



**Mount Isa Centre for Rural and  
Remote Health**

**Evaluation of the Marapai  
Ngartathati Murri Women's Group and Yurru  
Ngartathati Men's Group -  
Indigenous Justice Program  
for North West Queensland Indigenous  
Catholic Social Services**

**Final Report  
November 2013**

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## **Acknowledgements**

I'd like to sincerely thank the participants of the evaluation including community Elders, clients and stakeholders for their willingness to share their knowledge of and experience with the NWQICSS justice program. I'd also like to thank the NWQICSS staff for their willingness to participate and assistance with the evaluation. Thanks to the other MICRRH staff that undertook some of the interviews and provided support on the project. It has been a pleasure working with you all to complete this evaluation.

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Overview of the project**

The Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health (MICRRH) was commissioned at the beginning of 2013 by North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services (NWQICSS) to undertake an evaluation of their justice program. The justice program received funding during January 2012 – June 2013 from the Australian Government Attorney General's Department and seeks to address Indigenous offending in Mount Isa by providing a diversionary rehabilitative bail program operating through the Indigenous Sentencing List (formerly the Murri Court). The program incorporates case management, Murri Men's and Women's Groups, referral to other community services and Bush Healing. NWQICSS also indicated that they have adopted a narrative therapy approach to counselling their clients.

### **Methodology**

MICRRH undertook the evaluation using a broad appreciative inquiry approach and employing a yarning methodology for Indigenous clients of the program and semi-structured interviews for staff, stakeholders and NWQICSS management. The evaluation focused on four broad evaluation questions:

1. What is working well with the program?
2. What are the challenges in implementing this program?
3. What is the impact of this program on clients' lives?
4. What improvements could be made to the program?

It is important to note that MICRRH was invited to conduct the evaluation as the funding period neared its conclusion and therefore were not involved in setting up any baseline data which the program outputs and outcomes could be assessed against. Consequently, the evaluation was restricted to a process evaluation and self-reported outcomes, which limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the results. However, the self-reported outcomes provide a unique insight to changes that clients have made during their journey through the justice program.

## Results

NWQICSS assisted a total of 107 clients (90 men and 17 women) from various communities during the funding period January 2012 – June 2013. Clients typically had multiple contacts with the justice system prior to the program and had multiple current offences. The offences tended to be related to domestic violence (DV) breaches, breach of bail conditions and driving related offences. The majority of sentencing outcomes for male clients as part of this process were community based orders.<sup>1</sup>

During this evaluation participants were asked about their perspectives of offending by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Mount Isa. Participants identified three key themes in relation to offending including; life events, behavioural issues and social determinants. Life events related to tragic or traumatic events and lack of family stability. Interviews with staff indicated that often these life issues had not been addressed which resulted in behaviours that could contribute to offending. Participants identified behavioural issues which can lead to offending including; boredom, undertaking activities for the thrill, normalised behaviour, mimicking others and substance abuse. A majority of participants highlighted the perceived relationship between alcohol and interpersonal conflict and offending in Mount Isa. Issues at a systemic level were labelled as social determinant factors that can lead to offending and included lack of support, loss of culture, social disintegration, lack of education, unemployment and housing issues (e.g. overcrowding and homelessness).

The results of the evaluation highlight that the NWQICSS program is highly respected and valued among clients and stakeholders. There were high levels of congruence between the elements of success, challenges and improvements reported by staff, stakeholders and clients. Participants reported a number of elements that were considered successful in the implementation of the program namely its cultural focus, the Men's and Women's Groups, the provision of practical support, the staff and the level of stakeholder engagement and collaboration. The evaluation highlighted some challenges in implementing the program related to capacity, client and community influences and managing program boundaries. However, these challenges have been reported among other Indigenous community based justice programs and were also identified as issues for other organisations in Mount Isa. Participants indicated a number of program improvements that could be made to the program relating to; operational issues, program reach, program delivery and program direction.

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<sup>1</sup> The same level of data was not available for female clients.

There were a number of positive gains reported in terms of improving the lives of clients and addressing the underlying factors which may contribute to offending among the client base. Clients that were interviewed reported sharing health and service information that they had learnt at the Men's and Women's Groups with their families and in social settings with their friends. Various client transformations were reported including changes in their emotional status, physical appearance, skills and behaviour. A number of compliance and justice process impacts were reported including the recognition by clients that the program served as a second chance to address their offending behaviour rather than going to jail. Stakeholders and staff reported that compliance with Court based conditions had improved, some clients have stayed offence-free and there was an observed lessening in the frequency and severity of offending from some clients. A number of client achievements were reported in terms of completing educational courses, obtaining accommodation and securing employment.

### **Recommendations**

The NWQICSS justice program appears to incorporate many of the suggested elements outlined in the literature involved in implementing a successful Indigenous justice program. The current evaluation has shown this program has real potential to positively impact the lives of Indigenous offenders in relation to addressing their offending behaviour. NWQICSS have been faced with similar challenges in implementing this program that were reported in the literature by other organisations implementing community based justice programs. One of the key issues facing these organisations is the difficulty to obtain long-term funding which affects the ability of the organisation to create a solid foundation for the program, often relying on a core group of community members to ensure the consistency in service delivery. Securing this funding is fundamental for NWQICSS to continue their operations and thus address the recommendations below. Funding bodies are urged to consider a justice reinvestment approach and to provide at least three year funding to build on the success of this program.

The evaluation resulted in three levels of recommendations including *foundation* (recommendations that are essential for the program to continue); *focus* (areas to improve existing program delivery) and *future* (areas that may be considered to strengthen the program in the future).

#### **A - Foundation:**

- 1. Funding provision – it is recommended that funding bodies adopt a justice reinvestment approach to community based justice programs.** This will allow a portion of funds typically spent on imprisonment to be diverted to community initiatives that seek to address the underlying causes of crime in the community.
- 2. Securing funding - it is recommended that funding of at least three years be obtained from a relevant Federal or State funding source.** This will provide program sustainability and organisational stability which will allow the recruitment of staff and allow the organisation to implement a planned and structured approach.
- 3. Staff – it is advised that at least two additional male justice workers and a female justice worker be hired to meet the demands of the program and provide sustainability within the program (resulting in a total of four male workers and one female worker).** Attracting new staff may be achieved through advertising the position through existing networks (e.g. Townsville Catholic Diocese; community contacts) or considering alternative employment options (e.g. a community service traineeship). It is acknowledged that it may be difficult to attract staff given the award wage for community service roles and the high cost of living in Mount Isa.

#### **B - Focus**

It is recommended that NWQICSS consider:

- 1. Structure – review the structure of both the justice team and Men’s Group in order to meet the growing demand for the service.** Team structure may include adopting a case load approach or restructuring the positions within the team (e.g. creating two types of positions justice engagement workers and justice case workers). To ensure the Men’s Group continues to be effective the group should be divided into smaller groups.
- 2. Staff training – complete a staff audit and develop training plans.** An audit of NWQICSS staff should be undertaken to identify existing skills and training completed by staff in the organisation. A training audit could be conducted using a survey or through reviewing staff human resource files to identify the skills, qualifications and training that each staff member has acquired. After completing the audit a training plan for staff to identify skill areas and training that staff require should be developed.

3. ***Case management – implement case management processes, monitor client progress and measure client outcomes.*** NWQICSS have made progress in implementing case management practices which could be strengthened by implementing the new case management templates that have been designed; training new and existing staff on how to use the templates; developing policies and procedures for program activities; as well as developing, implementing and monitoring appropriate client impact and/or satisfaction measures.
4. ***Women’s Group – place a greater emphasis on the women’s program to support the positive gains from the men’s program.*** This could be achieved by supporting and mentoring a new female justice worker; focusing on data collection; utilising other NWQICSS programs to promote the Women’s Group and hosting family days at the Child and Family Centre for Men’s Group participants to promote the Women’s Group to partners. In addition, NWQICSS should ensure that the Women’s Group have an opportunity to participate in Bush Healing activities and a dedicated space and equipment for their activities.

#### **C - Future**

1. ***Bush Healing – focus efforts on strengthening the Bush Healing program so that it is a regular activity that supports the clients of the justice program.*** This can be achieved by:
  - employing a designated Bush Healing coordinator;
  - seeking funding from alternative sources for this program;
  - mentoring past participants to assist with facilitating the program;
  - integrating activities with NWQICSS Child and Family Centre;
  - generating income from the program outputs for participants or NWQICSS (e.g. exhibiting or selling paintings).
2. ***Holistic approach – fostering a holistic approach which focuses on the family to address justice issues,*** through promoting the Women’s Group; engaging stakeholders in activities; hosting family events and integrating service delivery with the Child and Family Centre.

- 3. Young people – working with existing/new stakeholders to create a justice program suitable for young people at risk (under the age of 17).** This will require stakeholder collaboration to identify service opportunities, gaps and obtaining additional funding. NWQICSS could also host youth or family activities in the Child and Family Centre and provide a youth bush healing program.
- 4. Employment and education – continue to focus and explore new opportunities for employment and education activities for clients of the justice program.** This may include:
- linking with educational providers/employment services to deliver skills based courses (e.g. numeracy and literacy);
  - engaging additional stakeholders to present at the Men’s and Women’s Groups;
  - linking education and employment opportunities with the Child and Family Centre;
  - consider utilising registered training organisations within the community or within Townsville Catholic Diocese to deliver short courses for clients;
  - train and mentor clients to become peer mentors or community engagement workers to provide employment opportunities and to assist with the implementation of the justice program.



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## **1. Introduction**

The Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health (MICRRH) was commissioned at the beginning of 2013 by North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services (NWQICSS) to undertake an evaluation of their justice program including the Marapai Ngartathati Murri Women's Group and Yurru Ngartathati Men's Group (herein referred to as the justice program). The NWQICSS justice program was funded in January 2012 to June 2013, by the Australian Government Attorney General's Department under their *Indigenous Justice: Restorative Justice Program*. The program seeks to address Indigenous offending in Mount Isa by providing an alternative to incarceration in the form of a diversionary rehabilitative bail program operating through the Indigenous Sentencing List [ISL] (formerly the Murri Court). NWQICSS seeks to support clients to identify their triggers, assists with community integration and refers clients to services with the hope of preventing recidivism. The program incorporates case management, Murri Men's and Women's Groups, referral to other community services and Bush Healing. NWQICSS also indicated they have adopted a narrative therapy approach to counselling their clients.

MICRRH undertook the evaluation using a broad appreciative inquiry approach and employing a yarning methodology for Indigenous clients of the program and semi-structured interviews for staff, stakeholders and NWQICSS management. This report describes the results of the ten month evaluation of the justice program including an overview of the program, Mount Isa and MICRRH. The methodology employed and evaluation results are then presented. A series of recommendations are proffered with reference to ensuring the sustainability of the program.

### **1.1 Background to the NWQICSS justice program**

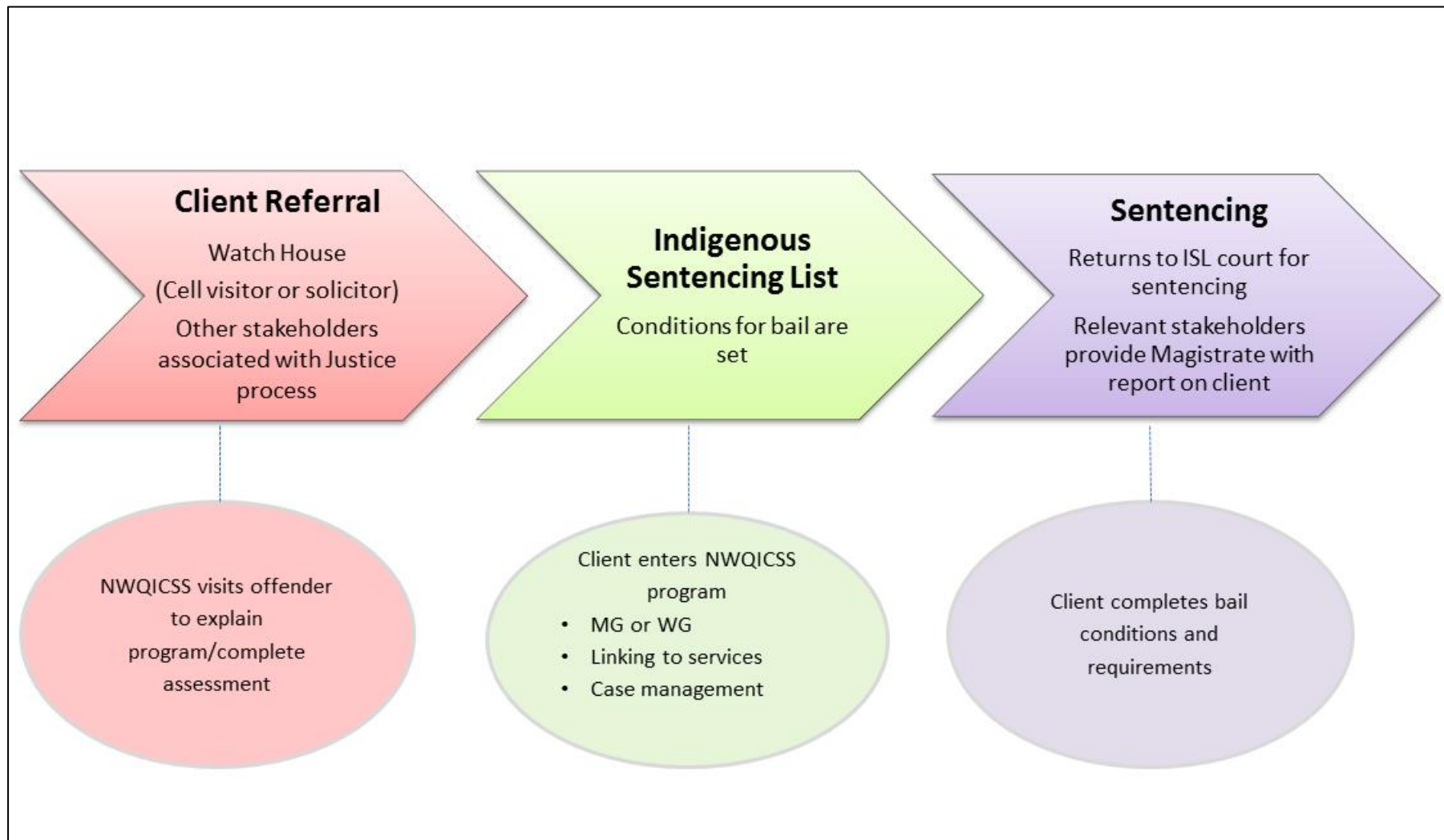
NWQICSS was established in 2006 and is a registered not-for-profit organisation operating under the auspice of the Good Shepherd Parish, Mount Isa which belongs to the Roman Catholic Trust Corporation for the Diocese of Townsville. It is an organisation that relies on the financial support of Government funded programs and in-kind support of donors to deliver services to Indigenous people in North West Queensland. The organisation's operations can be classified under three broad program areas including children and families; justice and community support (Appendix 1).

NWQICSS received funding to implement a justice program from the Australian Government Attorney General's department under restorative justice funding for the period January 2012 – June 2013. The Indigenous Justice Program had one objective as listed in the funding agreement: *to develop and undertake projects that will help respond to the urgent challenge of the accelerating rate of Indigenous offending and incarceration, and to support the realisation of safer communities.* The funding agreement specified that the outcome of this program is to see 'a reduction in the rate of offending, recidivism and incarceration rates in the client group and contribute to increased community safety'. In order to achieve this outcome the funding agreement specified the following activities:

- to employ three Restorative Justice Officers to conduct Murri Men's and Women's Groups
- each officer will have a case load of 15-25 clients per year
- clients will be referred by the Murri Court in Mount Isa (now called the Indigenous Sentencing List)
- to assist clients to avoid offending behaviours by identifying and understanding the triggers to their offending and underlying issues from their life experiences.

As per the funding agreement clients of the NWQICSS justice program are predominantly referred through the Indigenous Sentencing List (ISL), with a small number referred by other services (e.g. Probation and Parole). At the time of interviewing the justice program employed one Evaluation Officer and three Restorative Justice Workers (two male and one female). However, at the time of writing the report the female justice worker had resigned to pursue employment with another organisation. During the course of the funding period three male restorative justice workers also resigned to pursue other employment opportunities. The program includes individual case management, referral to other services, Men's and Women's Groups, Bush Healing. NWQICSS also indicated that they have adopted a narrative therapy approach to counselling their clients. Figure 1 outlines the client journey through the justice system and into the NWQICSS justice program.

Figure 1: The client journey in the justice program



## 1.2 Overview of Mount Isa

Mount Isa is a remote mining town and is located in North West Queensland, situated 904km (approximately 10 hours drive) west of Townsville and 1830km north west of Brisbane.<sup>1</sup> The traditional owners of Mount Isa are the Kalkadoon people.<sup>1</sup> The area surrounding Mount Isa is a vast arid landscape with deposits of lead, silver, copper and zinc, which has been mined since the 1920s. The town is largely based around Mount Isa Mines and associated services.<sup>2</sup>

The town has a population of 21,237 and an estimated Indigenous population of 3,206 (15% of the population compared to an Indigenous population of 4% in Queensland).<sup>3,4</sup> There is no public transport in Mount Isa and in 2011 approximately 7.9% of dwellings in Mount Isa were without a vehicle.<sup>3</sup> Due to its geographic isolation and main industry, the cost of living is high in Mount Isa (median weekly rental for a three bedroom house is \$580 per week).<sup>5</sup>

There are fluctuating population levels in Mount Isa attributed to fly in and fly out miners and people arriving from other communities.<sup>6</sup> This has resulted in a shortage of affordable and/or adequate housing and a strain on available infrastructure and social services.<sup>6</sup> The Indigenous population in the region is highly mobile particularly around certain festivals. Indigenous people may also visit from remote communities for health appointments, Court appearances and recreation. There are also people that visit Mount Isa from 'dry communities' in order to consume alcohol.<sup>7</sup> Central and North West Queensland Medicare Local (CNWQML) have highlighted a shortage in service delivery in the region including:<sup>8</sup>

- Lack of GP workforce to meet community needs
- Lack of dental services
- Lack of psychology and counselling services
- Lack of specialist and allied health services
- Need for child development, risk prevention and youth programs
- Need for drug and alcohol prevention programs
- Need for increased patient understanding of health issues – health education

There are disparities in the town among those that work in the mine and those that do not. This is particularly apparent when comparing census data for Indigenous and non-indigenous residents.

According to the 2011 census, approximately 8.9% of all dwellings in Mount Isa were being rented from the state government housing authority.<sup>3</sup> When examining Indigenous households only, 34% of all households with Indigenous persons were rented from the state housing authority.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, median personal income varied between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (\$472/week for an Indigenous person and \$1,043/week for a non-Indigenous person).<sup>9</sup> Median weekly household incomes also differed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous households (\$1,363 household with Indigenous person compared to \$2,190 non-Indigenous households).<sup>9</sup> Average household size varied between Indigenous and non-Indigenous households (3.5 compared to 2.6, respectively).<sup>9</sup> This overview has provided an indication of the context within which the NWQICSS justice program operates.

### **1.3 Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health (MICRRH)**

Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health (MICRRH) is one of 11 Commonwealth Government funded University Department of Rural Health centres. The centre operates within James Cook University and has three spheres of academic endeavour including education, research and Indigenous health. The staff employed within the centre reflects these spheres and includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics, researchers, health professional and administrative staff (resident in and working within the region). MICRRH's objectives include:

- Promote professional education and training in rural and remote health with a specific emphasis on professional education and training of Indigenous persons.
- Recruitment and retention of health professionals in rural and remote areas.
- Development of effective means of rural and remote health delivery.
- Develop a population and public health focus.
- Participation by Indigenous people in population health.

