Yuwaya Ngarra-li Research Brief
Core Principles of our Partnership

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Yuwaya Ngarra-li is the name of the partnership between the Dharriwaa Elders Group ('DEG') and the University of New South Wales ('UNSW') to work together to improve the wellbeing, social, built and physical environment and life pathways of Aboriginal people in Walgett collaborating on evidence-based programs, research projects and capacity building. We aim to evaluate and document this model of CommUNIty-Led Development as a way of working with other Aboriginal communities.

The purpose of this Research Brief is to provide more background and detail from the perspective of the DEG on the five core principles that underpin *Yuwaya Ngarra-li:* community-led, culturally connected, strengths-based, holistic, and human rights-based approach, and how these principles inform and underpin the governance and evaluation of *Yuwaya Ngarra-li.*

Background

Walgett is a remote town in north-west NSW. It has a large mostly young Aboriginal population and is a geographically diverse place with three Aboriginal language groups. Yuwaya Ngarra-li through the DEG has a close knowledge of the Walgett Aboriginal community; it is in touch with the people in Walgett and the nearby Gingie and Namoi villages who can identify what works and what doesn't work for them.

The name of our partnership, *Yuwaya Ngarra-li,* is taken from the *Yuwaalaraay and Yuwaalayaay* languages. It is the verb phrase for **dream** (*yuwa-ya*) from sleep-in, and **see** (*ngarra-li*). The DEG chose this phrase to reflect the fact that it is our vision, it is what we see as the core collective sentiment for community-led development in our community.

At a monthly meeting of the DEG Board of Directors it was agreed that the title: 'DEG-UNSW "*Yuwaya Ngarra-li*" (Vision) Partnership' be moved and accepted. The motion was accepted and unanimously carried. (Minutes from Monthly Meeting held 21 April 2018).

From the perspective of the DEG, *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* will meet the aims of the partnership by combining an integrated/internal whole of community effort coupled with the appropriate like-minded efforts of others.

Our Core Principles

PRINCIPLE 1: COMMUNITY-LED

This is the lead principle for *Yuwaya Ngarra-li.* This principle has been used time and again to assist and support successful Aboriginal community-led and community-managed programs. Since the 1970s, Aboriginal communities have played leading roles in building community-led development in areas such as local government, health, housing, community and welfare services (Sanders, 2002; Tsey, McCalman, Bainbridge, & Brown. 2012). An understanding of community-led factors facilitates successful Aboriginal community-led programs, and is important for informing programs and organisations (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [AIATSIS], 2007). This is the lead principle for Yuwaya Ngarra-li as it goes to the very core of the governance and good management of its work.

In practice, this means that community-led programs through Yuwaya Ngarra-li are programs where the local Aboriginal community has decision-making control and responsibility for their implementation. The community-led principle is the raison d'être of Yuwaya Ngarra-li; the reason for its being. It is the claim for the existence of Yuwaya Ngarra-li; its sole or ultimate purpose. (literally: "reason to be").

The literature shows that effective community-led development is underpinned by:

- strong family and cultural ties within the Aboriginal community (Hunt, 2010; Kenny. 2011);
- how an Aboriginal community identifies in relation to land and heritage, and how this is a central aspect of their culture (Kenny. 2011);
- empowerment of the community in a culturally appropriate way based on local knowledge and perspective (Higgins. 2010);
- genuine and trusting relationships between local people and support agencies (Burchill *et al*. 2006; Kenny, 2011; Walsh & Mitchell. 2002);
- control being in the hands of local Aboriginal people in the planning, design and implementation of a project or program (Hunt, 2010; Smith, 2004; Walsh & Mitchell. 2002);
- employing local Aboriginal people; employment and ongoing support for local Aboriginal people is considered a significant factor in the success of Aboriginal community-led programs (Campbell et al. 2007; Smith. 2004), and local Aboriginal people familiar with the community's issues are a critical ingredient to communicating a program in their appropriate language and in a way that matches their local social and cultural values. (Smith. 2004);
- sustainable implementation and adequate funding (Campbell et al., 2004; Higgins. 2010);
- adoption of a community solutions-focus and strengths-based approach to generating change (Hunt, 2012; Tsey *et al*. 2004);
- a flexible approach to implementing and achieving short-term outcomes (Burchill *et al.* 2006; Hunt, 2010; Smith. 2004);
- access to appropriate information/data (Walsh & Mitchell. 2002);
- access to good technical support in financial and corporation management (Walsh & Mitchell. 2002);
- the use of participatory planning approaches in Aboriginal communities (Walsh & Mitchell. 2002).

