

***Closing the Gap for Young People in Central
Australia – A Baseline Model for Youth
Service Delivery***



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What is the Baseline Model?

The Baseline Model for Youth Service delivery was originally developed in 2017, in partnership with MacDonnell Regional Council, Barkly Regional Council, Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC), Central Australian Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS), NPY Women's Council, and Central Desert Regional Council. The model continues to evolve, adapting to local community needs and from the important lessons learned by frontline providers, young people, and other community stakeholders.

The model has been informed by several independent evaluations undertaken which identify the resources required to deliver successful youth programs in remote settings, and the impact of youth programs on young people and the broader community.

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

Working Together for the Best Outcomes

Youth Services in remote Central Australia aim to work in partnership to support the sector and advocate for this Baseline Model. This is our commitment to delivering best-practice youth services in Central Australia.

Purpose

The shared purpose of Youth Service Programs across Central Australia is to provide fun, engaging, meaningful opportunities for young people that add value to their lives and contribute to their happiness, self-esteem, and wellbeing.

Strategic Plan

All Youth Service providers should operate under one Strategic Plan and delivering services under either a clear framework or Regional Plan, with ongoing support and involvement from both Territory and Federal Governments.

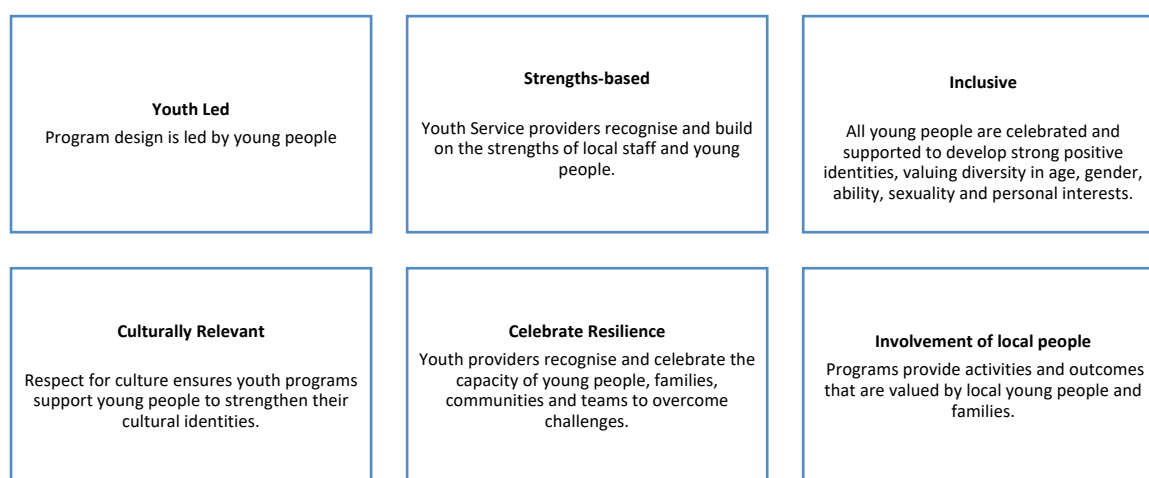
Funding Arrangements

Each region should be funded equitably through the NIAA to resource the implementation of the Baseline Model, and to ensure that young people in every funded community have access to the same level of youth service provision.

Current funding received through the Federal Government (NIAA) is inadequate to meet the needs of young people in Central Australia, and as outlined below, the distribution of funding is disproportionate.

Organisation	Funding Amount	No. of communities serviced	Average \$ per community
Central Desert Regional Council	\$4.4m	9	\$488,888
MacDonnell Regional Council	\$4.9m	9	\$544,000
NPY Women's Council	\$1.8m	4	\$460,819

Youth Service Provider Shared Values



Young people must 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.

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.

All youth programs have local advisory members that advise on culturally appropriate delivery and provide guidance on local issues and needs.

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

Resources and Infrastructure

The following describes the set of resources that is required for basic youth program delivery in remote communities:

Community <100 young people	Community >100 young people
1x Team Leader	1x Team Leader
1 x full time Youth Worker	2 x full time Youth Workers (1m/ 1F)
1 x Case worker allocated to servicing 2-3 smaller communities, providing targeted Case Management to identified young people	1 x full time Case worker
Team local Staff (equiv 2 FTE)	Team local Staff (equiv 4 FTE)
Designated community-based housing adequate for the needs of non-local workers	Designated community-based housing adequate for the needs of non-local workers
2 x 4WD vehicles	2-3 x 4WD vehicles
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, toilet, storeroom and extra smaller spaces for smaller group activities that enable them to be age and gender appropriate;	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, toilet, 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 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	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 for community based staff, including access to support, professional supervision and human resource services.	The provision of line management for community staff, including access to support, professional supervision, training, and human resource services
Opportunities for staff to take regular breaks from community – at least every 2 months	Opportunities to staff to take regular breaks on a. Rotating basis – at least every 2 months
<i>*If multiple Youth Workers are absent from community at the same time, there should be either casual staff or Coordinators who can provide temporary backfill support. This will ensure program deliverables are met, avoid staff burnout and ensure adequate staffing levels in communities at all times.</i>	

Consistent, Baseline Training for all Youth Workers

All Youth Workers who are employed to work across the region should be supported through training, prior to deployment to communities.