### **1.4 Objectives of the evaluation**

Upon commissioning the project, staff from MICRRH met with both the funding body and NWQICSS to discuss the purpose of the evaluation. In keeping with the requirements explained by NWQICSS and the funding body the evaluation focused on four broad evaluation questions:

1. What is working well with the program?
2. What are the challenges in implementing this program?
3. What is the impact of this program on clients' lives?
4. What improvements could be made to the program?

Further information concerning the methodology of the evaluation is provided in Chapter 2. The evaluation included the following milestones outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1: Project milestones**

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Date</b>
Finalised project plan	Within 2 weeks of contract being signed
Ethics clearance obtained	Ethics approval was granted on 11 March 2013.
Literature review completed	Submitted with progress and final report
Develop data collection instruments	End March 2013
Collect data	April – June 2013
Progress report	End June 2013
Submit draft final report for feedback	End September 2013
Obtain feedback from participants and incorporate into report	End October 2013
Submit final report	End November 2013

## **1.5 Limitations**

MICRRH was invited to conduct the evaluation as the funding period neared its conclusion and therefore were not involved in setting up baseline data against which the program outputs and outcomes could be assessed. Therefore, no pre-intervention data was available for comparison. Given the timeframe and the aforementioned issues the evaluation was restricted to a process evaluation and self-reported outcomes as opposed to a more rigorous design to assess impact or outcome evaluation. This limits the types of conclusions that are able to be drawn from the results. In particular, it was not possible to attribute any improvements in client outcomes to the program itself. However, the self-reported outcomes provide a unique insight to changes that clients have made during their journey through the justice program.

## **1.6 Structure of this report**

This document presents the results of the evaluation in relation to the evaluation questions. The remainder of the document includes:

- Chapter 2: Literature review
- Chapter 3: Overview of methodology
- Chapter 4: Outline of results to the four evaluation questions
- Chapter 5: Recommendations and conclusion.



## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

A literature review was undertaken to provide context for the review of the NWQICSS justice program. Specifically, the review focused on:

- Over representation of Indigenous people in prison
- Recidivism among Indigenous people
- Risk factors contributing to crime and recidivism
- Justice paradigms
- Reviews of other community based Indigenous justice programs

A range of published journals, reports and grey literature were used to inform the review. The literature was sourced through journal databases available through James Cook University,<sup>2</sup> program publications, government publications and websites. The term Indigenous is used in this review to represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Where the program information identified a specific target group that target group has been referred to (e.g. Aboriginal).

### 2.2 Indigenous people in prison

It is well documented in the literature that Indigenous people are over represented in prison, a trend which has been recorded consistently over time.<sup>10-13</sup> The latest *Prisoners in Australia* report indicates that the rate of imprisonment for Indigenous people was 15 times higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts.<sup>14</sup> The median age of Indigenous prisoners tended to be younger for non-Indigenous offenders, with the largest proportion of Indigenous prisoners being in the 25-29 year age group.<sup>14</sup> The *Prisoners in Australia* report records the most serious offence/charge for offenders in the prison system. Indigenous prisoners tended to be charged with 'acts intended to cause injury'<sup>3</sup> and 'unlawful entry with intent' in comparison to non-Indigenous prisoners who were charged with 'illicit drug offences' and 'acts intended to cause injury'.<sup>14</sup> Indigenous prisoners were more likely than non-Indigenous prisoners to have a prior conviction.<sup>14</sup> Over a quarter (29.7%) of prisoners in Queensland identified as Indigenous.<sup>14</sup> Given this over-representation of Indigenous people in prison, it is imperative that justice programs address the risk factors leading to crime and recidivism for Indigenous people.

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<sup>2</sup> Journal databases used to retrieve articles included Informit, Wiley Online Library, Proquest and Taylor and Francis.

<sup>3</sup> Acts, excluding attempted murder and those resulting in death, which are intended to cause non-fatal injury or harm to another person and where there is no sexual or acquisitive element.

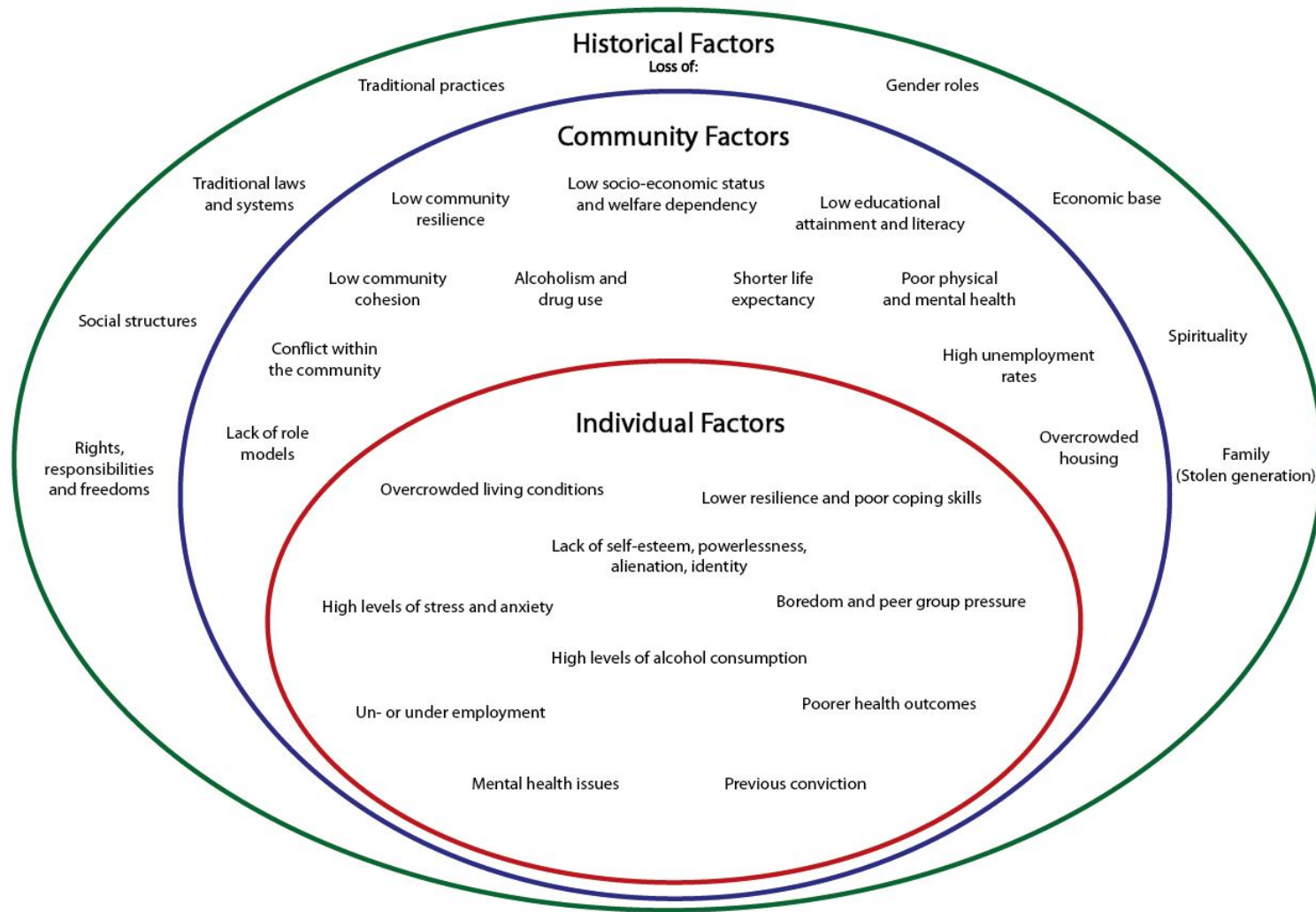
## **2.3 Recidivism among Indigenous people**

Prison data indicates, as well as being over represented in prison, Indigenous people are more likely than non-Indigenous prisoners to return to prison.<sup>13-15</sup> The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data indicate that 74% of Indigenous prisoners had a prior adult imprisonment compared with 47.8% of non-Indigenous prisoners.<sup>14</sup> In addition, other studies have shown that Indigenous prisoners were more likely to have additional contact with the justice system, higher rates of imprisonment, higher frequency of contact with the system and shorter time periods between initial release and return to prison.<sup>13,15</sup> Willis and Moore's study showed that at six months 24% of released Indigenous prisoners had returned to prison (which was double that of non-Indigenous prisoners).<sup>15</sup>

## **2.4 Risk factors contributing to crime and recidivism**

The literature outlines a number of interconnected risk factors that may contribute to crime or recidivism among Indigenous offenders. These risk factors can be classified as historical, community and individual factors (Figure 2). Many of the individual factors have been found to contribute to crime and recidivism among all prisoners regardless of Indigenous status.<sup>13</sup> However, it is noted that the prevalence of these factors is greater amongst Indigenous people, which may contribute to the higher rate of imprisonment among this cohort.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 2: Risk factors contributing to crime and recidivism<sup>11,13,15-21</sup>**



### **2.4.1 Historical factors**

It is noted in the literature that historical practices of colonisation have contributed to many of the community and individual risk factors associated with crime among Indigenous offenders.<sup>16</sup> The relations between European settlers and Indigenous communities resulted in social, cultural and economic dispossession. This has led to a number of negative outcomes including the loss of: <sup>16</sup>

- rights, responsibilities and freedoms
- traditional laws and systems
- spirituality
- traditional practices
- gender roles
- economic base
- social structures
- family (stolen generation).

A clear link between historical practices and Indigenous offenders has been demonstrated in the high number of offenders indicating that they were taken from their families as part of the stolen generation.<sup>13,17</sup>

### **2.4.2 Community factors**

Indigenous communities are often disadvantaged across multiple areas when compared to Australia as a whole which can contribute to criminal behaviour within these communities. The literature indicates that Indigenous communities may be affected by the following: <sup>16,18</sup>

- shorter life expectancy
- conflict within the community
- low socio-economic status and welfare dependency
- low community cohesion
- high unemployment rates
- lack of role models
- alcoholism and drug use
- overcrowded housing
- low educational attainment and literacy
- low community resilience
- poor physical and mental health.

Furthermore, these factors are more likely for Indigenous people living in remote locations.<sup>16</sup> The breadth of this disadvantage can contribute to the circumstances of individuals and the likelihood that these individuals may commit a crime.

### **2.4.3 Individual factors**

Historical and community factors can influence an individual's life experience which shapes an individual's personality and how an individual perceives and responds to different situations.<sup>13,16,20,21</sup>

Individual factors that are associated with offending, that are amenable to change, are referred in the justice literature as criminogenic needs and are often the factors that are targeted with interventions.<sup>19</sup> The community and historical factors which lead to disadvantage may contribute to individual circumstances such as:<sup>13,16,20-22</sup>

- un- or under employment
- overcrowded living conditions
- high levels of alcohol consumption
- lower resilience and poor coping skills
- high levels of stress and anxiety
- lack of self-esteem, powerlessness, alienation, identity
- mental health issues
- cognitive impairments (e.g. Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)
- poorer health outcomes
- boredom and peer group pressure
- previous conviction.

Much of the literature related to risk factors has examined cohorts of offender data to determine the underlying individual characteristics associated with crime. Among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders; being a young male is associated with most offence types.<sup>11,16</sup> This is likely to be a result of the propensity to undertake risky behaviour, peer group pressure, alcohol misuse and boredom.<sup>16</sup> The gender difference accounting for more male than female offenders among Indigenous offenders has also been linked to dispossession during colonisation particularly of males in the community.<sup>16,18</sup>

Alcohol misuse has also been identified as a risk factor for committing crimes. While it is recognised that the proportion of Indigenous people who consume alcohol is lower when compared to the non-Indigenous population, Indigenous consumers of alcohol are more likely than non-Indigenous

consumers to engage in harmful levels of drinking.<sup>16,21</sup> Furthermore, alcohol has been identified as the most important risk factor contributing to violence, assault and conflict in Indigenous communities.<sup>16,21</sup> Furthermore, international research suggests that over half of people with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder will come into contact with the justice system.<sup>22</sup>

Indigenous people experience more disadvantage in terms of education, employment, income and housing. This is represented in offender and population data with Indigenous people more likely to have lower educational attainment when compared to non-Indigenous people, this can affect the likelihood of employment and ability to obtain a stable financial basis for the individual and their family.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Indigenous people are more likely to have a lower weekly income or be reliant on welfare when compared to non-Indigenous people. In addition, overcrowding and substandard housing is more likely to be experienced by Indigenous people which can lead to conflict.<sup>16,18</sup> A lack of employment contributes to social and economic marginalisation of Indigenous people.<sup>18,21</sup> Disadvantage in terms of education, employment, income and housing have been linked to offending due to their contribution to other individual risk factors such as high stress levels, poor self-esteem, helplessness, boredom and excess of unstructured time, which can lead to conflict and alcohol misuse.<sup>16,18,21</sup> It is argued in the literature that Indigenous people may also be more vulnerable to police scrutiny due to congregating in public spaces as a result of unemployment or lack of structured time which can lead to participating in risky behaviours and alcohol misuse.<sup>15,21</sup> All of these individual factors may contribute to Indigenous over-representation in prison.

## **2.5 Justice paradigms**

There are a number of justice paradigms in the literature which can explain different approaches to justice programs. A brief overview of four approaches namely diversion, restorative justice, therapeutic jurisprudence and justice reinvestment are presented below.

### **2.5.1 Diversion**

Diversion programs seek to provide an alternative process for offenders in order to reduce further contact with the justice system and to assist the offender to maintain links with the community.<sup>20,23</sup> This type of program can be therapeutic, restorative (giving the offender the opportunity to repair harm they have caused), skills based (life skills, education) or experiential (provide an experience which is designed to bring a change in an offenders attitude).<sup>20,23</sup> These programs are often based in the community and usually form part of the conditions handed down by the Court so that if the offenders comply they are exempt from further processing in the formal justice system.<sup>20,23</sup>

The literature suggests that the benefits of this type of program include:<sup>20,23</sup>

- the ability of the offender to maintain links with the community which assists with re-integration after the offence
- reduced burden on the justice system
- a more timely response than the formal judicial system while still addressing needs of offender, victim and community
- allowance for community involvement in the program.

### **2.5.2 Restorative Justice**

The restorative justice approach is victim focused and based on the belief that those most affected by the crime should play an active role in resolving the conflict.<sup>24</sup> The restorative justice approach seeks to repair the harm caused by the offense for all parties involved in the crime (offender, victim and community).<sup>23,25</sup> The approach has three goals related to accountability, recovery and community safety.<sup>23,26</sup> Restorative justice involves mediation between victim and offender where the offender takes responsibility for their actions and hears about the impact of their behaviour. All parties then discuss how the issue will be resolved.<sup>23,25,27</sup> Some examples employing this approach include victim-offender mediation, group conferencing and some circle sentencing programs.<sup>26</sup>

### **2.5.3 Therapeutic Jurisprudence**

Therapeutic Jurisprudence considers the role of law as a therapeutic agent and is based on the principle that law can affect the physical and mental health of individuals.<sup>27-30</sup> It recognises that legal rules, procedures and people involved in law can produce therapeutic or anti-therapeutic effects.<sup>29,30</sup> The process of and outcomes of the law are considered in terms of how they impact on the whole person. There is a shift in focus from traditional law approaches of punitive to rehabilitative measures.<sup>31</sup> The approach suggests that the law, whilst still considering justice and due process, should be restructured to better accomplish therapeutic goals for individuals to promote physical and mental wellbeing.<sup>28-30</sup> An example of this approach can be seen in some specialist Courts such as drug Courts.

#### **2.5.4 Justice Reinvestment**

The justice reinvestment approach diverts a portion of funding that would have been spent on imprisonment to community initiatives that seek to address the underlying causes of crime in the community.<sup>32,33</sup> This approach requires gathering data on offending and criminal justice, using the data to create maps which indicate the greatest concentration of offenders and then redirecting funds to these communities to reduce offending.<sup>34</sup> This approach focuses on prevention rather than detention, working with communities to develop a targeted local response to addressing the underlying causes of crime.<sup>32</sup> The diverted funds may be invested in community programs (e.g. substance abuse programs), services (e.g. mental health services) or activities (e.g. improving the way Elders work with the Courts) which seek to address the factors contributing to crime within the community.<sup>32</sup>

This approach has been utilised in the United States of America and has resulted in reductions in the number of prisons required and economic savings.<sup>32,34</sup> There are also social benefits of this approach as offenders remain in the community addressing the underlying causes to their offending behaviour whilst retaining their family and community ties.<sup>34</sup> Critics of this approach have identified a number of challenges for implementing this approach; firstly it may not be a viable option for all offenders. Furthermore, it is difficult to obtain the appropriate data in Australia in order to create the justice maps required to identify crime concentration in communities. Finally, the rural locations of some communities may make it difficult to implement this approach.<sup>34</sup> However, given that the total net expenditure on prisons in 2010-2011 was \$3 billion<sup>35</sup> imagine the positive gains that could be achieved if a portion of this funding was diverted to community based justice programs to target offending behaviour.

#### **2.6 Program review**

A review of the literature on Indigenous community based justice programs was undertaken to identify the types of programs offered and their effectiveness. Specifically, the review focused on examining the key factors that need to be considered when implementing a successful program for Indigenous people, including the challenges in developing, implementing and evaluating these programs. The review identified relatively few program descriptions and a paucity of evaluation reports for community based justice programs that specifically target Indigenous offenders. Other authors have noted that there is limited information on the effectiveness of offender programs in Australia, specifically those pertaining to Indigenous community justice programs.<sup>12,36</sup> Within the



literature that was identified, all primarily focused on male offending with no articles on programs specifically for female offenders. However, it is noted that some of the programs originally targeted for men now include some services for women.

### **2.6.1 The value of community based justice programs**

Community based justice programs have been identified in the literature as a valuable alternative to prison. International literature suggests that community programs can be more effective than short-term prison sentences.<sup>37</sup> Prison can have a variety of negative consequences including decreasing social bonds and decreasing job stability, with both factors shown to contribute to re-offending.<sup>37</sup> Given that Indigenous offenders are more likely to receive shorter sentences in prison,<sup>15</sup> undertaking community programs may help address some of the factors associated with risk factors such as being able to access rehabilitation services and other services to address individual needs.<sup>37</sup> A recent Australian report showed that community based residential treatment programs may be more cost effective than incarceration.<sup>38</sup> The report indicated that community based residential programs were also associated with better outcomes including lower recidivism rates and better health outcomes.<sup>38</sup>

### **2.6.2 Key elements for community programs for Indigenous offenders**

#### ***Content***

The factors affecting Indigenous offenders are complex, inter-related and do not easily fit the traditional criminogenic/non-criminogenic models.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, community justice programs for Indigenous people need to be holistic and address individual risk factors in the context of broader family and community concerns.<sup>12,13,21</sup> It is recommended that programs focus on empowerment, self-determination, strengthening cultural norms, traditions and seek to reconnect Indigenous people to their cultural and spiritual origins.<sup>12,21</sup> The literature indicates that programs that address multiple issues which lead to offending may be more effective than programs that focus on one area.<sup>37,39</sup> Jones *et al.* argues that the program should focus on individuals' needs to assist offenders to remove barriers and promote a positive and fulfilling life.<sup>21</sup> Gilbert and Wilson contend that programs should assist individuals to engage in useful activity, treat substance abuse and help form supportive relationships.<sup>36</sup> In addition, Gilbert and Wilson suggest that the programs need to be Indigenous specific, involve culturally appropriate content and employ a facilitator who understands the nuances of the culture.<sup>36</sup> It is also recommended that programs should focus on strengths based approaches rather than focusing on deficits.<sup>36</sup>

The literature indicates a number of key focus areas for Indigenous community justice programs including:<sup>13,15,21,36,37,40</sup>

- life skills training – around parenting, legal rights, household management, budgeting, accessing services, job readiness, effective use of leisure time
- skills to help navigate the majority culture
- education and training – to assist with reducing barriers to employment. Education and training should be accessible and relevant to Indigenous offenders.
- holistic healing programs – focusing on individual, community and historical risk factors
- employment including networking with labour market, incentives to employers, timely information about opportunities to program participants, vocational training relevant to local job market, providing job skills, coaching on disclosing criminal history, long-term follow up support for offenders
- building social networks – with family, friends, Elders and the community have higher chances of success in reducing re-offending
- promoting self-efficacy
- developing problem solving skills
- targeting alcohol abuse as it is strongly linked to arrest particularly among Indigenous offenders therefore adequate rehabilitation and support services are needed to address this risk
- fostering Indigenous identity – linking people to culture, traditional practices and country
- reflecting on how behaviour influences family/community.