Yuwaya Ngarra-li's approach builds on this literature in the following ways:

- facilitating Aboriginal community ownership and control over decision-making;
- harnessing existing community capacity and leaders, including employing local Aboriginal people who are embedded in their community's values and understand their issues;
- communicating in a culturally appropriate way, meaning finding a way to communicate effectively that respects and accepts cultural differences. Communication is a two-way process, so all people involved in the *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* partnership collaborate to achieve culturally appropriate communication;
- Ensuring good corporate governance;
- Ensuring trusting relationships with Walgett's Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations ('ACCO's) and partners are established; and
- Flexibility in implementation timelines, acknowledging that things take time and that other community events take priority; for example, Sorry Days and Sorry Business, so allowances must be made and scheduled activities are deferred. Traditionally after the death of a tribal/community member, the community would spend time grieving and in remote communities this is still practiced. In the local community Aboriginal people still place significance on attending funerals and to not attend or not observe a death is to lose the respect of the bereaved family. This is an extremely significant protocol where community protects their Aboriginal cultural traditions.

Campbell et al. stated that successful community-led programs were those in which the community defined its own needs and then designed and controlled the response. (Campbell, Pyett, & McCarthy, 2007; Hoffmann et al. 2012; Smith, Grundy, & Nelson, 2010; Tsey & Every. 2000). Community ownership is considered important in community-led development because it ensures authority and autonomy over all aspects of a program, builds the commitment and enthusiasm of all people involved in the program including collaborators, (Hoffmann et al. 2012) and contributes to building community capacity so that communities can address their own needs. (Couzos, Lea, Murray, & Culbong, 2005; Smith et al. 2010).

In this vein, *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* is seen as facilitator rather than expert as it values the community-led development process and because ultimately, community-led development efforts for Yuwaya Ngarra-li will be sustainable and the Walgett Aboriginal community will learn how to tackle its own problems and use the contributions of others to help them do so. The best forms of insight and capability come from doing, while being appropriately supported.

Having strong Aboriginal leaders associated with projects satisfies several other success factors such as trust and flexibility (Burchill et al. 2006). *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* benefits from DEG's collaborative working relationships with local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in Walgett to achieve positive outcomes for the community and implement programs using existing community strengths. Thus, there is already a built capacity for the progression of community-led development with a critical mass of people. Walgett ACCOs are involved in and manage a broad range of programs, services and businesses (including, for example, those developed through partnerships and funding arrangements). Local Aboriginal leadership in the planning, design and implementation of programs is a critical factor for *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* success in Walgett; something that is upheld as a primary operating principle.

PRINCIPLE 2: CULTURALLY CONNECTED

This principle is central to Aboriginal people. *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* recognises this because it is fundamental to Aboriginal wellbeing and is a source of strength and resilience for Aboriginal people.

Strength of culture: All people have a unique set of strengths and for Aboriginal people culture underpins this – culture can act as a source of resilience and a protective factor. *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* uses a culture-based approach to programs and services so the challenge is to ensure that it is perceived as a guiding principle and that this translates into practice with Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal culture is diverse, constantly changing and is a source of strength and healing. As Andrew Jackamos said: *'Culture is not a perk – it is a lifeline. Culture and identity must be at the heart of work with Aboriginal people.'* (Aboriginal community leader & Elder, Victoria). For Aboriginal people living in a remote community like Walgett it is vital for them to connect with their culture to help them hold strong to their Aboriginal identity. Culture is placed at the centre of work on and across all *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* programs. Culturally competent practice prioritises and operationalises the importance of culture to Aboriginal people. Culture is important as it is what keeps Aboriginal people strong and happy; and is therefore acknowledged by Yuwaya Ngarra-li as a key strength and source of resilience.

In practice, *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* must abide by this principle to maintain local Aboriginal culture as it is rooted in the community, Aboriginal heritage and country, and provides a strength in ways that large national or state wide organisations and governments cannot. Cultural considerations are embedded into *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* practice and its advocacy for making systems of Aboriginal wellbeing as culturally responsive as they can be.

With this in mind, *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* works towards tackling a range of community concerns through being culturally-connected such as health, wellbeing, education, housing, unemployment, youth, justice, racism and

oppression. It provides an optimistic move in bridging the cultural gap within the community and acknowledges and observes a revered spiritual understanding of Elders' sentiments:

> Elders say:
>
> *'We want the evidence of our cultural history to continue so future generations can learn how our people lived in the past. We treasure the evidence of the past, as our cultural heritage was used and respected by our ancestors. Our culture was highly valued and continues to be highly valued by us who remember ancestors that lived that way. Our cultural history remains with us and it gives us pride in the resourcefulness of our ancestors, and it helps us learn again about past ways of thinking and doing things that are in danger of being lost. The remains of our cultural past tell our future generations how people lived, and what they did. When we are in cultural places and practice culture we have a sense of belonging to our home (gunimaa) where we are associated with. We feel good when we are there and would feel bad if our culture was ignored, impacted or destroyed. This is the feeling we get from our spirituality.'* (Dharriwaa Elders Group, 2009).

