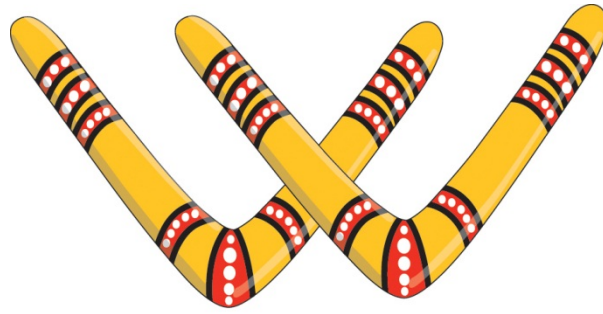


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**wirrpanda**  
foundation

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# **‘INQUIRY INTO THE HARMFUL USE OF ALCOHOL IN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES’**

## ***A SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF THE WIRRPANDA FOUNDATION***

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## **WIRRPANDA FOUNDATION BACKGROUND**

### **Our Vision**

*To improve the outlook for Aboriginal Australians we must work together to reduce the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in our society. We can achieve this by empowering and building capacity among Aboriginal people and their communities.*

### **Our Background**

The Wirrpanda Foundation exists to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by working together to empower and build capacity amongst Aboriginal individuals, their families and their communities. All of our mentoring programs aim to reduce the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in our society through a cross-generational approach that:

- Increases the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in school
- Improves the life choices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by encouraging further study or entry into the workforce
- Sustains Aboriginal Employment through cross-cultural training
- Improves the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Since 2005, The Foundation has aimed to increase the retention of Aboriginal students in school and improve their life choices after leaving school by encouraging further study or entry into the workforce. This aim has been met through the delivery of carefully constructed, culturally inclusive programs which assist Aboriginal children, families and the community to be better equipped to contribute to significant social decisions that directly impact upon their lives.

We have 20 full time and 20 casual staff members. Our mentors are all local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander role models, and have completed culturally appropriate facilitator and mentor training.

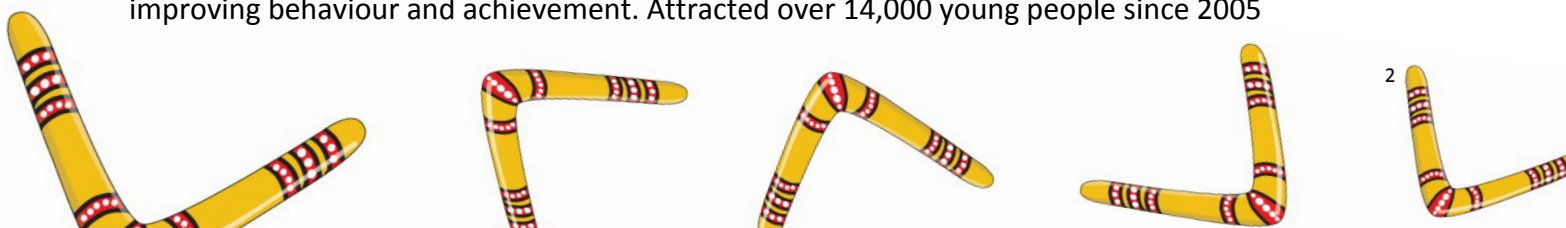
Our programs are delivered in metropolitan and regional Western Australia, including Bunbury, Mandurah, Narrogin, Karratha, Kwinana, Wickham, Broome, Onslow, Kellerberrin, Northam, Katanning and Perth. We have interstate programs in the ACT, Victoria, and New South Wales. Our programs include:

**P242 Happy Families Employment Program** - Mentors work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men to support them in gaining meaningful employment and soft skills also with a focus on health and fitness creating a happier future for themselves and their families in Kwinana.

**Deadly Sista Girlz Program** – run in 10 local schools, 7 community locations and 4 schools interstate, the program has engaged 3,000 girls over the past 6 years. In 2013, Deadly Sista Girlz won four state and National awards, including a Deadly Award for Excellence in Education.

**Troy Cook Health and Leadership** - a 10 week program for young people to experience the life of a professional athlete alongside program mentors. Over the past 6 years, the program has successfully engaged over 3,000 young Aboriginal people aged 13 to 17 years.

**The Wirra Club** – a reward based program aimed at keeping Aboriginal children in school and improving behaviour and achievement. Attracted over 14,000 young people since 2005



**P242 Indigenous Employment Program** - aimed at inspiring and creating opportunities for long-term unemployed Aboriginal people aged 18+ to reach their full potential and gain employment. The Plan 2day 4 2morrow program was commended in the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards 2013 and won a bursary.