### ***Delivery***

There are a number of recommendations from the literature pertaining to the delivery of a community justice program. Day *et al.* in a review of domestic violence programs indicated that there is a lack of interventions that are matched to the participant in terms of their relative stage of change and individual circumstances.<sup>19</sup> It is argued that if interventions were matched to the individual then the programs would be more effective. Authors have noted that programs need to be accessible, of sufficient length and intensity to help reduce risk factors associated with offending.<sup>19,21</sup> It is suggested that intensive programs (over 100 hours of contact) are more effective than short-term interventions.<sup>19</sup> Gilbert and Wilson indicated that involving case workers and Elders may improve access to community justice programs for participants.<sup>36</sup>

Other authors have noted the importance of ensuring that all aspects of the program ‘culturally match’ participants.<sup>41</sup> For, example content should include practice-based examples related to Indigenous life experiences, should use appropriate language (avoiding the use of jargon), and use visual content and activities to communicate program content.<sup>41</sup> Authors have noted that it would be beneficial to involve Elders and Indigenous facilitators in the development and delivery of programs.<sup>12,41</sup> It is recommended that the local community are involved with the program and that they have ownership and control over the program.<sup>39</sup> This ensures that the program is relevant to the needs of the local community and that the program is culturally appropriate.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Other considerations***

There are a number of other considerations identified in the literature which may impact on Indigenous community justice program delivery. A key issue raised in the literature is the lack of suitable housing available for Indigenous offenders.<sup>13,21,36</sup> It has been argued that providing offenders with suitable housing arrangements is necessary as some offenders may not have housing, or may not wish to return home (e.g. shame over offending) or will be returning to housing which may increase their risk of further offending (e.g. over-crowding, exposure to other risk factors, violation of orders).<sup>21</sup> Jones *et al.* indicates that the provision of transitional housing, residential drug and alcohol treatment centres or residential cultural healing centres may be options to address this risk factor.<sup>21</sup>

Given the recommendation that Indigenous community justice programs target multiple risk factors and approach offending behaviour holistically it is imperative that programs seek collaboration with other organisations. This requires collaboration across agencies and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous community organisations.<sup>39</sup> Coordination between agencies will help to avoid duplication, facilitate access to services and enable information sharing. Willis and Moore recommend collaboration through formalised agreements.<sup>15</sup>

Several authors have noted that case management and ongoing support are essential to ensure the success of the program.<sup>36,37</sup> Case management may reduce the risk of re-offending as individual risk factors can be identified and addressed.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, case management also provides a central point of contact, promotes support and can provide access to a range of services.<sup>15</sup>

## **Challenges**

The literature highlighted a number of challenges for implementing community justice programs for Indigenous people. Difficulty securing funding has been raised in the literature as an issue when designing and implementing these programs.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, the ability to attract facilitators that are qualified to deliver the program has also been identified as an issue.<sup>15</sup> Both these factors can lead to difficulty delivering the program consistently in the community.<sup>15</sup> Finally, difficulty accessing services and lack of services in remote locations can make it difficult for programs to address individual needs and also make it difficult for participants to comply with Court orders.<sup>15</sup>

There is a lack of published evaluations specifically focusing on Indigenous community justice programs in the published grey literature<sup>12,36</sup> It appears particularly challenging to find appropriate outcomes to measure the effectiveness of community justice programs.<sup>15</sup> Often programs are measured against recidivism rates. However, some argue that this may not be the most effective outcome measure as it does not illustrate specific failings or merits of a program.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, others argue that these types of community development programs may take years to show tangible results<sup>42</sup> and interval measures such as employment, reduced alcohol or drug use and decreased assessed risk may be more appropriate.<sup>15</sup> There is a need to evaluate Indigenous programs as many of these programs have been adapted from mainstream programs as the effective translation of these models remains in doubt. Gilbert and Wilson acknowledge that program evaluations of these programs are vital to illustrate any implementation issues and examine whether desired outcomes have been achieved amongst Indigenous offenders.<sup>36</sup>

### **2.6.3 Program Descriptions**

#### ***Program A – Red Dust Healing***

*Red Dust Healing* is a community based program that has been delivered in Queensland and New South Wales. The aim of the program is to equip Aboriginal men with tools to identify problems in their lives and help address any ongoing patterns of negative behaviour.<sup>43</sup> It provides Aboriginal men with an understanding of identity, assists them to restore the role of men in their families and communities and restore family relationships.<sup>43</sup> The program is multi-faceted and recognises that the risk factors associated with offending are interconnected.<sup>43</sup> Table 2 outlines the sessions that are discussed as part of the *Red Dust Healing* program.

**Table 2: Session topics from *Red Dust Healing***

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity</li> <li>• Aboriginal culture and traditions</li> <li>• Family structure and roles</li> <li>• Relationships, power and control</li> <li>• Grievance and loss</li> <li>• Rejection</li> <li>• Stress and mental health issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger management</li> <li>• Drugs and alcohol</li> <li>• Education and employment</li> <li>• Housing issues and budgets</li> <li>• Community contribution</li> <li>• Governance</li> <li>• Community resource mapping and case plans</li> </ul>
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The program uses activities that are culturally relevant to help participants understand the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal men in their family and communities (Appendix 2).<sup>43</sup> It allows men to discover, explore and share any problem areas in their lives with the group.<sup>43</sup> Case management is included at the end of the program with individual case plans developed and participants linked to appropriate local services based on their information from the completed activities.<sup>43</sup>

*Red Dust Healing* addresses the recommendations in the literature in terms of providing a holistic wellbeing approach which targets multiple factors. While no formal program evaluation was publically available the research conducted by Cull indicated that participants had shared the *Red Dust Healing* concepts with their families in an effort to deal with their issues.<sup>43</sup> At the time of Cull's research, one participant had been trained as a facilitator and now runs the program in his local area.<sup>43</sup> These findings suggest at least some positive outcomes for some of the individuals that have participated in the *Red Dust Healing* program.

### ***Program B – Rekindling the Spirit***

*Rekindling the Spirit* operates in Lismore and was originally developed by a local Aboriginal man who voluntarily started the group for local men wanting to address their issues with violence.<sup>44</sup> It is a joint program funded by Probation and Parole, Department of Community Services and a health service.<sup>44</sup> *Rekindling the Spirit* has grown from its initial inception and now includes services for men and women. The organisation now employs four family workers and two project officers. It has seven board members with nearly all of the board members and workers being of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander decent.<sup>45</sup> The program addresses a number of issues (Table 3).

**Table 3: *Rekindling the Spirit* topic areas**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family relationships</li><li>• Personal development</li><li>• Individual development</li><li>• Parenting skills</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child abuse and neglect</li><li>• Family violence</li><li>• Relationship development</li><li>• Alcohol and drug abuse</li></ul>
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#### *Program delivery*

The program operates on a healing pathway which is a 12 week program with the possibility of extension from between 13 – 24 weeks if required. Referral and intake happens within the first week with clients referred from Department of Community Services or Probation and Parole or self-referral. A case plan is developed which includes client background information, identifying issues, setting goals and strategies to address the identified issues. Between the second and eleventh weeks the client attends a number of activities which can include:<sup>44,45</sup>

- Aboriginal Men's and Women's Group (weekly for four hours)
- specialist groups such as alcohol and stolen generation groups
- parenting groups
- men's camps
- counselling
- family therapy
- interim reviews with case workers (revisit progress towards goals and revise strategies in case management plan)
- referral to other services.

At twelve weeks participants complete the program and have a final meeting with their case worker.<sup>45</sup> This meeting involves reviewing client progress toward goals, determining future needs, goals and planning to achieve them.<sup>45</sup> At this point they may need additional service delivery so may spend up to 24 weeks with the organisation.<sup>45</sup> The organisation also provides transport and the use of office facilities for clients.<sup>45</sup>

#### *Evaluation and challenges*

The evaluation of *Rekindling the Spirit* has largely focused on quantitative process measures such as the number of clients accessing the service as a whole and its separate activities. Newell indicated in the interim organisational review report that there has been difficulty evaluating the program due to the number of informal clients that have been accessing the service.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, high staff

turnover has negatively affected the collection of data.<sup>45</sup> At this stage, outcome data is not available but evaluation tools have been developed. Outcome evaluation will include the comparison of pre and post program case worker ratings across a number of areas including physical health, mental health, anger management, offending, employment, confidence, responsibility and communication with family.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Program C – Family and Community Healing Program***

The *Family and Community Healing Program* is conducted by the Central Northern Adelaide Health Service and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).<sup>46</sup> The aim of the program is to address family violence in Aboriginal families in a North West metropolitan region of Adelaide.<sup>46,47</sup> It forms an integral part of the South Australian Government's Regional Aboriginal Health Plan.<sup>46</sup>

#### ***Program delivery***

The program uses a holistic approach with services provided for all individuals in the family (Table 4). The focus of the program is on capacity building and early intervention and it is based on the TAFE Family Wellbeing Course. There are approximately 25 staff operating in three primary health care sites.<sup>46</sup> The program is based on six program objectives which were outlined by the funding body:<sup>46,47</sup>

- Objective 1: Build community capacity to support 'safe families'
- Objective 2: Equip Aboriginal people with the skills for effective communication and conflict resolution
- Objective 3: Support families in crisis
- Objective 4: Build capacity of mainstream agencies and services within the region
- Objective 5: Workforce development
- Objective 6: Data and evaluation.

**Table 4: Activities for each group in the *Family and Community Healing Program***

Group	Activities
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured 8-week family wellbeing course</li> <li>• Women's healing group with narrative and art therapy</li> <li>• Stress management and cognitive therapy (through GP partnership)</li> <li>• Nunga Mi:Minar Women's shelter – working with staff and women</li> <li>• Young Women's Group</li> <li>• Individual counselling – brief intervention</li> <li>• Boystown</li> <li>• Women's wellness camps</li> <li>• 'Nunga Women U R Special' pampering day</li> <li>• Weekly art group including talking circles, peer-led</li> </ul>
Young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership and well-being course with local high schools</li> <li>• Kids connecting with community</li> <li>• School expo events</li> <li>• Young people's drop in</li> <li>• Young Nungas Yarning</li> <li>• Holiday program</li> </ul>
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community peer support initiatives</li> <li>• Nunga Nutrition lunches</li> <li>• Mini conferences – family violence, life improvement plan</li> <li>• Clinic Services – adult and child health assessment</li> <li>• Lifestyle/living skills</li> </ul>
Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zebra Finch Men's Group</li> <li>• Bush mechanic (through man alive initiative)</li> <li>• Peer support</li> <li>• Licence for life</li> <li>• Young Nungas Yarning</li> <li>• Kinship program</li> <li>• Boystown</li> </ul>



## *Evaluation*

A participatory action research approach was undertaken to evaluate the program by a South Australian University.<sup>47</sup> Interviews and focus groups with workers and clients of the program were conducted.<sup>47</sup> The evaluators also attended a number of the program activities.<sup>47</sup> Both the workers and clients of the program indicated their unanimous support for the program.<sup>47</sup> The evaluation revealed a number of positive outcomes resulting from the program for the clients, including:<sup>46,47</sup>

- developing self-esteem and confidence
- promoting cultural connections
- developing skills and knowledge to move away from violence to healing
- the development of relationships and a safe environment from the Men's and Women's Groups
- development of communication and conflict resolution skills
- addresses the reasons and consequences of family violence
- passing down of skills/knowledge and stories to younger participants
- some clients have gained employment or are furthering their education at TAFE
- artwork from group activities have been sold at local events to help fund the program.

A number of strengths and challenges were identified during the evaluation. One of the main strengths is the number and quality of collaborations with other health and human service agencies.<sup>47</sup> Some of these links are through formal arrangements but others are related to personal relationships between staff. These collaborations have assisted in managing clients that present in crisis situations and has enabled the development of a protocol for emergencies.<sup>47</sup> Other strengths indicated in the program is the ability to provide transport for clients to attend activities, mixed ages in groups so people can learn from each other and the co-location with health services.<sup>46,47</sup> Another strength identified was the on-the job training provided to staff through peer support, mentoring junior staff, and formal training such as attending the Family Wellbeing course and other training courses as needed (e.g. alcohol, pregnancy and foetal alcohol syndrome).<sup>47</sup>

The challenges identified during the evaluation related to staff, funding and difficulty with collecting data. It was recognised that staff often have a lot to cope with on the job and in the community which has led to stress and burnout which has resulted in high staff turnover and unfilled positions.<sup>47</sup> The need for long-term funding in order to provide consistent services in the community was also identified.<sup>46,47</sup> Finally there was limited quantitative data available for the evaluation and the evaluators acknowledged the need to regularly and systematically collect and review evaluation data

to inform the program. In relation to the collection of evaluation data it was recognised that it was difficult for staff to prioritise the collection of this data as part of their role.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Men's Groups***

This section presents a brief overview of Men's Groups. It is followed by a more detailed review of two Queensland based Men's Groups. Men's Groups have been used as a way to empower men, provide support and to address underlying factors associated with poor health and wellbeing.<sup>40</sup> They are designed as a culturally safe place for reflection, healing and establishing roles in the family and community.<sup>40</sup> The literature indicates that these groups should be directed by Aboriginal men and acknowledges that the evidence base around evaluating these groups is lacking.<sup>40</sup> The literature indicates that there are a variety of approaches that Men's Groups can take to address the needs of participants. These include:<sup>40</sup>

- counselling, leadership and personal development programs
- parenting programs
- youth programs
- sport and recreation programs
- culture, tradition and spiritual recovery
- suicide prevention programs
- alcohol related programs
- access to health services
- criminal justice system
- family violence programs
- employment
- social enterprise initiatives.

### ***Program D - Yarrabah Men's Group***

This Men's Group was started by volunteers in Yarrabah (a town near Cairns in Queensland) with a health service providing in kind support in terms of facilities, coordinating activities and use of information technology resources.<sup>48</sup> The group was initially started to provide weekly support to local men in the form of health education sessions, counselling, men's health clinics and activities to promote social bonding.<sup>48</sup> In 2001, the organisation was awarded two year funding which enabled the organisation to hire a full time and a part-time person as well as purchasing a van to assist participants with transport.<sup>48</sup>

The aim of the group was to help men take their rightful place in society. A series of 'do's and don'ts' were created to guide behaviour. These were later developed into four key action areas which were translated into a two year plan:

- personal development, leadership, parenting
- employment
- education and training
- tradition, culture, Yubba Bimbie – men's place

In 2004, the organisation along with a Queensland university were awarded a three year National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grant to consolidate the findings of their participatory action research project started in 2001 and to expand this approach to another site (see Ma'Ddaimba Balas program below).

### *Challenges*

Various articles surrounding this group have reported a number of challenges that this group faced when implementing the program. Initially, it was difficult to keep men's interest in the group.<sup>42,49</sup> Secondly, workers involved with the program were accustomed to a crisis intervention/reactive approach which created challenges for planning a proactive approach during the planning phase.<sup>42</sup> Workers also required additional training in order to be able to plan and deliver the group.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the participatory action research project revealed that prior to funding it was difficult to run the program on a volunteer basis.<sup>49,50</sup> However, while obtaining funding provided more resources it also created challenges in terms of balancing what the men wanted and what the funding body required (e.g. planning, reporting, evaluating).<sup>49,50</sup> Additionally, when developing the two year plan the people involved in the project struggled with whether to run all aspects of the plan themselves or to call on other organisations to implement some aspects of the plan.<sup>50</sup> Finally, there were also some difficulties with perceptions in the community as some people were referred to the Men's Group by the Court.<sup>49,50</sup> This created a perception in the community that the Men's Group was only for people who have problems and that it was seen as a 'soft option' for offenders.<sup>49,50</sup> Researchers involved in the project indicated that the participatory action research approach was useful in overcoming these challenges as the constant analysis, reflection and problem solving that occurs when using this method assisted with addressing the issues as they arose.<sup>42</sup>

### *Evaluation*

A Queensland university was commissioned to evaluate the program in 2001 and that work continued till 2007. Initial results published in 2003 showed that men attending the program were hopeful in finding employment and were more involved in community meetings.<sup>42</sup> In 2004 a micro-analysis of the participatory action research process with this group indicated that incremental changes were seen when participants were asked to reflect on their progress in 2001 and then evaluate their progress in 2004.<sup>50</sup> When participants were asked to reflect on their life in 2001 and provide a rating out of ten on their progress against the 'do's and don'ts', most participants gave a rating of 0 or 1. When asked to explain this rating participants indicated that this rating was provided as they indicated that the do's and don'ts were new to them, they may have been selfish, they had issues with drugs and alcohol and there was a lack of support to make progress against them.<sup>50</sup> In 2004, most men rated themselves between a 4 or 5 out of 10.<sup>50</sup> The change was attributed to personal development after participating in the program and an acknowledgement of their responsibility to their families.<sup>50</sup> Other results indicated an expansion of Men's Group activities and networking with other Men's Group.<sup>50</sup> Several men also gained enough confidence to stand for local government and were elected to the local council.<sup>50</sup> These incremental changes since the group's inception highlight the length of time that it may take to realise outcomes from community justice programs.

### ***Program E - Ma'Ddaimba Balas Men's Group***

This Men's Group is located in Innisfail (a town 90km from Cairns in Queensland) and was started in 2001 by a health worker associated with a local health service. The group was formed to focus on domestic violence and to provide advocacy, support and diversionary services for men.<sup>51</sup> This group was incorporated in 2005 as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation. A board was formed and the Men's Group meetings were held monthly two weeks after the board meeting.<sup>51</sup> The organisation focusses on a number of key areas:

- *Men's Group meetings* – issues related to health, relationships, family violence, support and providing community events. Speakers are invited to give talks on topical issues. Men's Group participants can be referred from Court or casual members or self-referred. Approximately 10-12 men attend each meeting.
- *Networking and advocacy* – workers informally yarn with men about issues in the community and attend interagency meetings to advocate for Indigenous men.
- *Court support* – volunteer as Court support worker to provide advice on rights and options

- *Educational programs and counselling* – provided on substance abuse, anger management, ending offending and family wellbeing program
- *Improving health service* – local men were not accessing the health service so speakers at Men's Group have done a number of talks about various health problems and have conducted screening at the group.
- *Sporting and social events* – organised community sporting events and participated in existing community events. This allowed the group to increase its profile in the community, engage more participants and fundraise.
- *Working with Indigenous youth* – organised youth activities, weekend camps and sports.