Indeed, Aboriginal Elders share a deep cultural spirituality and this is acknowledged by *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* because it touches every aspect of Aboriginal lives and teachings. Elders do their best to live by example – by actively following deep-seated core principles, values and teachings. ("Elders knowing and showing"). They are identified by the common principles they uphold and instil in the community. The status of Elders in community-led initiatives and the respect Aboriginal people have for them means Elders gain recognition within their community as key cultural decision makers, they teach important traditional skills and customs, pass on knowledge and share personal stories. '*My culture and my family are the most important aspect of my life – everything I do is connected to my cultural identity*.' (Aboriginal Community member).

It is important in Aboriginal culture to respect, remember and celebrate history, traditions and achievements. A major part of this is respect for Elders, family and acknowledging past generations.

A young Aboriginal person may use the terms Aunty, Uncle, Brother and Sister as a sign of respect, rather than an indication of family relationship. As one young person comments: *'…culture is who you are, so if you don't know, you don't know who you are.'* (Young community member).

Cultural affiliation and engagement by Aboriginal young people are positively associated with their resilience and wellbeing. Studies indicate that cultural affiliation and engagement, including being able to converse in their native language, were positively associated with Aboriginal peoples' social and emotional wellbeing. (Wexler. 2009).

For Aboriginal people to receive the services they need with the best outcomes, *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* will work to ensure that its programs and services are physically and culturally accessible and inclusive of the needs and wishes of local Aboriginal people, incorporate their ways of working and thinking, and enable them to achieve positive equitable outcomes through the observance of culture guided by the following factors:

- The strength and resilience that many Aboriginal people experience through their culture is acknowledged and incorporated into the partnership practice to support good development outcomes.
- Systems, processes and resources are systematically reviewed to ensure that culturally responsive systems are developed.
- Aboriginal people will have equitable access to services that address cultural barriers.
- Services will be culturally safe and responsive to the needs and expectations of Aboriginal people.

Good practice principles highlight that programs are unlikely to be effective when they are not culturally competent and do not have a high level of Aboriginal ownership and community support; they operate in

isolation from, or do not address the legacy of past trauma, past and current racism and issues such as poverty and homelessness.

All Aboriginal people are entitled to respect for their culture. Exposure to, and engagement with Aboriginal culture will enrich *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* programs and strengthen its purpose. Aboriginal people are entitled to protect and manage the use of their cultural heritage and expression and cultural issues and values need to be core business at every level of *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* systems and processes.

PRINCIPLE 3: STRENGTHS-BASED

Harnessing existing Aboriginal community capacity and creating a critical mass of people supports *Yuwaya Ngarra-li.* The use of the strengths-based principle underpins the work of *Yuwaya Ngarra-li which* employs a strengths-based approach or framework for its partnership practice in Walgett. *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* draws on the capacity of Aboriginal people to identify and build strengths-based activities and relationships in the Walgett community using Aboriginal leadership, community capacity and like-mindedness of external others.

Drawing on literature in social work, organisational management and the community development field, an alignment is shown between the partnership practice and the strengths-based philosophy and practice as described in the literature, particularly in terms of adherence to beliefs about innate community capacity, the need to draw on community strengths and resources to create change, and the delicate balance between a strengths focus and problems that might surface. A strengths-based approach is an emerging approach in development practice to operationalise participatory development principles (Chambers. 1983). The literature describes how strengths-based practice results in a change process as involving communities or beneficiaries who take responsibility (Saleebey 1992, 8; Weick 1992, 23–24; Kretzmann and McKnight 1993, 6) and communities who take the initiative to draw on internal (and sometimes external) resources to act (Whitney and Torsten-Bloom 2003, 16; Mathie and Cunningham 2008, 121).

Strengths-based principles have been adopted in the community development field as one way of operationalising the participatory development principles originally proposed by Chambers (1983). Pioneers in this work include Mathie and Cunningham (2003, 2008) and a range of organisations which adopt approaches focused on 'assets' or strengths (Ford Foundation 2002; Burkett 2011; O'Leary, Burkett, and Braithwaite 2011; Willetts *et al.* 2013). Mathie and Cunningham proposed that the recognition of strengths is more likely to inspire positive action rather than a focus on needs and problems, and describe the empowering potential of the process as: *'The logical consequence of focusing on assets, capacities, and capabilities …to encourage a proactive role for people, replacing their passive, dependent role in the welfare service delivery model of community development practice.'* (Mathie and Cunningham 2008, 122).

There are two key characteristics of strengths based practice. First, it is described as a facilitated process which identifies a range of strengths and then helps to build action 'from the inside out'. Then, it involves building relationships and trust and working in partnership through dialogue (Saleebey 1992, 9–11; Weick 1992, 24; Kretzmann and McKnight 1993, 9) and where appropriate, to act as brokers to assist people to access external resources or engage with institutions such as government, universities or other organisations (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993, 15; Sullivan and Rapp 2009, 227).

