

Yuwaya Ngarra-li

Walgett Youth Justice Forum

14th March 2018
FORUM REPORT

Yuwaya Ngarra-li

‘Yuwaya Ngarra-li’, which means ‘Vision’ in the Yuwaalaraay/Gamilaraay languages, is the partnership between the Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG) and the University of New South Wales (UNSW).

The purpose of Yuwaya Ngarra-li is for DEG 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, and to evaluate this as a model of CommUNity- Led Development.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group deeply values working with young people in their community and holds grave concerns about the risk of them ending up in the justice system rather than in education and employment and thriving in their community. The DEG identified this as an urgent priority for Yuwaya Ngarra-li.

The Walgett Youth Justice Forum

With youth justice issues identified as a key priority for the Dharriwaa Elders Group and the Walgett community, the partnership hosted a forum on Wednesday 14th March 2018 in the Community Hub at Walgett Community College. The aims of the forum were to:

- Present data, evidence and information about what is known about young Aboriginal people in Walgett and the justice system.
- Gather community members (young people, families, Elders) and all the critical services, organisations, and Walgett stakeholders (Police, legal and justice agencies, Walgett high school) together to discuss the needs of Aboriginal young people at risk of entering or who are already in the justice system and possible responses.
- Facilitate a public forum that is action oriented and focused on positive, evidence-based solutions.

The forum was attended by more than 70 people including young people, parents, Walgett Aboriginal community organisations including the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service and other members of the Walgett Gamilaraay Aboriginal Community Working Party, and service providers and government agencies including NSW Police, Juvenile Justice, Justice NSW, Aboriginal Legal Service, Legal Aid NSW, the Walgett Community College, Walgett Shire Council and Thiyamali Family Violence Service.

Speakers included visiting and local experts, agency representatives, young people, parents and carers on what is contributing to the high rates of young Aboriginal people ending up in the justice system and what local, evidence-based strategies could work to address this and support children and young people in Walgett to thrive in their community.

This Report

This Walgett Youth Justice Report summarises the presentations and discussion that happened at the forum, outlines the community concerns about factors contributing to the high rates of Aboriginal young people ending up in the justice system in Walgett, sets out strategies and solutions identified by the community that could make a difference, and reports on the results of the evaluation survey of people who came to the forum.

Welcome to Country

Virginia Robinson, Secretary of the Dharriwaa Elders Group, welcomed everyone to the forum. In talking about the importance of gathering for the forum, she said:

"We love our young people. We cry out for compassion, we cry out for justice. We don't want our young people to go to jail, there's no love in jail. The system that is designed to protect young people is just not working. They come out of custody with a myriad of problems, some of them are irreparable. The system that was set up to protect them only facilitates their entry into criminal justice. Hopefully today we can see things taking shape, and I hope I can contribute to that."

Panel 1: Setting the Scene in Walgett

This panel set the scene around youth justice in Walgett, and included Trish Sharpley, youth worker, Jordan Murray, the Vice Captain of Walgett Community College, Christine Corby, CEO of the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service, Superintendent Greg Moore, Central North Police District, Clem Dodd, Chair of DEG and Virginia Robinson, Secretary of DEG.

Christine Corby, CEO of the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service, said:

"Thank you very much to the University of New South Wales and certainly the Dharriwaa Elders Group for putting on this very important meeting about identifying the issues and also trying to resolve something unique for Walgett as a community..."

"I think it's very important that we go back to what we see as early intervention programs, prevention programs, not only for the young ones but also for the families. Families struggle, in Walgett or wherever – looking at Walgett we look at the economy, how it's changed; the society, how it's changed; the potential workforce – how can we encourage young people into opportunities for work when there is no work? They must go away."

"Unfortunately Walgett has a terrible history for ABS stats being in the top 5 for domestic violence offences in the state, so whether it be young people or whether it be families, we really need to look at the influences we give our young people and how we can change that behaviour. As an organisation, WAMS

was recently accredited by White Ribbon because we really are focusing on violence. You have to call it what it is, it's an ugly thing - it can be physical violence, it can be lateral violence, it can be the conversations that you have. So to identify from this forum today the issues, work as a collective... I do believe service intervention is the only way to go for our young people and also our families."

