women, other community members and service providers are persuaded by it. There is a strong belief that such change can and will be sustained over time at the individual, family and community levels.

Accordingly, the evaluation finds that *Our Men Our Healing* is achieving the stated outcomes at the community and program level. The evaluation finds that this success is grounded in the following key factors.

1. At each site the elements that research suggests need to be present in a quality healing program were indeed present.

QUALITY ELEMENTS	WURRUMIYANGA	MANINGRIDA	NGUKURR
Addresses issues in the local community	✓	✓	✓
Driven by local leadership	✓	✓	✓
Developed evidence and theory base	✓	✓	✓
Combines western and Indigenous healing	✓	✓	✓
Understands the impact of transgenerational trauma/grief	✓	✓	✓
Builds individual, family and community capacity	✓	✓	✓
Proactive rather than reactive	✓	✓	✓
Strong evaluation frameworks	✓	✓	✓

While at some sites some of these elements are more developed than at others, it is clear that with these factors as the base of the development of the program, other critical success factors can emerge within and across programs.

2. The process of co-design ensured that there was ownership and agency within the solutions and design of each of the programs. There was a continued commitment to the needs, solutions and activities being developed by the men for the men. Co-design allowed the men to address how they viewed themselves and this would be the key driver for change as the men became the agents of change.

There were crucial moments along the way when the men were asked how they wanted the program to look and be designed, and these were often followed by quiet moments of reflection. A time where one man questioned “*what ... we are going to run it on our own?*” and a response from the Healing Foundation policy officer saying “*yes ... it’s yours and we will support you*”.

Co-design meant that the men were given tools and some resources to support the program but much more importantly, they felt the facilitation of the program was valuing their culture and their knowledge system. This led to increased confidence that there would be sustained support and that “*our own solutions can work best if we own them and take responsibility for them*”.

It is doubtful the outcomes achieved would have emerged as quickly – indeed at all – had the co-design elements described in ‘Phases of implementation’ - not been present.

Notably, within the co-design work eight healing themes were identified to strengthen and keep safe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men’s spirits, families, culture, communities and roles. These included education, employment, healing, identity, law, relationships, resources and safety. All were being evidenced as outcomes of the *Our Men Our Healing* program (to varying degrees) at each site. That is:

- There was evidence of men taking their place as learners and teachers - not just of culture but wider social and emotional wellbeing issues
- There was evidence of men beginning to take their place as strong providers within traditional culture and ‘mainstream’ employment
- There was evidence of men becoming stronger, healthier, enhancing emotional wellbeing and learning to balance feelings and behaviour for better outcomes
- There was evidence of men taking their place as leaders and beginning to re-establish kinship and family lines and reaffirm identity
- There was evidence of men emerging as positive role models in their families and communities and for those men with children, enhancing their parenting skills
- There was evidence of men becoming more nurturing as they owned their mistakes without shame and improved skills to cope with stresses
- There was some evidence of men being empowered to be strong in various roles, seeking opportunities to build skills and capacity, and understanding the role of connecting to culture for healing
- There was emerging evidence of men taking their place as protectors and overcoming the issues, addictions and challenges that had taken away their ability to be protectors.

Across each of these areas there was generalised recognition that these changes were tangible and with each passing week and month such change was being sustained.

3. At least in the initial stages, the presence of a strong auspicing organisation in the community that provided support and legitimacy to the program was deemed critical to success. Such organisations can act as brokers and facilitators to a wider range of partnerships where other service providers are informed and engaged.

In Wurrumiyanga and Ngukurr the two respective organisations provided both resources (financial and non-financial) and opportunities from which agency and capacity for men can be enhanced. This support can be in the form of infrastructure, service integration and critically, personnel from which capacity and sustainability can be built.

There are emerging opportunities for each of the programs to share successes and challenges and through the work of the Healing Foundation policy officer there is increasing engagement of key leaders and personnel across sites. As each program progresses, more integration of programs, auspicing organisations, service providers and stakeholders will build enhanced success and sustainability. In turn, this can provide increased opportunities to enhance resources and support.

4. The presence of individual leadership that can be enhanced and utilised to build capacity within other individuals and the group, families and community ensures the ongoing success of the program. At each of the three sites key individuals have emerged as leaders and drivers for the program. These are local men who are respected across the community, though it might not have always been this way. These men initially can carry a heavy burden and supporting them is critical. Such support can simply be recognition of the changes they are endeavouring to make at both the individual and community levels.
5. The evaluation makes a very clear finding that a men's healing program needs a space (in the case of Wurrumiyanga the Men's Shed, in Ngukurr the Wellbeing Centre) for men to meet. This space becomes culturally safe for men to own and is recognised in the community as a place for men to talk, cool off, share and support each other. Without such a place / space the program essentially has no home and can therefore stall. As noted below, going out on country can also be part of a wider culturally safe space but an established space within the community is critical.

6. Reconnecting to culture and country must be embedded or even embodied within any cultural healing program for men. This appears to happen best when men get out of the community to a place of significance where Elders can share with other (often younger) men stories and ceremony. However, it can occur in community through the creative aspects of painting, making boomerangs and clap sticks etc.

