

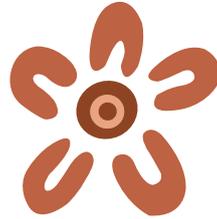


COMMUNITY FIRST
DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT 3 YEAR MACRO ANALYSIS 2017-2020

Moving beyond the gap





The term 'Indigenous', 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' people and 'First Nations' people are considered interchangeable and all are used throughout this document. We note that the language to refer to so many separate and diverse nations is viewed differently, and through these terminologies, we seek to acknowledge and honour our differences, and shared knowledge and experience.

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this publication may contain images and names of people who have passed away.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: MOVING BEYOND THE GAP

In 2020 Community First Development celebrated 20 years and 1000's of community-led success stories. We are looking beyond the gap, and incremental change, and thinking strategically about the next 20 years and how our assets, expertise and intellectual property will be leveraged to support stronger economic, education and social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our people are important.

Their skills, talents, and kinship to Country are important. With over 60,000 years of culture, we acknowledge our people, and respect their capabilities to initiate and lead change for their communities. We work in partnership with communities to achieve their goals for positive change.

As an organisation we are driven by the vision of a better world for all First Nations people; to work with all cultures for recognition, respect, and the right to be treated and valued with equality.

It is fundamental to Community First Development that we listen to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities – to put their voices and their leadership first.

We connect and collaborate with communities, when invited, to create opportunity in education, health, business development, economic planning, and cultural preservation.

It is a model built on the principle of self-determination, and it works to create the positive changes communities need for more optimistic futures.

Through our highly experienced community development team and robust evaluation and research framework, we are elevating the voices of First Nations people from the grass roots through to policy makers. We facilitate genuine and practical application of First Nations' decision-making power in the design, delivery and evaluation of projects and programs that impact communities.

Community First Development is uniquely positioned to achieve largescale change through a national network of strong community relationships and expert volunteers across Australia; our highly skilled community development practitioners who facilitate and broker the relationships between these two groups; and perhaps most importantly, the trust that communities have placed in us.

"I THINK THE THING I REALLY VALUE IS THAT THE (COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT) TEAM HAS GONE IN AND DONE A LOT OF DISCUSSION WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES SO THAT THEY DEEPLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THOSE COMMUNITIES ARE TRYING TO DO."

DEB ARCHIBOLD, COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT VOLUNTEER



Community First Development is uniquely positioned to support communities through:

- A bi-partisan approach and support to ensure longevity and stability in Indigenous Affairs.
- Broad reaching expertise across industries through a national network of expert volunteers.
- Trusted by a large network of communities across Australia in remote, regional and urban settings. Last financial year the organisation engaged with 159 communities. In the past 10 years we engaged with close to 800 community organisations.
- 20 years of experience in co-designing community led short and long-term projects and programs of work. Since 2000 we have delivered over 5,000 projects.
- A culturally appropriate monitoring, evaluation and research program that is well received in communities and has been in operation for the past five years.
- Broad public support: over 75,500 people have generously donated to support the work of Community First Development.

This three year macro analysis begins with a snapshot of our achievements in numbers. Over the last three years, the number of communities we have worked with has ranged from 159 to 200 and the number of projects from 112 to 209. Project numbers alone cannot demonstrate the extent of change that has occurred in the communities we have worked with. We have developed the capability to track and demonstrate change in communities through quantitative impact trends also.

A three year comparison of short-term project and longer-term dream indicators is provided. The indicators track progress towards community goals and are defined by what communities describe success looks like.

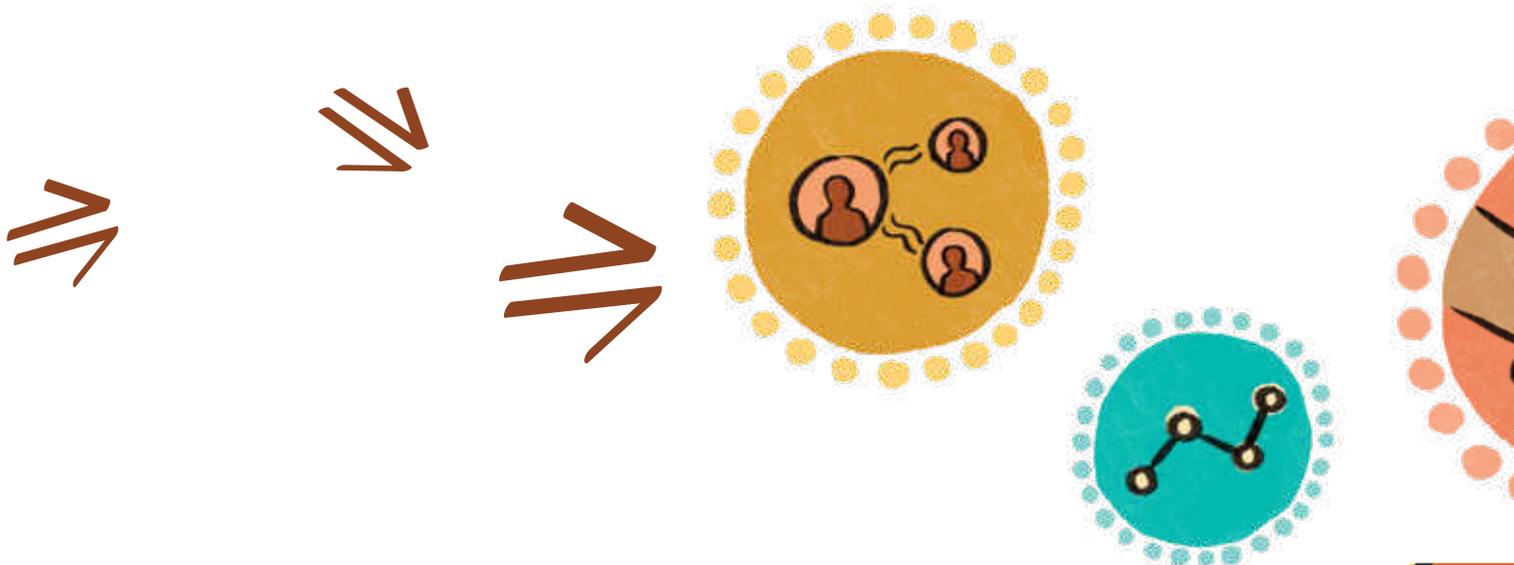


The macro analysis provides an opportunity to take a step back and see the cumulative effect of the organisation's community development activities over the past three years and how strong and capable communities are addressing the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. It also illustrates the organisation's contribution to the wider landscape of national government programs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3.3% of the Australian population. As a group they experience higher levels of incarceration rates and long-term health conditions and lower median incomes and literacy standards than the non-Indigenous population. In a 2019 national survey, the standardised rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reporting high or very high levels of psychological distress was more than double that of non-Indigenous people. This is pronounced among youth where 1 in 3 First Nations young people experience high levels of psychological distress, compared to 1 in 8 non-Indigenous young people.

The Productivity Commission's new Indigenous Evaluation Strategy once again highlights that Australian Government approaches have not worked to address the disparity in health, economic and education measures between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people. Successive Australian Governments have been criticised for a wide range of policies and programs that have arguably had little long-term impact and in some cases, caused serious harm.