### *Key challenges*

Similarly to other Men's Groups this organisation has faced a number of challenges in implementing their program. Initially there was fluctuating attendance at the Men's Group, possibly as a result of the inability to secure a meeting space.<sup>51</sup> Secondly, when the organisation was based on volunteers there was difficulty building a consistent education program as there was a lack of funding for resources.<sup>51</sup> This lack of funding and purely volunteer base contributed to management and infrastructure issues.<sup>51</sup>

### *Evaluation*

There was limited evaluation information available for this program. The available information on evaluation was based on a reflection on the use of the participatory action research approach as well as quantitative measures in terms of participation/contact for each of the key activities. The authors recognised the need for program evaluation and assessment of outcomes and there is some evidence from the initial interviews that there may have been some reduction in the number of domestic violence breaches.<sup>51</sup> In addition due to the Court referral process there was some reduction in the number of people being incarcerated.<sup>51</sup>

## **2.7 Summary of the literature**

This review of the literature indicated that there are limited evaluation reports available for existing Indigenous community based justice programs. However, the literature did reveal that the risk factors influencing crime among Indigenous people are complex and interconnected. It is thus likely that to be effective, community justice programs should address a number of these risk factors. Furthermore, it is essential that Indigenous community justice programs are culturally relevant and matched to the needs of participants (e.g. the use of relevant content and facilitation by an Indigenous person). The literature review also highlighted the difficulty in selecting appropriate outcome measures in order to measure the effectiveness of Indigenous community justice programs. The program reviews highlighted that incremental change against risk factors may be more appropriate outcome measures than recidivism. It is also noteworthy that most program reviews indicate that it may take several years to even achieve incremental changes in the risk factors. In reviewing the various programs for the literature review it is worth noting that they all appear to go through a similar lifecycle in that many started at grass roots level (often volunteer led), then are integrated into an organisation typically with short term funding arrangements, then longer term funding is sourced which creates challenges in balancing the original purpose of the group against funding requirements, after this initial long term funding there appears to be more stability which allows forward planning. This review highlights the need for long term funding to gain stability for these community programs.

### **3. Methodology**

This section presents an outline of the methodological approach adopted for the evaluation. The evaluation broadly adopted an appreciative inquiry approach that focuses on what the program is achieving rather than any deficiencies.<sup>52</sup> The approach seeks to minimise an excessive focus on dysfunction that can be destabilising in sensitive environments and it ensured the evaluation was approached with respect for the Indigenous community in mind. This strength based approach has previously been used to measure the impacts of other Indigenous programs.<sup>53</sup>

The project was commissioned in January 2013 with the final report due at the end of November. An initial project meeting was held with the management team of the justice program to discuss the approach to the project. A meeting was held with the Elders group involved with the justice program at NWQICSS to discuss and seek feedback on the approach of the evaluation. Ethics approval was sought and granted by James Cook University Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number H4960, 11 March 2013). There were three main groups associated with the justice program that were invited to participate in the evaluation these included clients who use the service, stakeholders who refer/have clients referred to their service and the staff/management of the NWQICSS justice program. The details of the approach for each participant group are outlined below.

#### **3.1 Clients**

A gender appropriate interviewer was invited by NWQICSS to attend the Men's and Women's Groups. The interviewer described the project to the group which included an explanation of the project, why it was being conducted and how the data would be used. Clients were invited to speak to the interviewer while they were at the group or clients could ask NWQICSS to contact the interviewer at a later stage if they were interested in participating in the evaluation. NWQICSS staff facilitated with scheduling the interviews by obtaining volunteers and providing transport to clients to assist them to get to the interviews.

A gender appropriate interviewer was used for each of the interviews. Individual face to face interviews were held at a time convenient for the clients and in a location where the clients felt comfortable (often in Men's and Women's Groups meeting spaces). A plain language information sheet and consent form was provided to clients that participated in the evaluation. A verbal explanation of both these forms was also provided. Written consent was sought at the beginning of

each discussion with clients, with separate consent sought for audio-taping and using segments of their story in publications. The method used to collect data from clients was the Yarning approach.<sup>54</sup> This method involves a participant telling a story about a lived experience (i.e. participating in the program) and the researcher drawing out further information with the use of questions. This approach is appropriate as it is culturally relevant, less formal and useful in relation to the research question around exploring the impacts of the program on client's lives. Interviewers were provided with a list of questions if they needed them but were instructed to keep the discussions conversational (Appendix 3). A total of ten male and four female client interviews were completed.<sup>4</sup> Each client interview took between 20 – 45 minutes.

### **3.2 Stakeholders, program staff and management**

NWQICSS provided a list of staff and stakeholder names and contact details associated with the program. Each staff and stakeholder was sent an email explaining the project and seeking volunteers to take part in a semi-structured interview about the program (both the information sheet and consent form were attached). The principal investigator phoned each staff and stakeholder contact to see if they wished to participate in the evaluation by completing a semi-structured interview. Individual face to face interviews were conducted with stakeholders, program staff and management at a time and location convenient for the participant (often interviews were conducted at the participant's office). Formal written consent was sought at the beginning of each interview, with a separate consent item to audio-tape the discussion. A copy of the interview schedules for stakeholders, program staff and management are contained in Appendix 4-6. A total of 19 stakeholders, program staff and management interviews were completed. Interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to 1.5 hours.

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<sup>4</sup> Initially the program plan included obtaining five female client interviews; however this was not possible due to a lack of female clients attending the Women's Group at the time. Additional stakeholders associated with the female clients and Women's Group were interviewed to ensure there was enough information about the female clients' experience with the program.



### **3.3 Additional information sources**

In addition to the interviews outlined above the principal investigator also reviewed copies of NWQICSS program reports and program documents. These documents provided background information for the evaluation and also outlined the program processes that were in place for implementing the program. A client profile summary was also developed from data supplied by NWQICSS (refer Chapter 4 – Results).

### **3.4 Data analysis**

Interview recordings were transcribed using an independent transcription company who have had prior experience with Indigenous justice interviews. The interviews were then checked and cleaned by the principal investigator (only clerical corrections were required). The transcripts were then analysed using a simple thematic approach utilising Thomas' approach to analyse qualitative evaluation data.<sup>55</sup> In addition, Smith and Firth's method was used as a practical basis to approach the theming of the data.<sup>56</sup> Initial theming of the interview data was conducted by the principal investigator. These codes were then verified by other members of MICRRH's research staff in a coding workshop. The staff members who verified the codes included a staff member who had conducted interviews with the male clients and another staff member who has experience in undertaking qualitative research with local Indigenous people. The codes were further collapsed during this workshop process and formed the final interpretation of the data. The use of peer reviewers is an accepted form of ensuring rigorous qualitative research.<sup>57</sup>

### **3.5 Confidentiality**

Mount Isa is a close-knit community with relatively few service providers often operating with small teams. In addition, many of the staff, stakeholders and clients have close relationships with each other. Consequently, when reporting results so as to avoid identification of individual sources in the report, a participant group is provided for reference (for example: NWQICSS staff, stakeholder, male or female client) and stakeholder organisations that have contributed to the evaluation have not been named.

### **3.6 Dissemination and feedback**

An important component of any research and evaluation project is to inform participants of the findings of the evaluation and receive feedback on these outcomes. A draft copy of the report was provided to NWQICSS staff at the end of September and a meeting was scheduled to obtain their feedback on the report. The findings of this evaluation were presented orally to the Elders group and the Men's and Women's Groups to allow participants the opportunity to provide feedback. Each group was also provided with a copy of the community report which formed the basis for the oral presentation. A written summary of results was provided to stakeholders for their feedback. The feedback from all parties was collated and included in the final report.

## 4. Results

This section of the report presents the results from the evaluation from the interviews with staff, stakeholders and clients of the NWQICSS program. A client profile outlining the key characteristics of clients who accessed the service during the funding period is presented. This is followed by a discussion on perspectives of offending obtained from interview data in order to provide context for the evaluation. The results of the evaluation are then presented according to the four questions that guided the evaluation.

### 4.1 Client profile

NWQICSS have assisted a total of 107 clients from various communities during the funding period January 2012 – June 2013. As outlined in Table 5, clients typically have had multiple contacts with the justice system prior to entering the program (average correctional episodes: 4.4 for males and 2.7 for females). Clients are also likely to have multiple current offences. The offences tend to be related to domestic violence (DV) breaches, breach of bail conditions and driving related offences for both male and female clients. There are a proportion of clients that have re-offended prior to or after sentencing in both client groups, this is consistent with literature which suggests offenders are more likely to re-offend.<sup>58</sup> The program has linked both client groups to multiple service options to address underlying issues associated with their offending behaviour. Within Mount Isa there are more program/service options for male clients as the majority of offenders are male (this is consistent with national offender data).<sup>59</sup> The majority of sentencing outcomes for male clients as part of this process have largely been community based orders.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Specific sentencing outcome data for female clients was unavailable at the time of writing.

**Table 5: Client profile (January 2012 - June 2013)**

Characteristics	Male clients	Female Clients
Total number of clients	90 clients	17 clients**
Average age	30 years (range 18 – 53 years)	32 years (range 22 – 50 years)
Average level of schooling*	9.5 years	10 years
Home Community of clients	31% - Mount Isa 25% - Doomadgee 11% - Normanton 5% - Camooweal 7% - Northern Territory 7% - Mornington Island 3% - Boulia 11% - Other	42% - Mount Isa 24% - Doomadgee 16% - Northern Territory 6% - Mornington Island 6% - Burketown 6% - Kowanyama
Average correctional episodes	4.4 correctional episodes	2.7 correctional episodes
Average no. of current offences	4.5 offences	3.5 offences
Most common offences	DV offences, breach of bail conditions/undertaking, driving related offences (without license, drink driving, other)	DV offences, driving related offences, breach of bail conditions/undertaking, public nuisance
Yet to be sentenced (based on total clients)	20%	35%
Absconded prior to sentence (based on total clients)	4%	18%
Reoffending behaviour (based on total clients)	21% - reoffended prior to sentence or referred to magistrate 21% - reoffended since sentence	24% - reoffended prior to sentence or referred to magistrate 6% - reoffended since sentence
Outcome of sentence (Does not include those yet to be sentenced)	22% - Prison term 37% - Probation orders 14% - Immediate Parole 27% - Suspended sentence 1% - Community service 0.25% Good behaviour order	Detailed information was not available for female clients
Average no. programs accessed	2 per participant	1.7 per participant
Services accessed in addition to Men's or Women's group	ATODS (Alcohol and Drug Counselling) Mount Isa Recovery Centre (Residential Drug and Alcohol Rehab program) Bush Healing and Narrative therapy MI Mentor (8 week DV course) Go Farr (relationships course) EFV (ending family violence) Ending Offending Course CORES (Suicide prevention course) Community Service	ATODS (alcohol and drug counselling) Mount Isa Recovery Centre (Residential Drug and Alcohol Rehab program) Arts and crafts Bush Healing

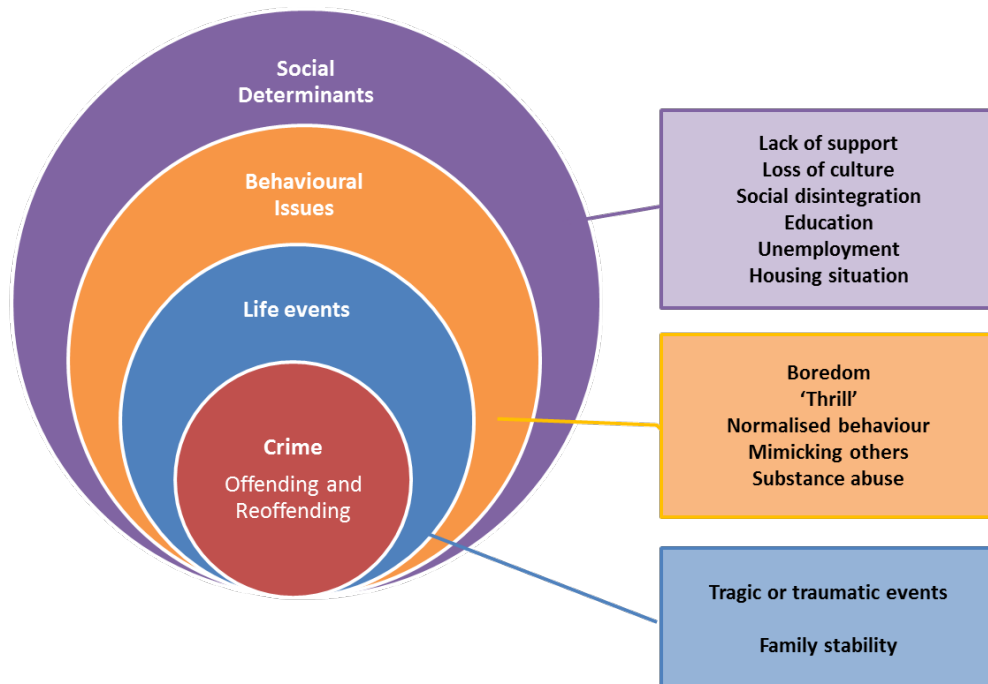
**Note** – percentages and figures in the table have been rounded. \* Data was not available for every client.

\*\* Please note the small number of female clients (the same data was not available for some aspects of the table for female clients). Categories in reoffending behaviour and outcome of sentence may not be discrete. **Source:** data provided by NWQICSS

## 4.2 Perspectives on offending

All participants of the evaluation were asked what factors they thought contributed to offending and reoffending by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Mount Isa. The factors contributing to offending and reoffending were grouped into three key themes namely life events, behavioural issues and social determinants (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Factors contributing to crime in Mount Isa**



The category 'life events' broadly related to a lack of family stability and tragic or traumatic events that people had experienced during their lives. It was noted by a staff member that the number of these events may be higher among Indigenous people. Staff members suggested that clients often had not addressed these issues and they manifested in behavioural outcomes such as frustration, anger, conflict or alcohol consumption which could ultimately lead to offending.

All participants in the evaluation noted various behavioural issues which can lead to or contribute to committing a crime. A majority of clients, stakeholders and staff acknowledged the perceived relationship between alcohol and interpersonal conflict noting this often leads to the majority of offences committed by Indigenous people in Mount Isa. It is important to note that conflict could be between partners, within family or in the broader community. Committing crimes was also related to performing behaviours due to boredom, or for the 'thrill of it' or mimicking others behaviours, particularly among youth. All participant groups of the evaluation noted the relationship between

specific behaviours and crime had become normalised, particularly acts of domestic violence and excessive alcohol consumption.

Systemic issues in the community were also raised in relation to their contribution to crime and were grouped under the theme of social determinants. Clients of the program noted that there may be a lack of support for individuals in order to deal with difficult issues. Additionally, a loss of culture and identity was mentioned as a contributor to crime. Specifically, participants of the evaluation noted that, traditionally, Elders would have taught the younger generation about how to lead a good life. However, clients and Elders noted that this was lacking in the modern day community, due to a lack of respect for Elders or the older generation 'passing on'. Among staff and stakeholders social disintegration was also mentioned as a contributor to crime. The following quote from a NWQICSS staff member highlights this issue of loss of culture and social disintegration.

*All these young fellas lost their culture, most of them, wouldn't have a clue what it is to be an Aboriginal person, and what we do, and not only run a Men's Group is we trying to give them back their cultural understanding, their cultural knowledge which, like, a lot of them been through – caught up in the Court system because they're a lost person. They can't fit into white society; they can't understand Aboriginal society because they don't know, and I find when you don't know, you're sort of a bit lost. NWQICSS staff member*

Educational variances and unemployment were two factors which were discussed as contributing to crime among Indigenous people. Participants highlighted that varying levels of skills (specifically numeracy and literacy) contributed to an individual's inability to navigate 'mainstream systems', and to gain employment. Some participants also reported that prejudice within the local community also contributed to unemployment levels. There was perceived link among participants between unemployment and crime as being unemployed can lead to boredom and conflict. Housing conditions including homelessness, difficulty in securing housing and overcrowding within homes were also perceived stressors. Overcrowding of homes was often said to be the result of large numbers of extended family members staying with clients, which could create stress and conflict. Staff at NWQICSS also highlighted a lack of understanding of justice processes among people who have had contact with the justice system which can lead to clients inadvertently breaching existing orders. All these issues highlight the complex nature of clients' lives and the need for the justice program to address multiple factors.

### 4.3 What is working well with the program?

Perceptions of the justice program were positive in the community with stakeholders indicating that it is a valued program that complemented their service provision and Indigenous justice practices in Mount Isa. The clients recognised the service as valuable often seeing it as a second chance to get support and to improve their lives. Two interview extracts are provided below which demonstrate the positive perceptions from a client and stakeholder's point of view.

*To help all of - everybody out, you know, all the boys, you know, getting in trouble. Like they're looking out for us and - well, giving us a second chance to redeem ourself, you know.  
And get our life straighten out for us. – Male Client*

*The breadth and depth of the work they're sort of able to do here, and the body of work that they offer, particularly to the Courts, is extremely valuable. So they provide a lot of, I guess, Court-based support to offenders, also victims at times. So that includes not only assistance around Court appearances but after care, if you like, case management of people to ensure that they try to, you know, meet commitments or minimise contact with the justice system, things like that.*

...

*Primarily, that means offenders in contact with the criminal justice system who are at risk of actual imprisonment. So they provide an intensive case management around those people with - with a view to trying to - to obtain outcomes from the Court which aren't, you know, custodial or immediate custodial outcomes, and they've been quite successful through their case management in providing assistance to people. – Stakeholder*

Participants in the evaluation reported a number of elements of the justice program that were working well these included the program's cultural focus, the Men's and Women's Groups, the provision of practical support, NWQICSS staff, stakeholder engagement and collaboration (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Elements that work well in the justice program**



#### **4.3.1 Cultural Focus**

The justice program is built on a cultural foundation that is respectful when working with Indigenous clients. NWQICSS recognise the importance of respecting men's and women's business resulting in gender appropriate staff working with clients and providing separate Men's and Women's Groups and activities. Additionally the Men's and Women's Groups involve community Elders to provide an opportunity to promote cultural identity and educate the younger generation in a traditional way. This is best explained by a NWQICSS staff member:

*...the Men's Group is based on our Aboriginal culture where we did have a men's place with older men...and is a place where old men used to gather and if men had problems they'd go and sit down with the Elders and talk about it, what's bothering them, and get that support and what the Men's Group is doing is giving that service back traditional way, where no shame. **NWQICSS staff member***

A key element of the justice program is the involvement of community Elders in each stage of the process. For example NWQICSS facilitates the Elders' involvement in the Indigenous Sentencing List (ISL); Elders are also involved in the Men's and Women's Groups and in activities such as Bush Healing. Clients commented that the Elders help to support them particularly through sharing their life stories. Stakeholders that attend the Men's and Women's Groups highlight that having the Elders involved in the program adds strength because they provide a different perspective and advice that is often more meaningful than what stakeholders can provide their clients.



Clients and staff reported that the program also assists clients to develop a cultural identity. This is achieved through coming together with other Aboriginal people, having discussions with Elders during Men's and Women's Groups and participating in Bush Healing. Staff saw providing a cultural identity as vital for clients as it was perceived that many of the younger clients had not been exposed to Aboriginal culture. It was perceived that cultural identity is important in order to be able to make changes to their lives. Stakeholders acknowledge that the service fulfils a cultural gap that is typically not provided through other services and provides an opportunity for their clients to come together with other Aboriginal people in a positive environment.

Many of the clients indicated that Bush Healing was their most memorable component of the program. Bush Healing involves taking a group of clients out of town into the bush and teaching them traditional practices such as setting up camp, making fire, preparing and eating bush tucker and preparing traditional artefacts (e.g. didgeridoos; clap sticks; boomerangs). For clients these trips are seen as an opportunity to learn about culture, get out of town to see the bush and an opportunity to yarn with Elders, staff and other clients. For NWQICSS staff, Bush Healing was seen as an opportunity to connect their clients back with culture.

In addition to Bush Healing, numerous clients indicated they enjoyed the arts and crafts activities that were available through the program. For female clients an arts and crafts program is available each Thursday (at the time of the evaluation the clients were painting). Men also had the opportunity to participate in painting and continuing with preparing their artefacts at the men's shed. Staff viewed this time as an opportunity to help clients explore their potential and as an informal way to have discussions with their clients. Clients valued these activities as it provided something for them to do that they wouldn't ordinarily get to do when they are at home. These arts and craft activities provide clients with additional opportunities to bond and yarn with the other clients. For stakeholders, Bush Healing and the activities that are provided are an opportunity for them to also learn about Aboriginal culture as their clients attend the activity and then explain the paintings or artefacts to them upon their return.

