

# Kurruna Mwarre Ingkintja —Good Spirit Men's Place Research Project Report

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“Wurra apa artwuka pmara.  
Boy's and male's place”

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*In partnership with CASSE and Congress looking at ways to develop  
a best practice Aboriginal good spirit male's place.*





# Acknowledgements

The research *Kurruna Mwarre Ingkintja*—Good Spirit Men’s Place was commissioned by the two organisations in partnership, Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment (CASSE) and the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (Congress) in 2015.

The management from both organisations were very flexible and accommodating in ensuring that the research is on track.

The Research Unit within Congress and the staff members within Ingkintja Male Health Service, worked together with the spirit of cooperation in anticipation of sound beneficial outcomes from the research.

We thank all the men who participated in this project and we sincerely hope that their dream of a Male Place can be realised:

*Two Aboriginal men, speaking for many, said of a Men’s Shed:*  
  
*“We should all get together. And my dream is I’d like to see us all on the one level...That ah, we can all come and then we can sit around the table and have a good talk and elaborate on the problem ahead of us and straighten out the ones behind us. I mean this is my dream”*  
(KMI\_04, 16/09/2016).

And another:  
  
*“I think it is a great idea. I think in all the politics and all the issues in Aboriginal Affairs, especially in Central Australia, there’s never been a coming together of the men and being recognised as how they fit into family structures and I think there’s been a lot of issues and problems where men feel left out... men have always been blamed for things, men are the ones who get incarcerated all the time, there’s never been a voice for men, there’s never been a safe place for men and there’s never been a place where men can talk about how they feel, you know if they’re hurting and things like that, they never had the chance and even though in the eyes of most people you know men are tough and they, they’re strong and things like that, they’re not they’re just like any, anyone else, they hurt, they bleed, they have pain and um a place that can make them strong and create friendship’s with other men and understanding and the thing that empowers the individual person to become stronger”*  
(KMI\_05, 11/10/2016).

Another Australian man said in relation to violence:  
  
*“You, me, everybody around us, it affects in some means. You know you’re either a witness to it, you’re a victim to it, you’re you know in the past you may have been an offender. But all this collectively is hurting our people as a whole community. So you need to make sure you tap into those major issues, so people get a self, well an idea of self-awareness”*  
(KMI\_01, 6/10/2016).

# Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
2. THE PROJECT BACKGROUND / PURPOSE	7
2.1 Background	7
2.2 Rationale	7
3. KURRUNA MWARRE INGKINTJA RESEARCH PROJECT	9
3.1 Cultural Statement Ken Lechleitner	9
3.2 Aims	11
3.3 History	11
3.4 Governance	12
3.5 Ethics	12
4. LITERATURE REVIEW	13
5. METHODOLOGY	17
5.1 Methodology	17
5.2 Methods	17
6. FINDINGS	21
6.1 The Male Leadership Group (MLG) and Blokes On Track Aboriginal Corporation (BOTAC)	21
6.2 The Establishment of BOTAC	26
6.3 Interviews with Aboriginal and Other Australian Males	28
6.4 Violence Workshops	36
7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT	41
7.1 Establish Service Agreements between non-Government and Government Organisations with BOTAC	41
7.2 Establishment of Male Cultural Place	43
7.3 Establishment of Psychological Place: Health Retreat	43
7.4 Men’s Residential Area	43
7.5 Chronic Disease Care Management	43
7.6 Palliative Care Services on Country	43
7.7 Iwupataka Land Trust	43
8 CONCLUSION	45
REFERENCES	48
APPENDIX	51



‘While Indigenous men and women share the burden of pain, it is the pain of Aboriginal and Islander men which is most likely to go unrecognised. The roles of Aboriginal men, in particular, have been devalued and loss and pain is transmuted into frustration and anger’

(Hunter, 1998)

## 1. Executive Summary

### The Project Background/Purpose

This Research Project called *Kurruna Mwarre Ingkintja*—Good Spirit Men’s Place, was commissioned by the two organisations, Creating A Safe Supportive Environment (CASSE), and the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (Congress). A partnership between the two organisations commenced in December 2011 and the formal research project commenced in 2015.

The aim of the project was to develop and evaluate a model of best practice of Men’s Sheds in Alice Springs/Central Australia that can provide support for Aboriginal men to heal from traumatic experiences and support the empowerment of men in their communities in order to create safe and supportive communities for all members and promote emotional well-being using a participatory action research or empowerment research program.

### *Kurruna Mwarre Ingkintja*— Good Spirit Men’s Place Research Project

This project is building on past research work in consultation with the same men from the same organisations of the past, which presented a high priority need identified by the Aboriginal men in Central Australia—a need for a men’s place. It was clear that the men needed/need a place to begin the processes of unpacking the complicated issues that they are drowning in today.

The identified need for a men’s place required a whole, new, different approach in examining the two topics below:

1. The Men’s Shed Research, and its associated processes
2. The Breakthrough Violence Changing Minds and Saving Lives—Men’s Groups Sessions

### Literature Review

Numerous reports have been done in the past that highlight the need for an Aboriginal men’s place or men’s shelter.

There have been a lot of talks in the past about creating a men’s place, and this conversation has been ongoing for over 20 odd years.

### Methodology


The research was jointly supported by CASSE/Congress and governance procedures were mutually agreed upon at the outset and during the project. Governance and research was informed by the Participatory Action Research (PAR) or the Empowerment Research Program (ERP) methodology.

This research process gave the ordinary Aboriginal male the ability to become part of the research, and researchers, in their own right via sharing relevant knowledge, ideas and emotional experiences, in order to address the issues that they are faced with day in and day out. A new approach was needed and found to bring to fruition past and present recommendations.

In order to empower Aboriginal males, a brave new method of approach, in identifying local Aboriginal males within the Community of Alice Springs, was the employment of an Aboriginal male to be the Researcher to conduct the research. The Aboriginal Male Researcher was closely mentored and supported throughout the research via video link up with the senior researchers from both organisations, with weekly updates on progress, and explanatory and reflective discussions on issues being encountered.

Thus, the employment of an Aboriginal male research officer to conduct the research was one of the empowering methodologies used in furthering this research in the Aboriginal men’s space. The Aboriginal male researcher





worked closely with the Aboriginal males in the community throughout the duration of the research.

### Findings

A Male Leadership Group (MLG) was established to take on the lead in setting directions on the research, with evidence based experience, backed up by all the talks in the past. These talks, to date, have led to little or very slow responses in meeting the needs for an Aboriginal Men's place.

The MLG identified domestic violence as a key issue for the men.

The MLG identified the need for group treatment for domestic violence and a Group Violence Program was piloted twice and revised.

The MLG strongly identified the need for a Good Spirit Men's Place—*Kurruna Mwarre Ingkintja*.

Originating from the MLG, Blokes on Track Association Corporation (BOTAC) was developed with the future hope and plan to develop an independent Aboriginal male place.

### Recommendations for growth and development

Future partnerships with other organisations in providing jointly focused outcomes—a place for Aboriginal males—in moving towards and improving the health of Aboriginal men within the Central Australian Region via services agreements.

### Conclusion

It is anticipated, that with having found the right mix in the Aboriginal male to carry out the research duties, some exciting outcomes towards improving Aboriginal male health can be achieved, with an integrated services response to Aboriginal males and other males in the future, in the spirit of reconciliation.

## 2. The Project Background/ Purpose

### 2.1 Background

The research project *Kurruna Mwarre Ingkintja*—Good Spirit Men's Place was commissioned as a partnership between Creating A Safe Supportive Environment (CASSE) and the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (Congress) in 2015.

CASSE is a not-for-profit, psychoanalytic organisation, based in Melbourne, dedicated to changing minds and saving lives. It includes an Aboriginal Australian Relations Program. CASSE aims to collaborate with Aboriginal organisations and communities in Central Australia to create a safe, supportive environment through a psychoanalytic understanding of violence, trauma and conflict. CASSE had facilitated another project in collaboration with the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), the Men's Tjilirra Movement (MTM) which works with five remote western desert communities making traditional tools—tools for living. CASSE has developed training presentations on violence and suicide, train the trainers and booklets and presented at conferences. The Director is a forensic and clinical psychologist and a psychoanalytic psychotherapist.

Congress is a community controlled health service that provides culturally respectful comprehensive primary health care (CPHC) to Aboriginal people living in and near to Alice Springs, including five remote communities; Amoonguna, Ntaria (and Wallace Rockhole), Santa Teresa, Utju (Areyonga) and Mutitjulu. For over 40 years, Congress has provided support and advocacy for Aboriginal people in the struggle for justices and equity. Since its first meeting in 1973, Congress has expanded to become the largest Aboriginal community controlled health organisation in the Northern Territory. Today, Congress is one of the most experienced Aboriginal CPHC services in the country, a strong political advocate of closing

the gap in Aboriginal health disadvantage and a national leader in improving health outcomes for all Aboriginal people.

### 2.2 Rationale

Literature and research (McCalman, Tsey, Wenitong, Whiteside et al, 2006) provides evidence to support the hypothesis that Men's Sheds can enhance men's lives and emotional wellbeing and have a positive influence on communities in which they exist. Congress has a long history of involvement with Men's Shed through Ingkintja and has first-hand experience in the delivery of workshop based practice.

Extensive community consultations by Congress since 2004, including a community-consultation to develop Ingkintja (Congress and Campbell-Smith 2006), two Aboriginal Male Health Summits (2008, 2010), and an analysis of the Ingkintja program (Rosewarne, Wilson, Liddle 2017), as well as a Remote Communities Male Summit (2013) and CASSE/Congress consultations, focus groups and workshops have consistently called for Men's Sheds and integrated male initiatives.

Current mortality, morbidity and social indicators indicate that Indigenous men, particularly Central Australian Aboriginal males, may be the most disadvantaged of any population group in Australia. Many live in a context characterised by poverty, unemployment, crime and imprisonment, poor educational attainment and poor access to social services (Rosewarne, Wilson, Liddle, 2017).

Men are the main perpetrators of violence against women and children, and have higher rates of suicide rates (McCalman, Tsey, Wenitong, Whiteside et al, 2006).

The impact of colonisation resulted in enormous loss, trauma and grief including loss of land, traditional ways, and roles as hunter/providers/warrior/teacher of young men, leading





Within the broad social, political and economic context of Aboriginal men's health, however, there are few resources and culturally-appropriate places to guide Aboriginal men in developing effective interventions at the community level. This project can develop awareness of different programs which might inform the work of Men's Shed programs as a basis of discussion with the men and a basis of comparison. It may provide some discussion and evidence about the effectiveness and limitations of relevant programs.

The creative use of short-term funding as seeding to secure sustainable funding for long term processes is a critical strategy to this vision and is commensurate with the CASSE/Congress partnership.

Working with violence and trauma to achieve healing and empowerment are commensurate with the partnership memorandum of agreement between CASSE/Congress.

Appropriate methodologies for evaluation need to be incorporated in order to develop the very limited evidence base for interventions of this nature (McCalman, Tsey, Wenitong, Whiteside et al, 2006). There is much anecdotal reporting of the value of group programs but possibly in part due to the informality of many groups; it would appear that there has been little rigorous evaluation to date (McCalman, Tsey, Wenitong, Whiteside et al, 2006).

There is little published evidence based research that captures the intricacies of the processes involved in promoting initiatives to enhance Aboriginal well-being (Bainbridge et al, 2011) and healing.

There is some published evidence on empowerment gained from men's groups (Tsey, Wenitong, McCalman, Whiteside, Baird, et al, 2004) but no rigorous work on trauma and healing.

Community empowerment provides a group-based participatory, developmental process through which marginalised or oppressed individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives and environment, acquire valued resources and basic rights and achieve important life goals and reduce marginalisation (Maton, 2008). Male cultural brokers/advisors/researchers can be employed to broker community pathways and relationships and ensure cultural sensitivities are upheld.

Capacity building and strengthening opportunities can be provided such as training and mentoring for community members which facilitates engagement with research in a more meaningful way and encourages more participation and control and sustainability of outcomes.

The problems can become the solutions.

Such research maybe a means to attract long term and sustainable funding for programs if empirically grounded.

to poor health, lack of recognition and loss of freedom. Culture was ruptured and undermined and control over their lives was lost; and children were removed (McCalman, Tsey, Wenitong, Whiteside et al, 2006). The consequence has been a devastating loss of self-esteem and self-respect, loss of culture and country and spiritual wellbeing (Briscoe and Spry 1999).

While Indigenous men and women share the burden of pain, it is the pain of Aboriginal and Islander men which is most likely to go unrecognised. The roles of Aboriginal men, in particular, have been devalued and loss and pain is transmuted into frustration and anger (Hunter, 1998). Indigenous males are more vulnerable to mental illnesses (Hunter, 1993). The pain can result in acting out (such as child neglect, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and physical abuse, suicide, violence) or self-medicating with alcohol or other substances (Swann and Raphael, 1995).

Self-determination and empowerment are seen as central to raising self-esteem, quality of life, health status and spiritual well-being and some men's groups have implemented explicit empowerment programs (McCalman, Tsey, Wenitong, Whiteside et al, 2006). A sense of hope is a precondition for taking greater control.

Men's Sheds allow men to take control and develop responsibility, influence change through program delivery, partnerships or advocacy, address challenging group and community issues and achieve social and emotional well-being (McCalman et al, 2010). They can restore hope, self-confidence and esteem and help men with isolation and depression, reinforce traditional structures, provide a safe place, discipline men for violence and create new job opportunities and small business ventures.

## 3. Kurruna Mwarre Ingkintja Research Project

### 3.1 Cultural Statement Ken Lechleitner

#### 3.1.1 Historical use of *Ingkintja* Cultural Statement

The word *Ingkintja* comes from the Western Aranda; Anmatjere, Alyawarra, Central Arrernte and Eastern Arrernte language groups. Whereas the terms *Jangkayi/Tjangkayi* and *Arnkintja* are used by other Central Australian language groups such as *Luritja*, *Warlpiri*, *Pintubi* and *Pitjantjatjara*.

This cultural institutional structure within the Aboriginal world view, played a major role in providing the cultural inductions for its young boys transitioning into puberty, where young boys were ceremonially relocated into the new residential arrangement of living in an *Ingkintja*, *Jangkayi/Tjangkayi* or *Arnkintja* male's place some distance away from the parent's camp site.

This process becomes the teaching place for young boys with biological and civic explanation of what they are undergoing as their physical transformation into a young man's body. In much older times young boys underwent boy's ceremonial learning of elementary song lines and performances that was a special boy's ceremony, allowing deeper understanding of future roles they will play as men (Abbott pers. com 2010).

This to be accompanied by ceremonial induction into cultural understanding of a man, via social conditioning, social recognition, transferring of knowledge according to cultural compliance with bestowed rewards into marriage with burden of responsibilities; in learning and applying all the cultural protocols in living and enjoying shared and own rights within the communal collective living, while being respectful of others around them.

#### a) Social Conditioning

From the day the baby is born into the Aboriginal world, the child gets introduced to who is who within the family groups and their traditional tribe names and associated interaction, this is introduced to the child in a playful manner, by saying I am your big brother or I am your grandfather, to I am your father.

Social conditioning of the young child happened each time there was connection via the kinship classification, which is used to define the skin group sub grouping, to the baby and is said within ear shot of other young children to make their own connections and problem solving of understandings of social conditioning.

This social conditioning is also used by right skin grandmothers on young boys, by way of teasing the young boy into managing bad behaviour, if the young boy doesn't listen to their parent when being asked to do a chore. The social conditioning of treating is by being told to go a live with that old lady, if the young boy chooses not to listen, as their promised wife; this will stamp out quickly any negative behaviour from the young boys.

This can be seen like all other cultures in the world that uses social conditioning measures via nursery rhyme, to tell its stories to provide understanding of rules and laws for good behaviour and understanding cultural structure that then allow for understanding of cultural discipline.

The traditional role the *Ingkintja/Jangkayi/Tjangkayi/Arnkintja* played in introducing the cultural civics to the young boys heading into puberty and moving into the new living place as its learning arrangements, by learning to cook for themselves and for the older men as single widowed grandfathers within the *Ingkintja/Jangkayi/Tjangkayi/Arnkintja*. This allowed for private tutelage in elementary song lines and performances (Abbott pers. comment 2010).



*'The boy's role has changed so much in this modern space, search for identity and place is much more complicated in this modern setting.'*



#### **b) Social Recognition**

The young person's activities for good behaviour within the community setting gets acknowledged as being the beginning of future responsible young member of the community. The monitoring of the young boys' behaviour is conducted with positive enforcement by encouraging through celebrating good behaviour.

Young people that help grandparents and attend to their needs by simple chores like getting fire wood and lighting fires ready for the grandparent to be warm during winter; helping with preparation of food, by cutting or digging the hole to cook the kangaroo are recognised by other members from within the community, and that would reinforce this social recognition as young boys doing the right thing as valued members within the community.

#### **c) Transferring of Knowledge on Key Responsibilities in Life**

The transitional process of young boys to man is made easy, when the young boy has been monitored during his growing period, and showing how he responded to instructions and treats other members within the community setting.