One aspect of poorly designed and implemented policies and programs is that they continue to reinforce an environment of negativity. Rather than focusing on the strengths of First Nations peoples, organisations and governments have become preoccupied with addressing the 'gap'. This has created a dominant narrative characterised by disadvantage that further entrenches the divide. While we must not ignore or discount the significant challenges faced by First Nations peoples, the dominant narrative must move beyond one characterised by disadvantage to one of elevating the many success stories that remain untold.





We must focus our efforts and attention to where we are heading: beyond the gap.

The final section of the report provides some inspiring community impact stories of self-determination by theme in a number of the Australian Government's new Closing the Gap target areas.

Community stories such as Ngalla Maya in Perth who were able to secure sustainable funding to support people transitioning from prison into employment and training; Ngroo Education who created an illustrated language screener book for different language groups covering 136 preschools, 12 schools and 20 community groups across NSW; and Baluk Arts in Mornington, Victoria who positioned themselves to expand their creative and community programs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The model we work to is one that:

- Operationalises self-determination: First Nations peoples are always in control, leading and owning projects and programs that impact them.
- Disrupts disadvantage: through reclaiming the dominant narrative and elevating successes, we are seeing First Nations peoples disrupt disadvantage and the ongoing impacts of colonisation.

Community First Development is both actively involved in First Nations communities, and established as a thought leader in First Nations community and economic development and research, monitoring and evaluation. We are delighted to share this snapshot of some of our achievements over the past three years.





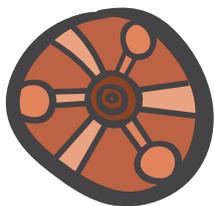
THE COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Community First Development has a core commitment to genuine partnerships and collaboration, working with First Nations communities based on the principle of self-determination. This means that communities have ownership over their big picture dream and goals for their community. This approach with self-determination at its core means we understand that communities are the experts in identifying the challenges they face.

Instead of telling First Nations people what to do or what projects they should be working on, we work together, by their invitation, on projects that they determine. As a result, the projects we support are diverse and focus on a broad range of activities spanning governance, tourism, social enterprise, community facilities upgrades and cultural programs. Our self-determination approach means that each community owns the project. The community takes the initiative to approach Community First Development with their ideas, dreams, visions and needs. It is a community-led, community-owned approach. Community First Development meets together with the communities to listen, yarn, plan and connect skilled volunteers with the community to get things done.

Projects are always determined and led by the community, ensuring that they have a genuine say in the design and delivery of services and the policies and programs that affect them.

OUR DISTINCTIVES



BY
**INVITATION
ONLY**

We do things with First Nations people, not to or for them. Communities invite us to assist them achieve their own goals.



100%
**COMMUNITY
DRIVEN**

Projects are 100% community driven. We give people control of development decisions and we respect local knowledge.



**PRACTICAL
SUPPORT**

Our national network of skilled volunteers provide practical support where skills and resources are limited.



**PROVEN
IMPACT**

Through identifying, monitoring and measuring outcomes, our projects and partnerships with communities show proven impact over time.



As a First Nations community development and research organisation, Community First Development partners with First Nations communities across Australia. We do community development and research that is important to communities themselves. Community First Development is invited around Australia to create partnerships so that they can achieve positive outcomes for their communities.

At Community First Development, we provide expertise in community development, research and specialised volunteers in the industry they need support in, to empower communities which in turn helps achieve the Government priority of 'closing the gap', and indeed even move 'beyond the gap'. We have a highly skilled team of community development practitioners that are based around Australia that connect with skilled volunteers to come alongside the communities with whom we work.

OUR APPROACH

The Community First Development Framework is a cycle of understanding, engagement, genuine co-design, delivery and reflection. It is an evidence and strength based approach, built on 20 years of experience working alongside First Nations people and communities. We know community development is not a quick fix to addressing disadvantage. It takes time and is a collaborative effort. It is a planned, long-term process.



THE LIFECYCLE REFLECTS OUR 5 INTERCONNECTED AREAS:



UNDERSTAND

Our relationships with communities are by invitation, community owned, asset based and relationship driven.



ENGAGE & EMPOWER

We take time to look, listen and learn, carefully managing expectations and investing time and energy into building lasting relationships built on trust.



CONNECT & BUILD

We work with communities to identify and build the next logical step towards achieving their dream.



DESIGN & DELIVER

We collaborate with experts in design and delivery and nurture the community's long term vision through practical action, and closely monitor the project to ensure the right expertise is in place.



REFLECT & CELEBRATE

We reflect and celebrate throughout the project and at the end, bringing encouragement and motivation. We promote continual learning in the way we work together with communities.





THE JOURNEY OVER TIME

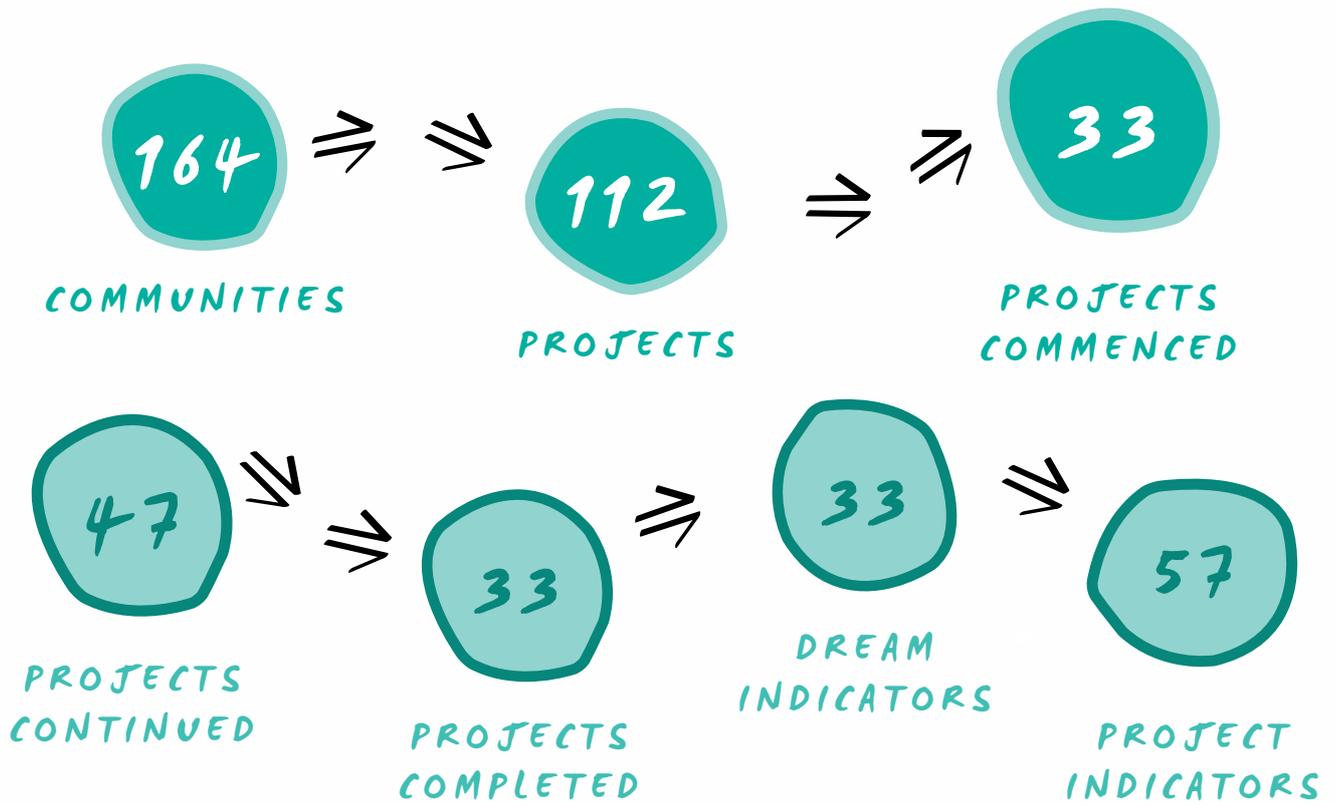
Change takes time. Having a way to track and measure change and progress is essential, and this needs to be done in a way that is a genuine partnership with communities. The progress needs to be measured in a way that works with First Nations people.