Trish Sharpley, former Youth Worker for the Walgett Shire Council and parent of children at Walgett Community College, talked about the urgent housing and service needs for young people in town and on country:

"I see that as our teenagers grow up, the houses are full, they haven't got their own space. I see that there is a lot of need for our kids, I see that the kids are really crying out for help. There's not many services in town to get that help, and if there is services, they'll do it for one week, and then the next couple of weeks or a month, they don't worry about these kids, and then they've fallen back down again into that stage one.

I feel that we do need something on country so we're not taking kids away from their families who aren't in need. There are so many young people who need help in our community. If we don't hurry up and focus on that and get things rolling, we are going to have some deaths of our young kids in this community. We really need to focus on these kids, because if we don't, who's going to? I think about the next generations that's coming up. If we can get something out of this, all of us that's here today, that'd be great."

Superintendent Greg Moore, recently appointed Commander for the Central North Police District that includes Walgett, also addressed the forum:

"We've heard a bit about service gaps, about the risks for our young people, and I know from the time I've been walking around Walgett and talking to people and meeting the agencies, the school representatives, Elders groups, ALS, a lot of those people sitting here today – it's obvious to me that we've got some really good, kind hearted, hard working people in the community, and I think we're all here in the spirit of working together for our kids, to get better outcomes for our kids. But we've heard about how we need to be better coordinated, we need to plug those service gaps to help the kids, and I think that's what today's about: it's a stepping stone to that.

So it was great to see the last agenda item on today's agenda is to set up an action plan – this isn't a talkfest guys, we need to talk about things and get some ideas but this is a stepping stone to getting some action into the future for our kids, because we do know that they deserve better.

I know just from the yarns that I've been having there's some great ideas out there and some great work going on. If we're all on the same page we can do it a bit better. So expect to see a lot more of me around, and Inspector Checkley who's here today. We'll put our hand up, we know that as police we can do better as well...

I look forward to working with you in the future to get better outcomes for our kids. It's not about people from outside coming in, it's about us working up local solutions but getting support from the good people who have travelled to our community today to help us."

The forum also heard from young woman, Delma Trindall, and her reflections based on her experience of contact with the justice system:

"Growing up Aboriginal means it is pretty much inevitable that you will come under police scrutiny at some time in your life, whether you are actually in trouble, assisting them with an inquiry or seeking support yourself..

There are a monumental amount of barriers facing our youth today upon entering the cycle of the justice system and a lot them are attached to stigma and stereotypes associated with Aboriginal people.

I don't have solutions to these problems but I do believe that building rapport by forging and strengthening community relationships is a great place to start, especially where young people are concerned."

Session 1: Out of Home Care, Education and the Juvenile Justice System

This session focused on the out of home care, education and juvenile justice systems, and speakers included Jodi-Anne Hunt, who works at Walgett Community College as part of the Remote School Attendance Program run by the Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation, and Judge Peter Johnstone, President of the NSW Children's Court.

Jodi-Anne Hunt discussed the issues she sees children facing in her role as Remote School Attendance Officer at Walgett Community College:

"I'm a local girl born and bred... Our role is the work with the School. We go out to families and work with parents about why the kids might be absent. Street patrol doing pickups and drop offs to school..."

Issues in Walgett for our kids – overcrowding, domestic violence, that can have an effect on whether the kids want to come to school. And I suppose being a young carer – for an elderly grandparent or for a young sibling with disability in the family. So we need to look at why the little ones are in that position. The school needs to be more engaged."

Judge Peter Johnstone, President of the NSW Children's Court, talked about his role and the benefits of a initiative such as this led by the Dharriwaa Elders Group:

"I'm here... to learn and to listen. Just so you know, I'm continuously concerned about the issue of over-representation in the justice system, more specifically in the juvenile and youth justice system... We still have 60% of the kids who come before us are Aboriginal kids in the criminal jurisdiction. That's just something that we have to address. In the care jurisdiction, 40% of the children who are removed from families are removed from Aboriginal families – that's another issue that we have to continue to address. The court can only do so much because we're an organisation at the tail end of the process, we respond to all of the issues. We aren't involved in the prevention or early intervention processes, but we are trying to do some things..."

