

Indigenous Evaluation Strategy
Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2
Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003
23 August 2019

To whom it may concern,

Yuwaya Ngarra-li Submission to the Productivity Commission on the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy

In this submission, we provide some background detail about Yuwaya Ngarra-li, the community-led partnership between the Dharriwaa Elders Group and UNSW, and our approach to evaluation, which we hope will be of relevance and interest to your work on an Indigenous Evaluation Strategy.

‘Yuwaya Ngarra-li’, which means ‘Vision’ in the Yuwaalaraay/Gamilaraay language, is the partnership between the Dharriwaa Elders Group, Walgett, and UNSW. After five years of working together on research projects, in 2016, the Dharriwaa Elders Group invited UNSW to work in partnership towards the Elders’ vision for change in Walgett:

The Dharriwaa Elders Group is leading a collaboration with UNSW and other supporters to grow our individual and community strengths and assets. The Dharriwaa Elders want to restore a robust belonging to thriving families, community and country, while making our place in the nation and sharing our learning with other communities.

The purpose of Yuwaya Ngarra-li is for the Dharriwaa Elders Group and UNSW to work in partnership to improve the wellbeing, social, built and physical environment and life pathways of Aboriginal people in Walgett through collaborating on evidence-based programs, research projects and capacity building.

Yuwaya Ngarra-li’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Exchange Framework is focused on measuring and communicating progress on:

- The development, strength and impact of the overall Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership
- The goals of the Yuwaya Ngarra-li Action Plan for Children and Young People in Walgett
- Learning around this as a model of ‘CommUNITY-Led Development’

Yuwaya Ngarra-li’s approach to evaluation

Our approach to evaluation is informed and underpinned by the Yuwaya Ngarra-li core principles:

- Community-led
- Culturally-connected
- Strengths-focused
- Holistic
- Human rights-based approach



Virginia Robinson, Gamilaraay lawyer and Secretary of the Dharriwaa Elders Group, has written the attached Research Brief on the core principles of Yuwaya Ngarra-li and how these principles inform and underpin the governance and evaluation of Yuwaya Ngarra-li (Appendix 1).

Yuwaya Ngarra-li's Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Exchange Framework is also informed and guided by critical social theory including critical Indigenous, gender, disability and criminology theory. A critical perspective offers a structural lens on the complex interactions of individual, social and systemic factors and compounding disadvantages that contribute to the circumstances and experiences for Aboriginal people in Walgett. Critical Indigenous theorists such as Rigney (1999), Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 2012), Sherwood (2010) and Moreton-Robinson (2014) have detailed the great harm that has been caused as a result of research that is done 'on' or 'to' or 'for' Indigenous communities rather than 'with' Indigenous people and 'with' Indigenous communities. Indigenous academics have led the critique of colonising methodologies and practices in research, challenging academics to produce research that is 'more respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful' (Tuhiwai Smith 1999; 2012) in relation to Indigenous peoples.

Research and evaluation in this context is inherently political and connected to past and current policies, processes and practices. Relevant to this point, we attach a recent article from the Evaluation Journal of Australasia, 'I'm sorry but I can't take a photo of someone's capacity being built': Reflections on evaluation of Indigenous policy and programmes' by our Director of Research and Evaluation Dr Ruth McCausland, which reports on past research that privileges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in exploring the tension between measuring the success of community-based, culturally led programmes using metrics that are meaningful and relevant to Aboriginal communities, and those considered robust and objective to government (Appendix 2).

Privileging the worldviews, contexts and voices of Walgett Aboriginal people and community-controlled organisations is a primary consideration in the evaluation of Yuwaya Ngarra-li. Our methodology sets out to be decolonising, empowering and Indigenous-centred, embodied with cultural and professional integrity as informed by the approach taken by the research collaboration that underpins the Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership (McEntyre, 2019; Baldry, McCausland, Dowse & McEntyre, 2015).