DEG Elders say it is: *'about realising what we can do ourselves to fulfil the vision. We have a lot of potential in terms of social, politics, human, culture, community and environment, these are our strengths.'* Elders also speak of the need for shared responsibility between themselves and community members (or other partners) to make things happen. For example they say: *'Our work is about giving strength to others within our own community.'* They viewed the strengths-based principle as a way for both identifying problems or needs and

> revealing strengths that could offer solutions: *'…we are strong because we give our community a chance to identify their own problems and then identify their own ways that they have in terms of manpower, skills, and what they have in the community to fix it. For us this means our community being in the driving seat; we depend on this.'* (==Needs reference==)

For *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* it also means the community is in the driving seat. Its sustainability depends on this: '*We work with the community where change requires the community to push a little and we push back a little – like a bow saw. Sawing together shows our partnership. 'We give them the tool to see their strengths and identify their resources and then work together.*' (DEG Speaker Clem Dodd, 2018) This captures the idea that people within the local community, have resources and good practice which can be recognised, learnt from and replicated using internal resources to respond to local situations.

Yuwaya Ngarra-li values building relationships and trust. An example of this relationship building and trust comes from one *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* Aboriginal worker talking about how they sought to build participation through *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* for Walgett youth: '*I approached youth and just talked together with them.*' The worker went on to explain that making the effort to talk with and listen to youth validated their participation and this resulted in open dialogue and trust.

The DEG recognised the strength of youth so they invited UNSW to visit their community to ensure that all Walgett Aboriginal community members knew who they were and who they could approach. A *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* staff member related how they brokered their community to access external resources: '*We started talking and working with youth to try to understand and reduce youth justice issues. At the DEG centre we talked with them about culture, change and the law. We involved youth all the way. We also worked with and talked to the wider community, police, magistrate, and the local court to work with Yuwaya Ngarra-li as well as gaining support for youth from schools, health, government and Aboriginal community members.*' *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* worked with people to map an alternative vision for youth by setting up and delivering a community hub workshop around youth justice issues and to then develop an Action Plan for Children and Young People to give them a voice and remind local police of the responsibilities under the law. '*Young people were assertive in the community. Youth are realising their potential and are taking pride in their achievements because someone is listening and seeing.*' (*Yuwaya Ngarra-li* Youth Justice Forum, 14 March 2018).

'*Hopefully, now they [young people] will realise that they can do things on their own without depending or waiting for outside help. With the resources we have they can do things they will benefit from and when they realise this power, together there will be no stopping them.*' (*Yuwaya Ngarra-li* staff member). '*Yuwaya Ngarra-li is about encouraging our people in community to take the lead through their strengths and find their own way to fix to local problems. This is not new – it is part of our culture and the old way of how people did things.*' (DEG Elders).

The strengths-based principle emphasises people's self-determination and strengths. It is a philosophy and a way of viewing people as resourceful and resilient in the face of adversity. It is people-led, with a focus on future outcomes and strengths that people bring to a problem or crisis. (McCashen, Wayne. (2005).

A strengths-based-approach is a specific method of working with and resolving problems experienced by Aboriginal people. It does not attempt to ignore the problems and difficulties, rather, it attempts to identify the positive basis of their resources (or what may need to be added) and strengths that will lay the basis to address the challenges resulting from the problems. As a practice it draws one away from an emphasis on procedures, techniques and knowledge as the keys to change. It reminds us that every person, family and group in the Aboriginal community holds the key to their own transformation and meaningful change process – it's about people taking control of their own lives in meaningful and sustainable ways. The challenge is and always has been whether we are willing to fully embrace this way of approaching or working with people. If we do, then change starts with us through *Yuwaya Ngarra-li*.

PRINCIPLE 4: HOLISTIC

This principle is characterised by the belief that the parts of something are intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole and that challenges should be holistic in order to maximise positive outcomes. Holistic thinking is the inquiry of a complex whole. Holistic thinking takes into account purpose, values, function in its environment, process, and structure. It is the basis for the development of systems thinking and strategy formation. It is about focusing on alleviating problems within a system by emphasising on the system as a whole and understanding that member parts ultimately aggregate to create that whole. Understanding this is the key for *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* in order to make powerful, effective decisions and to eliminate the risk of poor decisions.