Virginia Robinson from the Dharriwaa Elders Group I think is absolutely spot on: there is no doubt that putting children in detention has a deleterious effect on kids and can go with them all through their life in terms of their development, their ability to cope with society, getting a job, having a good relationship, being a useful member of the community. All the studies tell us that putting children into detention must be the last possible thing that we should be doing. We definitely are trying to avoid putting kids into detention.

Unfortunately at the moment, particularly in some places like Walgett, the alternatives to putting them in detention just aren't there; we don't have services in the community into which we can divert those kids.

That's why I'm very keen to see what you come up with in this particular forum about what are the options, what are the alternatives you can provide us with where we can put those kids when we do have to deal with them.

Finally, if I can say that it seems to me that the Dharriwaa Elders Group, what I have been particularly impressed with, is that they do have a vision. This is the first time I've been to a meeting or forum where I felt that people who were trying to do things at a community level actually have a vision, so I'm really excited about the prospects of your making a difference in this community.'

Trish Sharpley then spoke from the floor, raising the need for a safe space where all children and young people can access services and support:

"All young people need somewhere they can go where they feel safe and where they'll be respected and listened to. We've got PCYC but a lot of kids that are coming up are not allowed at PCYC – what are we going to do with those kids?"

Judge Johnstone reflected that what was needed was:

"A community centre for all... a centre for children where all agencies participate to support and work with children."

He also talked about other immediate strategies that could make a big difference for young people in Walgett:

"I believe you've got a pool – that should be free for kids. And I believe you've got a skate park but it's in disrepair – that should be addressed. We need to be keeping kids active."

Judge Johnstone also noted that there are only two youth residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres across NSW, each with 6-7 beds, which participants at the forum spoke up to agree was grossly inadequate given the level of need.

Norm Henderson, Coordinator of the Aboriginal Hub Project, a partnership between Orana Haven and Weigelli Aboriginal Residential Healing Centres and funded by the Far Western Primary Health Network, spoke from the floor:

"I've been working with the other end, adults who have mental health problems and AOD problems, and what I've experienced is that having somewhere for them to go to have consistency, structure and the right role models and also they need to learn about where

Session 2: Young people and Policing

they've come from, kinship, belonging, culture: that is the primary part of recovery from drug and alcohol problems.'

"We need places on country but there's about 18 beds around NSW. But more and more, the evidence is saying that places on country is what is needed.'

"It needs to be on country, detox facility, with meaningful activities and tasks for people to do.'

This session focused on young people and policing, and included a parent of two young people who have recently been in contact with police, Dr Vicki Sentas, a legal academic who has researched the NSW Police Suspect Targeting Management Program (STMP), and Lea Drake, NSW Law Enforcement Conduct Commissioner.

Dr Vicki Sentas from UNSW Law spoke about some of the systemic barriers it was important to identify in order to develop effective solutions:

"These problems are systemic, entrenched, historic issues – they go beyond individual good will or whether someone's a good copper or not.

So what do we know? We know that too much unnecessary contact with police leads to repeated contact with the courts, with being in remand, with being in prison. And it's happening all over the country for Aboriginal communities. We know this through the everyday experiences of people in Walgett of what's happening to your kids. And also through some of the early statistics gathered from the partnership, we know there are still too many arrests for non-violence offences when there are alternatives to arrests. We see from the Children's Court data that kids are still going to court for their first offence when they should have been cautioned, or given a warning, or have a youth conference as is required by law.

So in terms of ambitions for the police, I would say having as a key performance indicator to reduce the number of charges, reduce the number of young people being charged, increasing the number of diversions as a key performance indicator is really important."

