Part B [Additional information about the Entry up to 1 x A4 page]

Background to youth mental health and connection to culture. Include information regarding suicide prevention and coroner’s recommendations.

Mental health issues, including risky alcohol and drug use, are prevalent across the Kimberley region including the Fitzroy Valley (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Office, 2014). Alcohol and drug disorders are twice the rate in the Kimberley compared to the rest of the State (Rural Health West, 2016). WA Health and Wellbeing Surveillance System (2014) found that alcohol consumption in the Kimberley Health regions for both high-risk single occasion and lifetime drinking harms significantly higher when compared to the rest of the State (Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Office, 2014).

With regard to the prevalence of mental health issues, one in seven (15%) Kimberley adults aged 16 years and over reported having a current diagnosed mental health problem and 36% of Aboriginal people report high to very high psychological distress (WA Country Health Planning and Evaluation Unit, 2018). Suicide was the leading cause of death in Kimberley 15-24 year olds causing 34 deaths in the region in the period 2011 – 2015, which is 8.9 times the State rate (WA Country Health Planning and Evaluation Unit, 2018). A recent Coroner’s Inquest into the deaths of 13 young persons in the Kimberley region identified the importance of cultural continuity and cultural security to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people (R V C Fogliani State Coroner, 2019).

In response to the data on mental health and young Aboriginal people, Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal communities established a locally created campaign called Standing Strong. The aim of the campaign was to build resilience in young people by increasing awareness around protective factors to prevent suicide as well as reduce alcohol and other drug use. Elders from five language groups and young people in the Fitzroy Valley guided the development of the key messages in Standing Strong with the aim to be more relevant to the local audience.

The messages developed by Elders and young people focused on the protective factors of culture, language, connecting with Elders and country as well as talking to friends and family. The messages, which included “talking it out” and “Elders passing down the knowledge” were based on evidence that “…shows that an effective way of enhancing Aboriginal people’s social and emotional wellbeing is to build on restoring and building on Aboriginal strength.” (Dudgeon, et al., 2014, p. 438). These sources of strength and resilience are linked to strong kinship and family connections as well as Country and cultural identities, (Dudgeon, et al., 2014). This campaign promotes these concepts.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with poor social and emotional wellbeing are more likely to be dependant on alcohol and other drugs and require more mental health services (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). The action associated with this plan recommends supporting initiatives that promote Aboriginal wellbeing through connection to culture and language (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p. 22). Standing Strong has been well received by Fitzroy Valley Communities, with the
messages distributed widely across communities and the rap music video used in multiple locations ranging from the high school to local events.
1. **Evidence of a significant contribution to the field of mental health on a local, state or national level.**

Suicide is the leading cause of death for young Aboriginal people aged 15-24 years in the Kimberley (WA Country Health Planning and Evaluation Unit, 2018). Kimberley Aboriginal residents accessed community mental health services 3.2 times the rate of non-Aboriginal residents (WA Country Health Planning and Evaluation Unit, 2018). Poor social determinants of health have been associated with suicide, alcohol and other drug misuse and can be measured in the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). Most Kimberley residents (57%) reside in a SEIFA area that ranks in the lowest 10% for the country (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). The residents in the Fitzroy Valley have a low SEIFA score.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) was identified by the inquest into the 13 Kimberley suicides in Aboriginal children and young people between 2012 and 2016, as a contributing factor to the suicides (R V C Fogliani State Coroner, 2019). The Fitzroy Valley Aboriginal communities collaborated with health and non-government organizations to raise awareness of FASD and address this poorly understood condition in a culturally appropriate way (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2017). This is an example of how the Fitzroy Valley communities take a cultural approach to an issue affecting their communities.

The significance of culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is identified as central to emotional health and wellbeing (Dudgeon, et al., 2014). This has been recognised by the Commonwealth Government who has placed culture at the centre of the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013 – 2023, which states “strategies and actions such as empowering youth and adolescents to be proud of their identity and culture recognise the centrality of culture in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p. 9).

**Standing Strong** is a health promotion campaign that embodies the WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015 – 2030 goal that seeks to ensure “Aboriginal communities are re-empowered to live long, well and healthy lives” and “health services are delivered in a timely and culturally secure manner, responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people” (Government of Western Australia, Department of Health, 2015). Priority areas include building community capacity and building better health systems.