**Wickham Wirra Club Homework Centre** – 3 days/week to provide healthy snacks and support with homework. Fully supported by the community and Roebourne District School, we have received continued funding from Rio Tinto due to attendance and retention successes.

### **Wirrpanda Foundation Achievements**

We've reached well over 20,000 Aboriginal people and recently received a National Community Crime Prevention Merit Award for our work in Indigenous communities. Our Founding Director, David Wirrpanda, won the 2012 NAIDOC Person of the Year award.

In 2012, the Deadly Sista Girlz program has been named a best practice program by the Commissioner of Children and Young People in WA in her report titled *Building Blocks: Best practice programs that improve the wellbeing of children and young people*.

Also in 2012, the program was named a best practice program in the AMP Foundations *Best of Every Woman: An overview of approaches for philanthropic investment in Aboriginal women and girls*.

Deadly Sista Girlz won a Constable Care Child Safety Foundation Community Safety Award in 2013, in the Program of the year – Metro category.

In 2013 Deadly Sista Girlz was highly commended as a project to fund in in the Federal Government's House of Representatives Committee for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' *Sport: More than a game; Inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring*.

In July 2013, our Deadly Sista Girls Victorian mentor won the NAIDOC Youth of the Year award for her work in Deadly Sista Girlz.

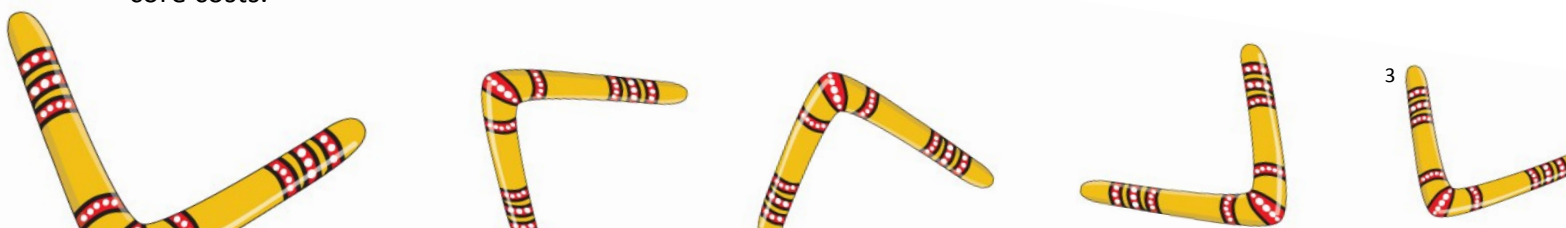
We have also won a 2013 Deadly award in the Excellence in Education category for the Deadly Sista Girlz Program.

In November 2013, DSG was a recipient of a World AIDS Day Award for our commitment to the sexual health of young Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In December 2013 The Plan 2day 4 2morrow program was commended in the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards 2013 and won a bursary.

### **Sponsors, Supporters and Partnerships**

David Wirrpanda Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation, incorporated 11 January 2002 and was endorsed as an income tax exempt charity on 12 February 2002. We have funding agreements and MOU's with over 39 funding bodies/partners, to ensure we remain sustainable. Our large fundraising events include our Annual Dinner and Tin Shake, which help maintain our core costs.



We strive to build self-sufficiency in the Foundation, and consistently seek funding through:

- Government funding grants
- Corporate sponsorship and charity partners, such as PwC charity partnership
- Leveraging charity partnerships and strategies
- Partnering with employee charity giving websites such as Givenow, Australian Charities Fund and Charities Aid Foundation
- Philanthropic funding grants
- Selling merchandise and holding fundraising events
- Using our Grants Manager to source other external funding opportunities

Our current funding breakdown is approximately:

- |                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| - State Government        | 11% |
| - Federal Government      | 29% |
| - Corporate               | 40% |
| - Philanthropic/Donations | 12% |
| - Fundraising             | 4%  |
| - Other                   | 4%  |

The main determinants of our program locations and thus funding distribution are:

- Local need; working in areas where our programs can address local Aboriginal needs
- Community consultation; ensuring all relevant local community members are consulted before programs commence in any location
- Partnerships; build rapport and strong partnerships to ensure our programs are sustainable and are embedded into the community for greater outcomes
- Evaluation; continually evaluate our programs to ensure they are in an area of need and are making an impact