#### **3.1.2 Rewards for Cultural Compliance**

The reward for cultural compliance in being given the responsibility to hold the spears and handle weapons, more in the past where more recently modern use of weapons is allowed by teaching the young boy how to shoot a gun and shoot at a target then use the gun to shoot for real in feeding the family. This is greatly celebrated and openly stated amongst other family members that he is now a hunter and provider.

##### **a) Marriage Rites**

The rights to marriage are only through the rights of passage to manhood via ceremonial induction, where the important roles of responsibilities are bestowed on the young initiate. It's only through this process, a young boy becoming a young man, and that he gets bestowed a wife. This role is the most sacred in nature, and it's only through this process that allowed for husband and wife to experience intimacy, this intimacy was the ultimate currency within traditional living to managed behaviour and this knowledge was not available until the bestowed couple was ceremoniously wedded and begin to live a life of their own. This practice however is becoming more and more depleted, where knowledge of such sacred act between a husband and wife is on longer the behavioural controlling mechanism as reward for doing the right thing as being the provider and maintainer of cultural civic, for such act is no longer kept as sacred, because all associated values have been disrupted.

##### **b) Boy's Role in Culture**

The boy's role is to bring fun and enjoyment into the community and teaching opportunities from the mothers and all other relevant male members of community. They become the central point of doing all associated activities in hunting small game and providing constant supply of birds and lizards for eating for the family. The boy's role has changed so much in this modern space, search for identity and place is much more complicated in this modern setting. How young Aboriginal males are taught today is met with many challengers and displacement.

##### **c) Men's Role in Culture**

The need for men to keep up with their learning themselves is via understanding the cultural protocols and conducting ceremonial processes jointly and solely to align the cultural nuances of understanding depending on the circumstance presenting itself.

The men have to be the provider in providing all large game hunting and to feed all other family members as part of the community at large. They have to do the problem solving of issues and iron out any potential conflict within family groups.

#### **3.1.3 Burden of Responsibilities of Aboriginal Men**

There are only a few Aboriginal men of the past and to the present that are still shouldering the burden of responsibility with pride and gusto.

##### **a) The Traditional Burden of Responsibility**

The traditional burden of responsibility is part and parcel of being a man and enduring all associated pain that comes with life and making ends meet to ensure the survival of the family by being an active hunter and gatherer. The responsibility is taken on with gusto in teaching its younger males members and extended family groups, how to be a man of cultural and to have cultural responsibility.

##### **b) Modern Burden of Responsibility for Aboriginal Men**

There is a real cultural clash in this space for Aboriginal men to even take carriage of the burden in socially controlling its young males members, using traditional methods disciplining with re-induction into its own society as now new men with a clean slate. The governing and controlling aspects of its own people are taken off the Aboriginal men, the new world states that it is not your burden of responsibility in taking care of your young people now and into the future abess of the Westminster system of control.

#### **What's the Shared Burden of Responsibility going into the Future for Aboriginal Men?**

To take back the roles to have the burden of responsibility of its people, into embracing and teaching again the needed social values in living between the two worlds.

The term 'other Australians' has been used throughout the report to describe men in the project who are not Aboriginal. This may be interchangeable with the term 'non-Aboriginal', which is used in many contexts. This decision was made in the spirit of the project, promoting inclusivity.

#### **3.2 Aims**

To develop and evaluate a model of best practice of Men's Sheds in Alice Springs/ Central Australia that can provide support for Aboriginal males to heal from traumatic experiences and support the empowerment of Aboriginal males in their communities in order to create safe and supportive communities for all members and promote emotional well-being using a participatory action research or empowerment research program.

- Consideration of the existing body of research that exists on workshop based practice and how this can be applied to the Men's Sheds of Alice Springs;

- Support the integration of Men's Shed initiatives across Alice Springs to develop a best-practice Aboriginal Men's Shed model in Alice Springs;
- Development of an understanding for how shed based activity is linked to healing and sustained wellbeing for all Aboriginal males;
- Co-ordinate and facilitate the Breakthrough Violence Program; and
- Development of sustainable and culturally appropriate ways of operation that empowers Aboriginal males to experience healing from violence and trauma.

#### **3.3 History**

CASSE and Congress have worked in partnership since December 2011. A Steering committee meeting quarterly to oversee the project was formed early on. This project emerged from years of consultations with communities in town and out bush as well as focus group meetings with staff and the Congress Board. Prior to this research project, Congress employed a Community Development Officer who worked for a couple of years organising and conducting an extensive community consultation to develop the Ingkintja Program (Congress and Campbell-Smith, 2006), Prior to CASSE's involvement, two Aboriginal Male Health Summits were held (2008, 2010) one at Ross River 80kms east of Alice Springs and a report on Ingkintja comprehensive primary health care model was undertaken by Congress researchers (Rosewarne, Wilson, Liddle 2017), all recommending further research and highlighting the value of exploring the Men's Shed or crisis drop in centre model.

This current project proposal is a development of these consultations and was considered to be a high priority need by the Aboriginal males in Central Australia. An Aboriginal research officer was appointed in 2015. Since then there have been four different research officers: Shane Franey, David Dolman, Greg McAdam and Ken Lechleitner Pangarte. Ken has been the longest serving and has carried the project through to completion. Ken is a *Western Aranda* and *Anmatjere* man fluent in four languages, *Western Aranda*, *Anmatjere*, and *Warlpiri* along with English. There have also been two different Research Coordinators and Dr Bronwyn Silver joined the project at the same time as Ken Lechleitner, replacing Dr Liz Hemphill. In early 2017 Ken Lechleitner approached Clive Rosewarne to join the project to act as research mentor and to assist with drafting and editing the report.



### 3.4 Governance

The *Kurruna Mwarre Ingkintja* Research Project was overseen by a number of governing bodies.

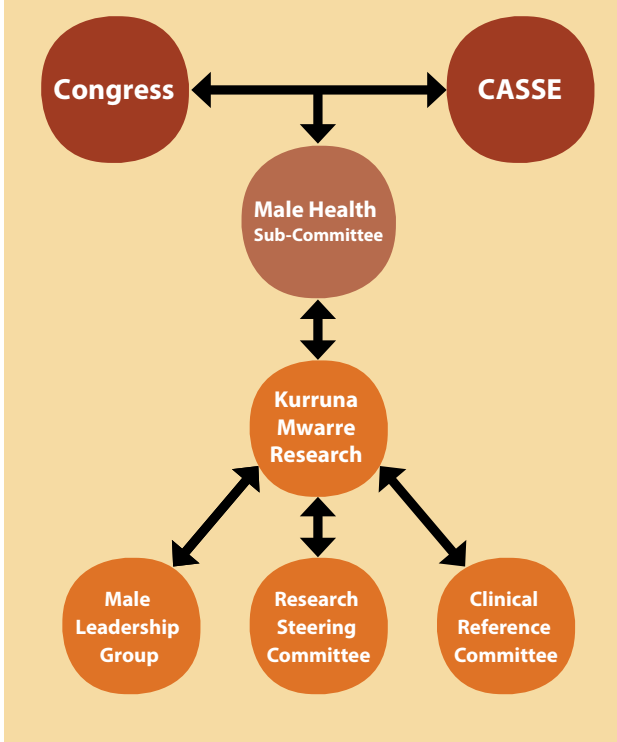
A Governance **Steering Committee of CASSE and Congress** representatives managed the joint project. Members of this partnership meeting were; from Congress William Tilmouth (Chair Congress Board), Donna Ah Chee (Congress CEO) and John Boffa (Congress Public Health Medical Officer PHMO); and representing CASSE management were Pamela Nathan (Director, Aboriginal Australian Relations Program), Anne Kantor (psychotherapist) and Robert Springhall (lawyer). This committee monitored the project performance outcomes and managed inter agency matters.

A **CASSE/Congress Research Committee** was established focused on ensuring the project followed research ethics and community research expectations and norms. In addition this committee was to support the work of the research officer and communicate progress reports and any other issues arising to the Congress Board and CASSE management. Members of this committee were: Pamela Nathan (CASSE), John Boffa (Congress PHMO), John Liddle (Ingkintja Manager), Tony Linn (Ingkintja), Ken Lechleitner (Project Research Officer) and Bronwyn Silver (Congress Research Manager).

In addition Congress has a **Male Health Sub-Committee (MHSC)** which is an advisory committee to the Board of Directors. This committee was developed at the outset of this research. There was a presentation to the Male Health Sub-Committee from the planning process as well providing feedback on progress development to MHSC for comments and directional advice and support if and when needed. This group of Aboriginal males provided the opportunity to talk about a 'men's' place by examining potential sites within Alice Springs, giving approval to go and explore potential sites as being unavailable or unsuitable for men's place within Alice Springs area. The input and leadership by the MHSC, when presenting ideas for consideration, was met with open arms, in seeing the overall concept of creating an entity that can take on the responsibility to secure of lease possible land outside of Alice Springs boundary.

A reference group, **the Kurruna Mwarre Clinical Service Group**, was established to reflect on the content, processes and operations of the Men's Violence Group. This group included: Dr Jon-Paul Caccioli (Congress), Mr Craig San-Roque (consultant psychologist), Pamela Nathan (CASSE psychologist and psychotherapist) and from Congress, Mr Gerard Waterford (counsellor), Dr Bronwyn Silver (Research Co-ordinator) and Mr Ken Lechleitner.

### KURRUNA MWARRE INGKINTJA Research Project Governance



### 3.5 Ethics

The research to be described was submitted to the Central Australian Human Research Ethics Committee (CAHREC) on 28 April 2014. The proposal was subject to review and a number of submissions were made prior to approval on 6 August 2014 to the 1 July 2016. Further extensions have been sought and approved.

## 4. Literature review

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Male Health and Well-being Reference Committee (NATSIMHWRC) established a *National Framework for Improving the Health and Well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males*. The national framework argues for a broad approach addressing the social determinants of health. In general, the Working Party wanted to see:

- All Aboriginal health forums consider prioritising male health issues within existing and future planning processes; and
- All national strategies consider their impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male health (Adams, 2002).

The framework is guided by this core principle: Indigenous male health and social well-being must be determined by Indigenous males and their families/communities in line with local cultural traditions.

The Congress led Ross River Male Health Summits and community consultations about *Ingkintja* (Congress and Campbell-Smith 2006; Rosewarne, Wilson, Liddle 2017) have endorsed the benefits of a Men's Shed or male place where Aboriginal males feel safe and comfortable. Key to creating a safe environment is the cultural sensitivity of the program and cultural safety aspects. It is reported that Aboriginal males locate their health in an emotional well-being framework. In this framework they recognize the impact of colonisation, changing male roles in contemporary society and social alienation and exclusion from access to employment opportunities as key contributing factors (Rosewarne, Wilson, and Liddle 2017). They report that Congress Ingkintja recognizes and works toward empowering Aboriginal males in the region, boosting self-esteem and creating community capacity to address and take action on social issues.

Within limitations, Indigenous men's groups aim to adopt

broad, multi-strategic programs that can encompass advocacy for changes to the broader social determinants of health, community development, developing personal capacity and improving the orientation of health services (Tsey, Wenitong et al, 2004). Strategies have included increasing employment opportunities, supporting men through the courts, providing anger management, family wellbeing, family violence or other programs, organising sporting or recreation programs, providing traditional cultural programs/activities, developing a "men's place", working with young people, and improving men's access to health services (McCalman, Tsey et al, 2006).

Indigenous men's groups also emphasise the need for men to have culturally safe spaces for healing, reflection and re-establishment of their roles in the family and community. They often emphasise that the group should be owned and managed by the men themselves (Franks, 2000). Men's group initiatives impact not only on men, but also on family and community members. For many decades Aboriginal males have called for the establishment in communities of places for Aboriginal males in crisis to go to seek emergency help and as a cooling off place to avoid violent or anti-social outcomes of their anger and alienation (Rosewarne, Wilson, and Liddle 2017).

### Relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks

Within Western theoretical paradigms, Indigenous men's group strategies can fit the frameworks of primary health care, health promotion, and/or empowerment. Self-determination and empowerment are seen as central to raising self-esteem, quality of life, health status and spiritual wellbeing (Briscoe and Fry, 1999) and some Men's groups have implemented explicit empowerment programs (Tsey, Patterson, Whiteside, Baird et al., 2002).



The concept of control, as a social determinant of health, has been linked with the concept of empowerment (Syme, 1998). Empowerment has been defined as a process through which people reduce their powerlessness and alienation and gain greater control over all aspects of their lives and their social environment (Mullaly, 1997). It provides people with resources, opportunities, knowledge and skills - critical among these skills are the capacity to reflect and analyse one's situation (Ife, 1999).

Addressing empowerment or control can be undertaken within the context of a whole-of community or multi-level approach (Oldenburg et al, 2000). Oldenburg et al. (2000) have proposed a framework that incorporates this approach and groups health determinants into upstream, midstream and downstream level factors. Upstream factors include aspects of the social and physical environments such as education, employment, housing, and taxation. Midstream factors include psychosocial processes and health behaviours, which reflect the way people experience and/or interact with their social and physical environments. They include the concept of 'control' or 'mastery'. Downstream factors include the neuroendocrine stress responses or the ways in which a person's experience or interactions with their environments translates into health or disease and illness (Oldenburgh, 2000).

The concept of empowerment is central to health promotion and is closely related to that of community capacity building, defined as "a generic increase in community groups' abilities to define, assess, analyse and act on health (or any other) concerns of importance to their members." Program activities become the means to the end of increasing community capacity (Labonte, 2002).

The literature describes a broad range of program interventions which may be considered by Indigenous men's groups in developing priorities or strategic plans for their work.

### The range of program interventions available

The literature describes a broad range of program interventions which may be considered by Indigenous men's groups in developing priorities or strategic plans for their work.

Key program areas include:

- **Trauma recovery groups.** One response to emerging research about the effects of transgenerational trauma in Aboriginal peoples and the resultant symptoms of violence has been to adopt trauma recovery treatments within perpetrator programs.
- "It's only when we start to do our own healing work that we can truly start to resonate, we feel the pain of the other because it's not as bad as all that" (Judy Atkinson, 1999).

- **Personal development or leadership programs** that provide opportunities for participants to build trusting relationships, think about their individual needs and aspirations, and develop life skills, strategies and support mechanisms to help each other meet those needs (Tsey, Patterson, Whiteside, Baird et al, 2002,2003);
- **Parenting programs to assist Aboriginal adult males** to face the enormous challenges and pressures in raising children, in particular the male children and youths who are their special responsibility: whether as fathers, grandfathers or uncles (Department of Families and Communities, 2006).
- **Youth programs** which work with teenage boys through "holding" where older generations assume the responsibility to care for and look after younger people and assist young boys/ men develop a vision for the future (McCoy, 2008).
- **Sports and fitness programs** which are an important part of Aboriginal community development, contributing to both physical and emotional wellbeing. This is especially true for the health of young people (McCoy, 2008).
- **Tradition and culture programs** that promote the return to country/culture, and educate younger males and those who have been removed from cultural contact about traditional systems, initiations and obligations of Aboriginality (Chandler & Lalonde, et al, 2003, Trudgen 2000). McCalman et al (2008) document an evaluation of a business venture commenced to strengthen culture and employment in 'Dancing back our spiritual identity'. The Yaba Bimbie Cultural Dance Troupe was established in 2003 by the Yarrabah Men's Health Group, which was auspiced by Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service. It was seen as a strategy to both promote tradition and culture and to create employment for local men.
- **Establishing men's places** which can house a range of facilities and services including men's clinical services, places for discussions and education, "cooling off" places, group meetings, and recreation, training and work activities (McCalman, Tsey et al 2006).
- **Suicide prevention programs** which provide support for people who threaten suicide or face stressful situations, link young people with a strong cultural identity, and advocate for improved access to assessment and treatment services (Chandler and Lalonde 2003, Kosky and Dundas, 2000).
- **Alcohol and drug programs** including advocacy for multi-strategic programs to deal with the grog and drug problem as a priority. The aim of alcohol and drug programs can be either to minimise alcohol- or drug-related harm and/ or to promote abstinence and zero tolerance of abusive behaviour. The literature describes the currently established

cultures of Aboriginal drinking as leading to abuse because many men drink to get drunk (Pearson, 2009).

- **Improving men's access to health services, care and treatment**, including advocating for the employment and retention of Indigenous male health workers, development of partnerships between Aboriginal health workers and mainstream health services, and advocacy for improved health service provision.
- **Crime prevention programs** including those which intervene early in the developmental pathways that lead to crime and substance abuse, advocate for controlling the consumption of alcohol; or advocate for alternative dispute resolution and community input into pre-court sentencing (Cunneen 2002, Howells, Day et al, 1999).
- **Correction of offending behaviour** through providing court-mandated and court-referred diversionary programs; advocacy for improved services to address and remedy the causes of offending behaviour and successfully reintegrate offenders into the community after prison release (Howells, Day et al, 1999, Cunneen, 2002).
- **Family violence prevention and early intervention programs** through projects aimed at intergenerational issues such as father-son relationships and mentoring of Aboriginal youth by Elder figures; the creation of men's "cooling off" places; establishing domestic and family violence outreach services targeted at men; organising men's healing camps and/or healing journeys; and formulating local violence prevention strategies aimed at indigenous youth. There are also interventions that address the broader issues of grief and loss, health, housing, education and employment (Blagg, 1999, Atkinson, 1999, Reilly, 2004, Cunneen, 2002).
- **Family violence perpetrator programs** including programs which target men who have been convicted of committing offences of violence (some try to change male/community attitudes towards violence and others focus specifically on individuals); and advocacy for controls over perpetrators to prevent future violence (Wright, 2004).
- **Work with the criminal justice system**
- **Parenting programs.** The family is the central point to Indigenous cultures. Although there are individuals and families who are resourceful, supportive and caring parents, many Indigenous families and children are facing huge stresses as they struggle to cope with disadvantage and, in many cases, they are not coping with this stress. Particularly in remote communities, children and young adults are being raised in environments of heavy alcohol use, devolution of responsibility for nurturance and sustenance to older

siblings or older abstinent women, and with structure and discipline often inconsistent or absent (Hunter 1998). Indigenous family violence also continues to have significant negative social and economic impacts on Indigenous people.

