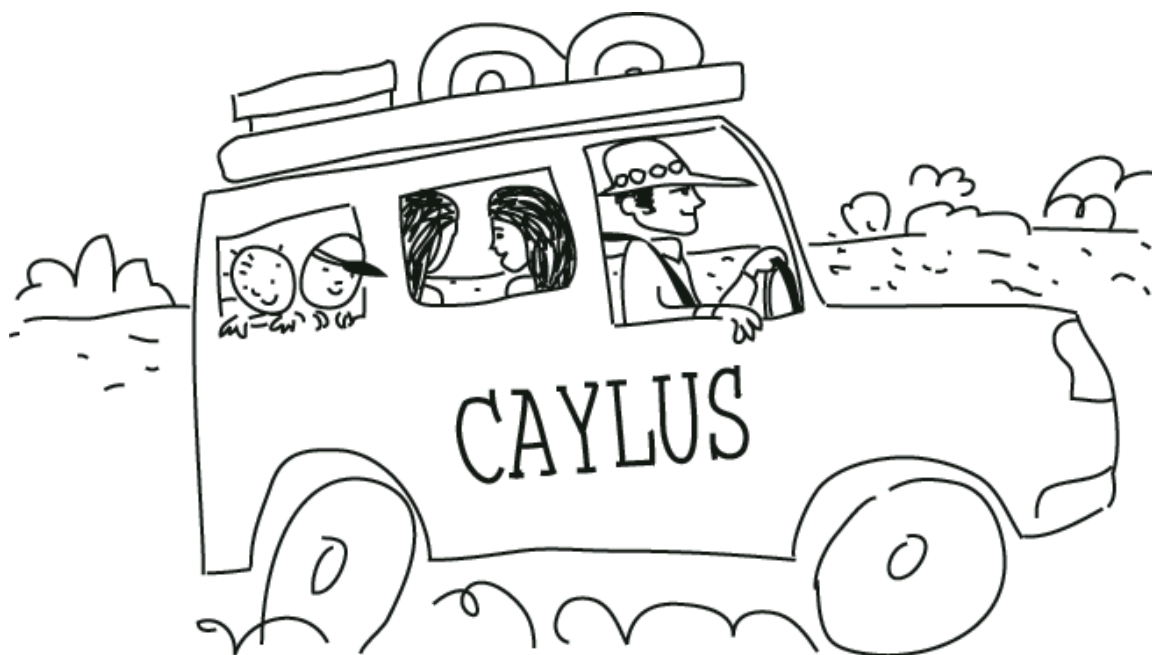


Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory



Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service – Tangentyere Council
July 2019

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2. About CAYLUS

The Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service (CAYLUS) is a youth substance misuse prevention program based at Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs. CAYLUS was established in 2002 and operates across more than 20 remote communities in the bottom part of the Northern Territory. CAYLUS takes a broad approach centred on addressing the supply/availability of substances, reducing the harms caused by substance misuse and addressing the underlying factors that lead to the initial demand for substances.

Policy and strategic direction for CAYLUS comes from a reference group made up of agency and community stakeholders. This group meets at least twice a year to set policy and review resource allocations made to projects through the CAYLUS Brokerage.

CAYLUS has been closely involved in supporting the development and roll-out of Low Aromatic Fuel (LAF) as a way of addressing Petrol Sniffing. This measure has been particularly successful leading to a 96% reduction in sniffing prevalence in communities like those in Central Australia where the fuel has been used comprehensively and in a sustained way¹.

CAYLUS is largely funded by the Commonwealth Dept of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPM&C), though in coming financial year we also have project funding from the Commonwealth Dept of Social Services (DSS), The Aboriginals Benefit Accounts (ABA) which is administered through DPM&C as well as a small amount of funds from individual and corporate donors. While CAYLUS works closely with a number of frontline Northern Territory Government (NTG) agencies we have no ongoing NTG funding. Over the time that we have operated, less than 5% of the funds we have administered have come from the NTG. The majority of this 5% was prior to 2012 when the NTG cut funding that supported a position in CAYLUS.

For detailed information on CAYLUS, our structure and our activities visit <http://caylus.org.au/about/> .

Evaluations of CAYLUS itself and some of our funded projects are available to view/download at <https://caylus.org.au/resources#caylusresources>

Like all PM&C projects in our area, CAYLUS has not had a CPI increase since 2014. This has effectively shrunk our funding by over \$1 million to date while real costs have been going up, and this year resulted in the loss of a position in CAYLUS.

¹ <https://substanceabusepolicy.biom> • [Resources](#)
edcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13011-017-0121-6

3. Gaps in Services to Children and Families in Central Australia

From its outset in 2002 CAYLUS has worked collaboratively to build the capacity of various service sectors in our region to better meet the needs of children and families affected by substance misuse. This has included supporting youth service providers, drug and alcohol treatment agencies, schools, local government agencies, sports clubs and more. As a small organisation serving a large area with immense need it makes sense for CAYLUS work this way, supporting local and regional partners to deliver needed services, rather than duplicating existing programs.

One practical way that we have been able to meet local needs and address service gaps has been through brokering funds. CAYLUS has managed various pools of brokerage funds since our outset. This involves:

- working with community stakeholders including families, community leaders and local agencies to identify the actions or supports that are needed to address issues of concern.
- maintaining an understanding of such needs across the region and how they might be prioritised.
- allocating available funds to projects and initiatives that address the highest priority needs (where possible this is done through allocations to locally governed partner agencies, or if this is not viable through regional agencies or through direct delivery by CAYLUS).
- monitoring the impact of these projects through direct observation, conversations with local stakeholders or through more formalised monitoring and evaluation projects. Learning from this allows us to adjust allocations and projects design to maximise impact.