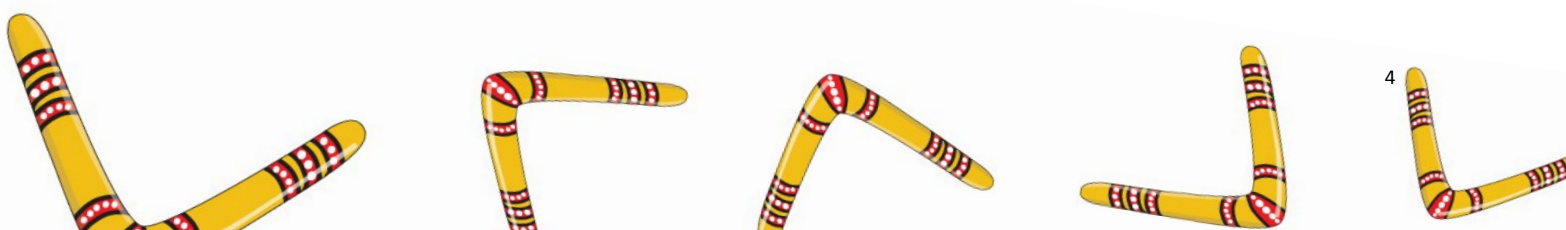
### **WIRRPANDA FOUNDATION COMMENTS ON RELEVANT SUBMISSION TERMS OF REFERENCE**

#### **Best practice treatments and support for minimising alcohol misuse and alcohol-related harm**

The Wirrpanda Foundation promotes healthy lifestyles and positive role models in all of its programs. This includes personal health, fitness, diet, finances and has a heavy focus on drug and alcohol education.

We are acutely aware that the factors that influence whether people and communities are socially included or excluded are multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. The Foundation employs and contracts strong, successful and passionate Indigenous role models and mentors to deliver all of our programs. The Foundation is committed to fostering community partnerships and engaging and empowering parents, families and community groups to break the cycle of disadvantage. We want to use our successful existing Indigenous programs to educate our participants about alcohol misuse and the problems that can occur. We realise that these problems can be a source of 'shame' for our participants, so we use well respected Aboriginal role models to deliver the education and mentoring sessions.

The following is a breakdown of Wirrpanda Foundation programs with a heavy focus on drug and alcohol education, and support for minimising misuse and harm.





### Troy Cook Health & Leadership Program

The Troy Cook Health & Leadership program is for Aboriginal boys aged 10-17 years who are at risk of anti-social behaviour and disengaging from school. Aboriginal male mentors attend their school weekly to deliver healthy lifestyle and leadership workshops to build resilience in them, inform them of the risks of drugs and alcohol and re-engage them in school.

The aim of the Troy Cook Health & Leadership project is to engage, educate and empower at-risk or disadvantaged youth in the Peel Region to make better choices for their health and their futures. The program aims to educate young people about risks of drugs and alcohol and living a healthy and fulfilling life, (more specifically; drugs and alcohol, gambling awareness, nutrition, sexual health, mental health, building self-esteem and confidence and developing leadership capacity). The program directly targets Aboriginal youth aged approximately 13 to 17 years in the Peel region of WA. More specifically, the programs include disadvantaged students in this demographic who are disengaged from secondary school or who are engaging in risk taking health behaviours. WF mentors work closely with school personnel to identify students who meet this criterion and who would benefit from being involved in this program.

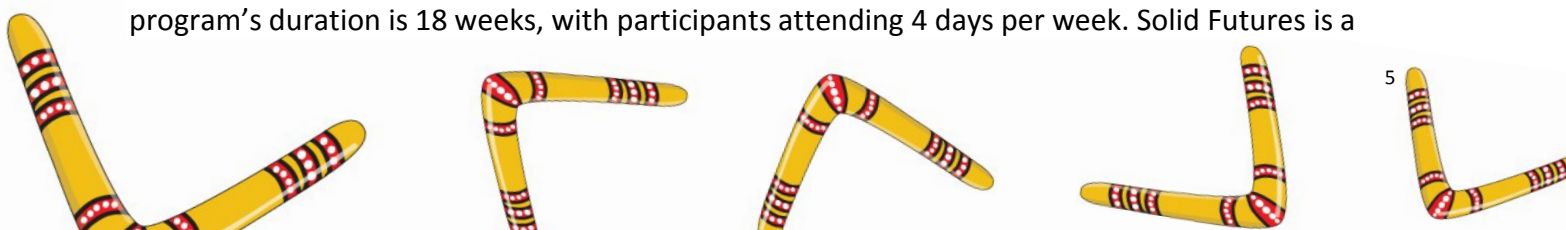
The initiative promotes and delivers strategies focusing on how to live a healthy lifestyle and in particular how to minimise harm from drugs and alcohol for themselves, their families and their communities. It also identifies and discusses the taboo topic of mental health (within Aboriginal communities – many suffer in silence), discusses the importance of good nutrition habits and discusses, through workshops, what are harmful behaviours and how do we minimise the risk of adopting these behaviours. These programs and the messages imparted are delivered at schools by role models and mentors who have reached the elite level of performance in their sports or chosen fields of excellence.