**Standing Strong** makes a significant contribution to mental health because it has a focus on prevention and deals with complex issues around mental health and substance use. This program is focused on empowering young people by developing life skills through culture. This is a strengths based program using local people, which make it a sustainable project in an area with a low SEIFA score and poor access to sustainable funding opportunities.

The other contribution of this program is that it encourages young people to use mental health services and destigmatizes mental health services. This has resulted in 74 referrals to Kimberley Mental Health Drug Service (KMHDS) Drug and Alcohol Service in 2018 compared to 55 referrals in 2017.
This program was driven by a community controlled organisation NCHS which had long standing connections to the community.

2. Evidence of innovation and/or recognised best practice.

This campaign is innovative and evidenced based. Cultural continuity and healing programs are associated with positive effects on the wellbeing of participants and associated with low rates of youth suicide (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse AIHW & AIFS, 2013). The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey found that children whose care givers are Aboriginal language speakers are at lower risk of emotional or behavioural difficulties (Zubrick, Silburn, Lawrence, Mitrou, Dalby, & Blair, 2005).

Acknowledging the positive effects of language, culture and connection with Elders on emotional wellbeing, they form the central tenants of the Standing Strong campaign. These community strengths are used to address community concerns in relation to suicide, substance misuse and other complex issues around mental health. It began with a workshop with the Indigenous Hip Hop Project (IHHP) to provide young people with opportunity to integrate the cultural messages into artistic mediums to be shared with other young people.

Young people were provided the platform to talk about mental health issues, alcohol and drugs from their perspective through a brainstorming exercise facilitated by IHHP. The words and themes pulled from this exercise were the basis of the lyrics to the song ‘Standing Strong’. One of the final products from workshops with IHHP was a rap music video that was subsequently posted on YouTube (Indigenous Hip Hop Projects, 2017).

The Indigenous Hip Hop Project (IHHP) has been associated with increased self-esteem among young people and uses traditional culture fused with hip hop, rap, beat boxing and break dancing to foster positive mental health and leadership skills in remote communities. A longitudinal qualitative and quantitative evaluation of IHHP found that young people responded well to the mental health promotion messages and had some recall of the messages related to depression and self-respect. Although their recall of the messages decreased after 6 months, young people reported higher levels of self-esteem. After the program, nearly three-quarters of young people (72-73%) were comfortable talking with friends or family if they themselves were experiencing tough times. The ability of young people to identify the signs of depression in someone they knew also improved as a result of engagement with IHHP (beyondblue, 2010).

Elders from each language group were invited to attend the workshops, tell their stories and create messages that they wanted to share with young people and the wider community. Posters were designed around these personalised messages and key strength based messages form the lyrics of the rap song.

Another important theme that was pronounced during the workshop development process was the notion of standing strong; together as one. All language groups were included and celebrated in the week-long event and are also represented on the posters (see Appendix 2). Culturally competent mental health care programs can increase service usage and result in high levels of satisfaction with services and
positive outcomes. Qualitative research undertaken in Perth and the Kimberley region of Western Australia found that Aboriginal people with a mental illness access traditional treatments first, highlighting the strong connection to culture for Aboriginal people (Vicary & Westerman, 2004). If these are not successful they commonly use in-patient services (Sveticic, Milner, & De Leo, 2012). Shame and fear of mainstream mental health system are associated with delay in accessing mental health services (Vicary & Westerman, 2004) and the Elders wanted to support the message that young people should access services for help.

The messages created from the workshops

Multiple resources were created including a rap musical video, postcards with emergency contacts, calendars, photobook and a series of posters celebrating local Aboriginal culture encapsulating the key messages. These messages were delivered through community events such as FASD Awareness Day/Standing Strong launch, movie nights and the online presence of Standing Strong music video. Posters, postcards & calendars have been distributed throughout Fitzroy Crossing Township and surrounding communities, which act as a reminder of the Standing Strong messages, which include “standing as one” and “talk it out, I give you an ear, talk it out I will always be here” (see Appendix 2).

3. Evidence of participation of mental health consumers, in the planning, implementation and evaluation of mental health service delivery. There may be exceptions to the involvement of mental health consumers. Please explain any particular circumstances where the involvement of mental health consumers is different or limited. View the definition of a Mental Health Consumer.