Dr Sentas presented the findings of her research on the STMP:

"It's a police program for reducing reoffending by targeting both young people and adults with intensive policing. And police say its purpose is to stop people from offending in the future. So young people are put on a list based on risk factors, their prior criminal history or other risk factors – we don't know what those other risk factors are because the policy isn't made public. And then every week, police are tasked with interacting with that young person, and what we see is often this is repeated, often excessive policing. And what we see is that often this is repeated, it looks like stop and search several times a week over months. Sometimes police will visit a persons home, sometimes all hours of the night and day, or give move on directions.

It's clear that the STMP disproportionately targets Aboriginal people. 65% of people on the STMP in NSW are Aboriginal. That's incredible. There is a really high proportion of children on the STMP, 25%. And a really high proportion of these children are Aboriginal."

Session 3:

Youth Justice History, Law and Policy

This session focused on the history, law and policy relating to youth justice with presentations from Gary Trindall, Walgett Aboriginal Legal Service Field Officer and Chris Cunneen, Professor of Criminology at Jumbunna Indigenous Research Centre, UTS.

Gary Trindall from the Walgett Aboriginal Legal Service observed that:

"We used to run cultural awareness training in Walgett and other nearby towns [for police officers]. They need local knowledge. It's no use doing cultural awareness training in Sydney, it's different.

After the police follow the kids up and down the street a couple of dozen times, and we've got kids on that program [STMP] – I know they've been locked up because of not wearing a helmet, which has then lead to [charges of] assault police and resist arrest."

Mr Trindall then identified the crucial need for improved communication and coordination amongst agencies and organisations in Walgett:

"If I'd like to see anything out of this meeting today, it's a committee formed of all organisations within this community. That we meet monthly, or even fortnightly for the first 6, 8, 12 months, so we can get things combined. We need to have things combined.

We don't want to be wondering what the PCYC is doing, we don't want to be wondering what DOCS is doing, we don't want to be wondering what the Education Department is doing, we want to be able to say: I know they are doing their job and they are doing the right thing. That's what needs to happen in this community. And if we can get that formed out of this, I would be very, very happy to be part of it.'

Professor Chris Cunneen reflected on the long history of problematic relations between police and Aboriginal people in the area:

"Law and order politics in this part of NSW has been volatile for a very long time. That is the complaints around and the view that more punitive approaches to law and order are the only way to go. And equally the view that any crime problem that occurs is primarily an Aboriginal problem – that it's Aboriginal people that commit crime. I think it's also in terms of some of the reoccurring themes, that law and order politics has real effects. It has real impacts... there has been significant increases in the number of police that were stationed in Bourke and Walgett, there have been impacts on the courts in terms of that pressure being placed on them to be more severe in the types of penalties that are being handed down. And of course we've seen ongoing impacts in terms of legislation, right through the period of the late 1980s and early

1990s and 2000s, and the impact of bail legislation recently. That's been a progressive thing over the last 20 years of making bail much more difficult to get for a whole range of reasons and offences and range of offenders.

The history of racism and discrimination is an important part in the history of Walgett. My teacher in relation to that was [founder of the Dharriwaa Elders Group] George Rose Snr.

What we are saying today about the importance of and role that [Aboriginal community-controlled organisations] should play is something that people have been saying for a very long time... The importance of Aboriginal organisations in finding solutions to problems in the context of self-determination. The problems around racial discrimination, and the problems of the more punitive approaches to law and order.'

Professor Cunneen discussed that while the overall numbers of children and young people in detention have declined, that is not the case for Aboriginal children and young people:

"What we see now is a greater over-representation of Aboriginal kids in detention. If we go back to the late 80s and early 90s, Aboriginal kids made up about 25 per cent or so of the youth detention population of this state.

Today it runs between 55 and 60 per cent of kids that are locked up are Indigenous children. And that reflects the fact that we haven't really addressed this problem at all in relation to Indigenous children over the period.'

Amanda Cheal from the Walgett PCYC spoke from the floor to discuss new funding that may be allocated for a larger PCYC facility in Walgett:

"If we get a facility like this, it will have to be community-driven. We're forming a PCYC committee now and we welcome anyone to be part of that. This is to benefit the whole community'

Other concerns raised by community members:

There were a number of concerns expressed by young people, families and community members throughout the day in addition to those outlined above that came up in the formal sessions about the drivers of young people's high levels of contact with the justice system. These are summarised below.