#### 4.3.2 Men's and Women's Groups

It became apparent during the course of the evaluation that the Men's and Women's Groups are a vital component of the justice program. The concept of the Men's and Women's Groups is highlighted in the logos that were designed for each group. These logos highlight not only the cultural significance of the groups to the core structure of the program, but also the process of sharing and support that occurs at both the Men's and Women's Groups. The extract from an interview with a NWQICSS staff member explains the logo for the Men's Group and what it means.



*Because you see - you see the men sitting down there. The men are talking about themselves, and all the other men around them are other men that supports them when someone talks here. There are all other men around them. And - and that circle in the middle is they're dealing with this thing inside of them. And after that you see those lines in the brown means they're going back - that's the community circle. And the line is that they've come from the meeting, they've talked about themselves and they feel good about them. So they go back into the community feeling good about what they've done. **NWQICSS staff member***

The Men's and Women's Groups provide an opportunity for clients to come together with other Aboriginal men or women, to yarn, share issues and stories. These groups provide emotional support and opportunities for both formal and informal education about a range of topics. A key element to their success is the group rules which were developed from collaboration between NWQICSS group facilitators and the clients.

In each of the client interviews the Men's and Women's Groups were mentioned as a positive aspect of the program. Clients indicated that they looked forward to attending the group as it was an opportunity to bond with other Aboriginal men or women. Each client that participated in the evaluation indicated they liked being able to yarn with other participants at the groups and sharing their issues and stories. Client interviews indicated that talking about their issues at the group provides emotional support as it helps them to resolve issues and that they feel 'lighter and stronger' after talking about their problems.

*Sometimes I look forward to come to Men's Group because that's – because I know well, I can talk my problems out. **Male client***

*When I first came to the Men's Group, I was at a loss, you know, like didn't know what to expect but after the first couple of sessions, like the first session and then the second session, you get to know everybody and, you know, once you sort of bring all that - relieve all that bloody weight that you're carrying all the problem, and you start talking to them and they - you know, they don't judge you, doubt you. They sit in there, they're to help...**Male client***

*...helping me to get my story out – out of my chest and I always coming with full - I don't know it's every time when I coming out of woman's group I always come out light, as you know my heart feel really light and I always come with a lot of pressure. **Female client***

The groups are an opportunity for the longer-term clients and older clients to share their stories with newer or younger clients. This provides an opportunity for clients to learn from other clients' experiences. It is an opportunity to highlight that other people have been through the same experience, to help clients overcome the shame of talking about their offences and to highlight positive changes that clients have been making in their lives. The excerpt below emphasises one male client's realisation during the group that he was following the same path as some of the older clients in the group.

*Yeah. But like when you hear those stories its like – and you think for yourself, you know, oh, ...  
I'm going down the same road, you know.  
And the older fellas, you know, saying it's not a good life, you know. **Male client***

For staff and stakeholders the groups were an opportunity for Aboriginal people to bond in a positive, supportive and culturally comfortable environment. Additionally, it was seen as an opportunity for clients to develop relationships with other clients to provide emotional support and in order to develop a support network when they were in the community. NWQICSS staff noted that the groups assist clients to deal with the underlying issues that may be contributing to their offending behaviour. Staff noted that clients could address these issues through constructive means (e.g. sharing their story) rather than destructive behaviours which often brought these issues to the surface (e.g. excessive drinking). It is also an opportunity for staff to build relationships and identify the triggers or contributors to offending behaviour so they may provide 'wraparound' services targeting an individual's needs.

A key element to the success of the Men's and Women's Groups is the development of the group rules. These rules were developed in collaboration between NWQICSS facilitators and the clients that attend the group. They include rules such as respect, trust, confidentiality, being sober and one person speaking at a time. These group rules help to assist the running of the groups but also contribute to a safe environment in which clients can divulge their personal stories. It is evident from the interviews that clients respect, appreciate and enforce these rules.

The Men's and Women's Groups also serve as a useful medium to provide both formal and informal education around key issues which may be affecting client's lives. This is achieved through the provision of discussions by both NWQICSS and external stakeholders. Clients indicated during the course of the evaluation that they found these sessions at the groups valuable. The interviews outlined the following topics had been discussed at the Men's or Women's Group: <sup>6</sup>

- keeping calm
- staying out of trouble
- stopping domestic violence
- communication
- positive relationships
- anger management
- taking responsibility
- addressing shame
- getting a licence
- healthy lifestyles
- drugs and alcohol issues (facilitated by ATODS/health providers)
- health issues including blood pressure, diabetes, sexual health, disease (facilitated by health providers)
- finding employment (facilitated by local employment agencies)
- Court processes and role play (facilitated by NWQICSS staff and justice stakeholders)
- other topical issues that may arise in the community.

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<sup>6</sup> Please note that only topics reported during the interviews have been listed. Consequently, it may not be an exhaustive list of topics that have been discussed at the Men's or Women's Groups.

#### 4.3.3 Providing practical support

The interviews indicated that a core component of the justice program was the provision of practical support, including linking clients to services/programs, assisting clients to navigate systems and assisting clients with transport. Clients indicated that they had been linked to a range of services provided by external stakeholders and other programs operated by NWQICSS. These services sought to address both the client's immediate needs and underlying issues/triggers that have been contributing to their offending behaviour. A stakeholder acknowledged that NWQICSS are able to successfully source 'wraparound services' addressing personal life experiences and needs, due to the ways clients share their stories with staff during the course of the program. During the course of the evaluation clients mentioned the following services that NWQICSS had assisted them to access:<sup>7</sup>

- domestic violence programs (facilitated by the Domestic Violence Resource Service)
- ending offending course (facilitated by Probation and Parole)
- Salvation Army Recovery Centre (a residential alcohol rehabilitation program)
- drug and alcohol support/counselling (provided by ATODS)
- employment services (JobFind, Isa Skills, Centacare)
- gaining driver's licence and specialty licences
- grief counselling
- accommodation and housing services (various temporary accommodation providers or Department of Housing)
- formal education (facilitated through TAFE and Isa Skills)
- provision of meals/food vouchers and Emergency Relief Support (through Parish services)
- organising community service/ converting fines to community service
- other community services (e.g. Centacare, childcare).

Clients also mentioned that NWQICSS staff had provided assistance in terms of navigating systems. This support included helping clients to complete paperwork (e.g. housing, job and educational applications), writing letters of support to assist clients and explaining mail from government departments and stakeholders associated with the justice system. This level of practical support is vital due to varying literacy levels and knowledge of 'mainstream services'.

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<sup>7</sup> Some programs may be part of the bail conditions that were specified for the client however those listed above were in response to a question that specifically asked what services NWQICSS had assisted them to access.

Another practical support initiative that is part of the justice program is the provision of transport for clients to get to appointments, Court and programs. The majority of clients involved in the evaluation mentioned and appreciated NWQICSS support with transport. Staff viewed this service as necessary in order to help their clients comply with the conditions of their bail program. Stakeholders acknowledged that this was a valuable service for clients to ensure they could get to their programs and appointments. Providing transport for their clients is crucial particularly as there is no public transport available in Mount Isa and many of the clients do not have a licence or vehicle. The provision of transport also assists clients to meet the conditions of the bail program and to avoid breaching bail conditions, which is one of the main offences associated with clients of the NWQICSS program.

#### **4.3.4 Staff**

All participants in the evaluation noted that NWQICSS staff are core to the effective implementation of the program. Stakeholders acknowledged that NWQICSS have a reputation 'for getting things done' and are well respected in the community. NWQICSS staff were praised for their strong relationships with clients and their perceived willingness to 'go above and beyond' to assist their clients. NWQICSS management acknowledged the justice program staff for their dedication, commitment and approachability, which has resulted in clients meeting their commitments under the ISL. Clients considered the staff at NWQICSS akin to their family and felt that the staff were always available to assist them with any request. NWQICSS staff acknowledged they had good relationships with their clients as they were well known in the community and they believe that clients feel comfortable with them. Staff felt that this trust and relationship stemmed from the fact that they were willing and interested to listen to their clients' stories. Based on the interviews it is apparent that the relationship staff build with clients extends beyond the time that clients are in the program as many staff still receive calls from previous clients updating them on their lives after they have left the program.

A key aspect to the successful implementation of this program is the level of involvement staff have with the client during the ISL process. Staff visit the watch house to talk to potential clients about the program, provide support to clients while they are going through the Court process, are involved in case management while they are going through the justice program and attend sentencing proceedings with the client. This involvement helps to create strong relationships with the client and other stakeholders in order to address the clients' offending behaviour. Since the Murri Court system was replaced with the ISL, NWQICSS have increased involvement in Court processes, such as

providing more information to the Court including cultural reports,<sup>8</sup> reporting on client compliance with bail conditions and activities that clients are involved in. Since the defunding of the Murri Court, NWQICSS assist with managing the Elders involvement in the Court process through the provision of Community Justice Group funding and assistance with transportation.

#### **4.3.5 Stakeholder engagement and collaboration**

A key element to the successful implementation of this program is the extent that NWQICSS engage and collaborate with stakeholders. Engagement and collaboration with stakeholders occurs at many levels including stakeholder attendance at the Men's and Women's Groups, through stakeholder meetings associated with the ISL and regular communication between NWQICSS and key stakeholders. Clients noted that stakeholders were involved in the Men's and Women's Groups as participants as well as facilitators of discussions. The information provided during the educational discussions is valued by clients as is the ability to ask the stakeholders questions during the group. Stakeholders appreciate being invited to attend the groups as it gives them an opportunity to build positive relationships with their client base, talk about the services and programs they offer and connect with other service providers in the community.

Due to NWQICSS involvement in the ISL justice process they have worked with the key stakeholders to maintain this process despite the defunding of the Murri Court system. Consequently, collaboration occurs at this level as the stakeholders hold pre-Court meetings which involve personnel from NWQICSS, Probation and Parole and legal representatives.<sup>9</sup> This ensures that information about the clients' progress is shared between the key stakeholders prior to the clients' appearance in Court.

Stakeholders noted that NWQICSS staff made an effort to maintain regular contact with staff of their organisation. In addition justice personnel commented that the support provided by NWQICSS was valuable and they often had regular meetings with NWQICSS staff. Some stakeholders indicated that NWQICSS provided assistance to their organisation by following up common clients on their behalf if the client had missed appointments or participating in conferencing with the client to assist them to meet their bail conditions. NWQICSS staff mentioned that they have good relationships with key

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<sup>8</sup> A cultural report is a report that is prepared by NWQICSS which provides background information on the client for the court and stakeholders involved in the ISL process. The cultural report contains the following information: personal details, family history, childhood, cultural heritage and practices, family issues/events, education, employment and reflection on offending.

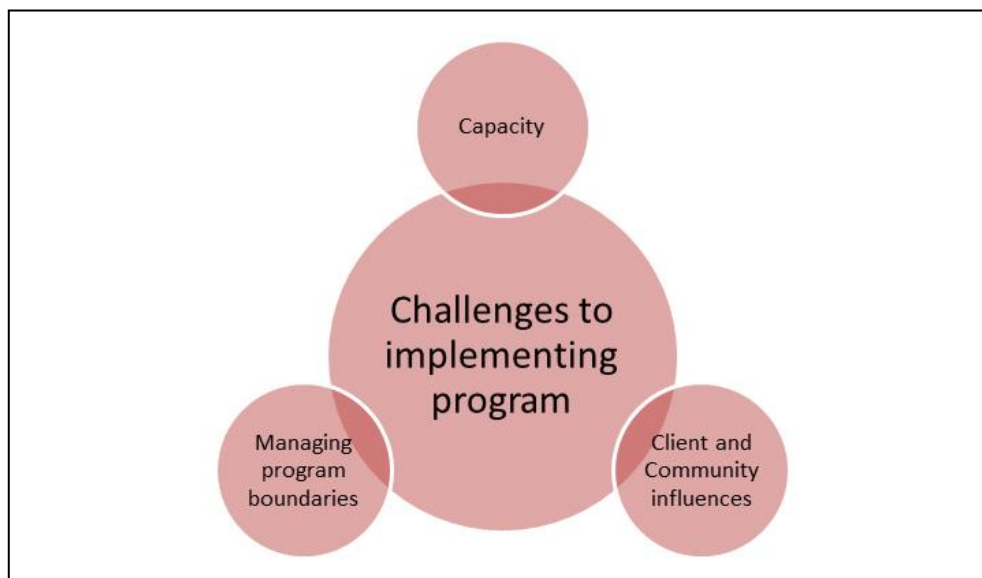
<sup>9</sup> Under the former Murri Court system a justice worker also attended and facilitated these meetings. This position has since been defunded and Probation and Parole are currently voluntarily facilitating these meetings.

stakeholders involved in the justice process, with other service providers and with justice personnel in Mount Isa.

#### 4.4 What are the challenges in implementing this program?

All participants of the evaluation were asked a question regarding challenges or barriers to implementing this program. There were slight variations in the wording of this question in order to make it appropriate for clients. Feedback from clients was positive with no issues reported in relation to the program. The following information thus comes from NWQICSS staff and stakeholder interviews. There were three broad challenges identified with implementing this program namely capacity, managing program boundaries and client/community influences (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Challenges to implementing the program**



##### 4.4.1 Capacity

There were two issues that were raised relating to capacity during the course of the evaluation. Firstly, the number of men being referred to the service had increased dramatically during this funding period. The primary driver for this increase seems to be the magistrate and other stakeholders involved in the ISL seeing value in the NWQICSS justice program. In line with other offender data male offenders comprise the largest proportion of offenders that come through the justice system.<sup>59</sup> In addition, both the Men's and Women's Groups have clients that may continue accessing the group post sentencing due to a self-identified need for support. Staff and stakeholders commented that it was positive men were engaging in the Men's Group. However, NWQICSS



acknowledged that the Men's Group was large and needed to be broken into smaller groups. NWQICSS have been unable at present to divide the Men's Group into smaller groups due to a lack of staff capacity.

*At the moment they're suffering, you know, a lack of manpower in the men's side of things because that's where the predominant offender numbers are in - certainly in the Court-base caseload that they have, you know, they service. So I know that they'd certainly like an extra body there to help them out...*

*This is the most Court-base referrals they've had for several years, and that's not because we're trying to heap too much on them; it just so happens that we have a bunch of other, you know, proactive stakeholders including a pretty proactive Magistrate who's keen to utilise these services.*

*So that would be the most immediate thing that comes to mind. **Stakeholder***

The second capacity issue outlined during the evaluation related to staffing; in particular, the number of staff employed compared to the number of clients, the ability to attract and retain staff and the varying skill levels among staff. The funding arrangement for the justice program outlined a case load of 15-25 people per justice worker. The number of men referred to the service has started to exceed this case load to worker ratio and NWQICSS staff identified the need to hire another two justice workers for the men's side of the program and a male worker dedicated to organising the Bush Healing trips. Stakeholders also acknowledged that it would be useful for additional male workers to be hired as they can see the existing staff are at capacity. NWQICSS management acknowledged that additional funding would be required to hire more staff for the program.

NWQICSS staff acknowledged that they have had difficulty in attracting and retaining new staff. Staff turnover was attributed to a number of reasons including pursuing other opportunities, the difficulty of this type of work and short funding cycles. During the course of the evaluation, one male justice worker and the female justice worker left NWQICSS to pursue other opportunities. The turnover that NWQICSS have experienced during this funding period means that the program relies on a core group of consistent staff which can make it difficult as these staff take on a greater workload and have a reduced ability to take leave. The difficulty retaining and attracting new staff was also acknowledged by the stakeholders interviewed as they have also had difficulty in this area. Stakeholders indicated that staffing issues were related to the isolation of Mount Isa, low award wages, the attraction of working in the mines, skill levels of applicants and the 'emotionally draining' nature of the work.

NWQICSS staff acknowledged that another challenge related to the varying skill levels among staff and the ability for appropriate training to occur given the capacity issues that the organisation faces. NWQICSS management recognised that additional training was required for staff however; this needed to be balanced with managing the day to day operations of the program. Some staff mentioned that internal mentoring and scheduling of professional development for staff needed to occur on a regular basis. During the course of the evaluation, NWQICSS scheduled training on case management for staff across a range of their program areas including the justice program.

#### **4.4.2 Managing program boundaries**

NWQICSS staff during the interviews mentioned the need to manage the scope or boundaries of the justice program. Due to the positive reputation of the justice program and a lack of available services in the community, NWQICSS were receiving client referrals from a number of different stakeholders. There have also been instances where stakeholders have wanted to broaden the reach of the program (for example to involve youth and non-Indigenous clients). Consequently, NWQICSS staff have met with the various stakeholders to explain the purpose and target group of the program in order to manage the scope of the program. A staff member also mentioned the need to set boundaries with the clients in terms of the scope of service delivery. There were instances where clients expected transport that was un-related to meeting conditions of their bail arrangements. However, staff appear to successfully manage this issue independently as it arises.

#### **4.4.3 Client and community influences**

Stakeholders and NWQICSS staff outlined client and community level challenges that can impact on the successful implementation of this program. Challenges included clients' willingness and ability to change their behaviour; the transient nature of the population and conflict in the community. It was acknowledged during the interviews that the client base of this program have quite complex lives and may be living in situations that may not be conducive to making positive changes to address their behaviour. One of the challenges that staff face is that the clients may be initially resistant to the program and the conditions of their bail arrangements. This may impact on how fully a client will engage with the program and whether they re-offend. It was noted that it is up to the individual to be willing to be supported to make changes in their life. This sentiment was shared with numerous stakeholders who also have contact with a similar client base. Both staff and stakeholders acknowledge that the individual may wish to make changes but their living situation may make this difficult (i.e. if others in the household are consuming excessive alcohol and they are trying to reduce their alcohol consumption).

The transient nature of the population also poses a challenge in implementing this program. Clients originate from many different communities as they are often brought to Mount Isa for their Court proceedings (Figure 6). The clients from out of town face further challenges in terms of participating in this program without available support structures like family and friends. It is also challenging as NWQICSS may need to find appropriate accommodation for these clients if they do not have friends or family in the area.

**Figure 6: Map of clients' communities**



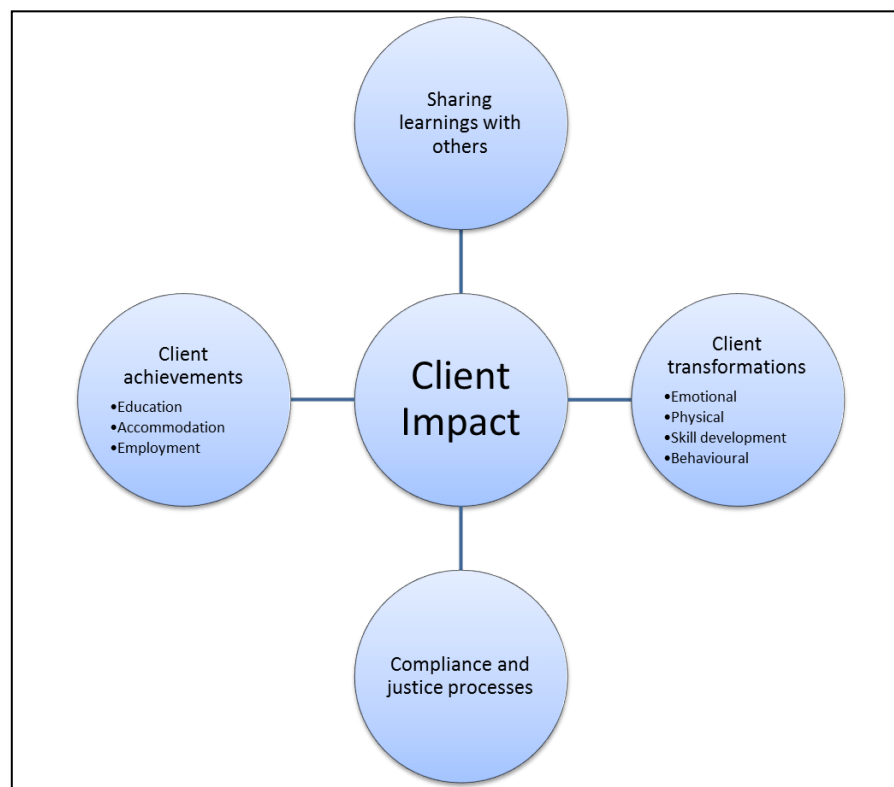
**Source:** NWQICSS client data records produced with BatchGeo maps

The final challenge mentioned by staff and stakeholders is that at times there has been conflict in the community that was subsequently brought to the Men's Group. A stakeholder noted that this was challenging because the Men's Group is only held once a week and stakeholders may be unaware that there may be conflict between clients. However, both the stakeholder and staff reported that this issue was well handled by the NWQICSS team through discussing the issue with the men involved and it was resolved 'in-house'.