To ensure this, at Community First Development, we take a long term approach to working with our communities. Genuine relationships take time to build. Projects vary in complexity, length and processes. We are committed to the journey. We get alongside our communities and provide volunteers where they are needed - and this looks different for every community and every project.

The organic, relational nature of our partnerships means that some projects have short timeframes, whereas others are completed over a number of years. As a result, there are different numbers of communities we are working with on any given year, varying numbers of projects commenced and completed.

**HERE'S A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK WITH
COMMUNITIES AND PROJECTS OVER
THE LAST THREE YEARS...**

2017-2018



2018-2019

200

COMMUNITIES



187

PROJECTS



83

PROJECTS
COMMENCED

48

PROJECTS
CONTINUED



40

PROJECTS
COMPLETED



38

DREAM
INDICATORS



160

PROJECT
INDICATORS

2019-2020





COMMUNITIES: 3 YEAR SNAPSHOT

Community First Development partners with a wide range of First Nations Communities, from not-for-profits to geographic communities and businesses that proactively support First Nations people. Each of the communities have a different focus for their development, where they would like to see change.



WE ARE DRIVEN BY THE NEED OF A BETTER WORLD FOR ALL FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE; TO WORK WITH ALL CULTURES FOR RECOGNITION, RESPECT, AND THE RIGHT TO BE TREATED AND VALUED WITH EQUALITY. WITH OUR PEOPLE. FOR OUR PEOPLE.

PHOTO CREDIT:
YANNI/NAIRM MAIR DJAMBANA



- **2017-2018**
TOTAL: 164
- **2018-2019**
TOTAL: 200
- **2019-2020**
TOTAL: 159

NT

- **2017-2018**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 34
- **2018-2019**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 70
- **2019-2020**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 47

QLD

- **2017-2018**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 38
- **2018-2019**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 48
- **2019-2020**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 35

VIC

- **2017-2018**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 4
- **2018-2019**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 3
- **2019-2020**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 4

WA

- **2017-2018**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 51
- **2018-2019**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 46
- **2019-2020**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 35

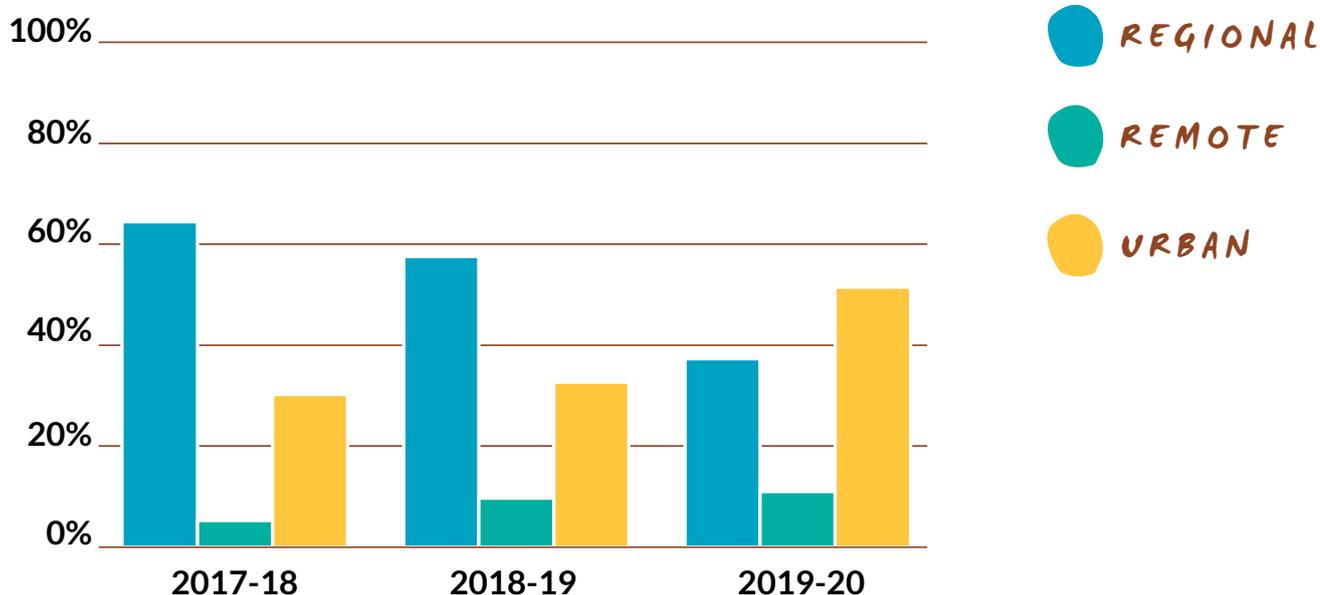
ACT

- **2017-2018**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 8
- **2018-2019**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 5
- **2019-2020**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 5