Below is summary of brokerage allocations between July – December 2018 from one of the brokerages we administer called the CAYLUS Brokerage.

| Description | Amount allocated | Purpose | Recipient |
|---|------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Sporting equipment | \$860 | Support diversionary activities | First People’s Disability Network Tennant Creek |
| Minor equipment for youth programs | \$545 | Support diversionary activities | various |
| Support for the Laramba Youth Program 2018/19 | \$5500 | Support diversionary activities | Central Desert Regional Council (CDRC) |

| | | | |
|---|----------|---|---|
| Volunteer Travel Costs Ampilatwtaja and Youth Program | \$2324 | Support diversionary activities | Purchased directly |
| Purchase Safe Storage Cabinets | \$1200 | Support for responsible retail of risky products | Remote community stores. Yuendumu, Willowra and Papunya |
| Support for Peoples Alcohol Action Coalition 2018/19 | \$20,000 | Support actions to improve NT alcohol policy | AMSANT (auspice PAAC) |
| Hairdressing kits for youth programs | \$6800 | Support for diversionary activities | Various youth programs |
| Provide funding for play area at uniting church hall | \$8000 | Support for diversionary activities | Uniting Church/Meeting place |
| media campaign to promote midyear school holiday programs in local languages | \$2200 | Support for diversionary activities | Purchased directly |
| Food for community BBQ in Wilowra | \$300 | Support for diversionary activities | Purchased directly |
| Purchase Safe Storage Cabinets for Amcal Katherine | \$1991 | Support for responsible retail of risky products | Amcal Katherine Store |
| Provide vehicle for cultural trip | \$500 | Support for diversionary activities | Akeyulyere Inc |
| Purchase Safe Storage Cabinets for Mutitjulu Store | \$561 | Support for responsible retails of risky products | Mutitjulu Store |
| Contribution to Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC) Jaru Pirtjirdi Program Annual costs | \$5000 | Support for diversionary activities | WYDAC |
| Minor equipment for town library holiday program | \$700 | Support for diversionary activities | Purchased directly |
| Catering support for town camp school holiday programs | \$1680 | Support for diversionary activities | Purchased directly |
| Program costs for 2 Mutitjulu 1 week holiday program | \$6188 | Support for diversionary activities | Spark Australia Inc |

Over time we have also been able to address some needs and service gaps through advocacy to government (for funding/policy change) and to service providers (to get them to meet identified needs using existing resources). In 2002 only two remote communities had youth programs that were operating. More communities in our region had funding but not enough funding and little expertise in running youth programs. With our support, there is now more than 20 funded and operating youth programs in the region. Keeping these operating with the patchwork of funding available is one of our main activities.

The existence of this Productivity Commission Inquiry and the Royal Commission that recommended it both point to a widespread understanding that there are deficiencies in service delivery to Children and families in the NT. When there is a gap sometimes resources are simply not there, and sometimes resources have been allocated but are not achieving their intended objectives. Some of the service gaps that CAYLUS works to meet are worth examining in this regard.

NTG Agency Services

NT Territory Families- CAYLUS regularly funds logistics and costs related to Territory Families clients attending rehab. Commonly such clients end up in residential rehab programs without income, needing shoes and clean clothing. Rehab providers are unable to access funding for this through Territory Families and ask CAYLUS for such support. **Based on current spending CAYLUS will provide about \$10,000 in this kind of assistance during 2019.**

In recent years the NTG has been building and resourcing the provision of night time youth activities and school holiday programs in Alice Springs. This is a positive step forward following 5 or more years where many Aboriginal children had no access to sporting and recreation activities outside of business hours. One way CAYLUS has been supporting school holiday programs has been through promoting availability of programs in local languages over the radio and in other forms. **Based on current spending CAYLUS will provide about \$3,000 in this kind of assistance during 2019.**

NT Department of Health- The NT Department of Health administer referrals and assessment under the Northern Territory Volatile Substance Abuse Prevention (VSAP) Act. Designed to prevent and respond to petrol sniffing and other volatile substance misuse this Act provides powers to compel people who sniffing to attend rehab and to declare Management Areas where petrol, glues and other high-risk substances are banned or have to be managed in particular ways.

CAYLUS regularly provides funding for the transport and logistics of getting people who are being managed/ referred under the Act to rehab as well as for costs such as clothing and footwear for clients while they are at rehab. Some of these clients are children whose families need to travel with them and we sometimes also end up paying costs for this. **Based on current spending CAYLUS will provide about \$20,000 in this kind of assistance during 2019.**

Clinical staff working for NT Health do not have ready access to funds to support their engagement with clients some of who are children or have cognitive impairment as a result of their substance misuse or related injury and trauma. Staff do not have access to resources such as toys, craft materials or computer games that can make a big difference in building rapport and keeping clients calm and engaged. Clients often have no income and are hungry. It's unreasonable to expect a hungry child or youth to engage meaningfully in processes to deal with their substance misuse but again NT Health clinical staff do not have the resources to provide a meal to hungry clients and this can severely hamper things. CAYLUS provides some support for these providing toys, materials and equipment to support client engagement and some support for food costs of clients. **Based on current spending CAYLUS will provide about \$20,000 in this kind of assistance during 2019.**

'Management Areas' are legally enforceable zones where volatile substances can be banned altogether or need to be managed in particular ways (eg locked in secure cabinets). These are a useful feature of the NT VSAP act and have been used to mandate the use of Low Aromatic Fuel in high-risk sites and to cut access to alternative substances. To be enforceable such areas need to be signed appropriately so that visiting tradespeople and others are aware of these requirements and can be prosecuted if they breach them. While we at CAYLUS have been keen to support communities in having such areas declared a constant obstacle to this has been that the Dept of Health staff do not have access funds to install appropriate signage. CAYLUS instead has funded and arranged such signage in numerous communities. The most recent of these was Ali Curung in May 2019 at a cost of \$3600. At that point it had been more than 4 years since community residents in Ali Curung initially requested the declaration of a zone, and if CAYLUS had not paid for the production and arranged the installation of these signs community residents would still be waiting.