The literature identifies the range of meanings attached to a holistic approach in this context. One review found that policy makers cannot rely on this approach to provide coherent arguments for meaningful engagement with the concept because authors in general are uncritical and un-reflexive in the use and interpretation of the concept; tend to alter the concept's definition and constituent elements without justification; ignore the wide range of mainstream literature about holism for Aboriginal wellbeing (Weiss. 1995); failing to acknowledge and examine the range of Aboriginal holistic concepts and found that a most profound contradiction exists in the acceptance of the English language concept 'holistic' as immutably Aboriginal. It seems not so much incapacity to engage, but incapacity to coherently articulate Aboriginal concepts, which prevents wholeness approaches in accordance with Aboriginal values. Could it be that an English language word has come to be accepted as definitive of a collective Aboriginal body and experience? (*Engaging with holism in Australian Aboriginal Health policy - A review*, 2005).

This essentially is underwritten by a perception that only Aboriginal people embody holism as Dr Ngaire Brown states: *'Most important, and central to understanding Aboriginal peoples, their current situation and their roles in modern society, is to have an insight into our history and an understanding of our holistic view of health, life and community.'*(Brown 1999, 221). For example, for Aboriginal people, health represents a holistic concept of wellbeing, not simply an absence of illness: *'Aboriginal health means not just the physical well-being of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural well-being of the whole community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being thereby bringing about the total well-being of their community. It is a whole of life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life.* (National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation. 2012).

Although there are certain difficulties of translation, this definition is prominent in current Australian health policy and discourse about health. Its definition can be seen as broadly holistic in comparison to other holistic definitions such as that of the World Health Organization. The nature of this holism and its grounding within the context of Aboriginal people in particular has implications as to what extent a definition of holistic is inspirational or operational. *Theoretical and Practical Issues in the Definition of Health: Insights from Aboriginal Australia* (2009).

*Yuwaya Ngarra-li'*s aim is to increase a holistic awareness to allow community leaders to create and implement successful management practice and policies. This is exemplified in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services where Aboriginal services insist on a holistic understanding. The Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service incorporates a holistic approach, taking account of the holistic context of service delivery to deliver primary health care (WAMS Service Profile. 2017).

Aboriginal holism should be an underlying core principle and philosophy of policy, program development, service delivery, strategies and practice. (Mark Lock, 2007; Couzos, S., Murray, R.B. 2003; Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service. 2017). In practice, the principle encourages a holistic approach that incorporates body, mind, spirit, land, environment, custom and socio-economic status. It is an Aboriginal cultural construct that includes an

essential, integrated model made accessible to communities (as close as possible to where they live) through their full participation in the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination. The provision of this calibre of approach requires an intimate knowledge of the community and its problems, with the whole of community itself providing the most effective and appropriate way to address its main problems.

The interconnection of social, emotional, physical and cultural elements means that these factors contribute to individual experiences of wellbeing for Aboriginal people. *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* is responsive to these factors through its understanding of a social model of wellbeing, recognising the broader social determinants that impact upon outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Yuwaya Ngarra-li affirms and believes that the ideal concept of Aboriginal holism is centrally placed in Aboriginal people's policies and strategies and that there is effective capacity to engage effectively with the concept. *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* embraces the holistic model that Aboriginal people have repeatedly identified as consistent with their cultural values and to respond holistically to community or a person's issues it needs to:

- appreciate the complexity of the person's situation/issues and the environment in which that situation/issue occurs,
- understand how the issue/situation affects the person in all aspects of their functioning – physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental and physical wellbeing needs to be seen within the broader context of their world,
- establish an effective and trusting relationship to explore options so a person can resolve their issues, and
- liaise with other significant people or organisations in the person's life to facilitate goals and action plans.

Most agencies/organisations cannot possibly meet every need in helping people to achieve goals/outcomes, however, by adopting a holistic approach *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* will be more in tune with the areas of assistance that people need and can achieve a comprehensive and integrated service delivery using a referral network of appropriate local and accessible professionals, services and community groups. The holistic concept is now the guiding principle in all forms of community service work and when applied to human beings, it brings an awareness that we cannot really know a person without learning about all aspects of their life and understanding the impact of the interrelationships between those aspects. (Berger, RL, McBreen, JT, & Rifkin, MJ. 1996).

PRINCIPLE 5: HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

'...control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions, and to promote their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs.' (The General Assembly - UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People).

This means that like everyone, Aboriginal people have all of the rights set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Aboriginal people have specific rights because of their unique position as first peoples of their nations. *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* acknowledges the world-views, contexts, and voices of Aboriginal people and their communities as a primary consideration and as a standard of achievement to be pursued in the spirit of partnership and mutual respect. *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* joins the international community in supporting and affirming the aspirations of all Aboriginal people.

The partnership recognises the distinctive rights that Aboriginal people hold as the original peoples of this land, including:

- The right to a distinct status and culture, which helps maintain and strengthen the identity and spiritual and cultural practices of Aboriginal community;

- The right to self-determination, where Aboriginal people/communities take control of their future and decide how they will address the issues facing them;

- The right to land, which provides the spiritual and cultural basis of the Aboriginal community.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People ('the Declaration') creates a framework for *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* to ensure issues are addressed by working directly with Aboriginal people and their community based on a human rights framework by observing the universally accepted declaration of human rights. *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* affirms the Declaration as a standard of achievement to be pursued in the spirit of partnership and mutual respect. It reaffirms the Rights under Articles 18 and 23.