## 4.5 What impact has this program had on clients' lives?

A number of positive impacts were reported during the course of the evaluation, relating to sharing learnings with others, client transformations, compliance and client achievements (Figure 7). All participants in the evaluation including clients, stakeholders and staff provided examples of these positive changes. Given the nature of this study no causal link can be made between any of the client impacts and the program itself. Despite this, the stories reported below provide a useful indication of changes that clients have made during their journey through the justice program.

**Figure 7: Client impact**



### 4.5.1 Sharing learnings with others

The Men's and Women's Groups appear to have facilitated the distribution of knowledge between participants at the groups into broader family and social networks. The Men's and Women's Groups incorporate clients sharing their stories and educational opportunities facilitated by NWQICSS staff and stakeholders. Clients that were interviewed reported sharing health and service information that they had learnt at the groups with their families and in social settings with their friends. This may lead to the development of health literacy and self-efficacy among clients and in the broader community.

*... they have them coming in, you know, to talk about health and all that. That's good. Because some – you know, some people don't really get that information and – because – the last time a lady came and, because, I had a grandmother, she's – diabetes. She's a diabetes person. And I had a talk to her about that, and told her, "Oh, this what I heard at Woman's Group". Yes. That's really good.*

**Female client**

#### **4.5.2 Client transformations**

The evaluation highlighted a number of changes clients had made relating to their emotional status, physical appearance, skills and behaviour. In terms of emotional changes the journey through the program assisted clients to self-reflect on their health, behaviour and situation. Clients acknowledged that the program made them think about specific behaviours such as excessive drinking, fighting and their interaction with the justice system. This process of self-reflection has enabled clients to take responsibility for their actions and to recognise triggers associated with their offending behaviour. This was also reflected in staff and stakeholders accounts of changes they have witnessed in some of their clients, specifically, moving from blaming others to the client accepting their role in the situation.

*...and I understanding what drinking do to you, smoking and all that, you know, all different type of drugs and that and, you know, I just sit back and think about what it does to your life, and not just only you, but for people around you, you know, like you have your own little tribe, you know, like your own family. It's affect them, you know, for what you do and that. **Male client***

*Made me realise that it wasn't all my partner's fault. I've been blaming my partner for a hell of a lot of things. Made me realise that it's not all her fault. I've got to take a step back and look at the problem and you know, and sit down and work it out...**Male client***

Clients reported that their outlook on life had changed in particular their attitudes and feelings. Clients reported feeling stronger, a sense of respect towards others and pride in what they had accomplished. Many of the clients described overcoming a sense of shame that used to be a part of their lives prior to participating in the program. Shame was described in terms of being ashamed of what they had done but also feeling shame when communicating with others. The Men's and Women's Groups appear to have facilitated these changes through the establishment of supportive, respectful environments and the sharing of stories which have helped clients work through some of their issues. Stakeholders and staff have noted a change in their clients' attitude towards people and a focus on the future including family, employment and other aspects of their lives they would like to improve.

*They've actually got me to talk up about myself, you know, which I've – I really don't really do to other, you know, people that I know, yeah. But ever since I started doing that I started to feel, you know, there's no point in being shamed about anything, you know. And yeah, it just changed my way of looking at things. **Male client***

*It's sort of changed me a lot, like, coming and – and – every week, every Tuesday, and talking, and it's sort of been pouring – I've been pouring out my feelings to the group. And I don't feel hate no more. **Female client***

One staff member also noted a change in the physical appearance of one of her clients and the pride she placed on her appearance. The staff member believes that through the program they are helping to address the underlying issues that are affecting their clients which then results in changes to their physical appearance. This is best illustrated by the excerpt of the story below:

*This young one was from black long pants, black skivvies, black hair, everything was black. It was like gothic. Three, four – I'd say four months or five months down the track the hair colour changes: black, gold, red. Oh, that was the highlight. We started praising and we started talking or admiring her looks. Then she changed. She never ever wore a dress once.*

...

*I went to pick her up one afternoon, this would have been about five or six weeks ago, and she came out with this long dress on, absolutely different, totally beautiful young lady walked out of that door with the biggest smile on her face. .... And there are the changes that they're doing to themselves or the personal from outside because we've targeted the inside.*

*We talked about the emotions and the traumas they go through and the – and, you know, encourage them that – or tell them that it's never their fault that bad things happened to them while they were little or – and it's true, it's not our fault. But to see them heal slowly on the inside it starts – they're making changes to their outer looks, yeah. **Stakeholder***

The program through the Men's and Women's Groups provides opportunities for skill development through educational sessions, discussion, sharing stories, role play and guidance from the facilitators. Some of the clients mentioned that they have developed skills in communication, conflict and anger management. This has resulted in better relationships with their partner through talking about issues rather than resorting to violence, and an ability to communicate with other clients, stakeholders and personnel involved in Court proceedings. Staff noted that providing these tools and skills has assisted clients to be able to resolve issues independently as they arise.

Staff, stakeholders and clients shared stories of behavioural transformations among the clients that access the service. One of the key behavioural changes mentioned by clients, staff and stakeholders during the evaluation was clients reducing or ceasing their alcohol consumption. Clients described a realisation that their offending behaviour was alcohol related. Clients also acknowledged that the program helped them to consider the impact that alcohol has on their health and family. Reducing their alcohol consumption has enabled clients to pursue employment opportunities.

*Well, with me, most of my - oh all of my charges has been when I - when I was intoxicated at the time, yeah, and just find that - like finding that out there and yeah, when I'm on the charge and it's either keep - keep drinking or - and ending up in jail or just give up the grog and don't end up in jail.*

**Male client**

*... I would have been still down the creek drowning my sorrows. I would have been – still been a big alcoholic. I used to be a big alcoholic, but now I gave up – I gave it up through this woman's group. I've been attending to it every Tuesday night. Every night when I go home now I don't want to look back in my old past of my life, it's not worth to go back because I want to look forward you know.*

**Female client**

Another change mentioned by all participant groups in the evaluation included clients being role models. Clients reported trying to make changes to their behaviour in order to set a good example for their children, by not swearing in the house and ensuring their children did not see them consuming alcohol. Staff and stakeholders mentioned clients becoming role models for other clients in the program through sharing their experiences with other participants in the Men's and Women's Groups.

All participant groups in the evaluation shared examples of clients helping others. These stories included helping family, volunteering with organisations and helping others in the community. One client mentioned helping his partner around the house, while others mentioned volunteering with organisations such as NWQICSS, Department of Housing and in community projects. Other clients expressed a desire to help out with the Men's and Women's Groups in Mount Isa or to start groups in their home communities in order to assist people who may need support. Clients also mentioned assisting others in the community through providing food for people and sharing what they have learnt during the program. The extent of clients helping others is best illustrated by an excerpt from a female client interview who is feeding the local homeless population that live in the riverbed.

*This is what I've been doing lately, I've been cooking at my home and cooking my own food. I buy my own food and I cook a big stew and I put it in a container and I go down the riverbank and I feed them out of my little pay, little money and little food. And I go down the creek and there's thousands of them. They're – they all come from a lot of community. I don't care where they come from, but they're all – we're all human and we're all families, you know, and we all come from one temple.*

....

*And it's really good helping – the more we help them, I'm sure they'll help themselves then. And I'd like to see because I've been already doing that. And they're happy. Every time when they see me coming down the street they think I'm walking with something behind me, because I've got a back pack and I walk down there and leave bread and stew down there. I cook at home and put my own food up and spent my own pocket money to feed somebody that I don't know, people that I don't know. But it's really good to help them because the more that I help them I feel happy that I'm helping somebody that they cannot help themselves because they've got no roof over their head. They're down the river, you know. And I've got a roof over my head and I've got a feed in my fridge.*

**Female client**

The interviews revealed that some of the male clients are also focusing on their relationships with their partners. This has stemmed from involvement in the justice program, specifically, attending the Men's Group and other programs such as MI Mentor.<sup>10</sup> Clients have discussed respecting and appreciating their partner more and performing small tasks to assist their partner. Clients during their journey through the justice program also seem to develop a sense of trust towards their partner which was not present before entering the program.

*... what I have learnt through the Men's Group - through the Men's Group and through the Men's [MI] Mentor is appreciating your partner a bit more. Realising, you know - letting them know that they're not just a partner, that they're somebody special, the mother of your children.*

...

*"Oh you're right, leave the washing up, I'll do it," you know, and give her that bit of time to herself and yeah, it's been working really good -*

**Male client**

*You can say, "How come you're on your own?" "Oh she's doing this", so you see that they're starting to trust each other and that's part of our Men's Group is based on trust, confidentiality and respect. So that's one of our - one of our foundations for the Men's Group is to trust, confidentiality and, you know, respect. So they learn that soon as they come in, this is what it's all about, we learn to trust each other, respect each other. So you see changes within their relationship...*

**NWQICSS staff member**

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<sup>10</sup> A program that seeks to address domestic violence which is conducted by the Domestic Violence Resource Service in Mount Isa.



Other changes in behaviour noted by stakeholders and staff included a change in language amongst clients and the extent they participate in the Men's or Women's Groups. One stakeholder mentioned that clients' choice of language has become more positive when interacting with others. Stakeholders and staff noted that as clients progressed through the program they started engaging more in the group, this included making their own way to the group,<sup>11</sup> listening and participating in the group (by sharing their story or contributing to discussions). One staff member noted that the reason that clients provide for attending the group moves from blaming the Court process to accepting responsibility for their situation (e.g 'they made me do this' to 'I'm here').

Another notable behaviour change mentioned during the course of the evaluation was that some clients continue to attend the Men's and Women's Groups even after they have fulfilled their Court obligations. This was often attributed to the fact that clients realise they still need support or still want to work on improving their lives and feel comfortable obtaining the support from the group. It was also attributed to wanting to help mentor some of the newer or younger clients through the process. This was viewed as a positive client outcome and a testament to the support they received while they were clients of the program.

#### **4.5.3 Compliance and justice processes**

One of the key impacts of the justice program on clients' lives is that it provides clients an opportunity to remain in the community and seek support to address their offending behaviour. Many of the clients recognise that this service is a second chance to make changes to their lives so they do not end up in jail. Stakeholders and staff revealed a number of positive outcomes during the interviews relating to compliance and justice processes for the clients that have been involved in the NWQICSS justice program. Firstly, it was noted that compliance with Court based conditions had improved particularly in relation to getting clients to attend the required meetings and Court dates set by the Court. This may be attributed to the relationship built between NWQICSS staff and clients and also the provision of practical support such as transport to assist clients to meet their Court mandated conditions.

Stakeholders associated with the ISL Court in Mount Isa also noted improved compliance and rehabilitation in terms of addressing the issues that contribute to clients' offending behaviour. Stakeholders also noted that they have seen some clients succeed and stay offence-free and have also observed a lessening in the frequency and severity of offending from some clients. The excerpt

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<sup>11</sup> Previously they relied on the transport provided by NWQICSS.

below from a stakeholder who is involved in the ISL Court outlines some of the results that have been noted and the importance of the NWQICSS justice program as it relates to Court processes in Mount Isa:

*I know we've had - you know, very immediate sense, we've had cases where the Justice Group has worked intensively with people over - over a number of months, well, you know, through a bail-base program. I know that that's resulted in positive outcomes from - from the Court. Not always but certainly the extent to which they've complied and received assistance and engaged - actively engaged with the Justice Group has been taken into account.*

*So they - to some extent their word holds, I guess, with the Court when it comes to saying whether or not somebody has participated successfully, and the extent to which they've participated in addressing their offending behaviour, so as I say, that's resulted in, I guess, non-custodial sentences for people and it's allowed them a chance at remaining in the community to - to, you know, to continue to rehabilitate themselves, engage in program delivery here where they live and attempt to carry on any positive sort of gains or work that they might have done with the - with the Justice Group.*

*We've also had, you know, varying degrees of success where we've seen - and this is just anecdotally - where we've seen a lessening in the - in the frequency of offending from people, a lessening in the severity, not just the regularity but severity of offending. **Stakeholder***

#### **4.5.4 Client achievements**

Through the course of the evaluation it was evident that clients had achieved a number of positive outcomes while participating in the justice program. These achievements were related to education, accommodation and employment. Clients reported completing courses related to domestic violence, numeracy and literacy, hairdressing, construction and labouring.

Clients also discussed obtaining their own flats and houses which has been particularly important as some of the clients had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. Clients reported feeling a sense of pride and happiness in having their own place. Obtaining appropriate housing can also contribute to reducing some of the issues associated with clients' offending behaviour particularly around overcrowding and homelessness.

*Yeah, bros, way better, hey, like if it wasn't for my house and that, I - I wouldn't - I would have felt low, you know, living with other people and that. But since that I got my own house, I'm proud of it, you know, proud of myself what I - what I achieve, you know. My first goal was to get a house and supporting, you know, me and my wife and that. Way - yeah, a lot happier because there's one thing about it, we was - like we was - when we was here, we was with her family bouncing around, you know, different homes and there was tension in the house, and me and her was arguing all the time and seeing that I got my own house, got up, you know, got sick of it, did it myself, went and got a house and today I'm right, you know, bro, I got my own house. I'm happier for it now.*

**Male client**

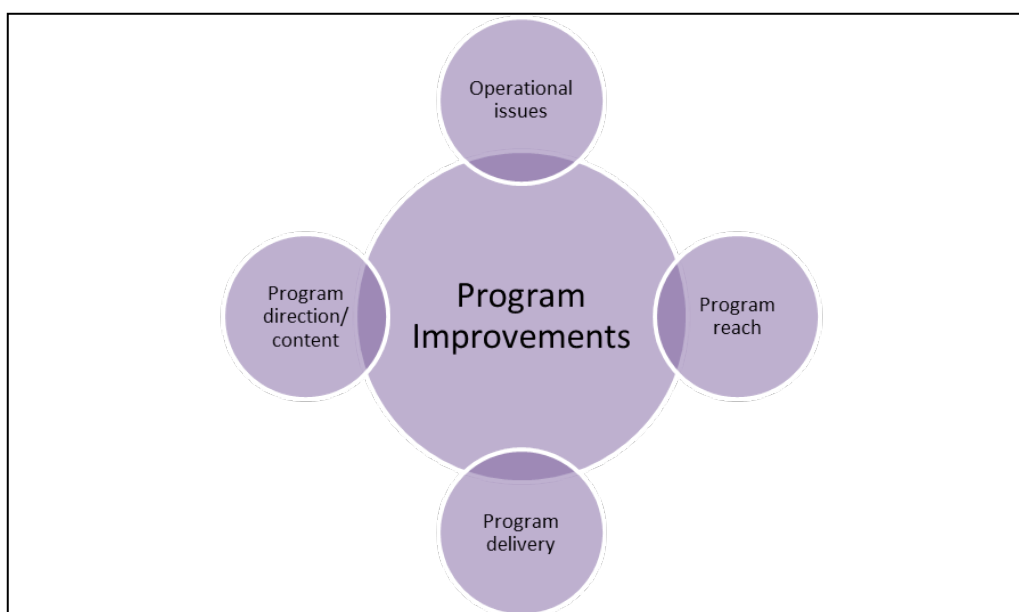
*And now I know my life is turning out really good. I've got my own family, got my own house. I've been homeless before, but when I came to woman's group they just put a roof over my head and now I've got a roof over my head.* **Female client**

The interviews with clients, staff and stakeholders also revealed that some clients had obtained employment on pastoral properties, in the mine and other organisations in the community. Staff noted that some clients had managed to secure employment prior to sentencing and the employer provided a letter to the Court confirming this employment status. Obtaining employment and housing is key to promoting stability for clients post-sentence and has been linked to reducing recidivism.<sup>37,60</sup>

#### **4.6 What improvements could be made to the program?**

The final question that was investigated as part of the evaluation was related to improvements that could be made to the program. This section presents the suggested improvements provided by clients, staff and stakeholders during the course of the evaluation. Interviews highlighted four broad areas which could be improved relating to operational issues, program reach, program delivery and program direction/content (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Suggested program improvements**



#### **4.6.1 Operational issues**

Operational improvements were highlighted by staff and stakeholders pertaining to funding, staff, capacity and resources for the program. One of the biggest issues facing NWQICSS is the ability to secure ongoing funding, as funding for this program ended this year. As a result, the female restorative justice worker left the program to pursue another opportunity and other staff have moved into other roles. Staff acknowledged that securing funding was one of the main priorities in order to continue being able to deliver the service. It was acknowledged that longer-term funding would allow NWQICSS the opportunity to plan and be proactive in their service delivery. Stakeholders also noted that funding was a priority and that there needed to be recognition from the community and government that the service being provided is important and that it should be funded in an appropriate manner.

Associated with having appropriate funding is the need to increase staff capacity in order to meet the growing demands of the service. Staff recognised the need to recruit new staff for the following positions: two additional male justice workers to assist with case management of the clients, an additional person to help facilitate the Men's Group and a person to focus on doing Bush Healing. Replacing the female justice worker should also be a priority once funding has been obtained. Stakeholders also acknowledged that NWQICSS require additional staff in order to keep up with the growing demand for their service.

Staff interviews highlighted the need to focus on professional development of existing staff; however, it was acknowledged that this needs to be balanced with service delivery. Providing training is currently difficult given staff turnover and the increasing case load for the remaining staff. Key skill areas that require development include case management processes, computer skills and narrative therapy training. One staff member highlighted that a more structured approach to professional development was required so that each staff member had a professional development plan that identified the skills areas that needed to be developed and then dedicated time was scheduled for training in the specified area. A 'train the trainer' type approach was suggested so that one staff member could go to a course and then pass on the information both to clients and other justice program staff.

Both staff and stakeholders acknowledged that additional funding was needed to purchase resources for the program. Staff indicated additional vehicles would be required if Bush Healing was to become more regular. While stakeholders associated with the Women's Group indicated they needed additional resources for their arts and crafts activities (e.g. canvas, sewing machines and craft materials).

#### **4.6.2 Program reach**

Improvements relating to program reach included broadening program delivery, focusing on developing the Women's Group, increasing the frequency of the groups and increasing stakeholder engagement. Examining the client data for the program revealed that a large number of clients who access the service are from other communities as they are often brought to Mount Isa for Court proceedings. A staff member and stakeholder acknowledged that replicating the justice program in these communities would be advantageous as this would help to alleviate isolation as the individual could have the social networks to support him/her to complete the program in their own community.

Further, developing the Women's Group was an improvement that was suggested by staff, stakeholders and clients. It is acknowledged that male clients far exceed female clients and thus the operation of the NWQICSS justice program is largely geared towards meeting this need (reflected in the number of male staff and availability of 'wraparound services' for male clients). At the time of interviews there was one female justice worker who was supported in facilitating the Women's Group by a female staff member from another NWQICSS program. At the time of writing, the female

justice worker had resigned to pursue another opportunity. Until a new female restorative justice worker can be hired the Women's Group is being facilitated by a staff member from another NWQICSS program and a community stakeholder.