Indigenous adult males face enormous challenges and pressures in their parenting, in particular of male children and youths, who are their special responsibility- whether as fathers, grandfathers or uncles. Their low levels of employment, educational disadvantage, poverty, high rates of illness and injury, and imprisonment all reduce their parenting capacity. The historical dispossession and disempowerment of Indigenous men have impaired their self-esteem and confidence to carry out their parenting and teaching responsibilities (Male Health Policy Unit, 2002).

Until recently there has been little systematic investigation into the needs of young Indigenous men in their fathering roles. For many young males who become fathers, the compounding issues of being adolescent, Indigenous and male have serious implications for positive outcomes in their role as fathers (Hammond, Lester et al., 2004).

- **Employment programs** through increasing access to the enjoyment of traditional subsistence resources, encouraging and supporting men to apply for existing employment opportunities in mainstream organisations, encouraging men to develop businesses, and advocacy to change the nature of welfare programs and develop community economies (Pearson 2009, Altman, 1998).
- **Developing or advocating for social enterprises** (sustainable business enterprises which have a social purpose) to address upstream health issues as well as having flow-on employment and economic impacts for the community.
- **Advocacy to influence the broader community and societal issues.** Since men's groups do not have the power or resources to try to influence the multiplicity of social determinants of Indigenous men's health alone, they can advocate to influence government or community-level policies which affect them. The literature emphasises the importance of Indigenous self-determination in developing and implementing programs and that the role of government agencies should be to enable a community response as opposed to directing or dictating what the response should be (Adams 2002, Cunneen, 2002).





‘The cultural world of Aboriginal people was privileged in these discussions and a number of lively discussions were held about the different understandings, concepts, and causes of violence’.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Methodology

A participatory action research process (PAR) or empowerment research program (ERP) can be used with research/project officer/s and or cultural consultants to work with males in Central Australia, with peer support and facilitation from CASSE to establish a systematic framework by which the Men's groups can analyse issues, barriers, re-strategies, identify growth and empowerment, reflect and identify options for programmatic action. Grounded theory (GT) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) can be used to analyse narrative data obtained from stories and interviews from the men. Qualitative data can be thematised and these themes will be recorded.

Research has provided preliminary evidence that PAR — Participant Action Research — is consistent with an overall program approach of enhancing participant's sense of control and mastery in their lives (Tsey, Wenitong et al, 2004). PAR is based on the principle that ordinary people become researchers in their own right and generate relevant knowledge in order to address the issues that are a concern to them (Tsey, Patterson et al, 2002). PAR can be defined as “a participatory, democratic process. It seeks to bring together action, reflection, theory and practice in participation with others, in pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individuals persons and their communities” (Reason and Bradbury, 2006 cited in Bainbridge et al, 2011). PAR can enhance capacity development and allow knowledge transfer of research empowerment processes through formal and informal strategies and mentoring between project officer, researchers, and staff.

Grounded theory is a thematic analysis approach to data analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and develops theories.

Grounded theory is designed to explore and understand the nature and occurrence of complex social phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin 1998). It is suited to conducting exploratory research especially in areas that lack an evidence base because it is an “inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account in empirical observations or data (Bainbridge et al, 2013).

Data from interviews, diaries and reflection meetings can be collated. The analytic process begins with coding and categorizing and these are clustered into themes.

### 5.2 Methods

#### 5.2.1 Male Leadership Group

The Male Leadership Group (MLG) is made up of Aboriginal males from the Alice Springs community. A list of 32 potential participants was developed by one of the first workers on the project. This list was provided to the current worker, to follow up to get the group started. A written invitation was sent to all the men and many follow-up contacts were made or attempted. Only 9 males came along to the first meeting, they were representatives of their respective organisations. From the first meeting the *Kurruna Mwarre* Male Leadership Group developed these *Terms of Reference*:

- Participate in a Male Leadership Group to design a best practice Aboriginal Men's Shed for Central Australia.
- Look at what are some of the keys issues faced by Aboriginal Men today.
- Have input into how the Aboriginal Men's Shed should function.
- The man's shed design to be determined by local Aboriginal males, as the Male Leadership Group representing males in Alice Springs.



To date the group held two meetings: 15 July 2016 and 17 March 2017.

In response to the terms of reference, the group that was present at the first meeting made it very clear that they didn't what to participate in something that was only going to be done with no final outcome achieved. The comments from the MLG can be used as true and correct:

- Establish something different that can be responsible for implementing things outside of this main Congress Organisation, but work in partnership with Congress.
- Provide something that's at arm's length while exercising own autonomy, to achieve desired outcome of men's lives being improved on.

The men determined that domestic violence was a high priority for the men to be addressed.

Members include:

- Congress—Ingkintja: Johnny Liddle, Tony Linn, Peter Braun, and Wane Campbell.
- Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid (CAALAS): Glen Sharpe (then, now Congress 2017), Kevin Corby, Troy Appo.
- Institute of Aboriginal Development (IAD): Mick Campbell, and Peter Wallace.
- Desert Knowledge Australia: Michael Liddle.

Other men present supported the establishment but didn't volunteer to be on the working Committee to establish an entity.

As this group is part of the action research component of the project other methodological aspects will be discussed in the findings section, including the establishment and ongoing development and work of Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation, as the new entity to ensure things are implemented or actioned.

### 5.2.2 Breakthrough Violence Men's Group Sessions

The 15 Week Breakthrough Violence Program: Changing Minds and Saving Lives – A Brief Group Program for the Treatment of Violence was developed by CASSE in response to the high priority for group treatment identified by the MLG for domestic violence. A manual was developed for the facilitators along with the manual on group violence.

#### Approach

**The overall aim** of the treatment program is to change minds and save lives by breaking through violence! The Program attempts to explore ways to stop violence and break out of denial by focusing on the use of mentalisation, thinking about violence, feelings of violence, the partner or children as human beings who have feelings too, on increasing the visibility and humanity of the Other, and the withdrawal of projections (you

are the angry one not me!) thereby achieving humane, safe and secure relationships. Mentalisation is a psychoanalytic approach which focuses on the recognition of mental states, of knowing the feelings of anger, distress, humiliation, fear, and developing empathy in the context of intimate, responsive, secure attachment relationships.

The attachment paradigm is well-suited to understanding relational violence which occurs in domestic/ family violence. The majority of victims of severe violence are related to the perpetrator by attachment relationships: partners, ex-partners, parents, friends or children. Secure attachments are a pre-requisite to mentalisation and for developing a solid sense of self. The Program is not solely about gaining knowledge or teaching content per se but about facilitating learning and change through emotional experience in the here and now.

There are fifteen workshops. The first workshop aim is for participants to explore and reflect on issues about violence and learn and develop interventions and tools about how to stop violence. Another aim is for participants to initiate their own programs and materials for programs using their experience of the workshops' creative process in their own work settings and communities. The workshops will be adapted to the group's needs and cultural frames and facilitators will check with participants where they are emotionally in the process of the group program. The facilitators model a responsive 'secure attachment' encouraging the participants to empathically recognize and witness one another's needs thereby aiding mentalisation. The content is therefore fluid and open to co-creation between participants and facilitators. The films provide visual material for exploration and reflection and maybe played at the outset of each session. Group gatherings with female partners maybe held after a number of sessions throughout the Program, sharing emotional learning, experience in order to change minds and save lives.

**The sessions** for the 15 weeks program are:

1. Break and Remake the Story Line
2. Breakthrough Violence
3. Trauma Trails –Wounded Fathers
4. Colonial Violence
5. Emotional Storms – Unsafe Relationships
6. Blindfolds to the Other
7. Pain Empathy
8. Safe Attachments
9. Minds in Mind
10. Mentalising Interventions
11. Mentalising Violent Feelings

12. Good or Evil
13. Fathering
14. Becoming Humane
15. Tools to Breakthrough Violence

This Program is not dissimilar to other violence programs in prisons and the community. The various programs currently available in the mainstream and in the indigenous community were reviewed. Pamela Nathan used her forensic and clinical experience in the design of the program along with her therapeutic experience. There is a change of emphasis in this program focusing on the importance of emotional change and on being human rather than focusing on behavioural change per se. The program also focused on the nature of violence, risk factors and patterns of violence. It attempted to focus on the development of empathy, many perpetrators have also been victims, and in highlighting victims of violence are not objects but human subjects. The emphasis was on having a mind on another mind and on the mind of the self and knowing feelings and developing tools for control, understanding and reflection in relation to violence. The cross-cultural context was privileged in the development and content of the sessions. Films were selected for each session and many are Indigenous. There was a program and a Manual for Facilitators.

Before the program was delivered there were a number of meetings with the different researchers and Ingkintja and the professional staff workshoping mentalisation and violence. These were re-run in lieu of different staff changes. The cultural world of Aboriginal people was privileged in these discussions and a number of lively discussions were held about the different understandings and concepts of violence and causes of violence. The different cultural understandings were not written into the first group manual but some reference was made in films included. It was understood that cultural matters to be raised were at the discretion of the cultural facilitators and participants. There was also much discussion about the gender of the facilitators and it was firmly agreed that the facilitators needed to be male.

#### Program delivery

This program was delivered and piloted in two lots of 15 week sessions. It was run for men participating in the Central Australian Aboriginal Alcohol Program Unit (CAAAPU).

#### Facilitators

The research officer was a key cultural male facilitator alongside a senior social worker with over thirty years' experience working with the people in Central Australia, another social worker and a social work student. A forensic male psychologist with Ingkintja was a facilitator as well on

the first pilot. The social workers are employed with the Social and Emotional Well-Being Centre at Congress and liaised with Ingkintja whose staff also participated. Staff from CAAAPU and Ingkintja frequently attended and participated in the group sessions. Pamela Nathan, psychologist and therapist was informed of the weekly content of the sessions and reflected and mentored throughout the duration of the courses.

#### Participants

Participants were either attending CAAAPU as early prisoner release, self-referrals, or had been sentenced to an Alcohol Management Treatment (AMT) program by the courts. All participants were Aboriginal males from within the Central Australian Region and its 25 different language groups.

#### Stakeholders

Meetings with relevant stakeholders were held before the Group commenced and the content, duration and format were discussed. CAAAPU emphasised the need for the use of visual material and film. The Department of Corrections and the Chief Magistrate and magistrates emphasised the need to have treatment over a two month period, representing the average time a perpetrator was on a community-based order and they wanted to keep the attendance informal and not conditional to sentence release. The point of difference of the program content and delivery to other existing programs were discussed. There was a lot of support by the stakeholders for the program Group.

#### Data collection methods

Data (see Appendix VIP Data) was collated on each participant anonymously with their consent to document group data, for example, on prior treatment programs, nature of offence, and so on.

#### Reflective notes

A social work student took reflective notes from the cultural facilitator on a weekly report and collated data via comments or action done by the participants. The notes of the student were circulated including to Pamela Nathan and they provided a basis for weekly email and phone discussion discussing the content and de-briefing among the facilitators.

**Pre and post measures** were developed to be administered before and after completion of the Group:

1. **The Growth and Empowerment Measure (GEM)** (Tsey, 2010) measuring growth and empowerment.

2. **Kessler 6 Distress Scale** including two new items assessing angry and happy feelings. It measures psychological distress within a period of thirty days and low scores measure low psychological distress.





## 6. Findings

### 6.1 The Male Leadership Group (MLG) and Blokes On Track Aboriginal Corporation (BOTAC)

Previous meeting notes and brief reports from males within the community of Alice Spring, conducted by previous research and its findings, helped shape the MLG thinking.

#### **Challenges and negativity and no action**

At the outset of this research, there were real hurdles. In a summary report of CASSE Men's Shed Project, a previous researcher had come across attitudes within the males of Alice Springs expressing various mixed feeling of "yes great idea and no it won't work" (CASSE Men's Shed Project Ingkintja Male Health Men's Shed Research Report, 2015). Statements like this indicated a real threat to the whole project from the start, where males just simply stated this as back up-to their position on the Men's Shed idea "yes great idea and no it won't work... I won't go to [CAAAPU] 'cause I'm not a drunk, I'm not sick won't go to Congress, I don't live on a town camp not allowed at Four Corners Tangentyere" (CASSE Men's Shed Project Ingkintja Male Health Men's Shed Research Report, 2015). These are some of the comments that made this research challenging from the word go. Further, previous recommendations endorsed at previous Summits had not been actioned which contributed to negative responses at the outset of this research.

#### **Independent and cultural place**

Nonetheless, the previous researcher noted at the outset a very important preference while participating in formal discussions with Men in Alice Springs living in town and on the Town Camps. Men attending Ingkintja Male Health Clinic around the Men's Shed strongly expressed wanting a place not affiliated to any organisations, ensuring an independent status that can give more of the men a chance to be together to tell

stories, work together, help the younger men and boys with culture ways and more important[ly] our [law] and respect to our heritage. This is including 'spiritual healing for all males in one place and working together fighting our sickness not ourselves" (CASSE Men's Shed Project Ingkintja Male Health Men's Shed Research Report, 2015). An independent place and one which is a cultural place were two important criteria raised at the outset. These views of the men are strongly linked to their Aboriginal heritage.

#### **Too much talking**

Nonetheless the men do not want to be in a position where they have to explain themselves and their views, cultural views too, repeatedly, even among each other. Until now, Aboriginal males have not formally talked about finding solutions for themselves and this is an evolving space.

#### **Emergent Proposal**

This lead the men to understand that something needs to be done about all of this, but they haven't quite got it clear in their mind, as yet, what a place will all look like, however the:

Overall response from local prominent senior and Cultural Men in Alice Springs they would be interested in being part of something that will indeed be a benefit and help to all males in town, schools and surrounding communities if having an independent place large enough to create a Male only shed for programs from lifestyle skilling to Cultural healing and more it would be more appropriate for all the Aboriginal Organisations to joint together and becoming one as this topic has been talked about for so long and that is all it has been for some time is talk and no action. (CASSE Men's Shed Project Ingkintja Male Health Men's Shed Research Report, 2015).

There was also a list of names that "agreed to be part of the steering committee in hope to be able to provide

### 5.2.3 Informant Interviews

*Semi structured interview schedule:* Each participant was interviewed using an open ended semi-structured interview design (see Appendix VIP Data). Participants were not paid for their participation.

*Purpose:* The purpose of the interview schedule was to interview men about the need for a Male Place and to hear the male voice on need and barriers.

*Informants:* An extensive list of potential informants was developed by the research worker, in conjunction with other research staff. The criteria were:

- Firstly, Aboriginal males active in leadership positions in their community
- Secondly, non-Aboriginal males who had an active interest in Aboriginal male health and wellbeing.

The initial list contained 40 names. People were then contacted by email seeking an appointment time, to discuss the project. A Project Information Sheet was provided as part of the email contact.

*Sample size:* Twenty-four males initially consented to be interviewed, but one man withdrew from the research, leaving 23 men with consented data to work with. Each conversation was recorded and later transcribed. The informants range from every day men working within and around this community and several high profile members within this community. Out of the 23 males, 14 were Aboriginal males, 8 were non-Aboriginal males (referred to as other Australian males) and one male was an Indigenous male from another culture.





reconciliation between the organisations that have a common goal for Men's issues" (CASSE Men's Shed Project Ingkintja Male Health Men's Shed Research Report, 2015).

### **Who are the leaders?**

Before the new researcher took up the position there had been a lot of talk by the men about who are the leaders? Are they the cultural men? Are they the Arrernte men? Is it protocol for the Arrernte men to invite the other men from different language groups? These talks placed some pressure on the earlier researchers who had different positions as males in the community of men.

Now with a new researcher taking up the position, he had to state the purpose of the discussions again with the same group of males within Alice Springs. The new researcher pressed on with gathering the invited males to come along and set up a Male Leadership Group, in order to give it a more formal structure to commence the working with males within the community of Alice Springs.

### **The men direct the researcher**

The new researcher did note the level of anxiety and frustration expressed to the previous researchers by these very same males within the community. The recorded notation captured the anxiety of Aboriginal males, "this topic has been talked about for so long and that is all it has been for some time is talk and no action". Therefore this message resonated with all the men and was expressed to the new researcher with much authority and directives to shape this participative action research. The men declared action.

### **First MLG meeting**

The discussion at this first meeting of the Male Leadership Group (MLG) gathering held on 15 July 2016 at 32 Priest Street Office at 10:00am started with participants stating, 'we have done a lot of this type of workshop meeting, many reports written, and it is collecting dust. We do not want to talk about the same old stuff. Can we get to the end of what is it, that you want to get out of this meeting?' (MLG Meeting Minutes 15/7/2016).