The target audience for Standing Strong are young Aboriginal people living in the Fitzroy Valley aged 10 – 17 years old. The secondary target group were parents and families, living in the Fitzroy Valley. A week long workshop was organised using the evidenced based, culturally appropriate methods developed by IHHP to engage with young people. Through the workshop, young people identified the health promotion messages they wanted to convey relating to mental health and wellbeing as well as the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs.

The Fitzroy Valley High School promoted the IHHP workshop, which resulted in 50 young people taking part in the brainstorming activity on the first day. Once the messages were established, a rap piece was developed. Young people nominated themselves for recording the rap piece, which resulted in six young women and eight young men taking part in the video and music recording.

To develop the Standing Strong campaign, an Elder from each of the five Fitzroy Valley communities were invited to develop messages that could be shared with community about the impact of suicide and alcohol and other drugs in the Fitzroy Valley as part of the workshop. Deborah Carter, from Nindilingarri Cultural Health Service (NCHS) was integral in bringing the Elders together. She approached them prior to the workshop and brought them to the workshop. The five Elders participated in recording in-depth interviews. These role models delivered inspiring stories of personal achievement with life stories that illustrated the message of Standing Strong. Most of the in-depth recorded interviews revealed personal information about their experiences around suicide. Due to the sensitive nature of
these interviews they were not shared with the wider community. Each person who was interviewed was given a copy of their interview to decide how and to whom they would like to share their story with. One participant has expressed wanting to use their interview to open up difficult dialogue with their family. This project respected personal as well as community autonomy of knowledge.

Some Elders showed special interest in having their message disseminated to the wider community. These messages are portrayed with their image on the posters (see Appendix 2).

4. Evidence of partnerships and linkages (collaboration for continuity between organisations).

This project was a partnership between Nindilingarri Cultural Health Service (NCHS) and Western Australian Country Health Service (WACHS) Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service (KMHDS). NCHS provided the cultural expertise and were able to access community members. WACHS KMHDS provided advice and support in relation to mental health issues and substance misuse. There were other collaborators mentioned below, who participated in the IHHP workshops, planning the Standing Strong video launch and other follow on events. They also contributed to the production of materials and bringing people together and through their Aboriginal cultural links supported the cultural security of the project.

Fitzroy Valley District High School provided facilities for the week of the workshops and continued to promote the project by displaying the posters, playing the video and discussing issues around mental wellbeing and culture. They were essential in providing informed consent and obtaining permission slips from the guardians of students who wished to be involved in the workshops.

Marra Worra Worra is an Aboriginal Corporation that aims to provide support services to existing and emerging groups in the Fitzroy Valley. Their other aim is to develop strong and sustainable communities and organisations. They provide a forum through which people in the Fitzroy Valley can discuss and act on issues of common concern, such as the complex issues around mental health and substance use affecting young people in the area. Their youth program officer was an important part of the campaign and drew the boab that became the part of the Standing Strong logo (see Appendix 2). They also collaborated in the organisation of some community events such as the Standing Strong short film festival.

Garnduwa is a sporting organisation that believes “through the power of sports and recreation and our values of community, culture and leadership, Garnduwa empowers Kimberley communities to live active and healthy lives.” Their focus is on Aboriginal youth leading healthy lives. Garnduwa’s role is to provide sporting equipment during the week and provide support with supervising and transporting the young people. They assisted with the organisation of the premiere screening of the rap video in Fitzroy Crossing.

The Wirrpanda Foundation is an education foundation that strives to build resilience in young people. They had some young people on their program that they
nominated to be part of the IHHP workshop week. They also supported with transport and supervision of the young people.

Gilimbaa is an Aboriginal creative design agency, based in Queensland who designed the posters. They facilitated the interviews of the community Elders and took photographs that were later developed into the posters and have worked extensively with IHHP on previous projects.

IHHP is a program designed to build self-esteem among young Aboriginal people by fusing traditional culture with contemporary hip hop, rap, beat boxing and break dancing to foster positive mental health and leadership skills in remote communities. As previously discussed, IHHP has had proven positive effects on building self-esteem in Aboriginal young people through this cultural fusion.

These partnerships and linkages re-enforced placing culture at the centre of Aboriginal health and wellbeing in the Fitzroy Valley and was led by NCHS, an Aboriginal organisation focused on cultural health.