CAYLUS has raised these service gaps directly with consecutive NT health ministers and most recently we detailed these gaps and made a funding application under the NT Youth AOD Grants Program for a contribution to these costs. We were however unsuccessful. We could refuse to fund such costs but this would clearly disadvantage young people and families in our region.

NT Courts/Justice System

CAYLUS is regularly contacted by legal aid agencies who are representing young people in court where such young people are likely to face incarceration because they do not have the funds or resources to travel (see section 6 – poverty and hunger). Some examples of this are:

- A child/youth needs to go to court in Alice Springs or Tennant Creek, but they are residing in a remote community or a different town. They and their family do not have money to pay for transport, or for accommodation in town.
- A child/youth is appearing in court and can be bailed to reside back in a remote community or with family, away from where they have committed the offense and where they are less likely to reoffend. Often no one has funds to pay for the travel/ logistics of this. When they arrive, they are likely to rely on their families/ carers for food who most likely are only scraping by themselves until their welfare payments can be sorted out, so ideally some initial financial support will be provided to carers. Again, there is no pool of funding to support this.

- A youth can be granted bail to return to boarding school, however the boarding school require a bond. No one has money to pay for this

Without volatile substance misuse being part of the behaviour, CAYLUS cannot allocate funds from our Rehab Brokerage to address this need. In response to needs like these in 2017 the CAYLUS Reference Group allocated funds for a Youth Justice Brokerage. This was a one-off allocation aimed at meeting this type of need, and in the process gain a better understanding the level of demand and ways that this might sustainably be met over time. Between Jan-June 2019 from this brokerage CAYLUS provided support keep 20 individuals out of incarceration for a total cost of \$2800 or \$140 per person.

A recent report from the Law Council of Australia² estimated the total costs to government of juvenile detention in 2016/17 at \$541,000 per young person per year or \$1,482 per night. So assuming we spared each of these 20 clients just one night in detention the taxpayer saved \$26,840 or a benefit of \$9 for every \$1 spent. Or, as is more likely, if each of these people would have spent 10 nights in custody, this support would have saved \$293,600 in costs to governments or a benefit of \$104 for every \$1 spent.

Access to Treatment and Rehabilitation Programs

As detailed above residential rehab programs may have funds to deliver residential care to clients but mostly do not have funds to support the costs of travel or costs of care like clean clothing or activities outside of the program (eg participating in football) while based at rehab. In recent years we had the best outcomes from rehab when clients have been able to attend programs that are geographically distant from their home region where their family reside. This means young people from Central Australia often travel to Darwin for rehab and young people from the Top End come to programs in Central Australia. So travel costs can be as much as \$2,000 if a person is travelling from a remote community.

CAYLUS is funded by PM&C to operate a Rehab Support Brokerage for the benefit of young people in our region. This commonly supports following kinds of costs:

- return travel between home community and residential rehab programs
- costs for basic clothing and personal items while at rehab
- bedding costs for Bush Based Rehab
- costs associated with supervised community placements (eg going to live with family in a nearby community)

CAYLUS provides around \$150,000 of this kind of support each year for clients in Central Australia. This is a gap in other regions where there is no CAYLUS.

Youth Sport and Rec Programs

In remote communities across our region there is widespread agreement that children and young people should have access to fun, regular and reliable recreational, sporting and developmental activities. CAYLUS sees such activities as playing an important role in

² The Law Council of Australia, The Justice Project Final Report Aug 2018.<https://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/justice-project/final-report>

keeping young people busy and away from substance misuse and other risky activities. Youth services can also lead to a range of other useful outcomes including local employment. There are funded Youth Sport and Rec Programs in most communities in our region. These are delivered by the three Local Government regional councils that operate in our region - Macdonnell Regional Council (MRC), Central Desert Regional Council (CDRC), Barkly Regional Council (BRC) as well as by the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC) in the Warlpiri region, and the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPY) in Mutitjulu, Imanpa, Docker River and Aputula. These five organisations deliver the youth programs in remote communities in the CAYLUS region.

While the needs are fairly universal there is a lot of variety in what is being funded and delivered in the region. Historically some communities and regions have greater levels of funding. Some regions are more focussed on delivering intensive one-on-one case work oriented services while others focus on delivery of activities centred programs.

For its part CAYLUS centres its efforts on supporting providers to deliver reliable, basic activities. We also work to support sustainable staffing levels, improvement of facilities, and research, monitoring and evaluation to inform the development of programs.

CAYLUS brokers funds to fill youth service gaps and build the capacity of youth programs in the region. Such allocations include the following:

- additional senior youth worker positions to build safety and sustainability of staffing levels
- funding for local Aboriginal youth workers and trainees. Especially for flexible, casual or part-time employment and for pools of staff as this provides flexibility.
- funding for additional staff/capacity during strategic times
- funding for school holiday programs or other strategic initiatives
- strategic funding for the improvement of facilities (eg consultants fees to develop plans and funding submissions for building upgrades).