Police

The poor relationship with and perceptions of police in Walgett amongst Aboriginal young people was seen as a significant problem. Community members spoke about the way that police often only having contact with children and families in situations of crisis, and there is little positive interaction or early intervention which exacerbates this problem.

As one community member said:

"Police need to build positive relationships with our community. They need to get together with parents, kids and all organisations to get to know how much support is out there so they can work with that – to get to know kids rather than just putting them down. We all need to work together."

A perceived lack of training and experience amongst police officers in Walgett was raised:

There is a problem with young police coming out here who don't know the community, instead of solving or helping

when there is a problem, they listen to existing police who say: "oh they're trouble". We have one incident and then they think every family is like that. Well, we're not.'

Alcohol was seen as a major contributing factor to many people's contact with police. Without local diversionary strategies or detox and rehabilitation services, the pathways for Aboriginal people in Walgett with alcohol problems were perceived to only be to leave the community or end up in the criminal justice system.

Education

Parents, carers and other community members raised significant concerns about the poor educational outcomes for students at Walgett Community College. The need for greater emphasis on literacy and numeracy and having culture more embedded and integrated into the schools was emphasised by many attendees. Supported transitions into quality early years learning, primary and high school were also highlighted as important.

A community service provider said:

"We regularly see kids sent from year 6 to 7 without being able to read or write, which is setting them up to fail at high school. We need to have more intensive work happening earlier to address that."

There was a strong message from parents and community members that literacy is crucial for children and young people to have choices in life.

One parent said:

"I tell my kids that education is the key to freedom. If you can't read and write, your options are so limited."

The grandmother of one student noted that even though her grandson attends school every day:

"It's very hard for him, he can't read or write. When I pass away, he'll be struggling."

An Elder said:

"Is someone going to talk to the Education Department about what's going on? We have 17 year olds who can't read or write."

A number of parents expressed concern about the high rate of suspension of students from the school, in particular for weeks at a time, as well as teachers calling police to the school to manage behavioural issues, leaving young people with criminal charges as a result. A need for in-school suspension options was raised by a number of parents and carers at the forum.

The need for digital literacy competence was also raised as an important skill for this generation of children and young people. The proposal to have Aboriginal Medical Service nurses based at both the primary

and high schools was raised as something that has been raised over a number of years as needed by the community, and a relatively straightforward proposal that could be resourced and implemented immediately.

The Literacy for Life adult literacy program in Walgett was raised as an example of a program that is seeking to address the very poor literacy rates. It is currently working with its third intake of participants aged 15 and over in Walgett.

Lack of after school care activities

The lack of appropriate places and activities for young people in Walgett to go out of school hours was raised as a contributing factor to contact with the justice system, both in terms of boredom but also as young people are often in public spaces in town because there aren't other safe spaces for them to go to, meaning those who are most vulnerable are often more likely to end up in contact with police.

A youth centre for all young people in Walgett was raised as urgently needed, not just for those referred there by the school as the PCYC currently operates.

Housing

The need for more housing in Walgett was raised as an ongoing and critical need, in particular specifically for young people and women leaving violent relationships.

As one service provider said:

"I've got clients staying in domestic violence situations because there's no housing."

Safe houses that can offer short-term crisis housing for children and young people was identified by a number of participants as greatly needed.

The possibility of hostel-style housing close to the school for children and young people to stay at during school weeks was also raised, run and staffed by Aboriginal community members.

Health

Having Aboriginal Medical Service nurses based at the primary and high schools was perceived as an important and immediate step towards the improvement of early intervention and holistic responses to the health and disability needs of Aboriginal children and young people.

As the CEO of the Aboriginal Medical Service identified in relation to cognitive and physical disabilities having an impact on children's poor outcomes in Walgett:

"FASD, ADCD, autism, speech, hearing, vision – our kids have a real hard start to life. You need to be healthy to make a baby. Too many kids have a backwards start to life. You need to do it in stages. We need to focus on early intervention."