NSW

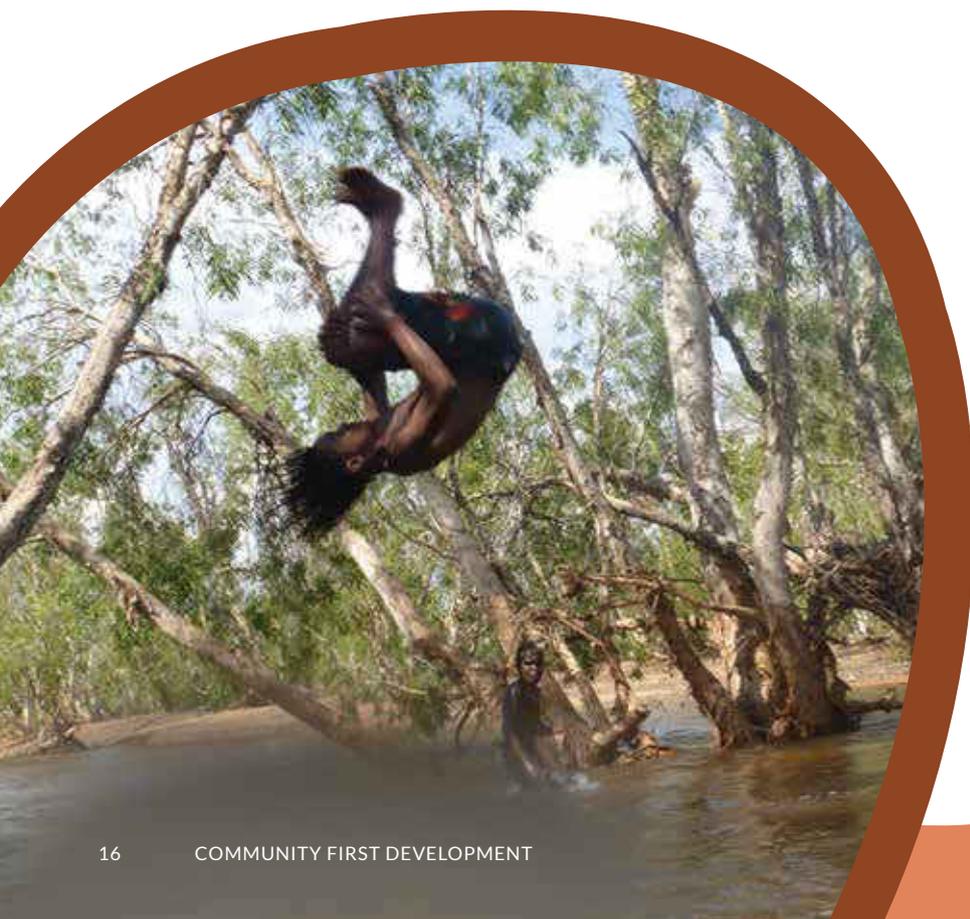
- **2017-2018**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 29
- **2018-2019**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 28
- **2019-2020**
NO. OF COMMUNITIES: 33

COMMUNITY PROJECT LOCATION



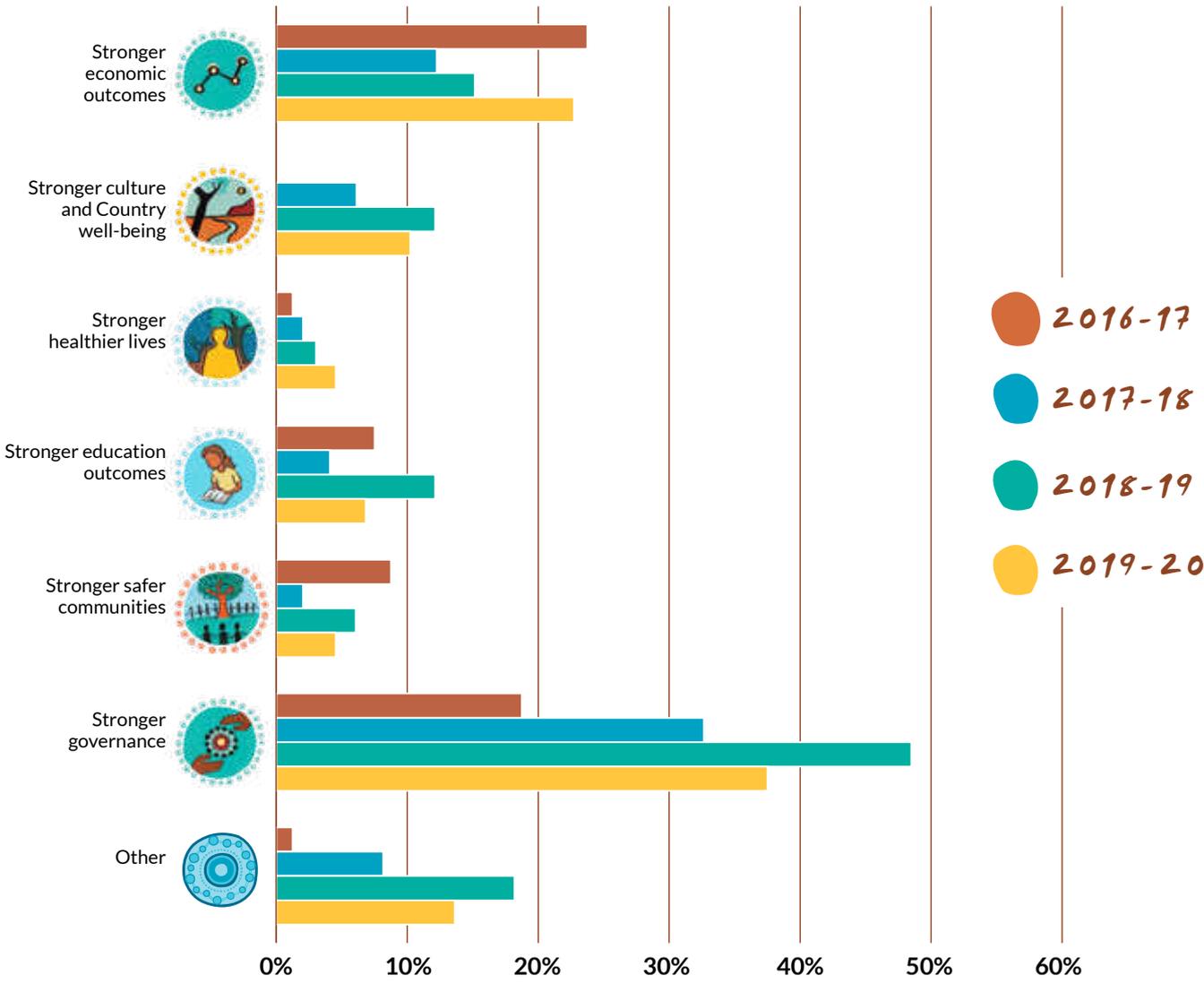
Community First Development works with communities across urban, regional and remote locations. Over the past three years, there has been a shift from regional projects being the most common to now urban based projects being the highest proportion of projects that we have partnered with. There has also been a gradual increase in remote based projects.

While a Community of Interest may focus on one particular dimension of impact - for example, stronger economic outcomes - this will often lead to impact in other secondary dimensions, such as stronger Country, stronger culture, or stronger connections and partnerships. These interconnected dimensions of impact are the focus areas in our Story of Change.



COMMUNITY REQUESTED PROJECTS BY CATEGORY

The most frequently sought after area for projects over the last three years has consistently been 'stronger governance' followed by 'stronger economic outcomes'. This graph shows the community requested projects by Story of Change category area over four years to illustrate the spike in governance activities.