CAYLUS was the proponent of a recent Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis project that provided insight into which types of youth program investments achieve the greatest returns. This analysis now helps inform CAYLUS decision making around how best to direct our efforts and resources

The key findings were:

- Investment in youth programs in remote communities across Central Australia indicates a significant net benefit
- Regular, consistent diversionary activities must form the base of youth programs
- Increasing funding for programs with a well-resourced and managed base level of activities, to provide more sophisticated activities, is likely to increase value

This report can be accessed at <https://www.nousgroup.com/forecasting-return-investment-youth-programs/>

Computer rooms

Another gap in the region is access to internet capable computers. With more and more services going on line, access to computers and internet is vital to try to access various forms of income support, as well as banking and other services. CAYLUS started a computer room in Papunya in 2009 in response to community needs, creating a recreational resource with IT training aspects. This proved very popular and successful, both with community members and with local and visiting services who needed access to computers for aspects of their service delivery.

The SROI found that access to a computer room increased the value of the youth program – see sections on Increase digital literacy, pages 35, section 1.7 for Ntaria, and page 50 for Yuendumu. This report can be accessed at <https://www.nousgroup.com/forecasting-return-investment-youth-programs/>

After the success of the Papunya Computer Room project, we checked with the local Regional Councils to see if they were planning to roll out this valuable local resource across the region, and found they were not able to, but were willing to partner with CAYLUS to do this. The local Regional Councils provide space and on ground supervision through their youth program, with CAYLUS providing the equipment and support. There are 24 remote community computer rooms, plus 9 in Alice Springs and 12 in remote dialysis services. This provides reliable access to computers and the internet to approximately 6,000 people across our region.

The computer room project has also been popular with philanthropic organisations, who have donated a brokerage for computers, R&M, IT training and funding for a local history photo archive since 2009, totalling approx. \$250,000. <https://www.dotcommob.org/>

Staff Housing

A lack of good quality staff housing is another major gap that hinders service delivery across a range of sectors in Central Australia. This probably stems from government, agency and community stakeholders being hesitant to invest in housing for staff when housing for community members is often insufficient, overcrowded and poorly maintained.

A lack of staff housing however ends up meaning that positions cannot be staffed, that often staff stay in poor quality or temporary accommodation and this contributes to burn out and high staff turnover, or underqualified or unsuitable candidates are recruited to positions because they are already housed elsewhere in the community. All of these things compromise services.

In the area of youth services CAYLUS has been working to address this gap in our region. We have now built eight houses using mostly Aboriginal Benefits Account (ABA) funding in seven communities. We manage the housing and sublet to youth service providers. This has met some of this need though there are still numerous sites where this issue is unmet and impacts on youth programs.

We are currently the proponent of a Cost Benefit Analysis project that is looking at this issue using four case studies, a school, a dialysis program, a youth program and a ranger program.

This project is a partnership with Deloitte Access Economics and volunteer staff from the Reserve Bank of Australia. We hope this will be completed in time to share with the Commission.

Funds to Maintain Shared Assets

In remote communities in our region there are a number of shared assets that have been falling into disrepair due to combination of a lack of funding and changes in 2007 to the form of tenure governments require before allowing funds to be spent on assets.

In our region such assets have come to be known as the 'Orphan Assets'. They commonly include things like basketball courts, sporting ovals BMX tracks, community halls and youth centres. These facilities are used by schools, sport and rec programs, regional councils, by government representatives and by others.

If an agency wants to put some funds into fixing/repairing an asset like this, they will likely be required by their funders to take out a Lease or License before they can invest funds. Taking out a Lease or License might require paying rent to Traditional Owners (TOs) - CAYLUS was charged \$70,000 for the Hermannsburg Youth Centre which we are leasing for 10 years. Such a lease also requires taking responsibility for the upkeep of the facility during the period that the lease is in place. Many funders will not commit to the ongoing R&M costs of such a facility, or if they do this it may have to come out of an existing budget. Where they have money, smaller local agencies sometimes struggle with managing capital works and upgrades projects which require a range of technical and project management skills. So there are numerous obstacles in the way of local organisations putting money into such facilities. Across Central Australia there are numerous facilities that are in this situation.

Some ways of addressing this would include:

- giving service providers reasonable R&M budgets for the facilities that rely on
- lowering the tenure bar so small amounts of funding can be spent on facilities without requiring a lease
- resourcing regional models for owning and managing facilities with end user agencies perhaps paying an access fee where this is viable

4. Lack of Government Co-ordination

Lack of coordination between tiers of government and between various departments of the same tier of government will no doubt be a recurring theme in submissions to this inquiry. We see a range of evidence of this across the board but will comment on this only in relation to its effect on youth services in remote communities.

As noted above there is wide spread agreement that children and youth in remote communities need access to youth programs, especially regular activities programs run outside of school hours and during school holidays.

Many remote communities in our region now have funded programs. These are run largely by five regional providers as detailed above. These providers' main funding is through PM&C, and they also have a small amount of funding from The NT Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture, and different providers access other project based and philanthropic funding. As detailed above CAYLUS also brokers funds to address strategic gaps in these youth services.

While there is wide agreement on the need, there is no underlying Policy at the Territory or Federal level that informs government decision making around such programs. Prior to the Commonwealth Governments IAS reforms, programs like the Youth in Communities Measure did go some way towards providing a vision that underlined government spending.