Evidence-based programs for "ears, eyes and teeth" were raised as able to be implemented immediately if appropriately resourced and supported. Culturally appropriate pregnancy and parenting programs were raised as important initiatives also needed, in particular for young parents.

Concerns about the mental health of children and young people were also expressed by a number of parents, carers and other community members. The need for trauma-informed practice in all agencies in Walgett working with Aboriginal children and young people was raised.

Few local employment opportunities

Beyond the Aboriginal Medical Service and the local supermarket, participants at the forum raised the lack of local employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in Walgett. While some attendees at the forum said that local employers are prepared to work with young people to offer them work experience placements and training, others felt that these were not genuine opportunities for young Aboriginal people in town based on prior experiences.

The need for relevant training courses to be run locally that met the interests of young people and the needs of employers was emphasised.

Community being let down

Some participants talked about how often the Aboriginal community in Walgett has been let down by service providers and others coming to Walgett who have made promises about contributions and support for the community, and then not followed through on those.

'We don't want to get our hopes up and then when everyone leaves, we get let down.'

'We just need people who care, that's all. That want to come out to a community like this, a beautiful community, that want to be here.'

Ideas about what is needed in Walgett

There were many suggestions raised throughout the forum of possible strategies and solutions that could address the problems identified, and help Aboriginal young people to thrive in Walgett.

These are listed below.

Improved communication and coordination

- Monthly meetings between Elders, parents, young people and other Aboriginal community members. Establish a Walgett youth advisory group.
- Clear coordinated communication from agencies of information and activities to all community members.
- Social activity between police and community members – ie weekly sports activity.
- Improve community access to data and information from local service providers.

Police and court

- Community input into Police Aboriginal Strategic Directions Plan.
- Increased use of cautioning and other diversionary strategies by police.
- Youth justice conferencing, involving Elders.
- Youth court diversion program.
- Youth patrol.
- Blue light safe house program.
- Alcohol restrictions.

Increased knowledge of and respect for Walgett Aboriginal people, identity and history

- Profile stories of successful Walgett Aboriginal people in posters/billboards in town/online i.e. Police Trackers of Walgett.
- Protocols for respect are observed by all government visitors to Walgett.
- Public art projects that help to rebrand the town.
- Cultural exchange activities with other communities/organisations.

Education and employment

- WAMS nurses based in primary and high schools to assist with appropriate and timely diagnosis and support and linking to other services – physical and mental health, cognitive disability.
- Need for huge improvements in literacy and numeracy, more effective methods of teaching kids.
- In school suspension options.
- Support for transition into and across early learning, primary and high school.
- Culturally-led programs in the school.
- Establish Yuwaya Ngarra-li education working group to work with Walgett Community College.
- Document views of Walgett Aboriginal students, family and community on education and what could improve engagement and outcomes.
- Document and develop opportunities for work experience, training, employment locally.
- Cert I and II courses responsive to local needs.
- Local training and employment case management roles to provide ongoing support to young people.
- Professional development, education, networking and training opportunities for local staff.

Improved facilities and services

- Youth centre that is open early hours, evening, weekends, school holidays and welcoming to all young people.
- Fixing up of existing facilities – children's centre, skate park.
- Pool free for children and young people.
- Basketball courts and organised sporting activities.
- Bike path around town and along river.
- Community centre open during the day for young parents and others disengaged from school.
- Young people's social committee given one night a week at clubs.

- Café for young people that is open in evenings.
- Children's safe house – overnight accommodation.
- Holistic on country youth facility and culturally-led activities including learning about plants, animals, water, rivers, looking after animals & habitats.
- Youth residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre.

Other service needs

- Improved diagnosis and support for children but also parents around FASD, ADHD, autism, speech, hearing, vision.
- New and appropriate housing to address overcrowding.
- Workers who are resourced and prepared to work after hours – flexibility and capacity to work with police and people with complex needs.
- Professional staff who are committed to staying in Walgett long term.

Feedback from people who attended the forum

The Yuwaya Ngarra-li team distributed a survey at the forum for people to fill out if they wanted to give their feedback, thoughts and ideas about what was discussed and what needs to happen next.