The Wirrpanda Foundation has referral procedures in place to assist any of our participants who have drug and alcohol issues. In this program, we are expecting students to present with marijuana and binge drinking issues due to past experience, and will report on this throughout the year.

### Plan 2day 4 2morrow Pre Employment Program

The aim of the Plan 2day 4 2morrow program is to reduce the incidence of risk taking behaviours including gambling, crime, drugs, alcohol and harmful substances abuse and in doing so, improve health outcomes and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We provide a multi-faceted approach to empowering P242 Solid Futures participants to make better health decisions in relation to their health behaviours. Positive diversionary activities to gambling include fitness sessions, culture, one-on-one mentoring, My Moola financial literacy, job search training and skills, literacy and numeracy support, workplace preparation, drug and alcohol education and testing, Moorditj yarning sessions and alternative to violence sessions.

Since 2007, The Wirrpanda Foundation has delivered the Plan 2day 4 2morrow Indigenous pre-employment program, evolving over the years and now delivered at two sites. The current IEP with Central Institute of Technology has two streams; Solid Futures and Solid Ground. Solid Futures is a pre-employment program for Aboriginal job seekers aged 18 and above. The program's duration is 18 weeks, with participants attending 4 days per week. Solid Futures is a



holistic delivery model, as we understand the complex barriers many Aboriginal people have in gaining meaningful employment. The program includes, culture and identity, one-on-one mentoring and ongoing support, financial literacy, job search training, literacy and numeracy support, workplace preparation, health workshops, drug & alcohol education, workplace fitness testing, relationship workshops and industry guest speakers and workplace tours.

Solid Grounds is for those who require a stage before Solid Futures. It involves well-being workshops, one-on-one mentoring, sport sessions, culture and identity, literacy and numeracy support, self-esteem development, health workshops (diabetes, drugs, alcohol, smoking, nutrition), gambling awareness sessions, homelessness support, alternative to violence program, dealing with grief and loss program, and family budget support.

Since the inception of the P242 program, we have engaged with over **347** Solid Futures participants, **147** Solid Grounds participants and have engaged **127** participants into employment placements, with most other participants engaging in further study. **73** of these **127** placements achieved 26 week completions, which is a **60%** success rate.

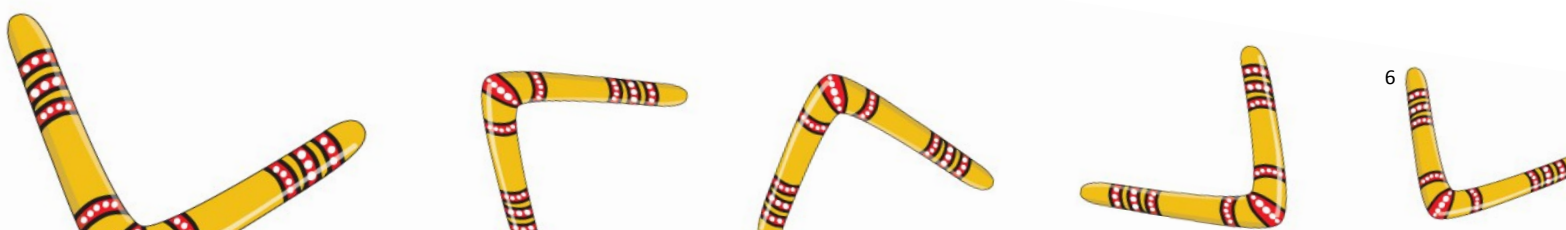
### Deadly Sista Girlz

Award winning Deadly Sista Girlz is a program designed for Aboriginal girls, aged 10-17 years. There are very few holistic education and wellbeing programs in Australia specific to the needs of Aboriginal girls. We target girls in this age group as they are most vulnerable. Our program aims to address health and wellbeing issues by providing culturally appropriate, positive and engaging activities designed to motivate these girls to be the best version of themselves and engage in healthy and positive futures.