The sense of reconnection is a salient theme in the stories men told. It is important to note that where reconnection was emerging so too were practices that had been lost or had not been present in the community for a number of years. Cultural celebrations and ceremonies were increasing notably and most often observed and commented on by women and service providers.

Strong men were (re)building strong families, strong culture and strong spirits.

As one of the evaluators has noted from the experience of being in community, the practice of culture and cultural wellbeing is intrinsic to the men participating in the *Our Men Our Healing* program:

“It can appear to add more than doing a painting, performing a dance or singing a song as it can go much deeper than this. Cultural practices drive who we are, how we behave, our values, beliefs, attitudes and spirituality. When men come together and share in the discussions of ‘doing it tough’ then they commence a journey in a strong sense of cultural ‘wellbeing’.

When aspects and elements of culture are out of balance then the ‘spirit weakens’ and that’s when we [men, women, families, community] start experiencing problems. There are strong links between lore, country, family and spirituality. In the middle of these sacred elements of connection sits the human spirit and when the connection to any of these sacred elements is ‘broken’ (e.g. through family breakup or substance abuse) the balance and connections are weakened, which in turn ‘weakens the spirit’... For this reason it is important for our men, particularly our men who are involved in our men’s programs to ‘reconnect’ their spirit back to these sacred cultural elements”.

7. Another critical element is the inclusion of women. Women need to be informed and supportive of the program – they need to see the difference. It is the women who have often carried the burden of the men’s disconnection to land and culture. Where they are supportive of the program the key issues begin to be resolved and confidence is built. The integration of men’s and women’s programs was beginning to emerge and seems to happen best once the men’s program is well established.
8. A key measure of success appears to be enhanced self-esteem and confidence in the men. These two elements bring strength and with strength the evaluation finds men become stronger and are more able to take up their roles as providers (through culture and employment), protectors (of families and communities) and teachers (of their children and others). Indeed, the evaluation finds that when the healing process begins, there is in that process inevitably a reconnection to culture and country and when this happens there is increased agency and empowerment. This positions men well to have the confidence to take the cultural lead with younger men, provide increased safety for families and take up employment where previously there had been thought to be limited or no opportunities for employment in their communities.

Indeed, through the *Our Men Our Healing* program men begin to see themselves, their families, their culture and their community through a new lens – which is their lens. It is a lens of hope, respect and possibility. As many men noted, the challenges have not gone away and there is still a complex and difficult local environment. However, *Our Men Our Healing* is providing tangible evidence of change including reduced rates of FDV, AOD use, recidivism and increased connection to culture, education and employment. There is a widespread belief that these can be permanent community-wide trends rather than short term program outcomes.



Appendix 1: Co-design workshop questions

ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS
<p>1. What is a strong man? As a man what does it mean to be strong and what makes you strong? What kind of things makes a strong man and why do you consider those characteristics to be strong?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What stops men being strong, and why?</i> - <i>How do you become a strong man? Why is it important to be a strong man? How can we have more strong men?</i> - <i>What stops the community from being strong?</i> - <i>What happens in families and communities when men are strong?</i> - <i>What happens when men are not strong?</i> - <i>How do strong men strengthen a community?</i>
<p>2. What strategies would encourage our men to choose healing to rebuild their spirits?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What does healing mean and what does it cover? Why should men find their healing?</i> - <i>What are the things that men need healing for?</i> - <i>What needs to happen for healing to occur for men?</i> - <i>How can men find healing?</i> - <i>How should men's healing be done?</i> - <i>Who needs to be involved in men's healing?</i> - <i>How do men currently engage in healing?</i> - <i>How can men better engage in healing?</i> - <i>What kind of healing do men need to become stronger or change for the better and overcome issues such as family violence?</i>
<p>3. How can we start a sustainable men's healing program and what will it do and how should it be run?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What do we need to start a successful men's healing program?</i> - <i>What will a men's healing program mean for men?</i> - <i>What is the best way to develop a men's healing program?</i> - <i>What should a men's healing program include?</i>

Appendix 2: Knowledge Circle members

The Our Men Our Healing Knowledge Circle was formed to ensure genuine input from Indigenous men at a local and national level in response to a need identified by Indigenous men in their desire for sustainable change.

The eight members of the Knowledge Circle represent a diversity of experience in traditional healing, cultural wisdom and counselling and mental health. The men were appointed to sit in the Knowledge Circle after background and safety checks to ensure this responsibility is in safe hands.

The strength of the group is in traditional healing, dignity, humility and integrity and a strong desire to recognise men's ownership of their healing.

Alexis Higlett

Alexis is non-Indigenous to Australia but his Papua New Guinean heritage gives him a common understanding of the plight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. As the 'Bringing Them Home' male counsellor with Danila Dilba (qualified in both mental health counselling and social work), Alexis has great knowledge and experience in working with rural, remote and urban Indigenous men in healing programs. This includes an appreciation of the importance of culturally safe spaces for participants to begin and continue their healing journeys, and in which Elders can take part, showing the respect he has for the wisdom in Aboriginal culture particularly for Elders. (Although Alexis is a non-Indigenous male, he displays a strong respect for Aboriginal cultural ways and Elders and is well regarded by Indigenous men in the community.)