In practice, this core principle assists *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* adopt a human rights-based approach because it is about providing equal opportunities for Aboriginal people by ensuring equity, availability, accessibility, accountability, acceptability and quality programs. *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* believes a human rights approach is not necessarily about more programs, but about better programs through processes that enable Aboriginal people to participate in all levels of decision making about their lives. *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* reflects the UN General Assembly on the rights of Aboriginal people developed in line with the 46 Articles in the Declaration. It takes account of Aboriginal community and culture, Aboriginal strengths and holistic-centred endeavours according to the Declaration.

This principle builds a human rights approach around the rights described by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and also the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) that are significant for Aboriginal Social Justice Reports, put out each year by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner since 1993. The reports monitor the exercise and enjoyment of human rights by Australia's Aboriginal people, and use human rights as a basis upon which to advocate for change across all systems especially in the political, economic and legal arena. The reports formed the basis for the Closing the Gap campaign, illustrating the growing literature and recognition of the human rights framework, particularly in the context of health and social circumstances of Aboriginal people worldwide.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner keeps Aboriginal issues before the federal government to promote understanding and respect for the rights of Aboriginal Australians and works to:

- advocate for the rights of Aboriginal people

- promote an Aboriginal perspective on different issues

- build support and understanding for an Aboriginal perspective, and

- empower Aboriginal people.

Yuwaya Ngarra-li looks at the key rights issues facing Aboriginal people and makes recommendations about programs and laws that will help Aboriginal people more fully enjoy their rights and keep *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* informed on issues ranging from self-determination to criminal justice through the annual reports on the Reconciliation process which are also included in social justice reports.

The DEG/UNSW partnership advocates for the recognition of Aboriginal people's rights and seeks to promote respect and an understanding of them among the broader Australian community because social justice is about making sure that Aboriginal people have choices about how they live and the means to make those choices. *Social justice is grounded in the practical, day-to-day realities of life. It's about waking up in a house with running water and proper sanitation; offering one's children an education that helps them develop their potential and respect their culture.'* (Mick Dodson, Social Justice Report, 1993).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is Article 25.1 which states that: *'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.'* (United Nations General Assembly. 1948).

This human rights based principle is the impetus for *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* to work in partnership together in trust and good faith because the value of human rights is not in their existence, it is in their implementation. *'The standards have been set, it's up to us to meet them… we must be able to come up with policies to benefit our people and improve their lives that aren't racially discriminatory.'* (*Yuwaya Ngarra-li* staff member, 2018). *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* acknowledges that it is often due to the lingering effects of colonisation and oppression that Aboriginal people are vulnerable to discrimination and mistreatment and excluded from effectively participating in processes that affect their rights and means that today, they are more likely to experience poverty, imprisonment, poor health and restrictions on self-determination. (Article 2). The Declaration creates a paradigm for *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* to make sure that issues are addressed by working directly in partnership with the DEG and the Aboriginal community especially the gaps in health, their lives and imprisonment rates for Aboriginal people today.

Yuwaya Ngarra-li sees that it is not possible to talk meaningfully about issues without reference to human rights - to respect the basic principles of humanity and that self-determination is an on-going process of choice to ensure that community is able to meet its social, cultural and economic needs. The *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* partnership approach is based on respect for human beings and cooperation with the potential to deliver many practical benefits in the long run.

GOVERNANCE AND THE YUWAYA NGARRA-LI CORE PRINCIPLES

The *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* core principles inform the partnership's governance by being integrated into all research projects and activities.

The DEG is a unique, leading Aboriginal community controlled association of Aboriginal Elders in Walgett, remote NSW, which supports their governance and leadership in the community, promotes local Aboriginal knowledge and cultural heritage.

> *'Governance is not just a matter of service delivery, organizational compliance, or management. It is about the self-determining ability and cultural authority of clans, nations and communities to govern: to decide what you want for your future, to implement your own initiatives, and take responsibility for your decisions and actions.'* (Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory Strong Aboriginal Governance Report May 2013).

In practice, this principle seeks the success of local Aboriginal organisations and programs that are underpinned by good governance and takes steps to avoid poor governance. Dodson and Smith highlighted that *'building good governance is identified as the key ingredient - the foundation stone - for building sustainable development in community.'* (2003, p. v). Good governance is about Aboriginal organisations and communities *'having the structures, processes and institutional capacity in place to be able to exercise … jurisdiction through sound decision-making, representation and accountability*.' (Dodson & Smith, 2003, p. 2).