From its launch in 2005 the Wirrpanda Foundation has been committed to the delivery of carefully constructed, culturally inclusive programs to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, their families and their communities to be better equipped to contribute to significant social decisions that directly impact upon their lives.

This commitment drives the on-going development of the Deadly Sista Girlz Program as a strategic social intervention, designed to achieve positive life-long outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The Deadly Sista Girlz Program, formally known as the Dare to Dream Girls' Program, began in 2009. It was originally designed for Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander girls aged 12-17 years as a health-based initiative with an emphasis on sexual health and building self-esteem. It delivered modelling, dancing, grooming, deportment and sport activities at schools, youth and community centres, firstly in Western Australia, then in other States.

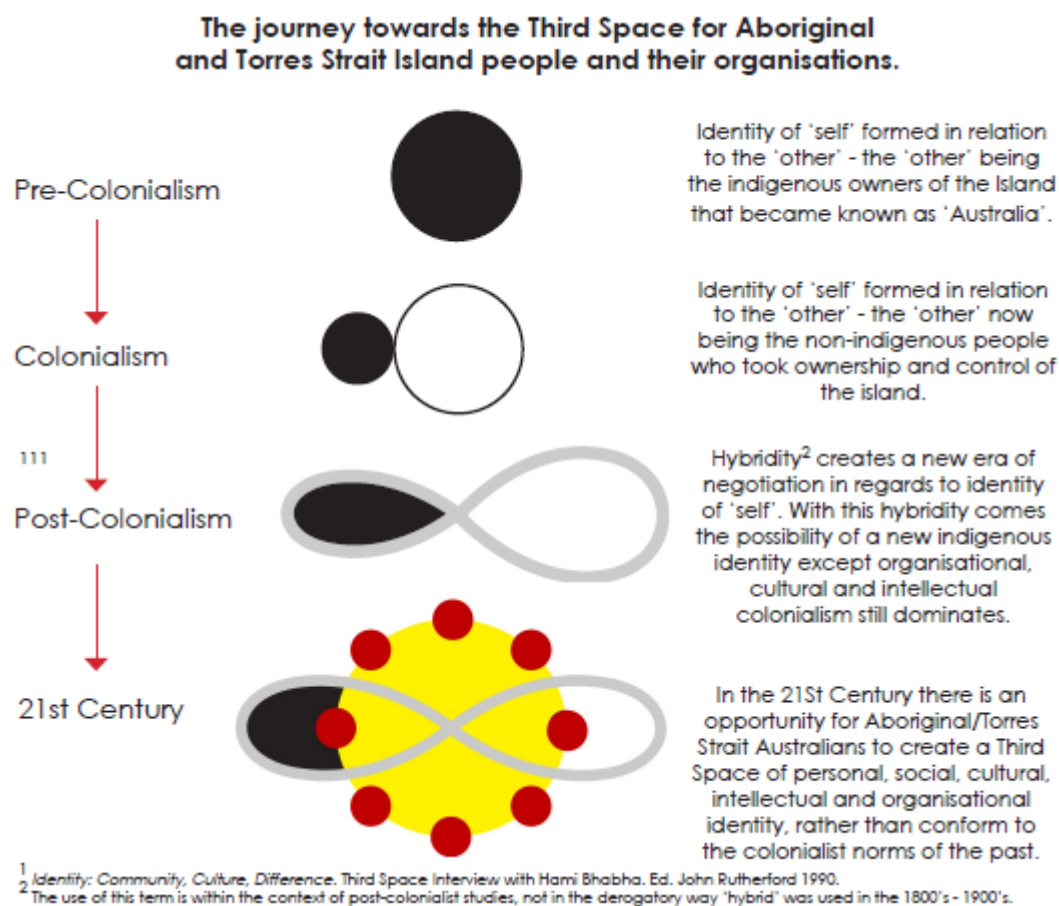
In-line with its commitment to social change and intervention, in 2012 the Foundation entered a project partnership with the POWA Institute to conduct a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis of the Deadly Sista Girlz Program. This work involved close liaison with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, including girls who participate in the Program, their families and other Aboriginal/Torres Strait adults who have an impact on their well-being. This work gave the Foundation a clearer understanding of the outcomes stakeholders want from the Deadly Sista Girlz Program.