Charles Hodgson

Charles has extensive family and traditional ties throughout southern and northern central desert regions of the NT and grew up in Darwin. He has detailed knowledge and experience in issues affecting Indigenous men in his current capacity as the Men's Health Co-ordinator for the Luritja/Pintubi zone. Charles displays a passion and commitment to his work evident in the high regard in which he is held for helping to develop resources and culturally appropriate programs for Indigenous men, e.g. the 'Suicide Story' and assisting and participating in the 'Rekindling the Spirit' program.

Jack Bulman

Jack is from outside the NT, being originally from South Western New South Wales but now based in Queensland. He has worked as an Indigenous health worker and is now Chief Executive Officer of Mibbinbah Limited where his work with men continues. Jack has extensive hands on experience in social emotional wellbeing for Indigenous males through to the development of culturally appropriate traditional and therapeutic programs. He has published research in the area and has project management skills, including partnership development. Jack is highly regarded in the field of Indigenous men's healing.

Justin Miller

Justin works with the highly regarded StrongBala program in Katherine and comes from a strong traditional and cultural background. His daily job is engaging with Indigenous men in the region who are predominantly from a similar background. He has great respect among his peers and work associates and displays a willingness and enthusiasm to work with men in need across all sections of the community. He has an intricate knowledge of the contemporary issues affecting these men, which includes men from the Ngukurr area.

Michael Torres

Michael is from the Kimberley and has extensive experience working with and in Aboriginal Affairs with various government and non-government agencies. He currently works as the Indigenous Men's Service Co-ordinator with the Darwin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Shelter. Michael displays considerable knowledge of issues affecting men and men's healing groups and has good skills in project implementation and policy. Michael also has an extensive counselling background which assists his program development for Indigenous men.

Michael Young

Michael has a Stolen Generation background with traditional roots in the Kimberley but grew up in Darwin and lived and worked in a remote community for a considerable period of time. He currently works in the Strong Fathers program at the Danila Dilba Health Service and engages men or fathers to, among other things, link them in with appropriate supports. Michael displays knowledge of the lack of services and effective engagement of men in remote communities and some intricate underlying issues valuable to seeking solutions.

Norman George

Norman has a similar background to Justin Miller. Because of this, their expression of interest applications and referee checks were submitted and carried out concurrently. Norman is the elder of the two and works closely with Justin through the StrongBala program. He has status as a strong man, can make things happen and has strong cultural knowledge.

Wayne Davis

Wayne grew up in Darwin from a Stolen Generation family background. His traditional connection is to the north central desert people of the Northern Territory but he has worked with clan groups in the Kakadu area and this gives him a broad understanding of different experiences and systems. His traditional family are regarded as healers and he has been through a Native American healing circle. Wayne displays a genuine passion to be a leader and create change for his people. He understands the importance of culture and connection to country. He also demonstrates good skills in project work.



Appendix 3: Field trip interview guide

The following objectives and outcomes for the *Our Men Our Healing* initiative have been determined in line with the funding agreement and the strategic vision of the Healing Foundation:

1. Ensuring the use of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview to design, develop and implement effective strategies to engage men in remote contexts
2. Supporting men in remote pilot sites to begin the complex and difficult process of healing
3. Contributing to the Healing Foundation's knowledge of men's healing that includes supporting their empowerment and capacity to become positive role models and strong protectors or supporters of their families
4. Contributing towards the evaluation of the project and dissemination of the key findings
5. Increasing the opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men to lead and develop their own solutions to profound trauma and grief and loss, and enhance their resilience and strength.

The key evaluation questions (to be answered by local Aboriginal people):

1. To what degree has the engagement of strong men within communities & families been enhanced?
2. To what degree has strong men's participation in activities been enhanced?
3. To what degree has community functioning and safety been enhanced?

During the field visits to each of the three communities we will explore primarily the process of implementation of *Our Men Our Healing* and secondly identify any outcomes that support the overall aims of the project.

We will speak with community members and key stakeholders within the community (including appropriate service providers). Key people to be interviewed in order of priority will be:

- project leaders, coordinators
- participants in the program
- Elders, community leaders
- community members
- service providers specific to the project (e.g. health services)
- schools, training providers
- local councils



Interview guide

1. Tell us the story of the program in the community? How did it go – for you and others?
2. What were the things that happened to make the project work? In what ways was it successful?
3. What were the challenges in getting the project up and running? What would have helped?
4. Who is involved and what is happening for the men involved? How important is the project? How has healing taken place?
5. What have been the best parts of the project and why have they been so good?
6. What are the sorts of benefits that are the result of the project? Can they be identified at the individual, family and community levels?
7. What more is needed to build the project up?
8. How are stronger men emerging? What is characterising a stronger man/men? How are they contributing to family and community life?
9. What will happen from here? What are the current challenges for the men, the families and the community? What are some of the project risks?
10. The *Our Men Our Healing* project is a pilot, so what recommendations for improvement would you suggest for a broader men's healing project?
11. What is the most significant difference the project has made?



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