The lack of clear vision informing these programs means the types of services they deliver are variable in that governments have no clear bar against which to measure the impact and success of it's investment.

Often this lack of vision results in the funding of casework services rather than the activity based youth development services that the SROI evaluates. This was one reason we commissioned the SROI : to be able to put an objective value on the youth development services. We have not been able to locate such an external evaluation on casework services and remain dubious as to their value in the face of systemic disadvantage, where the entire Indigenous population can be demonstrated to need support. The underlying presumption involved in casework is that the individual can make positive changes, whereas our model attempts to make positive changes to the environment in which the individual and their family is embedded. The Optimal Model (see below) developed by the 5 main youth service providers in our region outlines the goals of a youth development program. At point 6 it warns of the problem involved in casework and suggests any sites where casework is provided should be provided with sufficient resources for this so that the base level of provision of activities programs is not affected.

The lack of clear a clear vision for youth in remote communities becomes particularly problematic when multiple tiers of government are investing in the same programs. An example of this way that the NT Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture, Sport and Active Recreation program funding impacts on these programs.

NT Sport and Rec contributes funds sufficient for a part time position per community across a majority of communities in our region. Funds are to support the provision of sporting activities for community members. Mostly this makes up a part of the funding of local youth programs with youth programs delivering such activities as a part of collection of regular

activities funded by multiple funders. NT Sport and Rec funds are delivered in a chaotic way with funding agreements often developed retrospectively on the expectation that providers will continue to operate programs even when they have no certainty of funding.

Over more than 10 years NT Sport and Rec, who depend on remote youth programs for its service delivery, has proven unwilling to cooperate and plan towards a coordinated, regional approach. The culture of the NT Sport and Rec Program is focussed on building elite sports rather than providing reliable consistent local sporting opportunities. Youth programs that rely on the comparably small amount of funding available through NT Sport and Rec are obliged to arrange for groups of people to attend regional sporting competitions. This happens at the cost of local activities for the majority of young people as youth workers are compelled to be away from community travelling with teams. Such travel is energy intensive and risky as programs hold a duty of care for young people - risks for attending youth increase in the urban environment, and travel on rough bush roads also increases risk. Youth workers return exhausted to the majority of children who have missing out.

Another confounding factor and symptom of the lack of coordination of services is the proliferation of new service providers in the region, with the support of government funding, often funded in roles that duplicate existing programs. A recent example of this is a Sydney based company that has been funded by Commonwealth Health to run soccer programs as a diabetes prevention measure in 4 communities in Central Australia at a cost of \$150,000 per community per year for 3 years. We think such funds would be better directed to supporting/building existing resident youth programs, that are already funded to run sporting activities in these locations are already established in these communities. They could run soccer or perhaps a more locally popular sport. We note that this soccer program is being funded to run in a remote community in the CDRC which last week had to discontinue all their youth programs due to a lack of funds.

There have been some positive steps toward a more coordinated vision for youth in Central Australia. In 2018 PM&C and the 5 youth providers worked to develop an agreed good practice model for a youth program (see section below Optimal model), and then worked to map where each community sat against this model and what the gaps were. There was also some work done towards developing an agreed data collection approach so all programs in the region collect the same program data which could then be analysed regionally. This process has now gone on hold following staff movements in PM&C and possibly also the recent election.

Optimal model and resources for a basic youth program

The following points are considered the optimal basics for delivering effective youth development programs in remote communities in Central Australia.

1. Involvement of local people

Programs need to provide activities and outcomes that are valued by local young people and families.

Young people should be involved in the program development and delivery. The involvement of a number of young men and women who demonstrate leadership qualities is vital in directing, supervising and managing youth program activities. The involvement, guidance and support of a group of young leaders ensures that the ideas for activities which make up the youth program come from young people themselves. This involvement may be in the form of a community 'youth team' or a youth committee with local services determining the most appropriate way of doing this.

More broadly programs need to be accountable to the local community and open to feedback about the service and involve community members in decision making and program planning.

Where local Indigenous organisations with capacity to deliver quality youth programs exist, these organisations should be given priority to deliver youth services over non-local and non-indigenous organisations.

This can be measured through provision of data re local Indigenous employment, and notes from any planning meetings involving local people.

2. Resources and Infrastructure

The following describes the set of resources that is required for optimal youth program delivery in a community with a population of 400 or less, larger communities will need additional staff and potentially vehicles.

- Two senior youth workers, one male and one female;
- A team of local youth workers, 2 FTE or equivalent hours spread across a larger group;
- Designated community based housing adequate for the needs of non-local workers;
- Two 4WD vehicles suitable to transport small groups of young people. Two vehicles allows for the concurrent delivery of activities targeted to different genders and age groups
- A youth program base or headquarters in the form of a youth centre, such as the recreational halls commonly found on communities. This building should be multi-purpose, containing a large open space for indoor sports and games and other activities, a kitchen, storeroom and extra smaller spaces for smaller group activities that enable them to be age and gender appropriate;
- A range of equipment to be built up over time. Basic items would include sporting goods, camping gear, kitchen and cooking utensils. Further equipment needs would unfold gradually in accordance with the scope of the program;
- A designated office space and office equipment including a minimum of internet connectivity and access, a computer, phone and access to printer and copier;
- The provision of line management of the youth worker positions, including access to support, supervision, training, and human resource services.