The calling for the Male Leadership Group was a blessing in disguise. The selection processes was head hunting the Aboriginal males to be invited to come along. This method worked in getting males to the table and cut through the cultural barriers and uncertainties about cultural protocol among the men.

### **Cultural protocol**

Such cultural blockages can be due to misunderstanding or simply being told you can't do that without applying cultural authority. That cultural authority for all Aboriginal males means we are looking around for our elders to be there to guide us. Sadly, however, we have already buried our elders, the elders that we depend upon for this directional guidance. Now, the opportunity to step up to the plate has presented itself to many males.

So, this research process allowed males to self-select and come along as well. However, many males true to cultural protocols found that they have an avoidance system set up with other male members that were part of the team calling the meeting and presenting at the meeting. The importance of cultural protocol is often not recognised in research, gatherings or workshops but became very important in this research as a testimony to the sense of ownership of it by the men.

Therefore other individuals couldn't come along and participate. This also happens in life outside of this kind of structure that's work related, therefore the ceremony still happens with the males at the meeting, with resolution outcomes setting new directions, and these males exercised a level of cultural authority, while being respectful of the cultural dynamics within this region. Even if they didn't come along there was a lot of talk informally by the men.

### **Participants**

Out of this group of men, 32 males listed from within Alice Springs Community were given the opportunity to come along and participate. Only 9 males came along to the first meeting, but also were representing their respective Organisations. Out of all the organisations within Alice Springs only 5 organisations allowed their males members to come along to this meeting and contribute to the discussion.

The discussion at the first meeting of the Male Leadership Group (MLG) held on 15 July 2016 at 32 Priest St started, I say again, with participants stating, 'we have done a lot of this type of workshop meeting, many reports written, and it is collecting dust. We do not want to talk about the same old stuff. Can we get to the end of what is it, that you want to get out of this meeting?' (MLG meeting minutes 15/7/2016).

### **Invitation—Research brief**

The research brief for the Men's Shed for Aboriginal Men project was presented to guide the discussion. After identifying men within the community of Alice Springs (see Methods on page 19, for how participants were chosen) a letter was sent to them which outlined the following:

*You have been selected to come along and have input into what this Aboriginal Men's Shed should look like, and possibly how it should function. In doing so, you can talk about what the key issues facing males are in Alice Springs today.*

*As well as, how and in what way, [an] Aboriginal Men's Shed can address these issues.*

*Over the years at various men's meetings and conferences, there have been calls for Men's centres and shelters.*

*Now men, it's time to discuss, what this Men's Shed concept looks like. This may be one of the most important meetings that men can have that is culturally appropriate in the most modern way possible* (Invitation Letter 2016).

This lead to the men saying YES, we see and hear of the same things all the time. We need to do something DIFFERENT. Furthering the above statement then, the men also had this message within the invitational letter.

The formation of this Male Leadership Group is part of a CASSE/ Congress research project that... uses a participatory action or empowerment based method for collecting information to determine a best practice Aboriginal Men's Shed. This means the Men's Shed design is determined by local Aboriginal males. A Male Leadership Group which represents males in Alice Springs can lead the dialogue... come along and contribute to the discussion and formulate a plan for the Men's Shed concepts (Invitation Letter 2016).

With the invitational letter providing a clear message for men to contribute, to the discussion to formulate a plan, for the Men's Shed idea, it liberated the men that were present to speak and think freely and be allowed to dream, without restriction, outside the box in what a Men's Shed could look like.

### **Proposal for Male Place—BOTAC**

After discussing this, and with a belief that this meeting was about actually getting a Men's Shed underway, a suggestion was made to look at Jay Creek Community as an opportunity to bid for and develop as a men's place.

Having a place for men to go and maybe even be accommodated at Jay Creek with training to support the men's development could be beneficial support for Aboriginal men to understand how the rest of the world ticks. This lead to off the record discussing amongst MLG is talking about which Aboriginal organization will be best suited to implement and action such idea to fruition without the internal competition for resource to get things done, or it might just sit outside the scope of directional funding requirements. (MLG meeting minutes 15/7/2016).

A flow chart (see page 26) presented to the men helped guide the discussion. The MLG's could see real benefits and

opportunity in an entity with Memorandum of Understandings (MOU's) in place to support this Men's Shed. This place for Aboriginal men was proposed to be used as a training and development place that would be safe for men to conduct western education learning along with cultural learning, while providing accommodation in living quarters on site.

This lead to the genesis of creating a mutual body (Aboriginal Organisation) where other existing non-Government and Government Organizations can establish MOU's with the new independent body to conduct their services to deliver to the Aboriginal men in general.

A motion was passed to move down the track of developing and designing an independent Aboriginal Corporation, to be arms lengths away and yet accessible by other Government and non-Government Organisations.

The concept of a new corporation was given life in the form of the *Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation* (BOTAC) (see diagram on page 26), showing the proposed structure and scope of services, how it can work with other stakeholders while leading the charge in improving men's self-worth (MLG meeting minutes 15/7/2016).

All men present signed off on the pre-incorporation requirement with Glen Sharpe as the authorised applicant and appointed chairperson to get the ball rolling.

The general comment was that the MLG-Focus Working Group makes a meeting with Wheel Chair as one of the Traditional Owners for that area, to get approval by talking to him about, the proposed idea of taking out a 40-year lease to use and operate as Men's/Male Place/Community. This is to be actioned by the three selected male members.

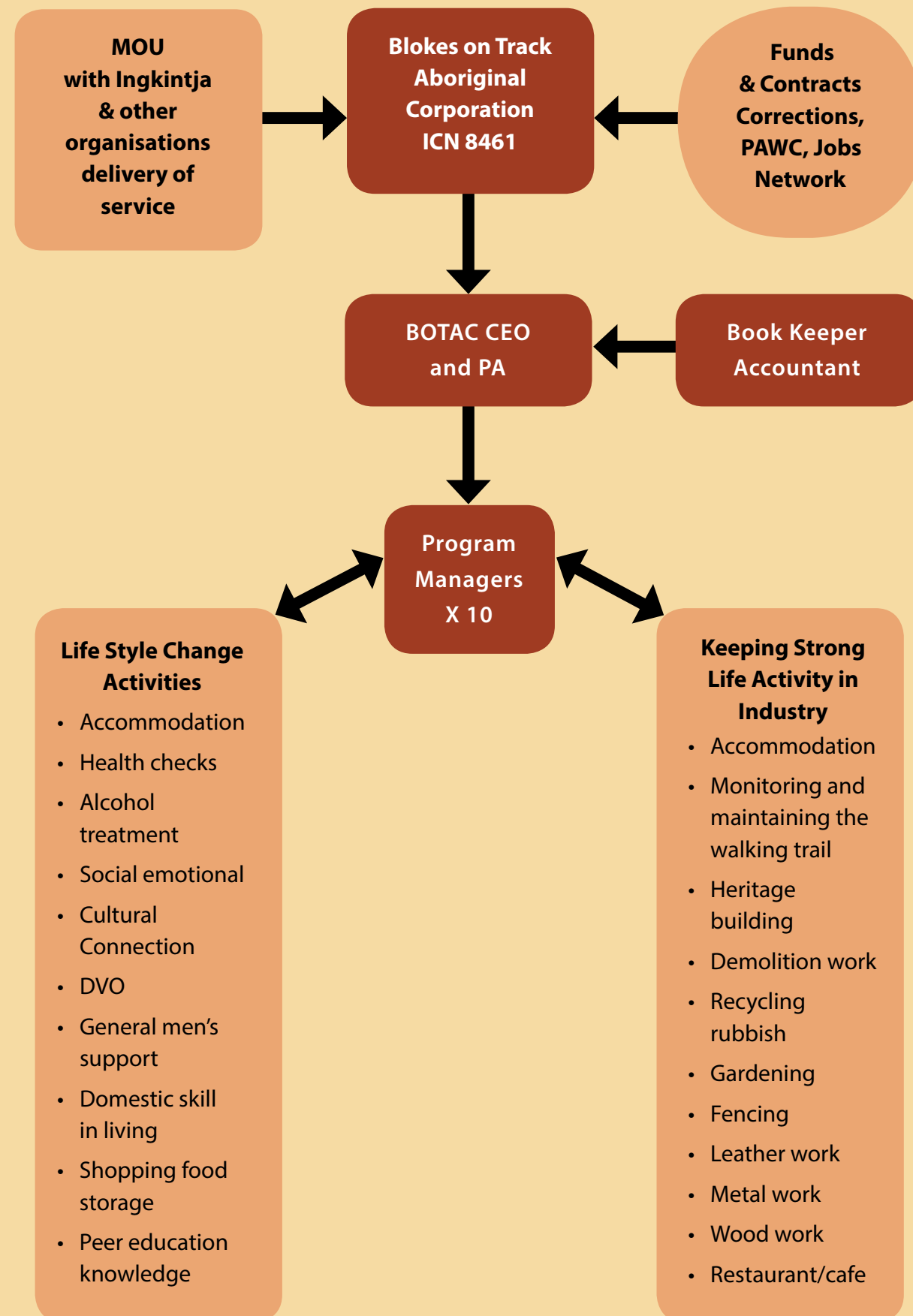
By having established MOU's between other stakeholders— Government and non-Government Organizations— to deliver their programs, means that BOTAC, without trying to take on too much within the constraints of a small budget can concentrate on delivering its core business.

*Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation* can focus on providing the accommodation and the internal "interculturalisation" training and development of the men, in understanding the western world's knowledge and societal structure (WWKISS) and teaching of *Altjira* to developing a complete man, with all his roles and responsibilities being encouraged to come out and take on empowering change.

This diagram on page 26 is reflective of the skeletal structure presented to the males at the first meeting, without the title of *Blokes on Track* as per this diagram.



## Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation (BOTAC) Proposed Framework



### **A voice**

The males present at this group's meeting now felt that they have a voice and something is being done about it and not just waiting for a long time. The male community have been waiting to see something happen to help men now and not later down the track.

It has been too long, with many males not seeing the end outcome of the male's movement. The many recommendations from past male's meetings have not been actioned or simply, the recommendations were not seen to be part of the core business warranting funds to be allocated to make it happen.

### **Trust in cultural researcher**

What was important to the males present was having trust in the personal reputation of the person conducting the research within the Aboriginal Community. He has a cultural reputation for being able to move between the two worlds and for being an advocate for change for his people. The men know him and his origins.

The males present felt that they could make open statements, like "we have done all this before and we are still waiting on the outcomes". Now what makes this research different is that the males could tell the researcher—a trusted Aboriginal cultural man—what they think and where it should go. This was then also relayed to Male Health Sub-Committee to present the new directions from the males within Central Australia.

The trust and reputational understanding towards the researcher by the Male Health Sub-Committee also made the work load and presenting to the Male Health Sub-Committee very favourable. Many of them have also witnessed his personal conduct within the community as a whole and have seen him be a sole voice in some areas of advocating change for Aboriginal people in general.

### **Appeal and Empowerment**

The empowerment of men from the community was one of the most important reasons why this group worked, starting with the letter sent to each of the men identified within the community to come along. The invitational letter stated its intent by asking the men to attend a Men's Leadership Group Workshop meeting in designing a Men's Shed for Aboriginal Men in Central Australia.

The content of the letter also expressed the importance of meeting that can be held that is culturally appropriate in the most modern way possible. This allowed for clear understanding of what they are getting themselves in for.

The letter also made the address personal; that they have been selected to come along and have an

input or a say in what this Men's Shed should look like, and possibilities in how it should function.

The invitation also stated that it's time now to discuss, what this man's shed concept looks like. It also reiterated from a personal perspective, how their input is very much called for now more than ever before, to shape men's direction along with empowerment.

This appealed and applied to the men within the community that are committed and working in this space of providing services for other Aboriginal males and having an input into addressing many of the issues faced by Aboriginal males within the community of Alice Springs and surrounding communities and seeking to find solutions.

### **Male responses to BOTAC outcome**

The registering of the Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation was a real action outcome from the first meeting of the MLG. Nonetheless at this very moment males felt overwhelmed that something was done straight away and this placed the males in a very unusual position, to questioning where and how do they now go forward, with this new structure that has potential to achieve the desired outcome in developing a Male's Place as mutual entity.

### **CASSE/Congress response**

The response from members within the two partners, in how this new body is going to work created little discomfort despite the unknown aspects. Indeed support was given as the development of BOTAC as an outcome was reflective of the directives coming from the Male Leadership Group as the reference group, as the integral males, guiding the research in a participative action research model. It was appreciated that a real outcome was emerging—the notion of a Male's Place—which could be implemented down the track. The two partners could see this was indeed action research and could see the empowerment of the men in process.

However, the BOTAC members were instructed to meet in their own time and not during normal work time. This created a little confusion amongst the men that made up the BOTAC, yet it's also empowered them to saying, "ok we can meet on Saturdays to move this matter along and see what they can do with this new entity."

So the real outcome on this is that Male Leadership Group gave directives to the researcher to conduct the establishment of the entity that can work with the current organisations as a structure that can lead to a win-win situation for all who want to do something for the Aboriginal males within this region.



### Communication

The change in communication and use of e-communication in passing motions and giving support behind meeting directions have been one of the most welcomed outcomes in getting busy members of the males community agreeing to something by voting on it via the email system to ensure the movement in moving along and not stalling and people losing interest in the directional push to get a Male's Shed up and running. This method has allowed for use of modern tools in moving matters along, while participating in shaping a good future for Aboriginal males in this region.

The e-communication method has proven to be very productive for the BOTAC members in being able to get endorsement to do something on behalf of BOTAC by getting support to action the motion and further the conversation and development of the Male's Place with potential stakeholders and services provides being engaged in developing business plan for the BOTAC.

### Some barriers

In ironing out frustrations there is the realisation that there are males that are doers, and there are males that are just talkers, that just like to get remunerated for their time in attending meetings. Working with males that are committed to improving things for males are only a few. These few males have also developed research literacy; have been up front in knowing what it can do and what it can't do. But with the research literacy they know how to shape the research direction to expressing the male's view from the community as empowered males within this region.

The Aboriginal men have found themselves in a very unique demographic situation, where some men didn't come to meetings because of cultural clashes that's happening amongst the Aboriginal men, and where there is an avoidance system that's at play between other men. There is also professional courtesy, where men don't want to be butting heads with old sparring partners of the past. Work doesn't allow for some men to come along. These men still support the program if and when it's up and running. Some men though perceive it as just another talkfest about issues relating to Aboriginal men and these men are encountered at all levels.

### Cultural change

There is also this issue that's being made clearer in understanding, the change in Aboriginal men themselves, that one type of Aboriginal men no longer exist, but there are these whole new types of Aboriginal men with sexual orientation to not having the cultural opportunity like other Aboriginal men, and by choice and choosing

things that are different to define their Aboriginality and manhood status amongst Aboriginal men in general.

There was a lot of talk about a proper name for the Men's Shed for Aboriginal men. The use of Aboriginal name for men's place, A Male Place, is collective, making other male members feel welcomed. Whereas calling it a Men's place becomes restrictive for other men that are not traditionally oriented, excluding a lot of men that would like to use male's places. There was a lot of discussion about the name and inclusion and exclusion criteria for men.

Diagram B shows the actionable outcome, where BOTAC obtains a 40-year lease of Jay Creek Mission to convert over to becoming a Men's Place to implement the inter-culturalisation goal. This conceptualization was created at the first Male Leadership Group meeting. Jay Creek is 40 km's out of town, providing safety, security and a cultural place for males, there are disused buildings which can be restored and plenty of potential space for different activities and accommodations.