OUR BELIEF IN OUR PEOPLE AND THEIR RIGHT TO DETERMINE WHAT THEY NEED TO CREATE BETTER CONDITIONS FOR THEIR COMMUNITIES REMAINS AS ALWAYS.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY

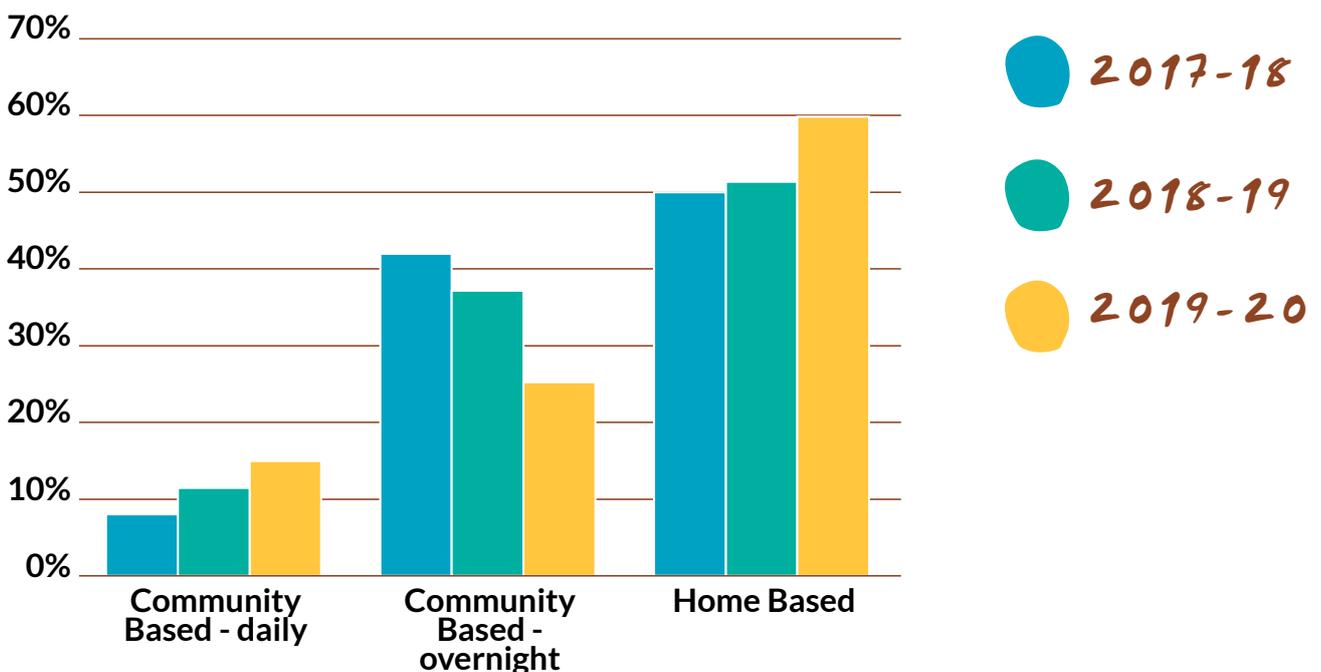
Volunteers are invited by communities to live and work alongside them to achieve community goals. It is a rare privilege and very much a shared learning experience.

The skill-set of our large pool of expert volunteers are wide and varied, accommodating the diverse range of community development activities that communities determine to progress with us. As well as an extensive screening process and induction program, volunteers benefit from the on-the-job coaching and mentoring received by our community development practitioners throughout each project cycle. Our community development team may spend years building trusting community relationships, this creates a pathway for our skilled volunteers to come in and work alongside our team and the community.

"WE COME TO YOU AND SAY, "THIS IS WHAT'S HAPPENING." SO, WE CLEARLY TRUST YOU AND THEN THE PEOPLE YOU BRING IN TO THAT SPACE TO WORK WITH US, WE TRUST THEM BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT YOU TRUST THEM."

GLENIS LITTLE, MIDWEST YAMAJI MUSIC ABORIGINAL INC

Volunteers work in a range of settings, from 'home' with the use of technology, daily visits and lengthier over-night stays in some cases for weeks or months at a time depending on the requirements for the community-led development project.





DIANE



KingGee

OVERALL CHANGE: DREAM INDICATORS



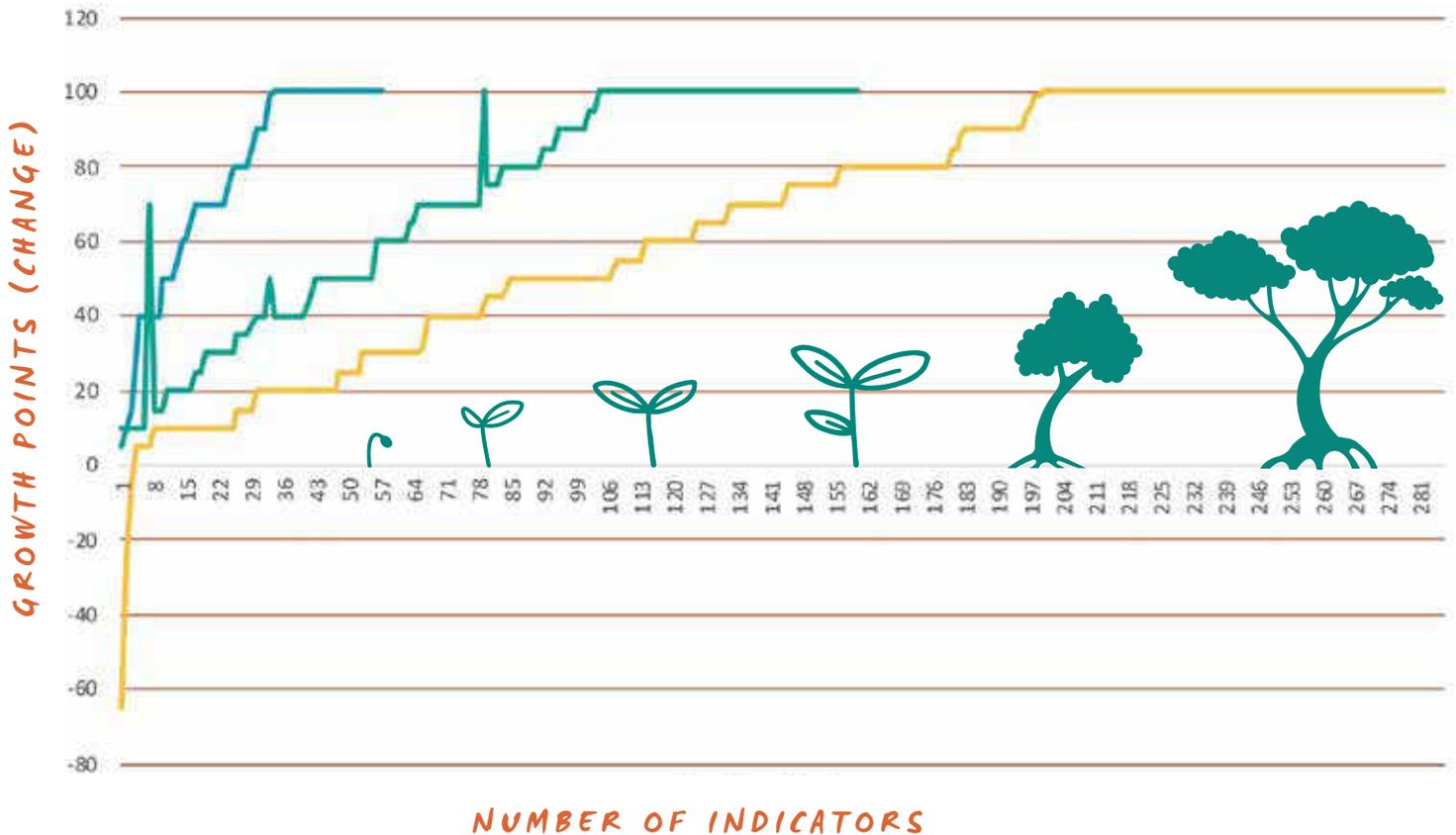
● 2017-2018

● 2018-2019

● 2019-2020



OVERALL CHANGE: PROJECT INDICATORS



● 2017-2018

● 2018-2019

● 2019-2020

OUR APPROACH TO EVALUATING IMPACT TAKES INTO ACCOUNT BOTH LONG AND SHORT-TERM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS, WHICH ARE CO-DESIGNED WITH COMMUNITIES.