The evaluation of Yuwaya Ngarra-li takes a developmental evaluation approach to data gathering and analysing understanding impact and change, drawing on both quantitative data (what) and qualitative data (why and how). Tools to inform data gathering and analysis that we are drawing on include:

- Theory of Change
- Stakeholder mapping
- Contribution analysis
- Community surveys
- Qualitative interviews
- Linked administrative data analysis
- Case studies
- Outcome harvesting
- Social network analysis
- Cost benefit analysis

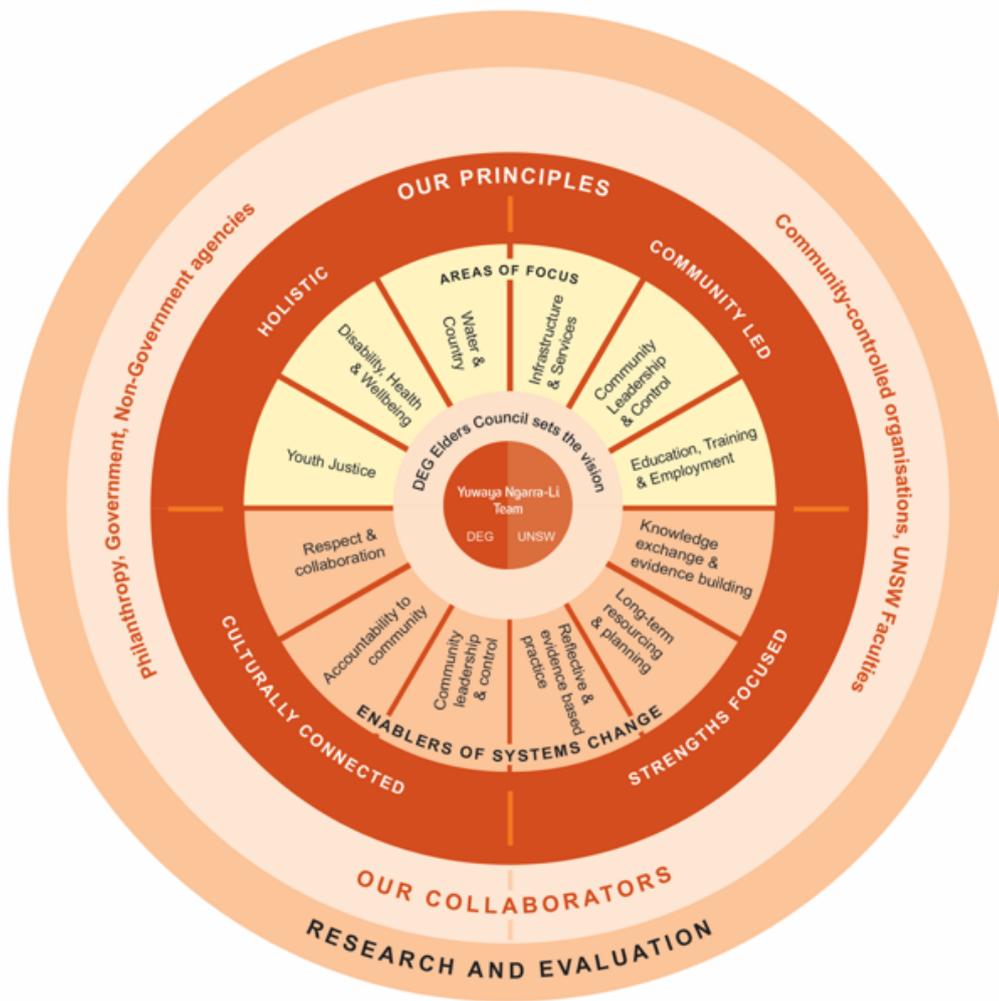


As our work progresses, we are reporting on the impact and lessons from our partnership to various audiences while ensuring that community voices, metrics and accountability are paramount.

The diagram below represents our approach to working in partnership, with research and evaluation underpinning every dimension of our work.

YUWAYA NGARRA-LI

A community-led partnership between the Dharriwaa Elders Group and UNSW



COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT



The Dharriwaa Elders Group and other community controlled organisations in Walgett have also had extensive experience around the impact and evaluation of government strategies affecting their community, including the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery, Murdi Paaki COAG Trial, NSW Government OCHRE Plan. There is a wealth of knowledge within the Walgett Aboriginal community on policy and program evaluation, and we encourage the Productivity Commission to engage further and enable more detailed input from the Dharriwaa Elders Group and other community controlled organisations to inform its Indigenous Evaluation Strategy.

We would be pleased to assist should you be interested to know more about any aspect of our work.

Yours sincerely,

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