On-going work with the POWA Institute since 2010, in the area of staff development and training, has also resulted in the conceptualisation of a 'third space' as a construct for enabling social change. A robust program manual was created during this time. It formalises the Foundation's outcomes approach to Deadly Sista Girlz Program planning and its commitment to helping each girl and young women participating in the program to achieve the following long-term outcome:

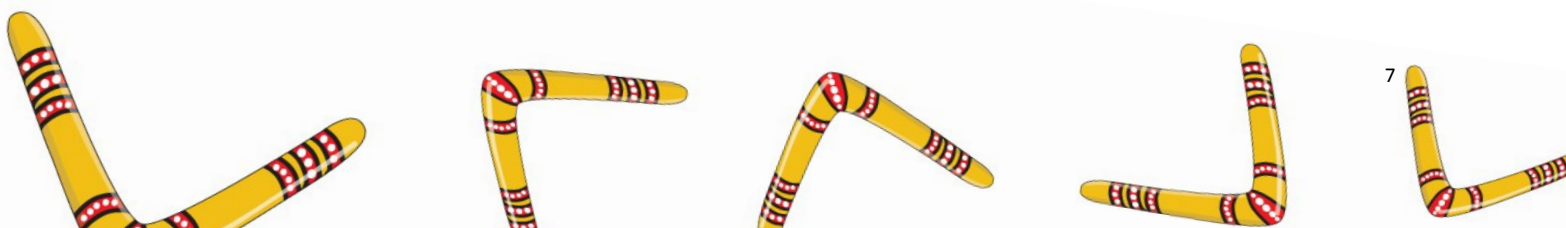
*Being a proud Aboriginal/Torres Strait Island woman with good spirit, thriving in the Third Space.*

The concept of a 'third space' emerged from a professional development workshop undertaken by Wirrpanda Foundation mentors in 2011. Since then this concept has evolved through yarning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people involved with the Foundation's work. It has been developed further by drawing on the work of Dr Hami Bhahba at Harvard University, a post-colonialist scholar born in India, who first discussed the concept of a 'third space' in the 1990's. On-going yarning and research has resulted in the Wirrpanda Foundation's conceptualisation of the 'Third Space' as a new construct for enabling social change for the benefit of individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people as well as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Island organisations.



The Deadly Sista Girlz Program takes a "whole person" perspective in regards to bringing about specific changes in participant's "behaviours, knowledge, skills, status and level of functioning". In this context a whole person is defined as a person who demonstrates the following behaviours:

- Has a voluntary commitment to learning, who takes an active role in their own development, who initiatives positive self-development and progress which is of value to them.



- Who meets the requirements which protect the freedom and welfare of other individuals, who doesn't seek to develop themselves at the expense of others, who behaves in a way which is necessary for the sustainable functioning of a social group/community, of which they are a member.
- Makes a personal contribution, going beyond the requirements of an individual claiming membership of a social group/community and contributes something of themselves which will enhance and improve the quality and sustainability of the group/community.

The Deadly Sista Girls Program outcomes listed in our manual have been developed to align with the outcomes desired by stakeholders who have an impact on, or are impacted by the Deadly Sista Girlz program, including participants and their families and Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander adults who are involved with the delivery of the program.

### **Phase 1: Connecting**

This Phase begins the Deadly Sista Girlz Program (Extensive) and focuses on enabling participants to form positive connections and relationships within the safety of the Deadly Sista Girlz Program environment. All girls/young women are treated equal and part of the group. Building the successful functioning of the group at this stage is essential. Sharing information about each other's Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander origins is an important part of this connecting phase. At the same time, it is equally important that Mentors set up the conditions that enable each participant to take an active role in their own development, in order to lay strong foundations for the Program to evolve to Phase 2 and 3. Therefore there is a focus on specific pre-requisite skills that will enable participants to move forward with their own development confidently and purposefully. During Phase 1 the Mentor/s also focus on connecting with each participant, building a trusting and supportive relationship with each girl/young women participating in the Program.

A central feature of both the Deadly Sista Girls' physical and human environment is establishing the yarning circle from the first day of the Program and maintaining this circle of comfort, support and learning throughout the duration of the Program. Each session of the Program therefore begins with the yarning circle with all mentors, participants and visitors participating.

### **Phase 2: Developing**

As the girls/young women involved in the Program become more connected and secure in their relationships within the safe environment of the Program the Mentors' focus can broaden to an additional range of Phase 2 Outcomes. The Behavioural Outcomes, Skill Outcomes and Fundamental Outcomes of Phase 1 are not abandoned however. They continue to be important building blocks, particularly for participants who may need more support and more time to gain these skills. The yarning circle becomes particularly important during this Phase therefore the Mentor's work building trusting relationships with each participant continues within the context of the yarning circle as a safe place of learning.