Good governance is underpinned by:

- stable organisational structure;
- capable and effective Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations;
- clear rules for roles, responsibilities and decision-making;

- separation of powers;
- dispute/complaint resolution processes;
- sound financial, good administrative and IT management systems;
- effective and realistic development strategies; and
- a strong cultural fit with the local community (An important aspect of good governance in Aboriginal communities is achieving a legitimate cultural fit) (AIATSIS, 2007; Dodson & Smith, 2003; ORIC, 2010; Reconciliation Australia, 2008). A cultural fit in the context of governance involves a balance between mainstream organisational governance standards and Aboriginal community traditions (ORIC, 2010).

Yuwaya Ngarra-li demonstrates the unsurprising point that successful community-driven approaches to development requires a well-developed governance and leadership capacity within the local Aboriginal community because strong governance and leadership is a feature of Aboriginal-initiated programs. One of the principles of effective development is that Aboriginal leaders must have 'genuine decision-making power' whereby they can take ownership of both their governance successes and failures, which serves to heighten both their personal investment and their level of experiential learning. (Cornell and Kalt, 2002; Tsey, K., McCalman, J., Bainbridge, R., & Brown, C. 2012). It seems clear that governance involves the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say. Fundamentally, it is about power, relationships and accountability: who has influence, who decides, and how decision makers are held accountable (Louise Fréchette. 1999).

*Yuwaya Ngarra-li'*s most enduring and sustained governance efforts will be those initiated by the local Aboriginal community or with non-government organisations in partnership with the Aboriginal community, as they are less affected by the vagaries of government policy shifts and are more likely to afford adequate time for long-term capacity-building to occur. In Walgett, *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* collaborates and works with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations that have successfully managed programs and services for their community. They have been successful because they have generally been underpinned by good corporate governance, had a commitment to prioritising cultural values, employed Aboriginal people, had strong leadership and harnessed existing local capacity to build strong, long-term relationships. Governance comprises the activities of local Aboriginal organisations where they are usually accountable to a board of directors and governance issues tend to be concerned with the role of the board of directors, its relationship to top management (the CEO or executive director), and accountability to shareholders or stakeholders in the local Aboriginal community.

Yuwaya Ngarra-li partners with the DEG in part because of its successful governance arrangements. It has a membership board that has clear rules for how it works with its members, community and affiliates. This means *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* has the potential benefits of DEG's good governance including enhanced organisational stability in the local Aboriginal community, acceptance by the community, fair representation of all Aboriginal constituents, the quality of people employed, more effective conflict resolution, better planning for the future and DEG's creation of a Walgett base which has an environment conducive to sustained Aboriginal wellbeing and socio-economic development.

The DEG is a leading ACCO. Its governance is predicated on good management and IT, community respect, community input, trust, aged-care service provision and consistent service to the Walgett Aboriginal community. There is a high level of trust and confidence in DEG amongst the Walgett community, and in the work of *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* by association. DEG was grown from a project of the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service (WAMS), and continues to work in partnership with WAMS.

The core principles of *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* overwhelmingly provide a framework for the governance structure for the DEG/UNSW partnership because they underpin local Aboriginal traditions of governance. To show how Aboriginal traditions of governance structures and processes reflect the core principles, *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* will:

- clarify that this is exactly the kind of governance it wants to have and the role it wants cultural values has in it. Culture is what makes Aboriginal governance strong: '*We come together to keep us strong and then we can look after the organisation*.' (DEG Elder).

- consult with the leaders and members of the Aboriginal community so that it understands concerns and priorities. (Reflecting on the community-led principle by placing people first, seeking direction from people, the partnership is shaped by and belongs to the people, and places ownership of wellbeing into the hands of individuals, families and community.).

- be open, fair and honest in dealings and decisions with leaders and their members.

- understand the governance history of the community and how that has shaped its current relationships, governance arrangements and problems. (Offering programs and services in an integrated, holistic way. Using Aboriginal strengths and holistic-centred endeavours.).

- discuss with community members and leaders which values, rules, relationships and processes might specifically strengthen the way Yuwaya Ngarra-li governs. (Using a strengths-based approach for community development.).

- be clear about which values, rules, relationships and processes will be part of DEG/UNSW partnership governance, and which ones are not appropriate or might undermine it. (Respecting Aboriginal rights that flow from Aboriginal traditions of governance where the role of women, Elders, family and clan, rule of law, consensus and land play a central role in self- governance).

- be clear about how Aboriginal community rules and values will be implemented. (For example, Yuwaya Ngarra-li may want to focus on the way leaders are chosen, how decisions are made, what behaviour is expected of the DEG board and staff members, the conditions of work and how DEG/UNSW feeds information back to members).

- tell community members and leaders where Yuwaya Ngarra-li is heading, what the strategic plan is for getting there, and what resources will be used along the way; report back to members on progress and problems or complaints.