AS SELF-DETERMINATION IS AT OUR CORE, COMMUNITIES THAT WE WORK WITH TELL US WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE TO THEM IN THE MEDIUM TO LONGER-TERM AND THE PROJECTS REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE THIS.

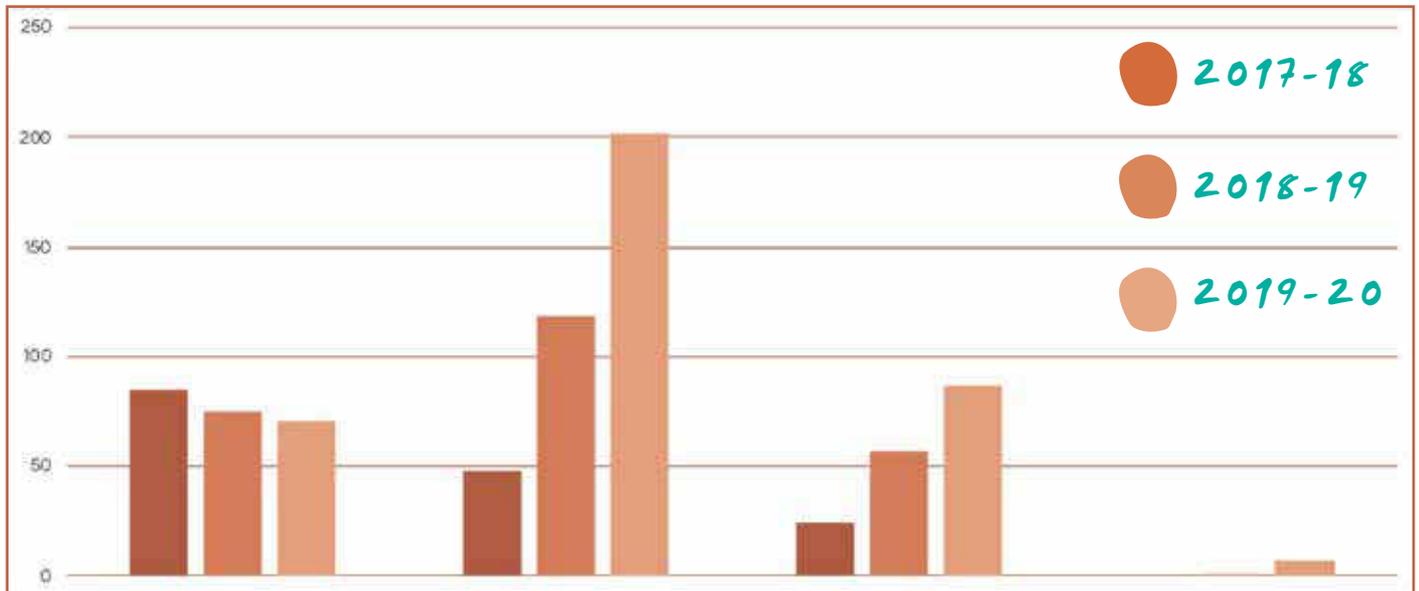


THE BIG PICTURE TRACKING CHANGE

This table summarises the project Monitoring Points and shows a three-year comparison. There were 209 projects that had Monitoring Points in the 2019-2020 financial year. This was across 697 individual Monitoring Point project indicators. Across all of these, there were 283 project indicators that were monitored that showed an overall change. On a scale of 0-100, the median point for project indicators that identified changes was 70. Of the 283 project indicators that registered change, 87 of them saw a point change of 100, meaning the project fully achieved the project indicator since the last monitoring point.

	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019	2019 - 2020
Total number of projects with a Monitoring Point in the financial year	49	109	209
The total number of project indicators with a Monitoring Point in the financial year	133	341	697
The total number of project indicators with a Monitoring Point in the financial year as well as an overall change	57	160	283
Median point change	85	75	70
Number of project indicators that saw a point change of greater than or equal to 50	48	118	202
Number of project indicators that saw a point change of 100	24	57	87
Number of project indicators that saw a point change of less than ten	0	1	7

CHANGE IN PROJECT INDICATORS



Median point change

Number of project indicators that saw a point of change greater than or equal to 50

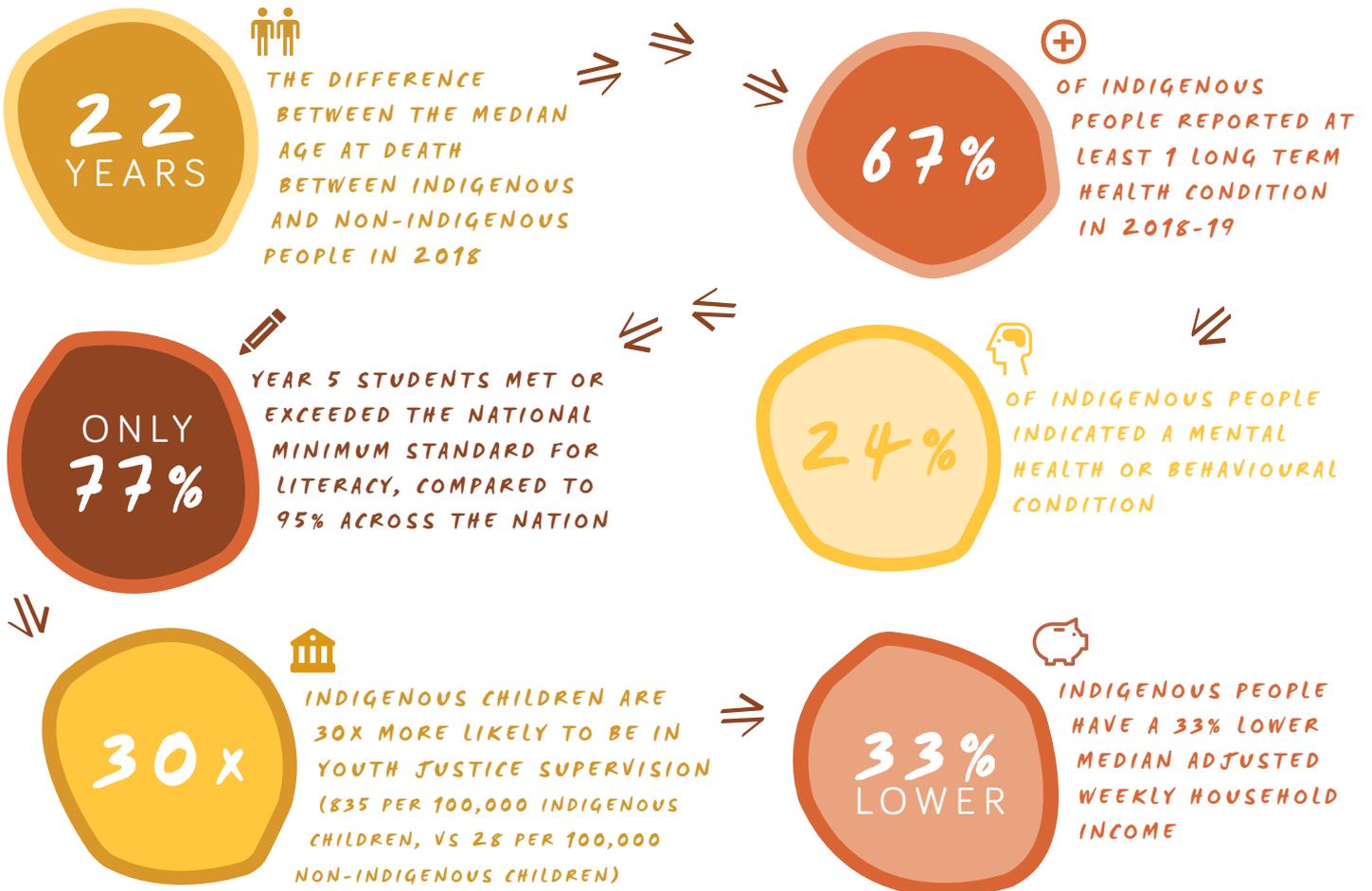
Number of project indicators that saw a point change of 100