5. Verification of effectiveness (quality improvement activity, data collection and its use including graphs and tables, achievement of performance indicators, e.g. attendance figures, outcome measures, number of document downloads, page views, click through rates).

The medium term outcomes of Standing Strong campaign were as follows:

- 50% of young people aged 10-17 years in the Fitzroy Valley area using a protective strategy during a period of stress as an alternative to alcohol and other drug use and self-harm by June 2019.
- Improved help seeking behaviour to mental health services, increased self-referrals to KMHDS and other mental health support services.
- Continued collaboration to deliver coordinated projects and events to improve mental health and reduce harms related to alcohol and other drug use in the Fitzroy Valley area.

The outcome of 50% of young people aged 10-17 years using a protective strategy during of period of stress as an alternative to alcohol and other drug use and self-harm by June 2019 is still to be evaluated. There have been improved relationships between community stakeholders and the government department of KMHDS following this project. There were many different community events and collaborations. An example of an ongoing collaboration is the Standing Strong Film Festival. This was a collaboration involving KMHDS, Marra Worra Worra Youth program, Garnduwa, the Shire of Derby/Kimberley West and North Regional TAFE. Such collaborations contributed to increasing the sustainability of the program.

There was further collaboration in September 2018 in the Standing Strong FASD Awareness Day Event, which was led by NCHS. In addition to the organisations listed above, the Bunuba Rangers, Wankgki Radio, Deadly Kids Enterprise and the emergency services (Police, Fire and Ambulance) were included in the collaboration. This is evidence that the Standing Strong messages continue to be disseminated through cross promotion events.
The *Standing Strong* music video was placed on YouTube in July 2017 (Indigenous Hip Hop Projects, 2017). By April 2019 it had 96,841 views and 445 likes. This compares with 69,389 views of Deadly Sheperdson College ‘Dhapiirrk Wukirri’ (Posted in May 2016) and 154,607 views for Mornington Island *Hit The Ground* (posted in September 2012). The number of views of *Standing Strong* compares well with other IHHP projects that have been posted on YouTube for a longer period of time. There were more views of *Standing Strong* compared with Deadly Sheperdson College ‘Dhapiirrk Wukirri’, which was posted a year earlier than *Standing Strong*.

Fitzroy Crossing High School played the music video in some of their classes. The school also reported that the students were repeatedly watching the music video on their own accord. It was noted “the song is played and sung by the students extensively, showing reinforcement of its strong messages.”

Following on from the Standing Strong campaign there were increased referrals to KMHDS drug and alcohol services. There was a 34% increase in clients commencing treatment in 2018 compared to 2017 (see Graph1).

*Graph 1*

![Graph showing number of clients in Fitzroy Valley commencing and completing drug and alcohol treatment programs 2014-2018](image)

The number of young people aged 14-24 years commencing treatment increased in 2018 compared to 2017 by 42%. Although the numbers are small in, in 2018 the largest number of young people commenced treatment compared to the previous four years (see Graph 2).
Standing Strong is a unique and valuable project that helps address the complex issues around mental health and substance use in the Fitzroy Valley area of the Kimberley. This project is strengths-based and places culture at the centre of resilience for young people through connection with community Elders. It uses local metaphors to demonstrate resilience, like the boab tree and places an emphasis on “talking it out.”

This project has been developed using evidence-based practice. The foundation of the program is based on local Aboriginal culture, which is the recommendation from Aboriginal academics such as Pat Dudgeon. Placing culture at the centre of Aboriginal health and wellbeing is the national recommendation in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023 and a State recommendation in the Western Australian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015-2030.

Cultural continuity and healing programs are associated with positive effects on wellbeing. The messages in Standing Strong advocate for young people to access drug and alcohol treatment. Whilst there may be other factors affecting this data, there was an increase in young people accessing drug and alcohol treatment programs in 2018 following the Standing Strong launch.

This program is based on local resources including Aboriginal community organisations and Elders. The collaborations between organisations during the development of Standing Strong support continuity of the program and allow for cross promotion with other issues. This combined with online platforms such as YouTube ensure accessibility of resources, such as the music video which can be shared with other communities.

**Conclusion**

Standing Strong is a unique and valuable project that helps address the complex issues around mental health and substance use in the Fitzroy Valley area of the Kimberley. This project is strengths-based and places culture at the centre of resilience for young people through connection with community Elders. It uses local metaphors to demonstrate resilience, like the boab tree and places an emphasis on “talking it out.”