- manage resources wisely and effectively; and

- implement and deliver equitable services and outcomes promised to leaders and the wider community and enable Aboriginal people to participate in all levels of decision making about their lives (inherent in their human rights).

EVALUATION AND THE YUWAYA NGARRA-LI CORE PRINCIPLES

The *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* core principles inform the partnership's evaluation to ensure that our approach and impact can be measured and documented.

Yuwaya Ngarra-li has developed a coherent framework to guide evaluation of its core principles which are designed to address the specific needs of the Aboriginal community of Walgett (*Yuwaya Ngarra-li* Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Exchange Framework, 2018). The framework is oriented towards assessing the benefits of evaluation for *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* as to whether initiatives/strategies have worked or not and to identify some elements of evaluation planning and practice to highlight requirements in undertaking evaluations. This discussion is about the importance and impact that can be measured and documented of the work of *Yuwaya Ngarra-li.*

The community-led principle takes priority in the evaluation of *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* because it is the Walgett Aboriginal community that will assess its success. There will be community data gathering for the evaluation of the *Yuwaya Ngarrra-li* partnership. Detailed baseline data is needed to document the current context and experiences of Aboriginal people in Walgett and to measure the impact of *Yuwaya Ngarrra-li* over time. The Director of Evaluation (UNSW) will compile relevant quantitative data to appropriately measure *Yuwaya Ngarrra-li's* aims and impact to ensure this partnership is genuinely community-led (*Yuwaya Ngarra-li* Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Exchange Framework, 2018).

The evaluation of *Yuwaya Ngarrra-li* will be informed and guided by critical social theory, which provides 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 (*Yuwaya Ngarra-li* Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Exchange Framework, 2018).

The *Yuwaya Ngarrra-li* partnership provides the opportunity for the DEG and UNSW to work collaboratively to implement and evaluate partnership activities, and to ensure that initiatives and services meet local priorities and are delivered where they are needed. It is hoped that this evaluation will provide significant insights into how the implementation of this new approach can address systemic disadvantage and discrimination faced by Aboriginal people in Walgett, and better inform future policy and practice ((*Yuwaya Ngarra-li* Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Exchange Framework, 2018).

The importance and impact of the five core principles need to be measured and documented using an evaluation framework to seek community feedback on questions for informing the evaluation. Clear reporting against principles for working with Aboriginal people helps develop the evidence base around the application of these principles remembering that they apply across programs.

The evaluation of the aims of *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* will focus on measuring and communicating progress on:

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

Like the overall partnership, the evaluation of *Yuwaya Ngarrra-li* is guided by the core principles of the partnership: community-led, culturally connected, strengths-focused, holistic, and taking a rights-based approach. There will be a developmental evaluation approach to gathering data and understanding impact and change from the outset and throughout the partnership. Developmental evaluation is a way of approaching the challenge of evaluating social innovation through guiding principles. (Patton, 2015 in *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Exchange Framework, 2018). Eight guiding principles of developmental evaluation have been described as:

1. Developmental purpose – inform and support what is being developed.
2. Evaluation rigor – rigorously gather, interpret, and report data.
3. Utilisation focus – focus on intended use by intended users from beginning to end.
4. Innovation niche – elucidate how the change processes and results being evaluated involve innovation and adaptation.
5. Complexity perspective – understand and interpret development through the lens of complexity, and conduct the evaluation accordingly.
6. Systems thinking – think systemically throughout, with attention to key aspects of the social system and context within which the innovation is being developed and the evaluation is being conducted.
7. Co-creation – develop the innovation and evaluation together so that developmental evaluation becomes part of the change process.
8. Timely feedback – to inform adaptation as needs, findings, and insights emerge, rather than only at predetermined times. (Patton. 2015).

Based on the experience of the research and evaluation team and relevant literature, this approach to evaluation that is underpinned by our core principles will provide *Yuwaya Ngarrra-li* with rich data and analysis to inform its evaluation and future activities without overburdening the community or staff.

CONCLUSION

Yuwaya Ngarra-li is the product of the DEG's partnership with UNSW that sees and creates successful, effective and meaningful solutions for the wellbeing of the Walgett Aboriginal community. The core principles of *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* are unique, insightful, clever and operate effectively because they succeed when community-led initiatives are at the forefront of community development. *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* is akin to Aboriginal people exercising their democratic right, i,e., Aboriginal people seeing and doing what governments don't do or should be doing.

'*The only real voyage of discovery exists, not in seeing new landscapes, but in having new eyes.*' (Marcel Proust). The source of this citation is 'La Prisonnière', the fifth volume of 'Remembrance of Things Past' (also known as) 'In Search of Lost Time' - perhaps the most celebrated work by Marcel Proust.

To conclude, *Yuwaya Ngarra-li* is '*not about the dream that's coming true, it's the vision, something we see that* will *come true*.' (DEG Elder).

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