### 6.2 The Establishment of BOTAC

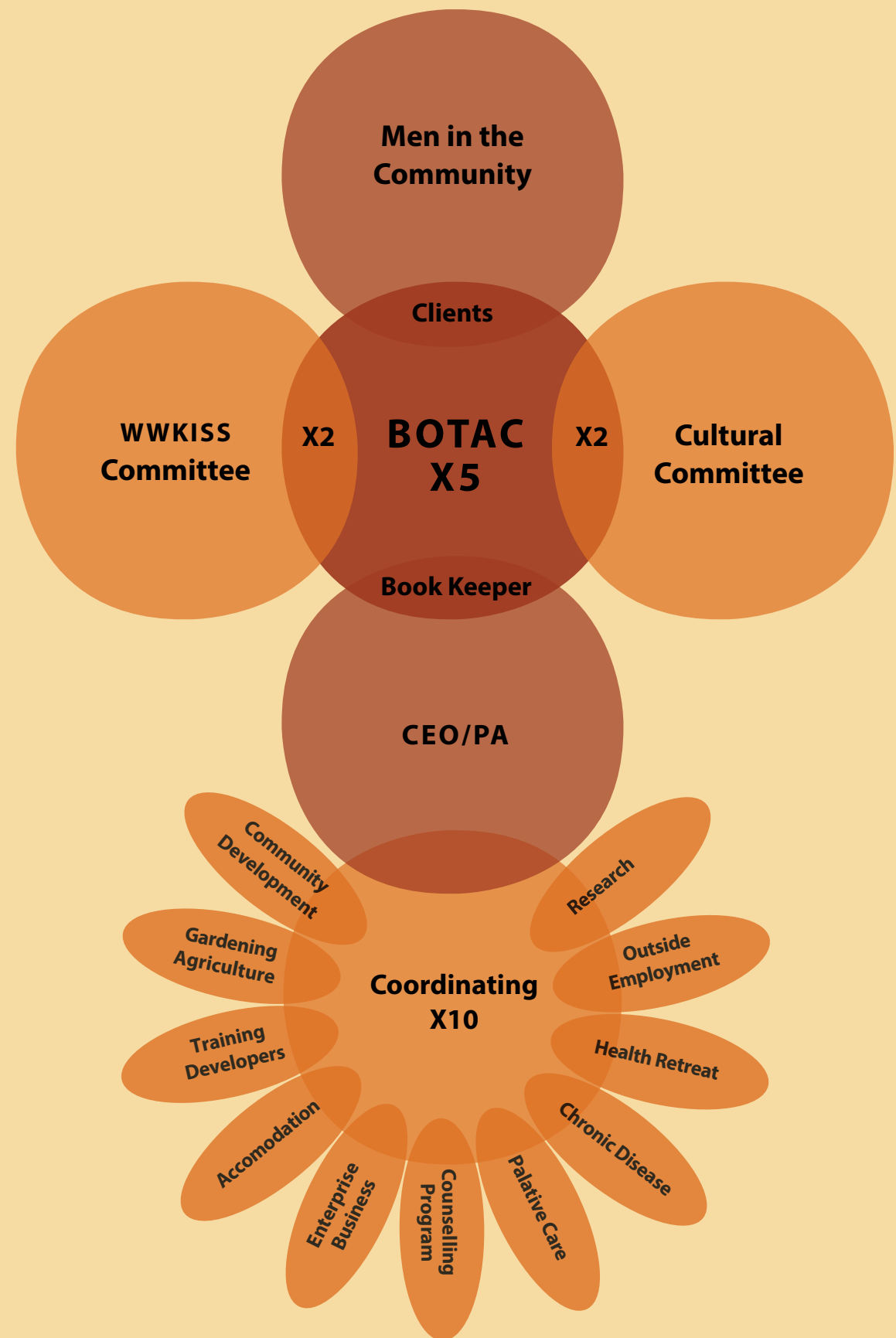
The establishing of BOTAC was the first participative action directive from the Male Leadership Group in demonstrating what men want to ensure that something is done to make this research achieve a real outcome. Therefore the outcome from the Male Leadership Group is the registering of the Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation; this also shows that men have developed a real understanding of action research and what research can do when providing the reference group role.

The objectives of The Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation ICN 8461 registered by a delegate of the Registrar on 27 July 2016 are:

Represent the Aboriginal males within Central Australia concerns in

1. Establishing strong, diverse membership base, representative of the region.
2. Consulting with males in Central Australia by sharing information and encouraging active participation within the organisation.
3. Collaboration, partnership and networking with relevant services, departments and agencies.
4. Incorporating lifelong learning and mentoring to support and strengthen personal and leadership capacity, in the area of economic development by participation in industry.
5. Responding accordingly and appropriately on issues impacting on Aboriginal male's lives and wellbeing
6. Sourcing funding to support the ongoing objectives of the corporation.

## Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation (BOTAC) ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE





BOTAC has held several meetings in moving the vision along and this process also shows that men can participate in discussion and then approve the decision by passing a motion to be actioned by delegated members within the group.

Some issues are still outstanding that needs to be actioned, however it is indicative of where the men's head space is at. A lot of action has been implemented after endorsement by the men, but little slow on the up take of them taking charge in going down to the bank to place their signature on the application even though it is all set up for the men to go and do.

This is where several men's confidence is low, for example, in following up such a request to go to further a bank account application in order to give it its power source to being able to attract funds to doing some in-house activities or applying for funding under their own rights as BOTAC as a fully registered entity that has the same rights which can commence trading in business operations.

The developed BOTAC Business Plan (separate document) should be read in conjunction with this section of the report to understand the further development of the Men's Centre and BOTAC as an entity. This document is available from BOTAC, Chairperson Glenn Sharpe, via contact officer Ken Lechleitner mobile 0421175287.

### 6.3 Interviews with Aboriginal and Other Australian Males

#### Summary Overview

Over twenty men were interviewed about the need for a Men's Shed and the barriers to empowerment. The men talked powerfully from the heart and strongly for the need for a place where they can talk, heal together and live in two worlds. They say they have all been victims, witnesses and become perpetrators. The humanity of the men is striking. Their emotional needs are great and they recognise their psychological needs. This recognition is striking and unrecognised by the wider public domain. They say they hide their feelings that 'they hurt, they bleed they have pain', 'all suffering', feel 'degraded and scorned', 'disempowered', 'lost', 'devalued' and 'unrecognised', seen as 'violent losers' and more. They want a safe place and space to talk together where they can 'straighten up' explore, grow, 'get their minds back on recovery', 'give them a voice', 'share stories', 'support each other' and heal together 'straightening out the ones behind us'. One man spoke of 'dashed hopes' and how important it is to talk about this dynamic in their lives! They recognise the importance of an Aboriginal identity first and foremost to secure confidence, 'strengthen the spirit', 'walk tall' and achieve psychological change. Many spoke of the barriers of racism, of two laws in the courts, of generational trauma, of no education, of not being able to read or write or even speak good English, let alone have skills to cope with life or trade skills enabling employment. They want to learn negotiating skills and skills of self-expression and assertion which will help them in explosive situations defuse domestic violence.

#### Thematic analysis

Responses from the participant interviews are presented under the research questions. Responses to questions 4 'What do men see that empowers other Aboriginal men?' and 5 'What activities or programs could empower men?' have been combined as participants conflated their responses.

Respondents have been grouped into two cohorts: Aboriginal males and other Australian (non-Aboriginal) males. This has been done so that where there were different responses based upon cultural and social experiences based upon Aboriginality or non-Aboriginality these can be easily identified. Therefore the opinions of members of the target user population are clearly delineated from those of non-Aboriginal males who either have experience in mainstream Men's Sheds or who were interviewed because of their involvement in, or commitment to, working in the Aboriginal male health and policy field. The majority of interviewees however are Aboriginal.

#### Question 1: Is there support for the idea of an Aboriginal Men's Shed

There is **unanimous support** for the Aboriginal Men's Shed by the Aboriginal males and overwhelming majority support among other Australian males that were interviewed. One Aboriginal man, speaking for many, spoke about his dream saying:

*"We should all get together. And my dream is I'd like to see us all on the one level ... That ah, we can all come and then we can sit around the table and have a good talk and elaborate on the problem ahead of us and straighten out the ones behind us. I mean this is my dream"* (KMI\_04, 16/9/2018).

One Aboriginal man spoke to the importance of a Men's Shed in promoting self-determination:

*"I think it is a wonderful idea, I think it's, we have been waiting for a long time for something like this. I think it's really, really powerful, for a number of reasons. I think one of the main one's is because it will give us men a space to connect with each other to express our thoughts and feelings, to heal and as part of that I think it ah, I think it's important that, I think it will embed belief in our men that we as Aboriginal men can take control of the situation, that sort of the social dysfunction in town here and around the area and I also think it's important too because it shows non-indigenous community and government that we as Aboriginal men know how to deal with our problems"* (KMI\_09, 11/11/2016).

Another Aboriginal man, again speaking for many, said there has never been a safe place, that men hurt and they need a place to become stronger:

*"I think it is a great idea. I think in all the politics and all the issues in Aboriginal Affairs, especially in Central Australia, there's never been a coming together of the men and being recognised as how they fit into family structures and I think there's been a lot of issues and problems where men feel left out. Men have always been blamed for things, men are the ones who get incarcerated all the time, there's never been a voice for men, there's never been a safe place for men and there's never been a place where men can talk about how they feel, you know if they're hurting and things like that, they never had the chance and even though in the eyes of most people you know men are tough and they, they're strong and things like that, they're not they're just like any, anyone else, they hurt, they bleed, they have pain and um a place that can make them strong and create friendship's with other men and understanding and the thing that empowers the individual person to become stronger"* (KMI\_023, 22/12/2016).

The responses of the men interviewed have been grouped into two broad responses:

Firstly, those that were highly supportive, to the idea of an Aboriginal Men's Shed and secondly, those that also gave specific instructions with their support towards the Aboriginal Men's Shed. The men emphasised the need for a safe place, a place out of town, where trust can facilitate conversations.

#### Safety

The Aboriginal Men's Shed has to:

*"Provide a space for the Aboriginal men to go to and to feel safe... comfortable to go there" this young man works with Aboriginal youth in re-engaging them back into education system"* (KMI\_12, 21/9/2016).

#### Not isolated, safety and trust

Another Aboriginal man said:

*"The best place would be somewhere that's not totally isolated, you know. Somewhere where the men have got their privacy, where the men can sit down, you know in comfort. They can feel safe, they can be with people they trust, and they trust the area. You know it's, Aboriginal people are fussy when it comes to somebody else's land... so you know we have so many different tribal people around Alice Springs, so really we need to have it in Alice Springs, but just a little way out... you know a place where it is home for everybody... being out of town a bit so you can have that sense of, oh this is, we're secure here"* (KMI\_03, 4/10/2016).

#### Conversation

A fellow other Australian male stated it has to be:

*"A place where people can share a meal together, have a coffee together, do a little bit of work together and more importantly be together as men and be a part of the conversation, about what does it mean to be men"*. This fellow other Australian has extensive work experience with Aboriginal men throughout the Central Desert Region (KMI\_02, 27/10/2016).

#### For all men

A number of interviewees said that the Men's Shed should be open to all men and not be exclusive to Aboriginal males:

*"I would be cautious to head down the path whereby it becomes exclusively for Aboriginal people, because I think that's a, there's a risk attached to that... where we continue to have you know Indigenous and non-Indigenous people operating and working and learning in separate spaces"* (KMI\_02, 27/10/2016). (There is real passion by this informant to be working with Aboriginal males working on stuff together and building work related working future).



Another Australian male said the place should be open to all men:

*"I am curious as to why a Men's Shed for Aboriginal men only"* (KMI\_02, 27/10/2016).

An Aboriginal man supported the idea that the Men's Shed should be open to all men:

*"I am involved with the other, with the Men's Shed and I was just wondering why we wouldn't sort of run together"* (KMI\_13, 25/10/2016).

Another other Australian male informant simply stated that:

*"I have never heard of an Aboriginal Men's Shed"... "I don't really know much about it. I'm generally familiar with the Men's Shed concept in mainstream Australia... I haven't really got an option yet"* (KMI\_10, 18/11/2016).

### Aboriginal place

In contrast, another Aboriginal interviewee said it needs to be for Aboriginal men only:

*"I think it's critical we have an Indigenous Men's Shed as a way, you know networking and bringing people, our mob together and sit down and discuss things and it also gives our mob an opportunity for our mob to talk and network in language and culture and kinship"* (KMI\_03, 4/10/2016).

Whereas an other Australian male informant supported the need for an Aboriginal Men's Shed:

*"I think it's a wonderful idea, the idea that you know, men need their own space has been bandied around for a while, and I do think that men do need their own space and I do think specifically Indigenous men, [they] would benefit from something like that"* (KMI\_11, 27/09/2016).

This informant added the importance of the men in having a "mechanisms in place that once you get your participants in, it'll be the men deciding [on] going forward" (Interviewee 12/ 2 /2016). He suggested that a model that could be used is that "it could be quite similar to the way a neighbourhood house is set up" (KMI\_11, 27/09/2016).

**No Men's Shed yet and need for recovery:** An Aboriginal Male informant with 72 years of experience working and living within this region had this to say about the idea of an Aboriginal Men's Shed:

*"I think it's the best idea that came to Alice Springs at this stage, being of course that we don't have any facilities"... "we have a men's health centre, but it's still not good enough to catch up to the women's programs... and simply to get men's minds back on recovery"* (KMI\_04, 16/09/2016).

In saying this, the informant is simply saying men's program are at least a decade away from what is on offer for women

in this town. Many men spoke of the need for a healing place which will be documented in a later section.

### Question 2: Been to any of the existing Men's Shed in this region?

In response to question 2, the following thematic grouping will highlight the response to the question of interviewees accessing existing Men's Sheds.

There are two males, one Aboriginal and the other, an other Australian male, that work in what is identified as a Men's Shed as defined by the Australian Men's Shed Association, without adhering to their constitutional operational structure. These are set up by local organizations working for on men's issues, creating a space for men and calling their program a Men's Shed, that reflect a loose operational commitment to Australian Men's Shed Association.

Many of the males don't know of the Men's Shed in the community. One Aboriginal informant stated *"there are nothing here at all, for the last, in all my 72 years, there's been nothing here in Alice Springs"* (KMI\_04, 16/09/2016). It's interesting that this informant has not seen much change for Aboriginal men. Another Aboriginal informant stated that *"I don't even know where it's located"* (KMI\_03, 4/10/2016). To this, one other Aboriginal male simply said *"no I don't"* (KMI\_08, 10/11/2016).

However two of the Aboriginal males indicated that have been to Ingkintja as the identified Men's Shed, stating *"I've utilized the one at Congress... personally and also through work with taking young people there on a regular basis... just try to engage our young people in, into services there so they can learn about what services are there, what's available for them,"* this young Aboriginal male works with young Aboriginal males within the school system (KMI\_12, 21/9/2016).

Out of all the other Australian males interviewed one goes to the mainstream Men's Shed whenever he can. *"I try to get to most Wednesday ... you know different characters come along... it's an easy chat over a cup of coffee really"* (KMI\_13, 25/10/2016). There is also an Indigenous male from another culture that went along to what was referred to as Men's Shed meeting and that was the extent of his involvement with that organization's Men's Shed.

Many Aboriginal males have heard of a Men's Shed in the community, but have not gone along, *"I've never been there, so, I don't know too much about it"* was the response from one Aboriginal male informant whose work in town and visiting remote communities, uses sports as way of getting community members involved in activities (KMI\_07, 6/10/2016).

Another Aboriginal male stated:

*"I think there's a man's shed for the general community, the*

*non-Aboriginal community you could say. Ah that's only started recently in the last 12 month or so, so I think that some of the blokes that come to us might feel a bit intimidated by going to that facility and using it, but the, mainly because of um, I don't know if you can say some of our mob are scared of white people or don't want to mix at that level with white people"* (KMI\_21, 15/09/2016).

An elderly retired Aboriginal male stated, *"Ah, yeah I have heard of 'em, but I haven't been to, I have heard of the Men's Shed here in town, but I haven't been to any of them or anything"* (KMI\_20, 12/10/2016).

He furthers his comment by stating the following:

*"Well I have worked nearly all of my life and grew up a family and it gave you everything. Once you had a job, money coming in every day, you didn't rely on anybody else, the dole or anything else. All you relied on was your work and your family and you kept together that way"* (KMI\_20, 12/10/2016).

One young Aboriginal informant stated:

*"No I'm, I'm not aware of anything, I've seeing the ads on TV and that about Men's Shed idea and that. I think it's sort of more about sort of non-indigenous men because that's the faces who I've been seen on these ads apart from one old fella. But um, you know I didn't really sort of connect with it because in that ad I seen, you know tools and things that weren't sort of Aboriginal or Indigenous, so I didn't really connect with that as, and that idea"* (KMI\_09, 11/11/2016).

### Question 3 Suggestions on how the Aboriginal Men's Shed could conduct business/programs?

This section has used the following themes to explain the findings: Type of Place; Who does it and how it's done; What happens; What kind of links it has with other services and a sundries section.

#### Type of place

**For all Aboriginal males:** Under this section it was made very clear by informants what type of place this Aboriginal Men's Shed should be or look like.

A place where Aboriginal males could go and it is for all Aboriginal males:

*"I don't think that men should be separated like from initiated men and working men... when we talk about Men's Shed... they should be the same once they go the shed"* (KMI\_20, 20/10/2016).

This informant also furthers his statement by saying it should be a place to get together for the Aboriginal generations collectively to talk and work things out:

*"I'd like to see them get together and just talk about things and sort things out between themselves, which is the best way to go. Like you get men in there that have been working and them that haven't been working and find out the difference and get together and talk about it and see what you can work out like for families... later on you could probably encourage kids to come along, their sons and everything, so that it encourages them to leave better lives when they grow up."* (KMI\_20, 20/10/2016).

#### A cultural place

The responses to the type of place is grouped into three sub-themes: firstly, a place to teach and listen to Aboriginal men about their issues. The second theme is for it to be a safe and loving place for men, and one that also have separate areas for young and old men. Thirdly, in this place, men responded that there is the need to prioritize time and space for clients to sit and take in the ideas that are being shared, where people can then learn about the issues they have come to seek information about. This form of listening is a vital element in Aboriginal cultural understandings of how men learn—it's a cultural place. It is also a place of empowerment.

In saying the above many men followed up by saying that the Aboriginal Men's Shed could conduct cultural learning of manual skills and hands-on cultural development training for its participants.