Phase 2 is primarily concerned with laying the foundation for participants to become role models in their own right, within the context of the Deadly Sista Girlz Program, being role models for each other and outside the Program with Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander girls/young women who are younger than themselves. For this to emerge an emphasis is placed in this Phase on developing the capabilities of each participant as she grows towards adulthood and has to deal with a wide range of personal issues and pressures associated with this growth, both within herself and within her external environment. Building the ability of the participants to operate in a cooperative, non-adversarial way as a cohesive social group/community is also a focus for this Phase in preparation for Phase 3.





### *Examples of Phase 2 Skill Health Outcomes*

Outcomes in this Area of pre-requisite skills are concerned with each participant acquiring useful descriptive and explanatory information; building their knowledge and understanding.

#### *Drugs and Alcohol*

7.11 Understands the impact that drug and alcohol use has on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples sense of self identity, culture and spirit; understands cause and effect relationships of drug and alcohol use within this context and the cultural consequences.

7.12 Understands why people use drugs (physically and psychologically addiction) and the problems they face.

7.13 Knows drug categories, can sort drugs into categories, knows the physiology of each category; knows what a standard drink of alcohol is.

7.14 Understands the short and long term consequences of drugs and alcohol and the cause and effect relationship between drugs and alcohol on their health, family, community, livelihood, dealing with the law, death and grief, culture and country.

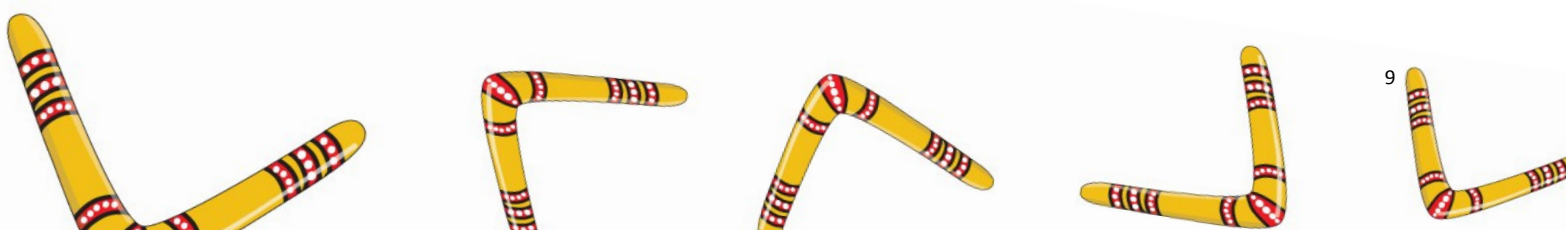
7.15 Identifies actions that may lead to drug and alcohol addiction and can understand the cause and effect relationships.

### **Phase 3: Contributing**

When a Deadly Sista Girlz Program progresses to Phase 3 the overall objective is to give participants the opportunity to gain skills that will enable them to operate in their communities as role models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and in particular girls and younger generations, sharing their identity and culture and being ambassadors of the Third Space in the wider community. Moving to Phase 3 of the Program depends on progress with Phase 1 and 2 so this Phase requires participants to have reached reasonable levels of maturity within the context of the Program's Outcomes up to this Phase. Outcomes in the earlier Phases are still not abandoned however. They continue to be important building blocks, particularly for participants who may need more support and more time to gain skills.

When Phase 3 emerges it provides an opportunity for Program participants to not only continue developing in the areas listed in Phases 1 and 2 but to move beyond the Deadly Sista Girlz program and make a contribution to their community, within the context of being a Torres Strait Island girl/young women. Community could be their school, other social groups, family networks, whatever context is relevant for their age and experience. This is an opportunity or setting goals and carrying them out with a significant amount of autonomy and independence. The yarning circle now becomes both a safe haven for sharing on-going learnings and experiences but also a group planning and decision-making environment as the Program participants are given the opportunity to contribute something of themselves to their community within the context of the Deadly Sista Girl Program.

Deadly Sista Girlz provides Aboriginal families with the opportunity for their girls to experience an all-female Aboriginal environment as an alternative to attending mainstream classes, for at least two hours a week during school terms. Within this environment Wirrpanda female Aboriginal Mentors facilitate a wide range of activities designed to help program participants take an active role in their own development as Aboriginal girls and young women, meet their social obligations as members of the Deadly Sista Girlz group, and make a voluntary contribution as an Aboriginal person to the betterment of their school and the Aboriginal



community. To enable positive progress with these behaviours the Deadly Sista Girlz Program provides opportunities for participants to progress with a range of pre-requisite skills.