3. Regularity and Consistency of Activities.

There needs to be consistent delivery of a basic level of scheduled youth program activities broadly available to young people and families in order to provide a reliable and stimulating

environment for young people. Regular and consistent activities are of particular importance for young people during the school holidays, periods known to induce high levels of boredom and potentially outbreaks of substance abuse and other risky behavior.

This could be monitored by collecting data on activities that are run, levels of participation and age and gender of attendees. Also through providing the schedule of youth activities advertised in the community.

4. Gender and Age Status Appropriate Activities.

Across Central Australia youth programs target a variety of demographics often depending on funding parameters and the mix of services available in local communities eg: in some sites youth programs target older demographics and early childhood programs are run separately. Regardless of target groups and alternative local services, across the region and all sites younger children attend youth programs.

Accepting this, youth programs ideally should be resourced to provide some separate activities for children, young women and young men. Such activities will cater exclusively for these gender and age status categories. The capacity to provide exclusive activities is dependent on having male and female youth workers and a platform of constant, ongoing regular activities for younger children.

This could be measured by identifying age and gender specific activities provided and participation data.

5. Activities which are Meaningful, Stimulating and Culturally Relevant.

Meaningful activities should focus on the fostering of self-esteem and confidence in young people, and be based around such themes as personal development, nutrition, exercise, positive adolescent health, and the development of valued cultural skills. The activities should be flexible and determined by young people and community members.

Youth programs should aim to foster strong intergenerational relationships and to encourage intergenerational transmission of knowledge. A range of intergenerational activities may be supported within youth programs, potentially including but not limited to day trips and camps for bush tuckering, seed and bush medicine collection and preparation, artifact making (such as digging sticks, spears, boomerangs), and involvement in visits to country and sites of significance, and land management work. These activities should consist of young people together with senior members of their families, supervised and supported by the youth workers and relevant service providers.

This can be measured by collecting data on outlining activities and their intention, and numbers of community members who assisted with activities. Community/ participant feedback will also be important in this regard.

6. Casework

Another useful role that youth programs can perform is support, advocacy and coordination for individual young people and their families in the form of casework.

Such work can be time and energy intensive and reduce the ability of youth workers to run generalist activities for larger numbers of young people. In some communities, with the support of local families and community leaders it may be appropriate for youth programs to prioritise program and staff time for casework. Ideally these sites should be provided with sufficient resources for this so that the base level of provision of activities programs is not affected.

5. Measuring the Impact of Services

While governments fund numerous initiatives for Children in Central Australia, they do not systematically measure the impact of these programs.

One simple example of this has been some capital works projects done by CAYLUS using ABA funds. Over 10 years or so we have been very happy to secure funding to renovate more than 14 town halls/ youth centres in the region, at a cost more than \$4m. We have worked hard on these projects and achieved good results for local people, significantly improving these facilities. We have been keen to demonstrate our success to the funders so have always encouraged site visits and have offered to facilitate these. However, this has only happened with one of these 14 projects (the most recent in Docker River). So while we have sent through reports and documentation only in one of these 14 projects has anyone visited the site to verify that our claims are true.

More generally with youth services, systematic evaluation of activities has been hampered by the lack of any overarching vision by funding bodies as to what they are trying to achieve. It's hard to measure something when you don't have a bar against which to measure it. Our response has been to undertake and commission independent research on key issues. These include

- The 2005 Opal Fuel Cost Benefit Analysis, which assisted the Commonwealth to decide to subsidise the roll out of Opal low aromatic fuel into our region from 2007, resulting in a sustained 94% reduction in inhalant misuse.³ Since that time the Commonwealth has commissioned ongoing evaluation of the Opal initiative which reports back on a regular basis.
- The 2017 Social Return on Investment Project by Nous Group⁴, which puts dollar figures to the value of youth services provided by youth programs and provides insights into how funding can be most effectively directed.



A graphic from the SROI of remote youth programs showing the return on investment for three youth programs resourced at different levels - basic, medium and high

³ http://caylus.squarespace.com/caylusresources/Opal_CBA_report.pdf

⁴ <https://www.nousgroup.com/forecasting-return-investment-youth-programs/>

As detailed above we are also currently working with Deloitte Access Economics and volunteer staff from the Reserve Bank of Australia to prepare a cost/benefit analysis about the provision of staff housing in remote communities. We have been aware of the bottleneck caused by lack of staff housing in service provision in remote Indigenous communities. We are hoping that the Federal Government will realise the quantifiable advantages to community wellbeing that come with providing this resource and change their policy.

CAYLUS also operates a rolling, monitoring and evaluation process for the youth programs we support through brokerage⁵. We work with our partners to collect program and community survey data which is analysed by staff at The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at The University of Sydney (and previously the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre UNSW). This ongoing monitoring/evaluation of our work helps us to understand what is being and achieved and direct our efforts to achieve maximum impact.

⁵ The latest report from this can be downloaded at <https://caylus.org.au/s/Evaluation-of-the-CAYLUS-Youth-Worker-Brokerage-2013-16-Executive-Summary.pdf>

6. Poverty and hunger

This is the elephant in the room. It underlies all aspects children's lives in the communities that we support. Without food security, any population will have ongoing physical and mental health issues, more engagement with substance misuse and crime, and hence imprisonment.

Background on the NT

The Northern Territory (NT) remains the state or territory with the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia (25 percent).⁶ A total of 58,248 Territorians reported having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origins in the 2016 Census. Indigenous people in the NT represent just under 10 per cent of the total Indigenous population and 0.3 per cent of the total Australian population.