**Songlines:** A young informant presented the view that this place should have documentary activities with media training for men to incorporate anthropology, where song lines can be followed as part of the discussion with other men. This notion was being shared because there is a gap in knowledge exchanging happening in the Aboriginal men's world today. The young Aboriginal informant furthers this accordingly:

*"Everyone else is singing their songs and everything like that and you don't know your traditional song line straight, like right through it's a bit disheartening you know? When you don't know where you're truly from and your songs lines... on where men come from"* (KMI\_23, 22/12/2016).

This young male suggests a good program could provide traditional cultural learning opportunities within the Aboriginal Men's Shed.

**Story-telling:** Another informant said a Men's Shed can facilitate story-telling giving pride and confidence to the disempowered men:

*"Oh I think the, the program first of all is the, is what the Men's Shed, Men's Shed and gathering do, is they listen, they allow someone to tell a story without being judged that a powerful thing in itself, then you feel as though, you feel confident you no longer just looking at the earth, you looking at people's*



faces that tell you that story, suddenly you've gone from being downtrodden to have pride and in that pride is recognition and in that pride is empowerment so that whole process and it that not happened just over one meeting" (KMI\_23, 22/12/2016).

A fellow other Australian suggested a program of selling sausages to raise money to "inviting the young fellas from Clontarf to a couple of sessions to sit down and talk about some of the things that men talk about" (KMI\_13, 25/10/2016). This is where "we can give them our experiences and so forth and maybe encourage then to go back onto the next level of education" (KMI\_13, 25/10/2016).

### What happens there?

#### A place of learning and training

**Social networking:** Men said there be could be lots of information exchange, where things can be talked about or where men can join up:

"Maybe you got to start the social networking in the broader community, then you go and speak to the Men's Shed and say can we come there on Wednesdays or something... that's a good way 'round it" in social networking with other men in community of Alice Springs (KMI\_13, 25/10/2016).

A lot of Aboriginal people tell me they spend all of their life learning. Many simply say:

"They got more certificates than I need to wallpaper this room... so they learn a lot of things... but they never really get much time to put'em into practice" (KMI\_13, 25/10/2016).

This is backed up by an Aboriginal informant stating that passing on skills could happen in an Aboriginal Men's Shed:

"Normal Men's Shed type activities which is you know maybe fix a car, do some woodwork, maybe stand around, maybe have a few beers and have a talk and laugh. Which is how most Men's Shed that I know of around... the rest of Australia are set up. It's to try and get blokes to go and you know tell people about their troubles, or to show other blokes that they've got skills that they want to pass on... whether that might be a mechanic, or carpenter or something like that" (KMI\_21, 15/9/2016).

It was also acknowledged that the older men may not have the skills to participate in modern workshops, but they could be encouraged to share:

"Language and culture, um lot of the old blokes have got skills in, you know making leather belts and that sort of stuff, but because of the way our mob are going they're, it's a dying art now. So we need to harness the knowledge that these older fellas of ours have got. Whether it's making boomerang or even fixing cars, you know there's not many cars that a

home mechanic can fix now... I've seen our mob fix them computerized cars, I've seen them out bush" (KMI\_21, 15/9/2016).

Another informant shared his personal experience in working in a Men's Shed, his story and spoke about spreading the desire to learn skills:

"Like this, if you want to repair the bed for somebody, or somebody takes it back home or other family come and look at it, the bed or, I need to make one for me and then ah okay, make another one for another family, yeah and tables and chairs like this yeah. Once the community members see what's being done by the men in the Men's Shed then there is request from other family members to make these items... Once people see what can be done many people can then copy that to make it come to fruition, and if this could be done in the area of food production for men is "growing food and producing and being productive and you know for, you being a breadwinner, or you know a provider for the family... learn the skills to be able to produce like food" (KMI\_24, 9/2/2017).

#### Health and education

One Aboriginal interviewee stressed the importance of health and education for team and self-esteem building saying:

"Ah, it's critical I think is health and education, would be the main two and you know looking at confidence and team building like thing, you know, like you know a lot of them probably have many issues you know and problems, so it's about getting them to work in a team but also getting them to open up and talk about their experiences and ah, it's about support and direction... so if you have a Men's Shed where our mob can come, all in the right frame of mind...and have a yarn... it creates a harmonious place and creates a neutral place where our mob can open up...like sometimes our mob shame job... they don't want to talk and it's how we get them to talk in a confident sort of place and support them...looking at confidence and team building" (KMI\_03, 4/10/2016).

#### Psychiatric

A surprising number of men mentioned the importance of psychiatric or healing programs for the men who have a lot of issues and acknowledged the problem of domestic violence:

Another Aboriginal interviewee (KMI\_04, 16/9/2016) said:  
"Well the first program of course is health—psychiatric...which is yah or nay is a sickness that we hide, or main thing is with the law when we have a domestic...the psychiatric problem in my opinion is men hold back on a lot of things we don't expose ourselves on the problems. If we have a problem with a woman we go to court and the court always believe in a woman's story

and we men can't stand up for ourselves and how to bring it out so the program could teach us how to talk, how to elaborate... to negotiate... if we don't have a Men's Shed, a program we can trust—we got nowhere else to turn to. We all gonna be jail birds... and locked up in a cell, pleadin' guilty all the time... we have to have that sound frame of mind where we can make our own minds up... to construct something concrete for all of us and straighten out our own weaker men.

This was backed up by a fellow other Australian male who said:

"I think you need to tick off areas of mental well-being... I think you are bringing together a lot of people that... you know, have a lot of issues which need to be dealt with themselves, you know so you need to provide appropriate referral pathways for those individuals, so have that mental support there... they feel when they leave the Men's Shed they know they are standing taller. So that's why it needs to provide both an internal thing for the individual and on the mental health side of the house" (KMI\_01, 6/10/2016).

Domestic violence and the need for coping mechanisms features quite prominently:

"For men in that regards, you know change behavioural programs, that sort of stuff. I think there's also any sort of programs you need there, need to know, to pick people up, you know, provide them with a sense of direction, a sense of worth, a sense of belonging...they need coping mechanism skills that they can take back to the family environment... with a men's shed you are providing them with an opportunity to, for information, for coping so they can create that amongst their fellow men...and you put this in the context of community safety issues" (KMI\_17, 6/10/2016).

Another respondent also poignantly stated that all men have been witness, victim and perpetrator which is rarely acknowledged by the mainstream:

"You, me, everybody around us, it affects in some means. You know you're either a witness to it, you're a victim to it, you're you know in the past you may have been an offender. But all this collectively is hurting our people as a whole community... So you need to make sure you tap into those major issues, so people get a self, well an idea of self-awareness" (KMI\_01, 6/10/2016).

Another Aboriginal man spoke about the problems of addiction and mental health and how there is a need to manage the fear and insecurity:

"...There is various forms of drugs, alcoholism and so on. You know it's all to do with managing fear and we just gotta try to manage the balance between you know a healthy balance of sound mind, good heart between love and fear but and help those who are really suffering mental health issues, with

managing fear, insecurity and to personally empower them to conquer you know those demons like you know their inner fears" (KMI\_08, 10/11/2016):

### Who does it or how is it done?

One informant said men can learn from leadership programs and from other men:

"It's like as you grow up you, become the person you become because of the training that you've had and I think you know same as being a parent, you don't know how to be a parent, you have to learn on the job and being a man doesn't always mean that you know everything, you learn and you have people who teach you along the way and I think to have a course in, in leadership, or a course in how to behave in certain situation it, everything you do in life is a learned, learned behaviour... your taught how to do things and I think it's important when men get to a certain age, that can go do courses and be around other men, and learn. It's an important aspect of society in both Aboriginal and, non-Indigenous society" (KMI\_05, 11/10/2016).

This man elaborated on learning at different stages in life:

"I think it's important to, to grow and learn and maybe have places where you can go and they say, well there's going to be a special course on this or, lesson in this and I think that's important too, it's a, cycle another cycle, cycle of life I s'pose that can incorporate those things where you can, it's not like you look in the paper and they advertise whatever it's just a place where men can talk and say 'hey look they're gonna run this workshop, how about coming along" (KMI\_05, 11/10/2016).

An elderly retired Aboriginal man stated it should be open to all Aboriginal males:

"When you talk about Men's Shed, I don't think that men should be separated like from initiated men and working men...they should be same once they go to the shed... otherwise it causes conflict in there. I'd like to see them get together and just talk about things and sort things out between themselves, which is the best way to go" (KMI\_20, 12/10/2016).

A young Aboriginal man talked about strengthening identity and having media training so that all men can follow their family tree and learn from the elders:

"Have like a little media program, interviewing men and doing documentaries on where men come from, especially the elders. Have a documentary, have like a media, just like a media training type thingy so we can have a, we can incorporate anthropology as well, follow lines and every men can get on, like personally if they want to follow their family



tree, where they're from and find out where the connection is from everybody you know, when it comes to Alice Springs... everyone else is singing' their songs and everything like that and you don't know your traditional song lines straight, like right through it's a bit disheartening you know? When you don't know where you're truly from and your song lines" (KMI\_23, 22/12/ 2016).

Another suggestion for group discussion and information sharing is inviting special guest(s) to come along and have a talk about any topic. It's as simple as saying, "we'd like you to come and have a cuppa tea with our blokes" and talk about anything (KMI\_13, 25/10/2016).

Some men said they wanted a place just to cool down and others said they needed a place of support: "You know we need that intensive support... not just for men, for family. We know it; you know that intensive programs work" (KMI\_14, 27/10/2016).

#### Question 4 and 5 combined.

#### What do men see that empowers other Aboriginal men? And what activities or programs could empower men?

The men gave wide ranging responses on disempowerment and what empowerment looks like and what is needed to achieve empowerment.

This respondent typified the responses of many emphasising Aboriginality and self-determination:

Empowerment and programs was seen to require by one Aboriginal man:

*"Working at their level"... working with Aboriginal people, you need Aboriginal people, that's the main thing. Aboriginal people that actually understand you know, the lifestyle, the language and the culture... if you wanna help Aboriginal people, you do what they want. You do what works"* (KMI\_17, 6/10/2016).

#### Culture

Many men saw an empowered man as someone with connection to traditional culture, that:

*"A lot of these mob from the bush are like... they are leaders in their community, they're leaders of community, they're leaders of ceremony, they, they bosses...but when you look at 'em you think, oh yeah he's just a man, but they very important people"* (KMI\_21, 15/09/2016).

Some men highlighted empowered men as being the ones with family, which is central to the cultural world of Aboriginal people, and a job to provide for his family: "Someone who's proud of their role, proud of their family" (KMI\_07, 6/10/2016).

A young man that works in the cultural space stated:

*"I think the main thing that empowers Aboriginal men is obviously our culture... cultural practice because I think, you know when we practice culture it seems to appear that all men have a role and a responsibility in that space, whereas in contemporary society we see that a lot of our men don't feel that they have a space and an integral part to play within the community"* (KMI\_09, 11/11/2016).

One Aboriginal man spoke of being on country strengthening the spirit:

*"You can pick 'em up and take 'em out bush. You strengthen their spirit and that's the way they do it. That's the way Aboriginal people work. You strengthen their spirit, they can go a very long way and our spirit ties in with the land. So take 'em out bush for a drive and talk to 'em out there. ..It's also about building trust"* (KMI\_17, 6/10/2016).

Another other Australian man spoke of the importance of trust to tell cultural stories:

*"But them you say you know 'tell me your story' what they've got to trust you though. They don't just blurt it out but once you've built that rapport"* (KMI\_11, 27/09/2016).

An informant that works with young Aboriginal students had the following to say about what empowers Aboriginal men:

*"Culture, if you talk about culture, I think that's a big one to empower Aboriginal men. Um, to have people to look up to, like perhaps elders of their community, um people like that, that they can strive to say 'yep I actually wanna be like that one day',...if you start at the culture side and you know, older Aboriginal men who I think that's, that's the way to go"* (KMI\_09, 11/11/2016).

#### Cultural empowerment—teaching and telling stories

Teaching and education is seen as the source of empowerment. As one Aboriginal man said:

*"Education is very important... so when you look at education its empower, it's empowers... knowledge is power so, all starts there and, and, and its understanding the current environment we live in, so you know, you got, understanding policies, understanding change in direction. This is what we as men need to understand. We have been disempowered but we've got to get that back you know"* (KMI\_03, 4/10/2016).

This informant talks about cultural empowerment:

*"Lot of the young people want a tell their stories... they get so excited when I sit there and they're tellin, me and their whole face lights up... they are telling me about where they're from their homeland and they talk about you know, all the stuff that I just do not understand"* (KMI\_11, 27/9/2016).

Other Aboriginal men agreed on the importance of cultural empowerment saying:

*"Because there's power in our stories, kinship"* (KMI\_03, 16/9/2017), *this can create a "place and space that they can call their own"* (KMI\_05, 11/10/2016).

Whereas another Aboriginal interviewee said that empowerment and an empowerment program could be the sharing of stories:

*"Sharing stories, sharing experiences, so it is evidence-based in that regard so it's, it's not a textbook... you're looking at mentoring... so it's actually giving them a voice... that voice is based on experience and their knowledge you know and their involvement, so it is valid in their mind... It's their reality"* (KMI\_01, 6/10/2016).

Another informant talks of the importance of cultural belonging as a source of empowerment:

*"Someone who is empowered I guess is, you know really proud about who they are, what, where they come from. The knowledge that they hold and um, I guess having a clear sight of where they're going... or even if they don't have a clear sight they're sort of, they're strong enough in themselves, oh no regardless of what happens ahead um, I can handle that situation... so they're feeling, and almost that sort of chest out sort of thing so, um yeah and, and confident in themselves and knowing what they do, but also um understanding, you alright I made a mistake there, but I can learn from that, that sort of thing so yeah. This is what is seen as empowerment"* (KMI\_12, 21/09/2016).

And another young Aboriginal man working in between the two worlds expressed similar thinking:

Knowing, *"who they are and where they belong... just knowing who they are and where they belong and where their ancestors come from and following their song lines. That's empowering"* (KMI\_23, 22/12/2016).

This notion is supported by another informant stating:

*"Identity, a sense of strong identity with bonds firmly extended community relationship, but meaningful productive outcomes... personal empowerment that's directly related to self-reliance, self-sufficiency"* (KMI\_09, 11/11/2016).

Another informant said it was important or men to have their own place which can enable them to live in both worlds:

*"Empower Aboriginal people to have a place and space that they call their own, um I mean you've got clubs and that, that are here and that have structure and that and I think it's important that Aboriginal people can have a place where they can go and have somewhere they can call their own and still incorporate the, the two phases of life"* (KMI\_05, 11/10/2016).

#### Employment

Employment is seen as an important source of empowerment. One informant said:

*"Men can come to the Men's Shed and build" or "just want to make stuff and sell it and get a bit of money" while developing skill in doing things at the Men's Shed, and this process has been empowering to many men within this community* (KMI\_15, 9/2/2017).

A retired Aboriginal elder shared his thinking:

*"Having a good job and having a decent family... I worked nearly all of my life and grew up a family and it gave you everything. Once you had a job, money coming in everyday, you didn't rely on anybody else... all you relied on was your work and your family and you kept together that way"* (KMI\_20, 12/10/2016).

Another informant highlights the importance of empowerment:

*"If you are going to empower Aboriginal men, you need to get the right leaders, the right people to, you know give 'em that little bit extra, make 'em feel good about themselves and just work from there"* (KMI\_17, 6/10/2016).

He also expands on the employment matter and gives suggestions for consideration of the difficulty that Aboriginal men face in getting that piece of paper to be qualified to do the job. In the communities:

*"You got men that can pretty much do anything. They can, you know you can put them in any type of vehicle, they can operate in and the problem is they won't get jobs because they haven't got piece of paper that says they can operate the vehicle and on top of that, Aboriginal people, we're sociable people, we are, you know like to be around other people. That's what makes us strong within our families"* (KMI\_17, 6/10/2016).

This informant suggests employment that can employ groups of family men by creating employment opportunities in hunting feral animals, *"Get these Aboriginal people to go and hunt these things and send 'em (the animal) overseas or feed their own families (with it)"* (KMI\_17, 6/10/2016).

One informant was quite scathing in his views that anything being set up for Aboriginal men should not be the end game:

*"A crucial element of that is that the playing around with tools in the shed, in the workshop, is an end in itself. It's not a stepping stone to a job and I think it's important is that we don't, that we don't set up an Aboriginal Men's Shed with a false expectation that somehow it's going to create jobs for people, unless it really is, I mean you could, you could have a collaboration with Peter Kittles (local car dealership) which meant that Peter Kittles was saying 'we guarantee we will offer*



six apprenticeships to six men every six month' or something and it did, fine but otherwise, it's, it could risk that problem" (KMI\_10, 18/11/2016).

This comment is also supported by another informant, who says proper employment is empowering:

*"When the men leave the Men's Shed that they are standing taller and it "provides them opportunities to develop in, you know different employment pathway this would start from doing volunteer work... a lot of employment you get into through volunteering... just getting involved. There's lots of existing programs of volunteers... now as a, as group of Men's Shed attendees that you go alright, today we're going to go and give a hand with Greening Australia and we're gonna go and plant some trees" (KMI\_01, 6/10/2016).*

The common thread here is that all processes should link and lead to some kind of full-time employment.