Staff acknowledged that the Women's Group was primarily developed to target the partners of the male clients. This was acknowledged as being limited in its success due to clients coming from other communities and partners not willing to be involved in the process. During the interviews it was noted that there may not be as much emphasis on providing services for female clients and supporting the female staff members to run the women's program. There were a number of suggestions to improve the women's program; these included attracting additional women to the program through various activities (for example barbecues) and ensuring the women have the opportunity to also participate in Bush Healing activities. Stakeholders also mentioned the need for the Women's Group to have a dedicated space and equipment for activities (e.g. arts and crafts, cooking). It is acknowledged that these improvements may not be possible until the female justice worker is replaced and funding is obtained.

Both staff and stakeholders acknowledged the growing demand for the service particularly in relation to the number of men accessing the service. It was suggested by staff and stakeholders that in order to make the Men's Group more manageable the group be divided into two or three groups. This would ensure that all clients have the opportunity to participate, as some clients may not be actively engaging in the group, due to the sheer number of clients currently attending the group. Participants suggested that the Men's Group could be split in terms of how long clients had been accessing the program. This would involve having a group with newer clients that meet on one night and have some of the clients that are self-referred or almost finished, sit with the new clients so they can learn from them and their experiences. Then after the newer clients are beginning to make progress and are actively participating in the group, they can be merged into the other group that may meet on a different night. This process can be repeated as newer clients enter the program. Participants in the evaluation also acknowledged that it would be good to increase the frequency of the Women's Group as well. It was noted in the interviews that additional funding and staff were required in order to be able to implement these changes to the groups.

Increased stakeholder engagement was also mentioned as a possible program improvement during the evaluation. From the clients' perspective they wanted to invite more guest speakers to provide information on available services, courses and other educational topics. Stakeholders associated

with the Women's Group indicated they would like to see more regular attendance from additional stakeholders such as child safety, Probation and Parole, ATODS and domestic violence services. Stakeholders that were interviewed as part of the evaluation highlighted that at times it was difficult to attend the groups because they have to attend in their own time and it may be difficult to attend after they have worked all day. One stakeholder mentioned that it would be good to get some one-on-one time with the clients at the group in order to assist with developing a relationship with clients.

#### **4.6.3 Program delivery**

In terms of program delivery three areas for improvement were noted during the course of the evaluation, this included case management, implementing a structured approach and utilising past participants to help facilitate the program. The funding body and NWQICSS staff acknowledge that case management is an integral part of the justice program. Interviews with staff revealed that they have a good understanding about the fundamentals of case management and are performing elements of case management in their day to day roles. However, both the funding body and NWQICSS management noted the need to ensure that this case management process is structured, appropriately recorded and measured.

Interviews and an analysis of key program documents revealed that NWQICSS have started taking steps to ensure that appropriate case management procedures are in place with the development of a number of documents including induction forms for when clients enter the program; case notes which record activities/services clients have accessed; cultural report used by the Courts as part of the ISL and a referral form. Interviews with staff highlighted that all staff are using the case notes document to record activities and services provided to clients. The other forms are primarily used by one to two staff members only. Interviews suggested that the reasons for the remaining staff not using these forms may be due to varying skill levels with using a computer and writing ability. Staff indicated during the interviews that the referral form may not be needed as staff have good relationships with other service providers in town and often just need to call and book the client in for an appointment rather than filling out a form.

NWQICSS management recognised the need for case management training for their staff and during the course of the evaluation paid for an external provider to run a four day workshop on case management across NWQICSS programs (including the justice program). NWQICSS management indicated that sending staff from all programs (justice, homelessness and child and family) would

allow consistency across the organisation in terms of the information that is collated and recorded. The training has resulted in the development of a case management plan template that focuses on the needs and goals of clients, and how these will be measured in the future. At the time of writing these documents were still in the development stage and had not yet been implemented. Another issue relating to capacity and case management is the need for a structured approach to dividing the client load among justice workers. This is particularly important as the number of clients accessing the service continues to increase. One staff member suggested assigning a case load to each worker so that each person has a set number of clients to manage. It was acknowledged however that this is difficult to implement given staff turnover and varying skill levels among staff.

Staff and stakeholders mentioned the need to improve some structural elements of program delivery. Firstly, in terms of topics covered during the Men's and Women's Groups one staff member suggested running a life management course which some of the staff have been trained to facilitate. Another staff member indicated that additional policies and procedures needed to be developed to help facilitate program delivery for example for Bush Healing. Finally, a stakeholder associated with the Women's Group indicated that she had noticed the group had been starting late which made it difficult for stakeholders to attend the group particularly as they are attending in their own time straight from work.

Staff, stakeholders and client interviews revealed that involving previous clients to assist with facilitating the program would be useful in future program delivery. There were a number of possible alternatives suggested including; mentoring clients to help facilitate the Men's or Women's Group as they are progressing/completed the program and encouraging clients to stay with the program so they can serve as role models and supporters for new clients. It was emphasised that role models should share their story, how they are now assisting the group and why they assist the group. Other suggestions related to awarding clients a peer leader role so they can organise a specific activity for the other clients and rotating that through the group. Another option involved having clients assist in the community by riding with a staff member in the car when they are transporting clients to their appointments. These suggestions were seen as beneficial to promoting Aboriginal capacity and ownership over the program and to ensure the longevity of the program.



#### **4.6.4 Future program direction and content**

The interviews revealed improvements in terms of future program direction and content that could be added to the justice program. One of the issues highlighted was the need to be more proactive. NWQICSS staff felt that they were operating in a very reactive environment and often did not have the opportunity to plan and respond in a proactive manner due to the funding cycle and capacity issues in terms of staff turnover and increasing numbers of clients. Clients highlighted the need to talk to people before they got in trouble with the law and to go out in the community and educate people about health and lifestyle issues. One client suggested that the Women's Group could take an active role in helping to educate the community by sharing their stories with the community over a meal that they had cooked. Stakeholders associated with the justice program indicated that they would like to be more proactive and involve NWQICSS justice staff in conferencing with their clients if they can see the client is having difficulty complying with their orders.

Clients, staff and stakeholders also indicated the need to work with young people. Clients acknowledged that similar Men's and Women's Groups be developed to support young people to deal with their issues and to involve them in activities such as sports and Bush Healing. Stakeholders involved with the ISL also expressed a desire for programs to target youth prior to/after offending such as a youth residential rehabilitation centre. NWQICSS staff recognised the need for Aboriginal youth to get exposure to elements of Aboriginal culture as many young people have not had exposure to this. While it is recognised that working with youth is outside the scope of this particular program it may align with NWQICSS' other activities such as the Child and Family Centre.

Participants that were interviewed for the evaluation indicated a need to adopt a holistic approach to supporting clients involved in the justice program. It was noted that it can be difficult for individual's to make changes to their lives if their circumstances and support networks are not conducive to change. Consequently, both staff and stakeholders recognised the need to work with the families and households of the client. This means involving the partners in the Men's or Women's Group and working with people in the household so that all parties are provided education and support to facilitate change. It was recognised that capacity issues and funding had restricted being able to achieve this with the existing program but it was hoped that the Child and Family Centre may facilitate a more holistic approach.

In terms of improving the program, clients indicated that they would like NWQICSS to provide more activities during the day that they could participate in. Suggestions included more arts and crafts classes, conducting Bush Healing more regularly, sporting activities, youth activities, cooking classes and sewing. It was suggested that items that were made during Bush Healing trips and during arts and crafts classes could be displayed in a gallery or sold in order to buy more supplies and help fund the program. Clients thought that having activities would keep people's mind occupied, alleviate boredom and stop people drinking during the day and therefore would help people stay out of trouble.

Bush Healing was highly regarded as part of the justice program and clients indicated they would like to access this activity more frequently. To date Bush Healing trips have largely been coordinated for the male client group on an ad-hoc basis due to staff capacity, funding and access to vehicles. Clients suggested that they would like to see the Bush Healing program extended to include overnight or weekly stays. Clients, staff and stakeholders associated with the Women's Group highlighted that they would like to have the opportunity to also take women on Bush Healing trips (to date this has not been as frequent as the male clients' trips due to staff capacity). Some of the clients also expressed an interest in passing on some of the cultural knowledge that they have gained and showing others their communities.

In terms of future program direction and content participants noted the importance of focusing on employment and education. Clients indicated that training courses could be run in association with local mining companies so that clients can get the necessary qualifications and obtain a job in the mining industry. It was indicated that NWQICSS had previously facilitated these types of courses. It was also suggested that an Indigenous specific employment agency would be beneficial to assist Indigenous people obtain employment after they had finished their program. Stakeholders noted that it would be useful for NWQICSS to focus on training and skills development with their client base and to develop a traineeship program that would facilitate access to employment post-sentence.

A need to focus on education for clients was highlighted as an improvement to the existing NWQICSS program. This was mainly centred on educating clients about different service providers that are available in the community and how NWQICSS can facilitate client access to these services. It was also noted that an emphasis should be placed on improving skills in numeracy, literacy and life skills (e.g. money, budgeting, cooking, hygiene etc.).

## **4.7 Summary of results**

The results of the evaluation highlight that the NWQICSS program is highly respected and valued among clients and stakeholders. There were high levels of congruence between the elements of success, challenges and improvements reported by staff, stakeholders and clients. There have been a number of positive gains in terms of improving the lives of clients and addressing the underlying factors which may contribute to offending among the client base. There are a number of elements that were considered successful in the implementation of the program namely its cultural focus, the Men's and Women's Groups, the provision of practical support, the staff and the level of stakeholder engagement and collaboration. The evaluation highlighted some challenges in implementing the program related to capacity, client and community influences and managing program boundaries. However, these challenges have been reported among other Indigenous community based justice programs and were also identified as issues for other organisations in Mount Isa. Participants in the evaluation indicated a number of program improvements around operational issues, program reach, program delivery and program direction. The final chapter of this report outlines some recommendations based on the evaluation findings to strengthen the program and to ensure its sustainability.

## 5. Recommendations and conclusion

NWQICSS through the Indigenous Sentencing List (ISL) has provided a successful rehabilitative, diversionary bail program for Indigenous offenders, working with clients over a period of several months in order to address issues related to their offending behaviour. The evaluation of the NWQICSS justice program revealed that it was highly valued amongst stakeholders and clients in the Mount Isa community. It is evident that the NWQICSS justice program incorporates many of the recommended elements proposed in the literature for delivering an effective community-based justice program for Indigenous offenders. This includes: <sup>12,13,15,21,36,37,40</sup>

- *addressing individual risk factors* for offending - through referral to services and delivering education at the Men's and Women's Groups based on clients' shared stories
- *fostering Indigenous identity* - through engaging Elders in service delivery and cultural activities (e.g. Bush Healing and arts/crafts activities)
- *focusing on life skills training* including Court processes, accessing services, job readiness, health and navigating systems - delivered through practical support and education at Men's and Women's Groups
- *focusing on education, training and employment* - through linking to appropriate services
- *building social networks* – through the Men's and Women's Groups and activities
- *developing problem solving skills* – delivered through informal/formal discussions at the Men's and Women's Groups
- *targeting alcohol abuse* – through linking to services and education at the Men's and Women's Groups
- *providing opportunities for reflection* – through the Men's and Women's Group and in discussions with staff
- *obtaining suitable housing* for clients – through linking clients to appropriate transitional, residential rehabilitation facilities or Department of Housing services
- *collaboration between community/service organisations* – due to involvement in the ISL processes, regular stakeholder meetings, stakeholder attendance at the Men's and Women's Groups and frequent communication between NWQICSS staff and key stakeholders.

NWQICSS have faced similar challenges in implementing this program in the community that were reported in the literature. Similarly to other Indigenous community programs, NWQICSS have had difficulty securing funding that is long term which would provide stability for the program and an opportunity to engage in holistic and proactive service delivery.<sup>46,47</sup> Secondly, high staff turnover has meant the service is reliant on a core group of people and balancing service delivery with staff

capacity has been difficult. Staff turnover was reported by stakeholders and in the literature as a significant issue which has affected service delivery of other Indigenous community based programs.<sup>45,46</sup> NWQICSS have also experienced challenges in developing a structured case management approach due to a lack of capacity and sustainable funding. However, it is noted that the organisation has taken positive steps towards implementing a more structured approach to case management and in measuring program outcomes.

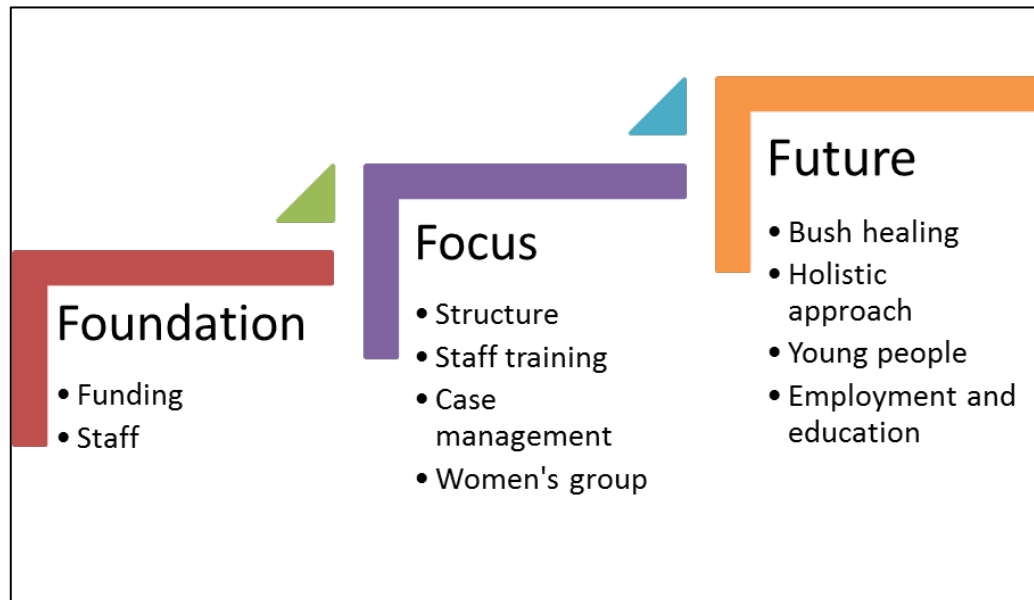
Similarly to the NWQICSS program, the literature indicates that justice programs are often measured against recidivism or incarceration rates.<sup>15,61</sup> Authors in the literature have cautioned that these measures may be unrealistic or require an extensive timeframe to show tangible results.<sup>15,42</sup> The literature suggests that other interval measures such as employment, reduced alcohol or drug use and decreased assessed risk may be more appropriate.<sup>15</sup> It is difficult to measure the impact of this program on recidivism and incarceration rates; however, the evaluation revealed that clients had achieved a number of positive outcomes that address the underlying factors associated with their offending. Specifically clients reported changes in behaviour (including reducing or stopping alcohol consumption), development of skills (e.g. conflict management), completion of educational courses, obtaining housing and gaining employment.

The NWQICSS justice program is an integral part of the ISL process in Mount Isa. In terms of justice outcomes, participants in the evaluation reported improved client compliance, addressing issues that may contribute to clients' offending behaviour, the ability of some clients to remain offence free and a lessening in the frequency and severity of offending among some clients. NWQICSS feedback to the Courts regarding clients' progress is valued and through the ISL process has influenced positive sentence outcomes, in the form of non-custodial sentences and community based orders (pers. comm. email Stakeholder 18 September 2013). It should be noted that Indigenous offenders are more likely to receive shorter sentences and offenders with short sentences do not typically receive access to rehabilitation services in prisons.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the use of community based programs such as NWQICSS justice program is advantageous as it can provide Indigenous people access to rehabilitation and other services to address issues associated with their offending behaviour. Furthermore community based programs have been outlined in the literature as more effective than short-term prison sentences.<sup>37</sup>

## 5.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered after completing the evaluation of the NWQICSS justice program with a view to strengthen the program and promote long term sustainability (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Recommendations



### A - Foundation

Foundation recommendations are those that are essential for the program to continue. These include:

1. **Funding provision - it is recommended that funding bodies adopt a justice reinvestment approach to community based justice programs.** This will allow a portion of funds typically spent on imprisonment to be diverted to community initiatives that seek to address the underlying causes of crime in the community.
2. **Securing funding - it is recommended that funding of at least three years be obtained from a relevant federal or state funding source.** This will provide program sustainability and organisational stability which will allow the recruitment of staff and allow the organisation to implement a planned and structured approach.
  - It is advised that NWQICSS obtain letters of support from their stakeholders to support their funding applications as many of the stakeholders during the evaluation

indicated they would be happy to supply a letter (and have supplied support letters on previous occasions).

- Cultural elements such as Bush Healing and arts/crafts may be able to be supplemented by other funding sources such as community grants or be tied to Child and Family Centre activities.

**3. Staff – it is advised that at least two additional male justice workers and a female justice worker be hired to meet the demands of the program and provide sustainability within the program (resulting in a total of four male workers and one female worker).**

- NWQICSS are advised to utilise their existing networks to attract new staff (for example advertising the positions through Townsville Catholic Diocese or other organisations in the community).
- In addition, it is recommended that NWQICSS consider alternative employment options such as the use of traineeships to recruit people to positions (e.g. a community service traineeship). These traineeships can attract government funding and can be organised through an Australian Apprenticeship Centre.
- It is acknowledged that it may be difficult to attract staff to the justice worker positions given the award wage for community service roles and the high cost of living in Mount Isa.

## **B - Focus**

These recommendations should be considered after addressing the foundational issues reported above. These focus issues seek to improve existing program delivery. It is recommended NWQICSS:

**1. Structure – Review the structure of both the Justice Team and Men’s Group in order to meet the growing demand for the service.**

- *Team* – There are two suggested approaches to restructuring the team in order to manage the growing client base. Firstly, each worker could be given a stipulated case load (e.g. 15-25 people). This approach requires that all staff are trained in each facet of the position including community engagement, justice processes, case management and required reporting. An alternative approach may be to have two different types of positions in the team (e.g. justice engagement workers and justice case workers). This will allow variations in skills among staff so that positions can be

tailored to skills. It is possible that justice engagement workers could be sourced from people that have successfully completed the justice program.

- *Justice engagement workers* – tasks may include providing transport to appointments, follow up with clients in the community, support during programs, facilitating activities and groups.
  - *Justice case workers* – responsible for structured case management including completing case management plans, recording data, linking to services and participating in Court processes.
- *Men's Group* – to ensure the Men's Group continues to be effective the group should be divided into smaller groups.<sup>12</sup> This may be achieved through:
- Creating two groups one for newer attendees with participants that have completed the program/self-referred – to enhance learning and share stories and to help newer attendees feel more comfortable and the other for participants that are progressing through the program or nearing completion.
  - The groups may be conducted on separate nights or on the same night (start out as a large group and then divide into smaller groups)
  - Staffing may be facilitated by training clients that have completed the program to become peer mentors. This will help add capacity and allows clients to be role models. It is also useful for succession planning.
    - It is noted that NWQICSS will need to provide mentoring and training to prospective peer mentors.

- 2. Staff training – complete a staff audit and develop training plans.** An audit of NWQICSS staff should be undertaken to identify existing skills and training completed by staff in the organisation. A training audit could be conducted using a survey or through reviewing human resource files to identify the skills, qualifications and training that each staff member has acquired. This should be followed by completing a training plan for staff to identify skills areas and training that staff require. This will help to alleviate some of the capacity issues affecting the team. NWQICSS may consider the following options to assist with staff training:
- Enrolling staff in training that is offered by stakeholders/formal training providers or community groups in either a face to face or online format

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<sup>12</sup> This can be replicated for the Women's Group as required.



- Utilising mentoring within the team or across programs and organisations to use existing staff with the skills or who have completed formal training to train other staff. For example, this could include utilising Townsville Catholic Diocese staff such as the IT officer at the catholic high school to up-skill NWQICSS staff in computers.
- Utilising registered training organisations within the community or Townsville Catholic Diocese to provide accredited courses for staff or enrolling staff in traineeships through an Australian Apprenticeship Centre.
- Dedicated training time set aside for each staff member should be provided to ensure all staff are equipped to perform each task required for their position.