The Northern Territory has 96 major/minor Aboriginal communities and 613 recorded homelands dispersed widely across the Northern Territory. The vast majority of these communities are in very remote locations as defined by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure. Over 51 000 Aboriginal people live in very remote Aboriginal communities or homelands (21 percent of the total Northern Territory population).⁷

Poverty in the NT

The deepest poverty in Australia is found in the Northern Territory⁸, along with the highest prevalence of children at greatest risk of social exclusion.⁹ The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) report ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage based on the Census of Population and Housing. The three Local Government Areas (LGAs) covering remote Central Australia (Barkly LGA, Central Desert LGA and MacDonnell LGA) all rank in the bottom 2 percent of all LGAs in Australia according to the 2016 SEIFA report.¹⁰

Roughly 45 per cent of all Indigenous households in the NT are located below the poverty line, and the census suggests that the level of Indigenous poverty in remote NT has been increasing.

For example (Indigenous people in the NT vs. others in the NT):

- When income levels are adjusted for inflation, between 2011 and 2016 the situation in the NT has deteriorated. Median personal income for Indigenous individuals declined

⁶ 2016 Census,

<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyCatalogue/C73D7CC81CA1FD2FCA258148000A4067?OpenDocument>

⁷ Northern Territory Government 2018, 'Northern Territory Government Response to the Senate Inquiry into Regional Inequality in Australia', Inquiry: Regional Inequality in Australia, Submission 92, 15 May 2018

⁸ <http://regnet.anu.edu.au/news-events/news/7002/deepening-indigenous-poverty-northern-territory>

⁹ UnitingCare Ageing, 2017 'Child Social Exclusion (CSE) Index'. The CSE Index uses 2016 census data and data from other sources such as the latest Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) and the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results.

¹⁰ <https://profile.id.com.au/rda-northern-territory/seifa-disadvantage-small-area>

from \$296 to \$281 per week (adjusted for inflation) between 2011 and 2016. For other households in the NT that figure increased from \$1018 to \$1072.¹¹

- Average Indigenous weekly income was just 26 per cent of the rate of other Territorians in 2016.¹²

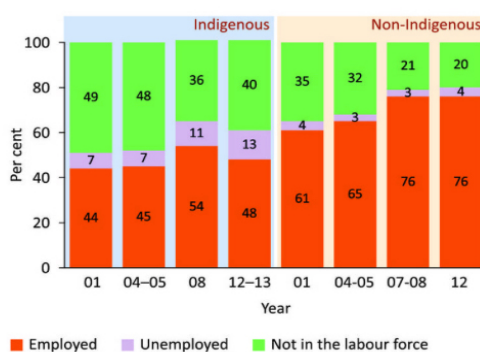
For example (urban vs. remote Indigenous populations):

- While Indigenous incomes have grown steadily in urban areas, where median disposable equivalised household income rose by \$57 per week in real terms between 2011 and 2016, median disposable equivalised household income in very remote areas fell by \$12 per week over the same period.¹³

In recent years we have been dealing with more and more people who are not accessing any form of welfare payment. The bar to stay on payments has been set higher and many of the people that we work with have simply dropped out of the system. Instead they have become reliant on their family members for food and support. Although this family reliance provides a safety net, it also impoverishes the wider community. This also places a burden on elders and the disabled as pensions are the most reliable income stream, and there are expectations that the pensioners will share with needy kin.

In 2012, the rate of non-participation in the labour force was twice the non-Indigenous levels. For very remote areas, non-participation was 47%¹⁴. Although these ABS numbers are not current, we understand the situation is getting worse.

Figure 2.07-4 Labour force status of persons aged 15–64 years, by Indigenous status, 2001, 2004–05, 2008 and 2007–08, 2012–13



Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2001 NHS (Indigenous supplement), 2004–05 NATSIHS, 2004–05 NHS, 2008 NATSISS, 2007–08 NHS, 2012–13

¹¹ Jon Altman, <http://regnet.anu.edu.au/news-events/news/7002/deepening-indigenous-poverty-northern-territory>

¹² <http://regnet.anu.edu.au/news-events/news/7002/deepening-indigenous-poverty-northern-territory>

¹³ CAEPR Census paper: 'Income, poverty and inequality', <http://caepr.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/income-poverty-and-inequality>

¹⁴ <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/indigenous/Health-Performance-Framework-2014/tier-2-determinants-health/207-employment.html> Table 2.07-3 and 2.07-4.

Effect of Community Development Program

The Community Development Program (CDP), in particular, has recently exacerbated the effects of poverty in the NT. CDP is a remote-area Work for the Dole scheme with around 35,000 participants, about 84 per cent of whom are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, often living in discrete remote Indigenous communities or small outstations.¹⁵ In the NT around a quarter of the Indigenous population takes part in the CDP.¹⁶

The CDP requires participants to work up to 20 hours a week (25 hours until March 2019)¹⁷ for Newstart at pay rates half the current minimum award. The CDP has imposed increasingly onerous conditions and intensive surveillance on participants relative to past employment programs. As a result, income support penalties have increased substantially, and Indigenous people have increasingly disengaged from the system. CDP participants in the NT are among the most penalised in the program, with breaches 7.5 times the national average and three times more penalties than CDP participants elsewhere in the country.¹⁸ The CAYLUS Reference group have identified breaches of CDP participants as a major factor impacting on children and families in the region.

Hunger in the NT

As a result of deep and increasing poverty, many Indigenous households in the NT - particularly in remote areas - experience food insecurity and hunger. Youth workers in the region regularly deal with hungry children. Some programs build provision of healthy food into their activities.