### Equality

Whereas another Aboriginal informant looked upon this whole matter of empowerment from the different angle of equality. He said:

*"Well empowerment maybe the wrong word and what we need is equality, we need equality where we can elaborate and contest anything that we don't agree with and come away with a satisfied frame of mind. That's my view of it...to construct something concrete for all of us and straighten our own, our own weaker men out" (KMI\_04, 16/9/2016). This notion was expressed by an elderly Aboriginal man with long history of working all his life.*

Another empowering process was described by a community member, when he identified how a community had chosen to spend their own royalty money, where they are using:

*"Their money, they've not asked the government to do it. They're doing it with their own money, they're supporting breakfast for the children... all the kids...everyone gets breakfast" (KMI\_18, 27/09/2016).*

This informant went on to refer to the idea that getting men off the grog would be a good start towards empowerment.

A straight forward answer to the empowerment of Aboriginal men was given by one informant:

*"I don't know... I never really looked at it like that, I look at just as in men you know and I see some men are, who are determined to do whatever it is they do well..." (KMI\_13, 25/10/2016). (An example of a person was used in demonstrating a level of commitment and community involvement, this young Aboriginal man has been working within the community of Alice Springs).*

## 6.4 Violence Workshops

### Program Delivery

The program Breakthrough Violence Changing Minds and Saving Lives—A Brief Group Program for the Treatment of Violence was run in 2 hour sessions once a week for 15 weeks or Aboriginal men. These men were sentence to CAAAPU for treatment as Alcohol Management Treatment and for the treatment of Domestic Violence. In each pilot trial approximately 25 men attended each week.

Meetings were held with relevant stakeholders announcing the commencement of the Group such as CAAAPU, the Department of Corrections and the Chief Magistrate and magistrates, ascertaining need, relevance and referrals.

### Need, demographics, gaol, recidivism

(See Appendix VIP Data) What is striking is that many of these men were repeat offenders and many had not before received treatment for violence, let alone treatment in a culturally appropriate manner. The data collection for 9 weeks demonstrates that of 32 men, over two thirds (23 men) had not attended a violence treatment program before. Nearly all (30) of the men were mandated and over two-thirds (20 men) had committed violent offences. Twenty-one of the men had been in gaol before with fifteen in gaol at least twice if not more often. Five of the men had been in gaol over five times. Twenty three of the men were substance affected at the time of the offence. In terms of age the majority of men were aged between 20 and 40. In terms of demographics half the men live in remote communities and slightly less in town. Thirty of the 34 men said they found the group helpful.

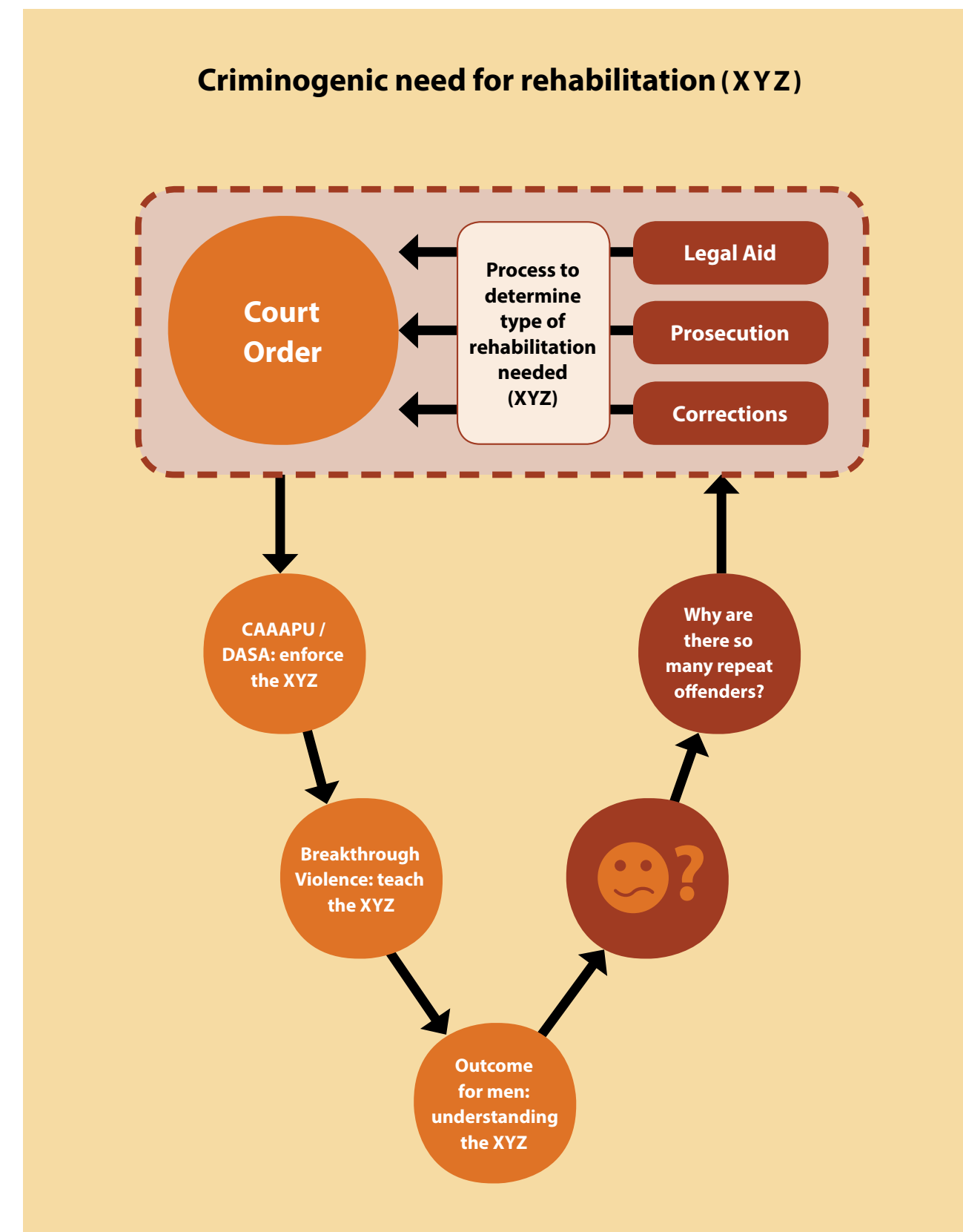
### Cross-cultural communication and context

The delivery of the program for the first time was a challenge in cross-cultural communication, with theories and meaning of words that needed interpreting to create better understandings for the clients and for the clients to take up ownership of these ideas in order for them to be stimulated to apply the ideas to create emotional and behavioural change. A simple method in demonstrating this was by using each word as the "method of workshoping the words, drawn up into a brick wall, as a model or symbol to indicating that if you don't understand the words, it simply represents a brick and all together that makes up the brick wall of everything one doesn't understand" (Week 2 Breakthrough Violence 2016).

This process uncovered a whole layer of misunderstanding that's happening across the board for Aboriginal men in a cross cultural and post-colonial context, as well as the program misunderstanding or not including Aboriginal cultural nuances.

These issues can get in the way of developing associative understandings to begin changes in the mindset and to becoming aware of new cross-cultural social structures. We described this as the missing of the "XYZ". This missing "XYZ" is the missing bit in a person's understanding of what specific language is asking them to do, as in the "implementation of the Court's instruction to the client to

do "XYZ" as for example in carrying out the courts instruction to attend a program or meeting the criminogenic needs in rehabilitation (Week 15 Tools to Breakthrough Violence 2016). Undoing confusion about language—the aspect of "XYZ will be discussed a bit more as required alignment of programs to be effective and not ineffective.







In order to develop an understanding of what was happening in the program, especially what relating to and translating the experiences of the clients, it was valuable to have a team of professionals especially by having a Social Worker with extensive working experience in this cross cultural space, in providing social and emotional support for Aboriginal people within this region.

Prior to the Group Program commencing, a number of workshops were held with some of the team members about the focus on emotional change, and using a mentalisation and cultural framework. Vigorous discussion between the different team members occurred particularly around different cultural understandings and meanings. Our delivery was also supported by a final year student social worker, who helped ensure notes of the session were captured. The team also included a male with bi-cultural experience which allowed for examining and challenging of the Aboriginal men's cultural mind sets or their own interpretation of cultural protocols and cultural civics, by creating an associative understanding into their situation. The notes were sent to the professionals each week including Pamela Nathan, who could not attend as a female, and each week the notes were responded too by the professionals providing a dynamic and reflective mode of delivery and a de-briefing. Often staff from Ingkintja or CAAAPU would join the Group and there was an inter-agency and intra-agency (between Social and Emotional Well-Being and Ingkintja) participation.

This team approach, and especially with these skill sets were helpful when the participants came up with negative or even destructive attitudes or statements such as:

*"Nothing changes, when you get out of here, family are still doing the same thing, and your wife might be with some other man. I would bash her and that other man and then end up back in here or the prison"*

(Week 15 Tools to Breakthrough Violence 2016).

This could stir all the men into negativity. A group discussion on blaming the system, and not taking up the responsibility of their own actions according to cultural and behavioural responsibility could follow. This is where understanding

the cultural nuances played a major role in refocusing men on what are the structural cultural principles of doing the right things in society. This was able to be reinforced only by someone that was competent in and showed adherence to, cultural principles, showing that these can be the moral compass refocusing the conversation away from the momentum of blame towards someone else and not taking up the responsibility, towards getting the group to understand from an Aboriginal cultural perspective, the requirement to take responsibility for one's own actions.

The Cultural Facilitator was equipped with the cultural knowledge and was capable of bringing into the conversation, a personal reflection on responsibility to reinforce responsibility towards each other's safety and wellbeing within our own Aboriginal community. The Cultural Facilitator drew upon what would happen in the situation of a person's daughter marrying a young man in discussion, "she [is] promised to my *Jampardiyi/Thampartey* (I as potential future father in law, induct my *Jampardiyi/Thampartey*, that I kill as a boy to transform into a man), with the rights to be married to my daughter with all associated cultural roles and responsibilities to ensure the safety and wellbeing of my daughter and my grandchildren as my lineage, with respect to me and my wife for offering our daughter as a gift (Week 15 Tools to Breakthrough Violence 2016). If he was "beating up on my daughter, I would intervene and take my daughter away from the *Jampardiyi/Thampartey* because he is not respecting the cultural law and I can also break the cultural law and not give him, my daughters hand in traditional marriage... after all he is breaking the cultural law, and therefore, I would not be obligated to accommodate that cultural contract" (Week 15 Tools to Breakthrough Violence 2016). This type of cultural facilitation hit at the core of non-responsibility that could be understood by men, with shattered world views, that are culturally oriented. This has just scratched the surface of where culturally oriented men are at in juggling roles and responsibilities, and choosing to escape from all aspect of dual cultural responsibility.

Whereas for our men that are not of cultural orientation, those men at times felt lost, but had really important stuff to contribute during other sessions. These young men took the leading roles as Captains in one activity where group discussion was needed, to stimulate group discussion on working things out together by talking to each other. This selection process was simply determined via the ability of one speaking the English language; this is where many men find themselves in this situation that they can't communicate, that they would like to learn how to speak the English language" (Week 5 Emotional Storm—Unsafe Relationship 2016).

It is to be noted that any group on violence with perpetrators can incur denial and a reluctance to talk and certainly a reluctance to admit guilt.

### **Mode of delivery—cultural and emotional change**

Creating a team that consisted of 2 Social Workers and 1 Cultural Facilitator, was very successful in unpacking many of the theories from the clinical perspective. The Social Workers explained issues during the workshop sessions and the Cultural Facilitator created meaning using Aboriginal cultural nuances to explain many of the terms used in the program. The use of Aboriginal language and idioms helped with creating better understandings. In order to address the issue of how do you motivate behavioural and emotional change unless you value yourself, we employed an example of using a "fifty dollar note, and asking what's its value if... crash it, what is its [value] if...stomp[ing] on it, what is it's [value] if ... ripped?"(Week 5 Emotional Storms –Unsafe Relationship 2016).

This lead on to the discussion of valuing oneself to "define the men, you have been like this fifty dollar note, crashed, stomped and ripped apart, but with a little help you are still a valued men in this community" ( Week 5 Emotional Storms – Unsafe Relationship 2016).

This activity gave men a whole new way of looking at themselves. A standard response, when Aboriginal men are in deep thought and in a reflective point in time, will say "this is making me think now". Many of these comments were made outside of the session in personal approaches to the facilitator or Master of Ceremony at events at Ingkintja (Mental Health Week at Ingkintja Male Health Service 2016).

Helping the men to find their voice in the Program is the first priority:

*"The first step is getting everyone to introduce themselves with 'their' voice – they don't have it – we are helping them to find their voice. Who are you? What's your connection to country?"*

*"We are challenging the men's thinking, pushing them outside their comfort zone. Over the duration of the program, I am starting to hear them speak with their real men's voices. They are starting to assess what tools they have, what they are missing, and what they need to do to build their tool set. Some of the men now want to learn to speak English and read and write. The men are telling me that they don't have these types of discussions in the community. Clearly there is a need."*

In keeping the workshop sessions engaging for the participants, some activities were used to emphasis the meaning or capture the feeling without endangering participants. Circle discussion was always challenging for many of the Aboriginal men, to even be able to talk about or even share their own feelings and thoughts on what was being presented for discussion. This put

a lot of Aboriginal men on the spot, as they found that they struggled to express or articulate what was going through their own minds. Their response to these new points or new tools being shared was "it's making me think" (Kurruna Mwarre Men's Violence Group 2016).

In any Group on violence with offenders it can be hard for perpetrators to talk let alone not to be in denial about their offences. It is possible that the showing of films before each session may have increased a sense of safety for the men and a space for talking which was not personal but shared and anonymous in content.

This kind of comments are supported by the men saying they want to "take responsibility in owning problems and expressing they would like more time a CAAAPU to get over many of the problems they are facing". There is the real need for Aboriginal men to develop this understanding on how the psychological mechanism works between the two worlds (Week 7 Pain Empathy 2016). This was an interesting process where men have expressed time and time again that they would "want to learn how to speak English" and many taking the timeout to think about their own position in life (Week 7 Pain Empathy 2016).

### **Sentencing time vs. Kurruna Mwarre Men's Violence Groups 15-week Program**

The sentencing time difference played a major role in juggling the group dynamics of the men changing every 8 weeks and at 12 weeks periods, with new faces coming to the session nearly every second week. The 8 week period was for the men as early prisoner release and self-referrals and the 12 weeks sentencing was the Alcohol Management Treatment (AMT).


This continuity issue was also compounded with other men being sent to CAAAPU that simply ended up attending the Kurruna Mwarre Men's Violence Group Program.

In all sessions the hardest moment was the beginning in trying to get the Aboriginal men that were willing to share their stories start, when there was a change or new face in the group. It disturbed the group dynamics in group discussions. The Social Workers and Cultural Facilitators had to "reintroduce [themselves again on many occasions to] create that trust [and in return] get them to introduce themselves and for the ones that spoke out clearly... used that moment to recognize their development in participating in this program and now feeling a little empowered" (Week 10 Mentalising Interventions and Week 11 Mentalising Violent Feeling 2016).

It is very important that this program be designed to be able to be delivered within the 8 weeks period for the early prisoner release, with maybe another extended program running at the 12-week program for the Alcohol Management Program (AMT).







There has also been a lot of discussion about the merits of a closed versus open group.

#### **Venue for the Kurrunga Mwarre Men's Violence Group**

There were issues associated with venues and there was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing, between Ingkintja and CAAAPU, with one additional experimental testing of a venue just outside of the Alice Springs town boundary to test out the logistics and participants reactions and participation.

If the program is to be run again, a more desirable venue needs to be located and set up to conduct the program, keeping in mind the need for tools and materials to make the rehabilitation journey real and achievable.

#### **Pre and Post workshop measures**

There were problems in obtaining this kind of information, however if such programs were to be run again, the in house counsellor needs to be engaged in carrying out the assessment and then sharing the client information with facilitator and Social Worker. Some men may need support following the completion of interviews that might stir up emotional distress. The aim with the schedules was to create an understanding of where the clients coming from and what they want to change in their own lives and to monitor the impact of the program on recidivism.

#### **Re-design**

Following the two pilots, The Violence Group Program has been re-designed with a 6 week module, collapsing some sessions and placing a cultural frame at the outset:

Week 1 Trauma Trails

Week 2 What is Violence

Week 3 Holding Men

Week 4 Fathers and Husbands

Week 5 Tools to Stop the Violence

Week 6 New Stories

The revised program can be delivered weekly or over two days in a different venue and/or on country. The original program and the revised one have one to two films per week per module. It is considered important to trial the use of film which may provide material to talk about which participants can emotionally resonate with but where they don't have to tell their own story if they feel too uncomfortable to do so. The emphasis in both programs has not been on delivering education per se but to achieve emotional change which can impact on men's behaviour and state of mind empowering them within a cultural framework. It is very important that the Group Program be run by men, a cultural facilitator/s and clinicians together and not by clinicians alone.

## 7. Recommendations For Growth and Development

Under the current back drop of low life expectancy, high rates of homelessness, with high levels of incarceration rates, followed by high levels of domestic violence rounded off by high suicide rates doesn't leave much to live for. The Northern Territory Coroner Greg Cavanagh made reference to the above statement and then focused on making this point last year when he said "the current focus on policing and punishments are not providing the answer to the NT's domestic violence problem" (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-22/domestic-violence-cases-in-northern-territory/7868592>).