Mandatory Training	Desired Training
First Aid	Volatile Substance Use
Fire Safety	Trauma and the brain
4 Wheel Drive / off road driving	Referral processes - TFHC
Mandatory Reporting	
Cultural awareness training	

Regular and Consistent Activities.

Youth programs are an integral service in community. Regular and consistent activities are of particular importance to young people during the school holidays, periods known to induce high levels of boredom and potentially outbreaks of substance misuse and other risky behaviour.

At times it is not appropriate to go ahead with activities as planned; in some circumstances youth program must be closed for the safety of staff and participants.

Program closure can have an impact on young people, staff and the wider community as well as the reputation of the service provider.

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 delivered 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.

Activities 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.

Food Support

With the majority of households on incredibly low incomes, food insecurity is an unfortunate norm in most remote communities. The provision of a nutritional snack and or food in after school programs, and during school holiday periods is essential. Particularly during the school holidays – it is evident that during these times where a school nutrition program is not available, and if families are unable to feed children, there are a higher number of break-ins at the shop and in houses. To prevent children from going hungry, food should be provided at youth programs – even basic food such as sandwiches and fruit.

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.

Adequate Salaries and Wages for Youth Workers

As of March 2024, Youth Service Providers in every region across Central Australia have multiple vacancies and gaps in service provision. Remote Youth Service providers are simply not adequately funded to pay salaries high enough to attract and retain properly experienced and qualified staff, or to compete with town-based organisations offering higher salaries for less intense positions. Oftentimes, under-qualified and experienced staff are recruited to roles beyond their means and a high staff turnover, burnout and further vacancies are a result.

To address this issue, Youth Services providers should receive adequate funding for staffing which aligns to the SCHADS Award, which is used to inform the salaries outlined in Enterprise Bargaining Agreements. A standardised rate of pay for staff would also address issues of competing against one another when undertaking recruitment.

Selection Criteria for Staffing

- Eligible for Working With Children's Check
- Criminal History Check
- Experience in delivery of youth programs, ideally in remote settings

Remote Loading

Incremental remote loading for non-local staff, based on distance from Alice Springs with loading increasing with distance. The logic for this is based on the limited number of services as communities become more remote, and the limited ability of staff in very remote communities to access town for respite, holidays and general visits. A remote loading will make it easier to attract and retain adequately qualified and experienced staff in those communities that are very far from regional centres.

Adequate Travel Days

When staff live 3 or more hours from a regional centre (Alice Springs / Katherine / Tennant Creek / Darwin etc), additional, paid travel time should be allocated to ensure that staff based in communities further from town are not at a disadvantage, compared to their counterparts based closer to town. An example of additional travel time could be something along these lines, assuming that staff should be able to leave their communities to take holidays, a minimum 4 x per year.

Hrs from Town	Additional travel days per year
3 - 4	4
5 - 7	8

Minimum Staff Ratios

These ratios are the minimum staff required for each activity. All activities must have at least one senior staff member present, it is encouraged to have at least one local staff member at each activity.

- 2: Afternoon activity (inside)
- 2: Afternoon activity (outside)
- 2: Bush trip (less than 8 young people)
- 3: Bush trip (more than 8 young people)
- 3: Evening activity (small community, less than 40 young people expected)
- 4: Evening activity (large community, less than 60 young people expected)
- 5: Night-time community sport/music (expected more than 40, less than 60 people)

Note – each service may assess whether a staffing minimum should be increased, given the unique circumstances in their community.

Youth Procedures

Youth Services in remote communities are required to have protocols and procedures on the following programs and or situations.

1. Safe travel procedure
2. Burn out
3. Camp fire safety

4. Program closure
5. Staffing ratio's
6. After hours responses
7. Staff supervision

Monitoring and Evaluation

To allow program activities, participant demographics, attendance etc to be adequately monitored and evaluated, a shared reporting database is required for Youth Service Providers. The database would be shared across the region, allowing each provider to log in with unique passwords, and access and enter only relevant program data.

Appendix

Investing in the future: The impact of youth programs in remote Central Australia: a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis

Evaluation of the Youth Development Program: CLC and WYDAC