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References


Rural Health West. (2016). *Outreach in the Outback, Kimberley Population and Health Snapshot*. Western Australian Primary Health Alliance. WAPHA.


Appendix of Support Material: up to 8 x A4 pages

APPENDIX 1: DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS
APPENDIX 2: POSTERS
talk it out, i give you an ear, talk it out, i will always be here

In an emergency call 000

Fitzroy Crossing contacts
Police 9163 9165
Mindilgarri Cultural Health Service 9193 0093
Kimberley Mental Health & Drug Service 9193 2867
Fitzroy Crossing Hospital 9165 1777
Alive & Kicking Goals Brooms 9193 5104

National helplines
Kid Helpline 1800 551 800
Family Helpline 1800 644 000
Lifeline 13 11 14
Rural Link 1800 582 002
Crisis Care 1800 199 008
Youth Beyond Blue 1300 224 636

our elders are passing down the knowledge, standing strong like a boab - yeah we're solid
“Take them out bush, give them more experiences, teach them cultural things”

GEORGE BROOKING, BUNURA & GOOMYANDI MAN

“be proud of who you are and stand up for your rights”

‘when you take drugs and alcohol you are hiding yourself, stand up strong, say no, stand up for your rights, your culture and your language’

BERNADETTE WILLIAMS, WALMAJARRI WOMAN

“I express myself with my art every piece is a part of me”

‘Our future is our young generation, our culture is important, let’s take a stand together and stand strong to break the cycle.’

HOZAU CLAIRE, BUNURA ARTIST
APPENDIX 3: STANDING STRONG YOUTUBE VIDEO

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjrwwSw3hg8.
APPENDIX 4: EVENTS

Standing Strong
Short Film Festival
23rd OCTOBER 2017
@ Tourist Bureau
5:30pm
Standing Strong/FASD Awareness Day Event
6th September 2018

The ‘Standing Strong’ campaign poster launch was combined with Nindigully Cultural Health Service’s (NCHS) FASD Awareness Day event. The event celebrated Fitzroy Valley coming together to create a powerful message to disseminate to the broader community.

The campaign is a follow on from the Indigenous Hip Hop Project that took place in Fitzroy Crossing in July 2017. ‘Standing Strong’ was inspired by Fitzroy Crossing community who had expressed real concern about the youth of the valley, particularly in regard to suicide and drug and alcohol abuse. The community came together and worked with Indigenous Hip Hop Project in 2017 to produce a locally created music video ‘Standing Strong Against Suicide and Alcohol and other Drugs’.

A series of posters were then developed to promote individual messages from local Elders as well as key messages from the original song including ‘Standing Strong Against Suicide and Alcohol and other Drugs’.

STANDING STRONG AIMS:
- Increase young peoples awareness of protective factors for mental health and AOD issues
- Increase young peoples knowledge of local mental health services and national helplines
- Strengthen stakeholder and community relationships within Fitzroy Crossing region

THE EVENT:
- Over 300 attendees at FASD Awareness Day and Standing Strong campaign launch
- Five Fitzroy Valley Schools participated in the FASD maze
- Six Standing Strong campaign banners were displayed at local RSA leading up to the event
- 12 Standing Strong campaign posters and 5 banners were displayed at the event
- 2 hour Hip hop dance workshop - 10 young people participated and 5 performed at evening concert

EVENING CONCERT:
- Over 150 attendees at the evening concert
- Evening concert was hosted by 2 local MGs
- Performance by Fitzroy Valley District High School band
- 7 local Fitzroy Crossing bands head lined the event: Now or Never – Hillside Boys

PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS
- Nindigully Cultural Health Service
- Kimberley Mental Health & Drug Service
- Mawunupumurra Women’s Resource Centre
- Mura Mura Miera
- Silk Park Kimberley West
- Wangi Radio
- Department of Communities
- Balulu Rangers
- Mangkaja Arts
- Fitzroy Valley District High School
- Kimzale College
- Yarramalay Studio College
- FC Dennis
- Deadly Kids Enterprise
- Emergency Services – Police, Fire, Ambulance

Target group:
- “Good family night out”

Feedback:
- “Pretty good numbers and participation/presentations from a wide variety of local people”

Feedback:
- “It was a great event that show case services and agencies working together to support the local Community”