Therefore with a little imagination and the new found tool of Participatory Action Research, several men from the community of Alice Springs, have come together via the formation of a Male Leadership Group, which set directives to establish a mutual entity called Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation (INC 8461). This group of men in Alice Springs have decided to take action to address these issues, by way of contributing to a more positive future, by doing things directly to tackle the underlying issues to the current problems.

The men in BOTAC believe that to bring about this "deep change" you need a particular physical and psychological environment, one where blokes looking to get their life back on track, by establishing a place for men to go to. The body, as BOTAC, to enter into contractual service agreement with all current existing services providers and BOTAC to provide the residential establishment for the men to live and access the programs to commence ameliorating flaws in our own lives. To do this a business model approach in using another tool called services agreement contracts would go a long way in making this happen without too much trouble, growth and development becomes possible through.

### **7.1 Establish Service Agreements between non-Government and Government Organisations with BOTAC**

#### **Central Australian Aboriginal Congress**

a) Contract Services Agreement between Congress and Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation in providing the following services, as agreed Medicare percentage:

- i) Well men's health check
- ii) Chronic Health Retreat as joint Management Plan for recommended period by the Doctor.
- iii) Healthy Life Style Nutrition program
- iv) Alcohol Treatment Program
- v) Violence Group Program

#### **Northern Territory Health Department**

b) Contract Services Agreement between Northern Territory Department of Health and Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation in providing the following services, as agreed Medicare percentage:

- i) Palliative Care Facility for Aboriginal Men to go to sleep on Country

#### **Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Services**

c) Contract Services Agreement between CAALAS and Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation in providing the following services, as agreed diversionary funds:

- i) Legal Education
- ii) Diversionary Program for young offenders





#### **The Department of Justice and Correctional Services**

- d)** Contract Service Agreement between Correctional Services and Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation in providing the following services, as diversionary funds:
- i) Early Prisoner Release*
  - ii) Probation Management*
  - iii) Domestic Violence Orders*
  - iv) Juvenile Diversionary Program*

#### **Creating a Safe Supportive Environment**

- e)** Contract Service Agreement between CASSE and Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation in providing the following services:
- i) Breakthrough Violence workshops*
  - ii) Recovery and healing*

### **7.2 Establishment of Male Cultural Place**

#### **Central Land Council**

- f)** Contract Service Agreement between Central Land Council to coordinate Cultural Ceremony funds and related activity:
- i) After Ceremony for young boys to men is concluded, the next stage of Cultural Civics induction into dual world responsibility can be enhanced and enforced to being sound dual men citizens*
  - ii) The coordination of the pilgrimage of Aboriginal men of old and young*

#### **Strehlow Research Centre**

- g)** Contract Service Agreement between Strehlow Research Centre and Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation in the following areas:
- i) Repartition of items and reconnecting of ceremonies to items*
  - ii) Input and update to Genealogy*
  - iii) Access to data and information via the men to Strehlow Research Centre*

#### **Aboriginal Communities/Tribal Ceremony Head Office**

- h)** Contract Service Agreement with each Tribal Ceremony Heads from Communities:
- i) To advance the young men's Cultural Learning and Discipline in cultural civics*
  - ii) Dual civics modelling in responsibility*
  - iii) Strengthening the inner Aboriginal men to take responsibility in this new modern world with cultural principles*

### **7.3 Establishment of Psychological Place: Health Retreat**

#### **CASSE**

- i)** Contract Service Agreement with CASSE and BOTAC:
- i) Breakthrough Violence Program*
  - i) Addition Workshops*
  - iii) Resetting life without substance*
  - iv) Couples Counselling*

#### **Congress Social and Emotional**

- j)** Contract Service Agreement with Social and Emotional with BOTAC:
- i) Family Relationship Counselling*
  - ii) Ingkintja Men's Shed*

#### **NT Psychological Society**

- k)** Contract Service Agreement with NT Psychological Society and BOTAC:
- i) Clinical treatment*

### **7.4 Men's Residential Area**

#### **Man's Contract to Change for the better**

- l)** Contract Agreement with each individual man with Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation.
- i) To learn and make that change to eliminate Violence towards wives and children, and fellow men*
  - ii) To learn new skills in modern development*
  - iii) To learn and participate in sharing of Cultural Knowledge with others*
  - iv) To support this new way of living as provider through employment for the family*
  - v) To participate in all developmental programs to enhance one's life*

### **7.5 Chronic Disease Care Management**

#### **NT Health**

- m)** Contract Agreement with BOTAC

#### **Congress**

- n)** Contract Agreement with BOTAC

#### **Other Aboriginal Health Services**

- o)** Contract Agreement with BOTAC

### **7.6 Palliative Care Services on Country**

#### **NT Health**

- p)** Contract Agreement with BOTAC

#### **Congress**

- q)** Contract Agreement with BOTAC

#### **Other Aboriginal Health Services**

- r)** Contract Agreement with BOTAC

### **7.7 Iwupataka Land Trust**

- s)** Contract Agreement with BOTAC 40-year lease
- i) Public Space area*
  - ii) Restaurant/Café*
  - iii) Market Place*





'The first step is  
getting everyone to  
introduce themselves  
with 'their' voice—  
they don't have it—  
we are helping them  
to find their voice.  
Who are you?  
What's your connection  
to country?'

## 8 Conclusion

The commissioning of this Research Project called *Kurruna Mwarre Ingkintja*—Good Spirit Men's Place, by an organisations called in short CASSE (Creating A Safe Supportive Environment), and then in the spirit of good partnership with Congress also known as Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. They fostered this working relationship together in examining the Men's Shed module and how it can present a new way of creating a place for men to begin the processes of unpacking the complicated issues that are drowning many Aboriginal males today.

This working relationship was made possible via the processes called Participatory Action Research method has been the biggest contributing factor, in creating this narrative for the Aboriginal men within Central Australia. This process was aided by this new found knowledge as a tool termed as research for men to use.

Although research has been done in the past by many other men, but, this time it's been with Aboriginal men's hand in pulling the shots. That they applied their own understanding of research, as a tool that was developed over time, their research literacy. This knowledge shaped and influenced the governing directives, and it gave the ability to Aboriginal men to give directions from a structured position of a collective called, the Male Leadership Group. They were charged with the responsibility to advise on outcomes. This Male Leadership Group took on the role as the reference group with gusto in providing that instructional setting.

The rationale of the project become clear and achievable, while also combining the cultural statement of historical use of the name for a men's place called *Ingkintja* and how this establishment provided all the required teaching needed for its youngest male members to its most senior men within

many of the remote Aboriginal communities then, and it's also very absent in days living.

While the structured processed looked at understanding Men's Shed based activities as the healing link. As the project rationale for the research was expanding on the notion that the idea of Men's Shed within Aboriginal Community could lead to positive influence. These ideas become exactly that and more in Aboriginal men embracing tools of research to influence positive community outcome for Aboriginal men.

This *Kurruna Mwarre Ingkintja* Research Project Cultural Statement lead to re-examining what the words *Ingkintja*, *Jangkayi* and *Tjangkayi* stood for in creating the cultural civics for its Aboriginal boys-to-men population in the past, to finding it as the modern missing link in teaching its male members roles and responsibilities according to its own cultural civics.

Use of the terms 'Aboriginal male' and 'other Australian male' is more inclusive in nature and respectful of each cultural male's status, without offending.

The research project aims presented the Male Leadership Group with ability to self-empower because that's what they applied in setting instructional directions, for the researcher to follow.

There have been a lot of talks in the past about creating a men's place, and this conversation has been ongoing for over 20 odd years. It's only started to materialise in a form of an entity that has to have carriage in implementing the findings or recommendations. This can be done via service agreement contracts with other entities, following similar modelling between CASSE and Congress that provided the research projects governances at the senior management level in a collective partnership between the two different entities establishing a contract services agreement.





As two different entities was further supported by also having joint research project ethics application with arrangements and ethics conditions in meeting deadlines while being guided by its ethics guideline has been fantastic. With agreed governance between the two entities in place, guided by the ethics frame work allowed for choosing the method of research known as Participatory Action Research (PAR) and the Empowerment Research Program (ERP) this process did give ordinary Aboriginal males the ability to become part of the research in their own rights via sharing relevant knowledge in order to address the issues that they are faced with on daily basis, or someone with in their family is subjected to.

The Male Leadership Group was made up of Aboriginal males from within the community of Alice Springs, who responded to an invitation, however this number was only small, but it was a small focused members that brought a lot of past experience in setting directions according to participatory action research and empowerment research program. Their input was the master stroke in shaping and directing research directions.

In collating data for the research was the road testing of the Breakthrough Violence Men's Group program that presented some outcomes that's very useful finding in how this type of group discussion can be delivered going in the future of Aboriginal males group workshops.

The other means of collating data for the research was via interview. Where 23 males that consented to be interviewed as informants in providing valuable input from the male community, that provide greater insight to where things are really at.

Literature review provided other forms of relevant information in justifying the supported for examining the need to having an Aboriginal Men's Shed within this region.

Some findings of how there is contempt within the Aboriginal male's community and its organisations that played a major role in looking after own patch, with guided self-importance. However it's through Aboriginal males developing own awareness and understanding of own limitation in carrying out some services, showed real leadership and collectiveness in wanting to do something for all other Aboriginal males within this region.

This collectiveness lead to the establishment of BOTAC was a breakthrough in finding a solution in engaging multiple services provided indicating that they would be happy working through a mutual body like BOTAC. This organisation was the direct action from the Male Leadership Group guiding and setting directional path to travel and develop.

The response from interviews with both Aboriginal males and other Australian men has been overwhelming, with doable suggestions and good will amongst each of the informants.

The Violence Workshop discovered new ways of doing business in hosting violence workshop that has to have cultural nuances at its centre.

This new business opportunity, presents itself via the lesson learnt from the past research and community gathering of men. It has come down to structural process of establishing a services agreement between all other stakeholders, with a venue to support all the activities. The key to the success of this research under growth and development for BOTAC is the ability to be able to establish contractual services agreement with existing service providers, without threatening their existing operation. The success is also depending on the possibility of taking out a 40 year lease of Old Jay Creek Mission as the site for this new Male's Place.

'...we've been waiting a long time for something like this. I think it's really, really powerful... [that] we as Aboriginal men can... take control of the situation... it shows... the non-Indigenous community that... we as Aboriginal men know the best way to deal with our problems'

(KML\_09, 11/11/2016)



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The images presented in this report are representative only. Aboriginal readers are warned photographs in this report may contain images of deceased persons which may cause sadness or distress.

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# APPENDIX

## Ingkintja Mens Group Data: Weeks 1–9

### Q1 Have you attended a group on DV before?

Yes	11
No	23

### Q1a In the community/prison?

Prison	8
Community	2
DASA	23
N/A	1

### Q2 Are you mandated to attend?

Yes	30
No	4

### Q3 Have you been charged with a violent offence?

Yes	20
No	14

### Q3a How many times have you been in gaol?

N/A	13
1	6
2	4
3	4
4	2
5+	5

### Q3b Were you substance affected at the time of the offence?

Yes	23
No	11

### Q4 How old are you?

20–25	7
26–30	4
31–35	6
36–40	6
41–45	0
46+	3
No record	7

### Q5 Do you live on a remote community or in town?

Remote	19
Town	15

### Q6 Are you finding this group helpful?\*

Yes	30
No	4

### Q7 What is your language group?

E Arrentre	2
Luritja	6
Walpri	3
C Arrentre	6
Pitjantjatjara	6
Munjuwa	6
W Arrentre	4
English	1

### Q7 Record frequency and duration of attendance

	Attended	Absent	Total #
Week 1	11	4	15
Week 2	15	0	15
Week 3	13	2	15
Week 4	11	4	15
Week 5	16	3	19
Week 6	15	7	22
Week 7	16	12	28
Week 8	19	11	30
Week 9	20	14	34



Story to painting and  
a story for the research

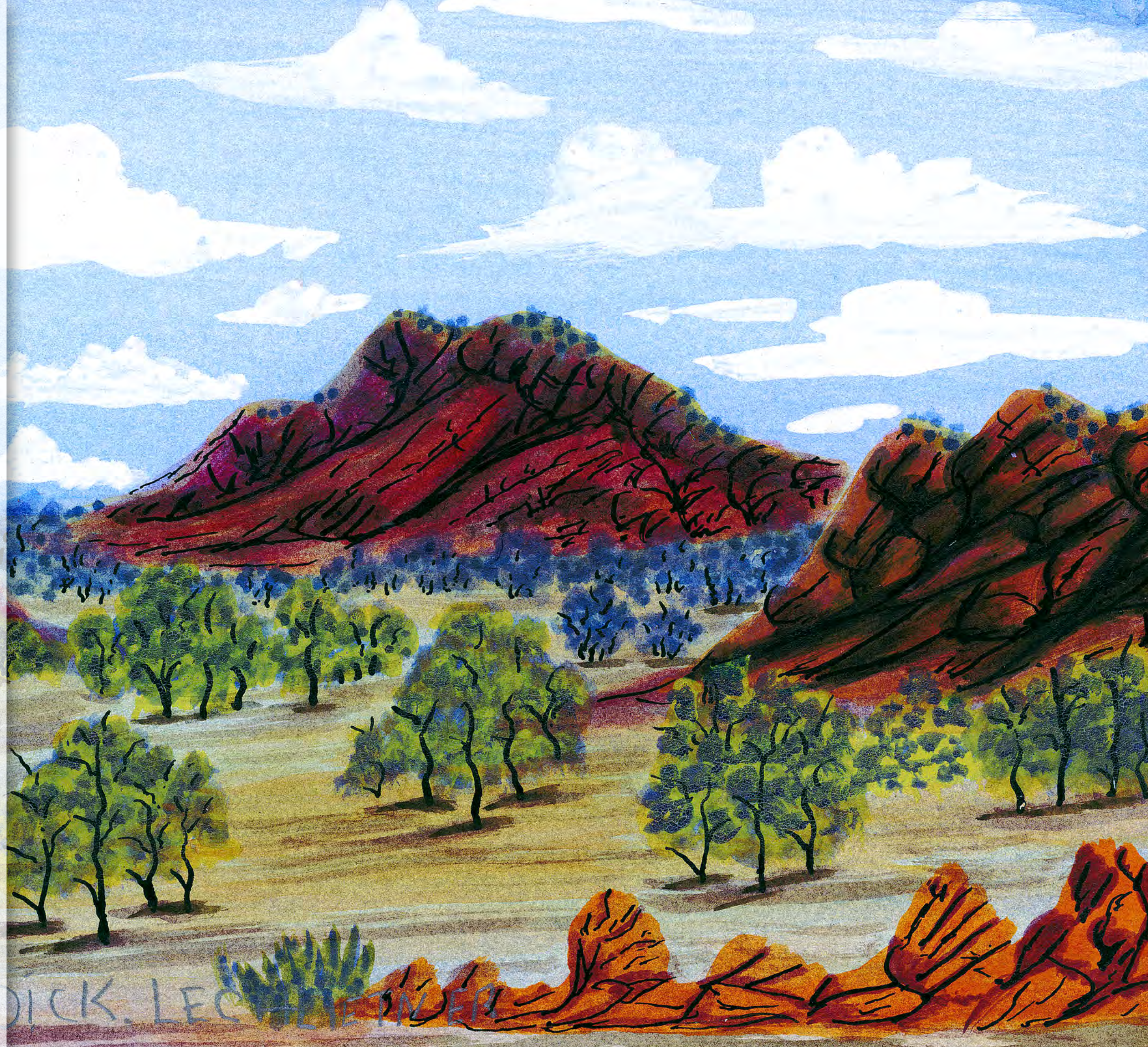
I travelled with Kumanjayi Dick Lechleitner Japanangka over thirty years ago, out bush to many different communities over a few weeks at a time for two years as we completed the work for the book *Health Business* for and on behalf of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. He taught me so much about the country, dreaming, bush tucker, bush medicine, Anmatjerre, his people and more. He wanted to paint. He wanted to learn to write. I got some watercolours for him and this is a picture of his first painting ever. He went on to paint big canvases with acrylic on country. This painting is showing holding country behind Coniston, north of Yuendumu and in between Mt Allan and Yuendumu. His country. You can see his signature on the bottom of the painting (full image—inside back cover). He learnt to write his name. We had writing lessons by the campfire. Kumanjayi gave me this painting and recently I have given it back to Ken.

Kumanjayi Japanangka spoke strong for his people. He always said: "No more empty promises!". Ken Lechleitner Pagarta is his son. Ken has been the powerful Research Officer on this Kurunna Mwarre Ingkintja project. There is an intergenerational legacy of research work from father to son in this project and the organisation of Congress. The father-son generational, country connection is integral to this project and to the establishment of a Kurunna Mwarre Ingkintja Men's Place.

May there be indeed no more empty promises. May the men dream, paint, write, lead and live with and alongside a men's place.

Pamela Nathan  
14 February 2018

Dick Lechleitner Japanangka,  
*Apmere, Home, Place, Country*  
water colour, 297 x 200mm, 1981  
Courtesy Ken Lechleitner







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Aboriginal Congress  
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