According to the 2018 Hunger Report produced by Foodbank, more than half of parents who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (58%) have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months and 40% of charities in the NT reported an increase in people seeking food relief.¹⁹ Other recent Foodbank reports have found that one-fifth of Northern Territory school children go to school without breakfast, compared to a national average of 14.8 per cent.²⁰

A confounding factor is the high cost of food and services in remote communities. A 2015 study for example found that food costs 53% more in remote NT Communities than in urban locations²¹. This means that already scarce family income buys considerably less than it would in other settings.

¹⁵ Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), The Community Development Program Regions, 18 April 2017, <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/indigenousaffairs/community-development-program-regions> (

¹⁶ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-04/cdp-community-development-program-region-penalties-map/10329118>

¹⁷ <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/news/changes-community-development-program-cdp-have-started>

¹⁸ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-04/cdp-community-development-program-region-penalties-map/10329118>

¹⁹ <https://www.foodbank.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018-Foodbank-Hunger-Report.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-28/northern-territory-children-going-to-school-hungry-foodbank-says/6503140>

²¹ <https://theconversation.com/food-price-gap-shows-need-for-subsidies-and-promo-deals-for-remote-areas-46810>

While welfare reform measures such as CDP aim to reduce welfare dependency and its impacts, consideration needs to be given the effects on young people (and their families) of being constantly hungry. Hunger is closely associated with poor health and social outcomes²² and undermines the efforts of government in other areas.

The majority of child welfare referrals in the NT are for neglect, a situation exacerbated by hunger and poverty. The wider Australian community does not understand the real poverty that the Indigenous community suffers, thinking the population must be on Centrelink benefits, and their spending habits are the problem. In our experience this is not the case. Inability to access the increasingly complex Centrelink system is one barrier, resulting in the Not in the Workforce numbers in the graph above. CDP also contributes to the problem, making income security reliant on mutual obligation conditions that many people cannot meet. We note that mutual obligation seems to only apply in one direction, with consistent failure in relation to the obligation of government to provide economic development and a base level of resources to support health, housing and other determinants of workforce participation.

It is our opinion that making significant changes to the Centrelink and CDP systems to ensure food security to Indigenous people in our region would go a long way to addressing Closing the Gap targets, as the problems identified – life expectancy, child mortality, poor health, poor educational attainment - are caused by poverty. The NT is not on track for Child mortality, Early childhood education, School attendance, Life expectancy, Reading and numeracy or employment according to the latest Closing the Gap report²³

²² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4480846/>

²³ <https://ctgreport.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/ctg-report-2019.pdf?a=1>

7. A case study in working with community to address gaps - the Utopia Stronger Communities for Children program

The Stronger Communities for Children program (SCFC) operates in 10 remote communities in the NT. This section of our submission deals with the one CAYLUS ran from 2015 to end 2019. It demonstrates that there are easily identified gaps in service provision, and that running a program well does not guarantee future funding.

CAYLUS was awarded the SCFC contract by PM&C in mid 2015 which provided brokerage to improve quality of life of children in Utopia, working with a community committee to identify and fill gaps. We formed a Local Community Board (LCB) in September 2015 who gave overall direction to the project and approved specific funding applications. All proposals recommended by the LCB were then researched to establish if there was evidence that the strategies being proposed were known to be appropriate. The proposal, community endorsement and supporting research was submitted for approval to PM&C, who ensured these were genuine gaps, and that funding did not already exist to provide the services. We put this project forward as a case study because it shows the gaps are able to be demonstrated to an external agency, PM&C, showing these gaps are real and qualitifiaible.

Further independent analysis of the project from start in 2015 to end of 2017 was provided by Winangali/IPSOS on contract to PM&C and found to be effective. The report found that at that stage \$1,036,521 had been brokered into the region to fill gaps, providing 11 funded activities that saw participation by 7607 local people. – see https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50061cbb84ae216bb5cb9339/t/5a3887bfe2c4838a7635b180/1513654255055/PMC_SCfC+Evaluation_Community+Report+Utopia+LR.pdf

The value of the project was also recognised in 2017 by the NT Human Rights Award in the category Social Change for the school’s attendance strategy, which used cultural activities funded by SCFC to make schooling more relevant to the community.

Further external evaluation was provided when in 2018 the Local Community Board was a finalist in Reconciliation Australia’s Indigenous Governance Awards. In feedback from the Judges and Review Committee, the following strengths of the process were identified :

“Strengths

Strengths of Utopia Stronger Communities for Children Project response to effectiveness included the following:

- Meaningful engagement
- Deciding to do things and then having the resources to do them
- Research partners monitoring the impact of the project
- Core plan is simple and practical & easy to measure
- Project supports local Indigenous agency
- Very effective project and good response to this part of the criteria

Overall it’s a great project with good governance. It was a pleasure reading the application you will go from strength to strength.”

Despite the clear success of the program, the funding was diverted at the end of 2018 to a small local Indigenous organisation.

We think the CAYLUS SCFC project has great case study value as it demonstrated that it is possible to determine local gaps and address them with targeted and supported funding. It demonstrates that external evaluation is possible and useful in this space. It demonstrated the extent of the gaps in that this one region of the NT could identify more than \$1.5 million in gaps that were confirmed to exist by PM&C for the duration of the project, 3.5 years. It also shows that in this case the independently evaluated success of an organisation in running a program has no effect on the continuation of funding of the program to that organisation.