Number of project indicators that saw a point change of less than 10





DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT: FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE



Community First Development works to a strength based model. For too long the narrative of our people has been focused on disadvantage. We are intentional about promoting the strength, innovation and wisdom of our people and cultures.

However, we do not ignore or discount the significant challenges faced by First Nations peoples. This demographic snapshot provides a broad overview of the challenges that we see play out first-hand in many of the communities we work with. We stand in solidarity with communities in times of challenge and grief and acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonisation on our people.

We are working with communities to build relationships and bridges between western and First Nations systems and people to improve outcomes for our people. We work with communities to design solutions and connect them with resources and services reserved for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"... A LOT OF THEIR WESTERN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ARE REALLY NOT ABLE TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FROM US AS FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE. IT'S PRETTY STANDARD THAT WE MORE OR LESS STANDING ON ONE SIDE OF THE RIVER AND THEY'RE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER AND THEY'RE SENDING OVER MISSILES WITH TOKENISTIC PACKAGES AS AN ANALOGY, RATHER THAN PUTTING A STRONG EMPHASIS AND EFFORT INTO BUILDING THAT BRIDGE ACROSS..."

COMMUNITY MEMBER

POPULATION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent 3.3% of Australia's population, comprising 798,400 people in 2016. Of these, 91% identified as being of Aboriginal origin, 4.8% as being of Torres Strait Islander origin, and 4% identified as being of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.¹

While the total Australian population is growing at 1.4% each year, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is growing at a faster rate of 2.2% each year, and is projected to reach one million people by 2027/2028. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have a much younger age structure than the non-Indigenous population, with a median age of 22.9 years compared to 37.8 years in 2016.² 1 in 3 Indigenous Australians are aged under 15, compared to close to 1 in 5 non-Indigenous people. Just 5.2% of Indigenous people are 65 years of age and over, compared to 16% of the population of non-Indigenous people.³ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to face a significantly lower life expectancy at birth than non-Indigenous people, at 71.6 years compared to 80.2 years for males, and 71.6 years compared to 83.4 years for females.⁴ In 2018, the median age at death for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was 60, compared to 82 for non-Indigenous people.



ONE OF THE KEY FOCUS AREAS WITH COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IS THE STORY OF CHANGE AREA CALLED "STRONGER COUNTRY, STRONGER CULTURE" RECOGNISING THE ENVIRONMENTAL, PHYSICAL, SPIRITUAL, EMOTIONAL AND CULTURAL BENEFITS THAT COME THROUGH CONNECTION TO COUNTRY AND PRACTICE OF CULTURE.

HEALTH

To be in good health of course includes a physical dimension, but the concept also encompasses social and emotional health, as well as cultural and spiritual health. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, concepts of health apply not only on an individual dimension, but for the community.⁵

Data from The Australian Bureau of Statistics presents a current snapshot from the 2018-2019 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS). It showed mixed health outcomes for First Nations people. Overall, 45% of respondents rated their health as excellent or very good (compared with 39% in 2012). Rates of smoking had declined, with half (50%) of those aged 18 to 24 years having never smoked (up from 43% in 2012), and 37% of those aged 15 and over smoking daily, down from 41% in 2012.

Despite these declines, smoking is overrepresented: in 2018-2019, 41.4% of Indigenous Australians were current smokers, compared to 14.4% of non-Indigenous people.⁶

Nearly half of First Nations people (46%) reported having a chronic health condition that posed a significant health problem, which had increased from 40% in 2012.⁷ Almost two-thirds (64%) of the disease burden among Indigenous people is due to chronic disease, who face a disease burden 2.3 times higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts.⁸

In 2011 almost one fifth of the disease burden among First Nations people (19%) was caused by mental health and substance disorders, followed by injuries, including self-inflicted and suicide (15%). Cardiovascular diseases cause 12% of the burden, followed by cancer (9%), respiratory diseases (8%). Taken together, close to two thirds (63%) of the disease burden was from chronic diseases.⁹

Cancer is the leading broad cause of death among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, at a standardised rate of 234.9 per 100,000 people, compared with 161.9 per 100,000 for the non-Indigenous population. In 2018, the primary specific cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians was coronary heart disease, accounting for 1 in 8 of total deaths (12.1%; 390 deaths); this was followed by diabetes, accounting for 1 in 14 deaths (7.2%; 232 deaths).¹⁰

Obesity has become a growing challenge, with 37% of Indigenous children aged 2-14 years being obese or overweight - up from 30% in 2012 - and 71% of those aged 15 years and over being overweight or obese, up from 66% in 2012. While obesity presents a health challenge across the nation, the rates are higher among First Nations people than the overall population, where 24% of non-Indigenous children aged 5-14 are obese or overweight.¹¹ In 2018-2019, 3 in 4 (76.8%) Indigenous people were overweight or obese, compared to 2 in 3 (66.3%) non-Indigenous people.¹²

There has been a decline in infant mortality, with the rate for First Nations people dropping from 7.2 per 1,000 births in 2007-2009 to 6.2 per 1,000 live births in 2015-2017. Comparatively, for the non-Indigenous population, the rate is 3.1 per 1,000 births. While there has been a decline since 2008, there was an even faster decline among the non-Indigenous population; as a result, the gap in child death rates has continued to expand between these groups. The death rates for Indigenous children aged 0-4 is 2.4 times higher than non-Indigenous children (164 versus 68 deaths per 100,000).¹³

In 2018-19, 2 in 3 (67%) of Indigenous people self-reported at least one current long-term health condition; close to 2 in 5 (38%) reported eyesight problems, and 1 in 4 (24%) indicated a mental health or behavioural condition.¹⁴

Standardised suicide rates are also significantly higher for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, at 23.7 per 100,000 in 2014-2018 (an increase from 20.2 in 2009-2013), while the non-Indigenous population this was 12.3 per 100,000 in 2014-18. In 2018, 169 First Nations people died by suicide.¹⁵



ONE OF THE KEY FOCUS AREAS WITH COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IS THE STORY OF CHANGE AREA CALLED "STRONGER HEALTHIER LIVES" TO STRENGTHEN THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE.