28 people completed the survey, and identified themselves as one or more of the following:

- 12 Aboriginal community members
- 11 Walgett residents
- 3 parents/carers of a child or young person
- 4 Police, Courts or Justice employees
- 3 Legal Aid or ALS employees
- 2 Education employees
- 9 representing other service providers, including the Walgett Shire Council and the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service

In response to the statement:

"Today's forum was a useful way to bring the community, service providers and experts together to talk about what needs to change around youth justice in Walgett"

- 100% of people said they agreed or strongly agreed

When asked what they had learnt, people said:

- *"There are many building blocks already in Walgett. We need to grow and strengthen these initiatives not create new initiatives"*
- *"Youth outcomes need improving, we will all need to work together"*
- *"The lack of trust Aboriginal youth have for police"*
- *"Enjoyed all speakers honesty"*
- *"Expressions of views about experiences with services and policing"*
- *"Subjects/speakers were relevant and informative"*
- *"What is important to community"*
- *"Impressed with all speakers"*

In response to the statement:

“The information presented was relevant and easy to understand”

- 96% of people said they agreed or strongly agreed

When asked

“Is there anyone you think should have been here today who wasn’t”

People said:

- “Magistrate”
- “Youth Workers, Manager Shire Council”
- “Ombudsman”
- “Juvenile Justice – one attendee for part of day but no speaker from JJ”
- “Early childhood providers and primary school reps. More young people – hear their experiences”
- “No”
- “FACS to answer questions about child protection”
- “Careers counsellors, youth workers, magistrate. Good if police could have stayed longer”
- “FACS, hospital, ambulance”
- “More Shire representatives”

When asked:

‘What would make a difference for Aboriginal young people aged 12-20 in Walgett?’

- Youth Centre – **96%**
- Court diversion program – **76%**
- More culturally led programs at school – **76%**
- Cert I or II training courses – **68%**
- More positive, proactive policing – **64%**

The survey asked if there were other ideas of what would make a difference for Aboriginal young people in Walgett. People said:

- *"More support for small business owners from Walgett to take on young workers"*
- *"Junior League Junior Activities; More travel away"*
- *"Rehab and counselling services"*
- *"Thematic discussions focused on the root causes of issues - eg Health, Education, Housing etc. Forum session for people with no formal roles in community. Changes the power dynamics in the room. Transition points for children - EL-Primary-Secondary-Tertiary/Employment"*
- *"Teach the Youth the good things in life, that will make their future better"*
- *"It would be great to have a multipurpose centre."*
- *"More mental health beds and supports"*
- *"More effective education, employment pathways. Services working together more and being more focused and coordinated on individual children. MOU with police and courts re how work with community and services"*
- *"Already exist through the high school: Cert II individual support and Cert II small motors. Culturally-led programs at school: BroSpeak, SistaSpeak, Bangarra Dance, Ride for Life to name a few"*
- *"Versatile local education, health and social intervention and promotion programs"*

People were asked if they had any other feedback, thoughts or ideas about what was discussed at the forum:

- *"Helping Walgett local Aboriginal people start and run own business"*
- *"Less barriers around school work experience, traineeships"*
- *"Rehab and counselling services"*
- *"Youth Parents' responsibilities"*
- *"Community organisations working together"*
- *"Great to see young people involved"*
- *"Prevention and diversionary programs"*

- *"Great idea and positive to have the quality of speakers available"*
- *"Valuable information and ideas"*
- *"Very positive to have the Elders Group/uni to take a lead role and discuss issues and welcome feedback from forum"*

Youth Action Plan Workshop

The Dharriwaa Elders Group, UNSW, other visitors, police and community members met again on Thursday 15th February to start building these ideas into short, medium and long term goals in a Walgett Youth Action Plan.

Contact Details:



@Dharriwaa_UNSW



Peta MacGillivray

Project Manager, UNSW

peta@yuwayangarrali.org.au



Wendy Spencer

Project Manager, Dharriwaa Elders Group

wendy@yuwayangarrali.org.au