**3. Case management – implement case management processes, monitor client progress and measure client outcomes.** NWQICSS have made progress in implementing case management practices which could be strengthened by:

- implementing the new case management plans – including client follow up at specified time periods to fit with service delivery (e.g. one month, three months, pre-sentence and post sentence)
- training new staff in case management processes (this can be conducted by existing staff that have completed the formal case management training)
- conducting a training session for staff on new/existing templates and how to use these documents
- creating a mentor system for staff less experienced in case management to shadow more experienced staff
- developing policies and procedures for the key elements of the program including outlining the client journey, case management approach, facilitating the Men's or Women's Group, Bush Healing and other program elements as required
- Develop, implement and monitor appropriate client impact and/or satisfaction measures<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> An example used in the program *Rekindling the Spirit* can be found [http://epubs.scu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1416&context=educ\\_pubs](http://epubs.scu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1416&context=educ_pubs)

**4. *Women's Group – place a greater emphasis on the women's program to support the positive gains from the men's program.*** This could be achieved by:

- supporting and mentoring a new female justice worker (e.g. weekly planning meetings with male and female facilitators of the Men's and Women's Groups). It is recognised that the current facilitator of the Women's Group would need to be covered for these meetings as she is employed in another NWQICSS program.
- implementing the same processes used for the male program to ensure consistency in the level of data captured for the female clients
- utilising the Child and Family Centre and parish activities to promote the Women's Group
- hosting family activity days at the Child and Family Centre for the Men's Group participants' so the Women's Group can be promoted to partners
- ensuring the female clients also have the opportunity to participate in Bush Healing activities
- ensuring the Women's Group have a dedicated space and equipment for activities (e.g. arts and crafts, cooking, and sewing).

## **C - Future**

The following recommendations are provided to strengthen the program in the future. It is advised NWQICSS consider:

**1. *Bush Healing – focusing efforts on strengthening the Bush Healing program so that is a regular service that supports the clients of the justice program.*** This can be achieved by:

- employing a designated Bush Healing coordinator
- seeking funding through alternative sources to purchase equipment, resources and materials (e.g. community development grants through state, federal and local government; Indigenous arts and culture funding)
- generating income for the program or participants by displaying/selling products developed during the Bush Healing program (e.g. paintings)
- mentoring past participants to help facilitate the Bush Healing program by becoming peer mentors or peer leaders
- integrating the Bush Healing and other activities with the Child and Family Centre activities to achieve efficiencies, share cost and create additional capacity.

**2. Holistic approach – fostering a holistic approach which focuses on the family to address justice issues, through:**

- promoting the Women’s Group to partners of the male clients
- pursuing new and engaging existing stakeholders in activities conducted by NWQICSS including the Men’s and Women’s Groups, justice program activities and activities held for other NWQICSS programs
- hosting family events in association with the Child and Family Centre
- integrating aspects of service delivery with the Child and Family Centre to provide educational opportunities (e.g. parenting, healthy lifestyles and life skills) or to host activities for the Men’s and Women’s Group participants
- cross promoting NWQICSS’ programs at each centre and during NWQICSS or parish activities
- utilising the Child and Family Centre to provide day care services so female clients can attend programs through the justice program

**3. Young people – working with existing or new stakeholders to create a justice program suitable for young people at risk (under the age of 17 years). This may include:**

- meeting with stakeholders to determine existing youth services and service gaps
- collaborate with stakeholders on a funding application to secure funding for a youth program
- engaging with stakeholders to build on existing programs and resources to provide activities for youth in the community
- hosting youth or family activities and education sessions in association with the Child and Family Centre
- Providing a youth Bush Healing program incorporating Elders and previous participants to assist with facilitating the program

**4. *Employment and education – continue to focus and explore new opportunities for employment and education activities for clients of the justice program.*** This may include:

- Continuing to link with formal educational providers and community services to provide numeracy and literacy courses and other skills based courses.
- Link with local employment services and industry to provide careers information and pursue opportunities for skills based training (e.g. traineeships, short courses).
- Engage additional stakeholders to discuss topics at the Men's and Women's Groups around health, employment, available services, Court processes, legal issues, relationships and life skills.
- Link employment and educational activities to the Child and Family Centre to create efficiencies, share costs and generate capacity.
- Consider utilising registered training organisations within the community or within the Townsville Catholic Diocese to conduct short or certificate courses for clients
- Train and mentor clients that complete the justice program successfully, to become peer mentors or community engagement workers to provide employment opportunities and assist with the implementation of the justice program.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The NWQICSS justice program incorporates many of the suggested elements outlined in the literature involved in implementing a successful Indigenous justice program. The current evaluation has shown this program has real potential in positively impacting the lives of Indigenous offenders in relation to addressing their offending behaviour. NWQICSS have been faced with similar challenges in implementing this program that were reported in the literature by other organisations implementing community based justice programs. One of the key issues facing these organisations is the difficulty to obtain long-term funding which affects the ability of the organisation to create a solid foundation for the program, often relying on a core group of community members to ensure the consistency in service delivery. Securing this funding is fundamental for NWQICSS to continue their operations and thus address the recommendations above. Funding bodies are urged to consider a justice reinvestment approach and to provide at least three year funding to build on the success of this program.

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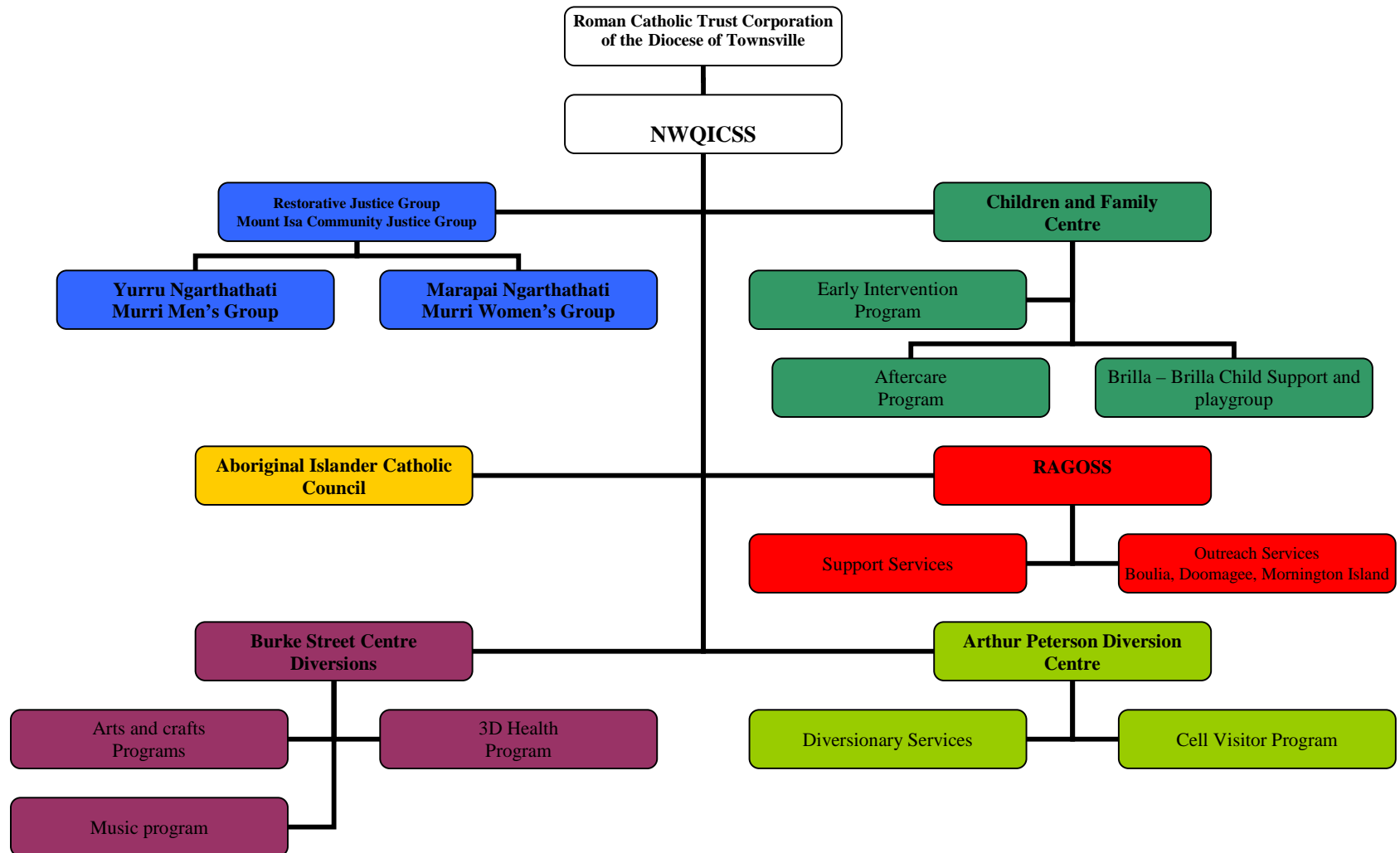
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## Appendix 1 – NWQICSS organisational structure



Source: Diagram supplied by NWQICSS

## Appendix 2 – Red Dust Healing activities

Activity	Description <sup>43</sup>
Family Tree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants are asked to draw a tree with roots and branches.</li> <li>• They put their name on the trunk and then write the names of the people that have contributed to their upbringing on the roots.</li> <li>• They discuss the good and bad things that have affected their lives – that have ‘filtered into the root system’.</li> <li>• Participants are asked to recognise people they have lost and tragedies that have affected their lives on broken branches in the tree.</li> <li>• Saplings are drawn beside the tree to symbolise the younger people that are looking up at them.</li> </ul>
Bird and Fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity is based around a bird and fish that have fallen in love.</li> <li>• The bird cannot live in the water and the fish cannot live in the sky.</li> <li>• It symbolises the connection to loved ones and symbolises what you can and cannot control.</li> </ul>
LAW vs. LORE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law = Legalities, Attorney General, Westminster</li> <li>• LORE = Land, Origin, Respect, Elders</li> <li>• LORE operates in Indigenous communities and is about knowing who you are, where you come from, maintaining respect and becoming a respectful leader.</li> <li>• This activity explains that if you follow the LORE then you won’t get in trouble with the LAW.</li> </ul>
Pouch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is based on a kangaroo diagram</li> <li>• It stands for Problems, Options, Choices and How.</li> <li>• U stands for how you make a decision and captures the entire acronym.</li> <li>• The activity helps participants to stop and think about decisions</li> </ul>
Control and Power and Love and Respect Mat exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A mat with a coloured wheel and spokes is placed on the floor.</li> <li>• Each coloured spoke on the wheel represents a different form of power and control (physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, greed, jealousy)</li> <li>• Participants are asked to reflect on the type of control they have been a victim of and asked how it made them feel</li> <li>• They are asked to stand on spoke of control that they have exerted over loved ones</li> <li>• The idea is to show how behaviours can be passed down from generation to generation</li> <li>• Love and respect mat is laid over the other mat and participants asked to discuss how they can maintain love and respect with their loved ones.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 3: Interview schedule NWQICSS clients

*Interviewer note: where possible this interview should focus on the Men's or Women's Group and any additional services NWQICSS have provided as part of the justice program. The style of interviewing should be conversational the questions are listed as examples to help guide the discussion.*

### Introduction

The government gave money to run the Men's and Women's Groups. The government wants to know how the groups are going – the good things or bad things. So we are talking to people that have been joining in at the Men's and Women's Groups. Your name won't be recorded or mentioned. Please answer honestly. Please do not mention any crimes that happened in past, now or future. If we do hear about crime we may have to mention it.

*(ensure that you provide explanation of information sheet and consent form)*

To help me remember what you say is it ok if I tape our talk? *(If yes turn tape on – if not ask if you can take notes and read them back to participant after interview is finished).*

### Topic 1: Program implementation

*Day to day running of the program (administration, scheduling of groups and other interventions)*

1. Can you tell me about what happens at Men's/Women's Group? What do you think the purpose of the Men's or Women's Group is?
2. Do you know who NWQICSS are? *(may identify with a particular staff member)*. How have NWQICSS (or person) helped you? *(ask about any other services they have provided for the participant)*.
3. Do you meet with NWQICSS staff outside of the group? If yes – how many times?
4. Is XXX night a good night to go to the Men's and Women's Group? *(Is there a better night/time)*
5. What works well at the Men's/Women's Group?
6. What doesn't work well at the Men's and Women's Group?
7. Are there any changes we could make to the Men's or Women's Group to make it better?

## **Topic 2: Experience with program**

*We want to find out about the client's experience with the program, what they value, any changes and whether 'it's working for them'.*

8. Do you get anything out of the Men's/Women's Group?
9. What are some good things that you have gotten out of the Men's/Women's Group?
10. What's changed for you in your life? What do you think group did that helped you make the change? *(query if there were any other services that helped with this change)*
11. What part of the group do you remember best and why?
12. Is there anything in your life that you would still like to change?
13. Is there anything that would help you change this?

## **Topic 3: Future**

*In this section we'd like to find out what the client's perspective is on the factors that may influence Aboriginal people committing crimes and what changes we could make to the program that might assist with this.*

**Intro:** The next questions are about the community, not about you. Please remember that I don't want to know about any crimes that anyone has done.

14. What are some of the reasons why Aboriginal people do things that end up with the police being called?
15. What can the service do that might help Aboriginal people stay out of jail?

## **Ending**

Thanks for talking with me. Your name won't be mentioned and I didn't hear about any crimes. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about?

*If interviewer was taking notes – read them back to the participant to make sure they are accurate.*

## **Appendix 4: Interview schedule NWQICSS management**

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me today. As stated in the information sheet, MICRRH has been asked to evaluate the NWQICSS justice program this includes the Men's and Women's Groups as well as case management and referral processes to other services.

The aim of the consultations is to look at how the program is implemented and the impact that this program is having on the lives of the clients. We are also looking at whether there are any improvements that might be made to the program to make it more effective.

The interview today will take about 45 minutes – is that ok with you?

As you are aware the findings will be collated into a report for NWQICSS and the Attorney General's Department. We will not be identifying you personally in the report.

Would it be ok if we audiotaped this session so that I can have a record of what we said to allow me to check my written notes on the interview? The tape will be stored securely in my office and you will not be identified on the tape. *[if participant does not wish to be taped, check if it is ok to take written notes of the session]*

Have you got any questions you would like to ask me before we start?

### **Program Development**

1. What do you see as the major aim of the program?
2. What justice programs were in Mount Isa before this one? Are there any other programs that are currently operating in Mount Isa with similar aims?
3. How did you decide on model for program? What were constraints and priorities?

### **Program Implementation**

4. What's working well with the program? What's good about what you are currently doing?
5. Is there anything that is not working so well? Have you faced any barriers when running this program in Mount Isa? (operational issues recruitment, staff support, development, safety, quality improvements, day to day operations)
6. Case management is part of the justice program what does it mean to you? Do you think that case management is being implemented as part of the program? Is there training and systems in place to support staff with case management?
7. How would you improve the program?
8. How would you know that the program is working properly?
9. What do you think a successful client outcome is for this program? Did any of your clients achieve this through the program?

### **Client impact**

10. What factors do you think contribute to offending and reoffending by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Mount Isa?
11. I'd like to ask you about the impact that this program has had on your client's lives. Could you tell me about any positive changes that have resulted for any of your clients. For which clients?
12. If there were positive changes – what did the program do that helped?
13. Were there any unintended negative consequences for your clients that participated in the program? For which clients?
14. What do you think was a high point with the program? What happened, who was there, what was it that made the experience so good, how could the program do more of this?

### **The future**

15. Is NWQICSS planning any new justice programs or other programs to assist with recidivism?
16. Imagine that in twenty years time, the program had made a real difference to the lives of Aboriginal people here in Mount Isa. What would have contributed most to these outcomes? What decisions would need to be made and by whom to get us so much success? What else needs to change in the community to assist with change?

## Appendix 5: Interview schedule NWQICSS staff

NWQICSS have been funded to run a justice program including the Men's and Women's Groups, linking clients to other services and case management. MICRRH have been asked to look at how the program is going. So we are talking to NWQICSS staff, clients and other services that may be linked to NWQICSS.

Whether you participate or not will not be mentioned to anyone. If you do participate your name won't be recorded or mentioned. Please answer honestly.

The interview will take about 45 minutes – is that ok with you?

To help me remember what you say is it ok if I tape our talk? *(If yes turn tape on – if not ask if you can take notes and read them back to participant after interview is finished).*

Have you got any questions you would like to ask me before we start?

### Program Implementation

1. What do you see as the major purpose of the program?
2. Can you explain what a typical day involves for you?
3. Case management is a way of managing a client and is part of the justice program. What does case management mean to you? Do you do any case management as part of your role in the justice program?
4. Forms – *[show staff member the case management forms]* have you seen these forms? Do you use any of them and how. If you don't use them why don't you use them?
5. How does the day to day operation of the program work? What's working well? What's good about what you are currently doing?
6. Is there anything that is not working so well? Have you faced any problems when running this program in Mount Isa? How would you improve the program?
7. How would you know that the program is working properly?
8. What do you think a successful client outcome is for this program? Did any of your clients achieve this through the program?



### **Client impact**

9. What factors do you think contribute to offending and reoffending by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Mount Isa?
10. I'd like to ask you about the impact that this program has had on your client's lives. Could you tell me about any positive changes that have resulted for any of your clients. For which clients?
11. If there were positive changes – what did the program do that helped?
12. Were there any unintended bad consequences for your clients that participated in the program? For which clients?
13. What do you think was a high point with the program? What happened, who was there, what was it that made the experience so good, how could the program do more of this?

### **The future**

14. Imagine that in twenty years time, the program had made a real difference to the lives of Aboriginal people here in Mount Isa. What would have contributed most to these outcomes? What decisions would need to be made and by whom to get us so much success?

## Appendix 6: Interview schedule NWQICSS stakeholders

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me today. As stated in the information sheet, MICRRH has been asked to evaluate the NWQICSS justice program this includes the Men's and Women's Groups as well as case management and referral processes to other services.

The aim of the consultations is to look at how the program is implemented and the impact that this program is having on the lives of the clients. We are also looking at whether there are any improvements that might be made to the program to make it more effective.

The interview today will take about 45 minutes – is that ok with you?

The report on the project will go to NWQICSS and the Attorney General's Department as they fund the program. We will not be identifying you personally in the report.

To help me remember what you say is it ok if I tape our talk? The tape will be stored securely in my office and you will not be identified on the tape. *[if participant does not wish to be taped, check if it is ok to take written notes of the session].*

Have you got any questions you would like to ask me before we start?

### Program Implementation

1. What do you see as the major aim of the Program?
2. How is the program associated with your service?
3. What has worked well for you?
4. Are you aware of any barriers to running this program in Mount Isa?
5. Are there areas where things could be improved?
6. How would you know that the program is working properly?
7. What do you think a successful client outcome is for this program? Did any of your clients achieve this through the program? Can you tell me a bit about their story.

### **Client impact**

8. What factors do you think contribute to offending and reoffending by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Mount Isa?
9. I'd like to ask you about the impact that this program has had on your client's lives. Could you tell me about any positive changes that have resulted for any of your clients. For which clients?
10. If there were positive changes – what did the program do that helped?
11. Were there any unintended negative consequences for your clients that participated in the program? For which clients?
12. For which clients did the program work well for/ least for?

### **The future**

13. What small changes could we make to the program right now that would help other Aboriginal people stay out of gaol?
14. Imagine that in twenty years time, the program had made a real difference to the lives of Aboriginal people here in Mount Isa. What would have contributed most to these outcomes? What decisions would need to be made and by whom to get us so much success?