This includes focusing on growing positive feelings and attitudes towards themselves as Aboriginal females, knowledge building in the area of Aboriginal identity and gaining a better understanding of personal health and wellbeing. The Mentors provide opportunities for participants to develop these positive behaviours and enabling skills through activities that are in-line with the interests and motivations of the participants. These include arts and sports activities, cooking, personal grooming and culturally appropriate activities, such as yarning circles.

#### Gwabba Yorga Gabba Worra (Good girls don't drink)

The "Gwabba Yorga - Gabba Worra" (GYGW) program was aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls (12 - 17 years). The name of the program is a Noongar phrase meaning, good girls, don't drink. The aim is for girls to understand the ramifications of binge drinking, increase personal responsibility, and reduce/prevent binge drinking incidents.

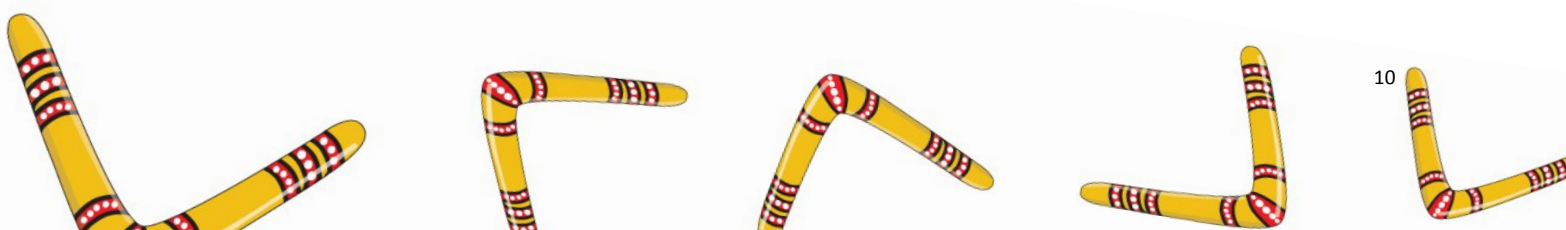
The program is located at 7 sites in Western Australia; Bunbury, Mandurah, Kellerberrin/Merredin, Kwinana, Perth, and Katanning. The GYGW is an innovative, pilot program, meeting Community Level Initiative objectives by using netball as a vehicle to motivate and engage the girls.

With the assistance of Sophia Gillies, Director/Education & Training Consultant at WA Health Education Services, we created a 10 session engaging and empowering binge drinking and netball program. The education is interactive, where girls get to share their stories and experiences and learn from each other. Using 'yarning' topics, mentors talk about binge drinking and associated risks. They show the girls that they don't need to drink excessively to have a good time.

A facilitators manual was created as part of the program development which supports our mentors and ensures quality of delivery across all sites. Sessions include:

- What is a Drug?
- Reasons for drug use
- Drug classification
- Harm reduction
- Blurred vision goggles
- Drug experience
- Alcohol
- Standard drinks
- Types of Alcoholic drinks
- Binge drinking
- Tobacco
- Quizzes
- Helping, seeking and goal setting

We directly engaged with 136 Aboriginal girl program participants in the first year of our program, with key binge drinking messages indirectly delivered to up to 2,000 people in the Aboriginal community at events we attended.



In the Perth metropolitan area, our mentors delivered 10 sessions in 10 visits at three different sites in 2012;

- The Balga program had an average of 13 participants in year 1
- The Kwinana program had an average of 21 participants in year 1
- The Mandurah program had an average of 10 participants in year 1

In regional Western Australia, our mentors delivered 10 sessions during 6 x two day visits at four different sites in 2012;

- The Northam program had an average of 13 participants in year 1
- The Kellerberrin/Merredin program had an average of 15 participants in year 1
- The Katanning program had an average of 56 participants in year 1
- The Bunbury program had an average of 8 participants in year 1

A total of 136 Aboriginal girls were direct participants in Gwabba Yorga Gabba Worra in Year 1, 2012.

*Best practice strategies to minimise alcohol misuse and alcohol-related harm*

- Use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models to design, implement and deliver diversionary programs
- Diversionary activities ensure Aboriginal participants are participating towards positive pathways. Activities must be long term, with a pathway outcome (further training, education, employment) to ensure it isn't a short term fix
- Culturally appropriate information and delivery methods to ensure participants are engaged throughout the program

**COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

- Include Wirrpanda Foundation staff members and Aboriginal role models in any on-site inspection or public hearing plans
- Consider Wirrpanda Foundation as an experienced professional partner in the reduction of harm/minimizing alcohol misuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