WELLBEING

The concept of wellbeing is closely connected to that of health; it encompasses mental health, but also relates to a sense of connection to land, culture, spirituality and ancestry. As with health, wellbeing for First Nations people is understood to relate not only to the individual, but to the community.¹⁶ Around 1 in 4 (24%) Indigenous people indicated a mental health or behavioural condition, with anxiety (17%) and depression (13%) being the most commonly reported conditions. While two thirds (66%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults experience low or moderate levels of psychological distress, just under 1 in 3 (31%) experience high or very high levels.¹⁷ The standardised rate of those reporting high or very high levels of psychological distress was more than double that of non-Indigenous people.¹⁸ This disparity is pronounced among youth, where 1 in 3 First Nations young people experience high levels of psychological distress, compared to 1 in 8 non-Indigenous young people.¹⁹

EDUCATION

As a child progresses through his or her primary years of education, literacy and numeracy are foundational building blocks for higher learning, and have been shown to have an impact on a person's employment opportunities into adulthood.²⁰ Across the board for Year 5 students, 19 out of 20 children meet or exceed the national minimum standard for literacy and numeracy; however for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, just over 3 in 4 (77%) met or exceeded the national minimum standard for literacy and 4 in 5 (81%) for numeracy. The disparity is more significant in remote areas.²¹

School attendance is a key component of students' academic and social development, and the two are found to be strongly correlated.²² While overall, school attendance in Australia is high - with Year 1 to 10 students attending more than 92% of available school days - the overall national school attendance rate among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is at 82%.²³ Non-attendance rates also increase with remoteness.

Addressing school absenteeism is complex, as it relates to a range of key drivers including a family's socioeconomic status, the school environment, the child's health, any experiences of bullying, as well as other community dynamics. Between 2014 and 2018, the comparatively low attendance rates for Indigenous students have remained stubbornly consistent. That said, positive changes are being seen on a number of outcomes, including the proportion of First Nations people aged 20-24 having completed at least Year 12, a Certificate II or equivalent, increasing from 3 in 5 (59%) to 2 in 3 (66%) between 2012-13 and 2018-19.²⁴ Further, whilst First Nations people were more likely to have left school at Year 9 or below than non-Indigenous (19% compared to 6.7%), these rates have been improving since 2011, where almost a quarter of First Nations people (24%) and 8.6% of non-Indigenous left school by Year 9.²⁵

At the beginning of schooling, the proportion of Indigenous children who were vulnerable in one or more of the Australian Early Development Census' five domains (namely, physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; communication skills and general knowledge) had decreased from close to 1 in 2 (47%) in 2009 to 2 in 5 (41%) in 2018, though still elevated above the 1 in 5 (20%) non-Indigenous children who start school with vulnerability in at least one developmental domain.²⁶



ONE OF THE KEY FOCUS AREAS WITH COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IS THE STORY OF CHANGE AREA CALLED "STRONGER EDUCATION OUTCOMES", STRENGTHENING EDUCATION OUTCOMES FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH TO EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS.

YOUTH JUSTICE

Children and young people aged 10-17 who engage in criminal activity (or allegedly do so) are usually dealt with in the youth justice system.²⁷ Boys are more than three times likely to be in youth justice supervision than girls, and children from areas of greatest socioeconomic disadvantage are 10 times more likely to be in youth justice supervision. Rates of youth justice supervision increase with remoteness (502 children per 100,000 in very remote areas compared to 43 per 100,000 in major cities). Research indicates that there are a number of compounding factors that increase the likelihood of youth justice supervision, including child maltreatment and neglect, drug and alcohol abuse, poor school attendance and trouble at school, substance abuse by parents, parental incarceration and homelessness or unstable accommodation. Many of these factors are overrepresented in young Indigenous people.

Whilst each state and territory have their own jurisdiction for youth justice, the general premise is that rehabilitation options are favourable for children who have broken the law, with youth detention being seen as a last resort. Youth justice supervision includes supervised community-based sentences such as probation (78%), and detention sentences (22%).²⁸

Young Indigenous people are extremely overrepresented in the youth justice system with rates of 835 Indigenous children in supervision per 100,000, compared to just 28 per 100,000 for non-Indigenous children. Young Indigenous people are also likely to spend more days per year under supervision (197 days compared with 186), and slightly longer time in detention (74 days compared with 71). Young Indigenous people also spend longer in unsentenced detention (52 days compared to 44).²⁹

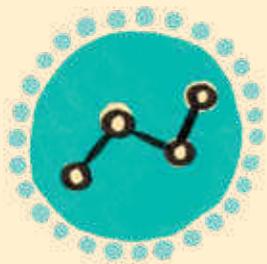


ONE OF THE KEY FOCUS AREAS WITH COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IS THE STORY OF CHANGE AREA CALLED "MORE FOR YOUTH" TO STRENGTHEN THE HOPE, OPPORTUNITIES, CHOICES, SKILLS AND RESOURCES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO SUCCEED.

ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

The ABS Census data (2016) shows a disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on household and personal income. The median adjusted weekly household income was 33% lower for Indigenous people (\$623 compared with \$935 for non-Indigenous people) (ABS 2019)³⁰ and the personal median weekly income was \$441 compared with \$670 for non-Indigenous. Indigenous people were half as likely to have a weekly household income of \$1,000 or more (20% Indigenous compared to 41% non-Indigenous).³¹ Over half (55%) of Indigenous people aged 15+ have a gross weekly income of \$1-\$799 (ABS 2017). Income varies considerably with remoteness, with the lowest level of earnings in very remote areas. Indigenous people are overrepresented in the lowest socioeconomic quintile; with an estimated 37% of Indigenous people households in this lowest quintile (the bottom 20% of all income distribution for Australians aged 15 and over). Further, only 9% of Indigenous people were in the top quintile (top 20%) (ABS 2019).³²

Over half (52%) of Indigenous people (aged 15+) report receiving a government pension or allowance as their main source of personal income (2014-2015), compared to 25% of non-Indigenous. This has declined from 65% in 2002. Financial stress is heightened with cash-flow problems and the inability to access or raise funds to cover an emergency. This income vulnerability was again more prominent among Indigenous people, with 48% saying they could not raise \$2000 within a week to use in case of an emergency, compared to 13% of non-Indigenous people. Indigenous people were also 1.4 times more likely to report cash-flow problems in the last year.³³



ONE OF THE KEY FOCUS AREAS WITH COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IS THE STORY OF CHANGE AREA CALLED "STRONGER ECONOMIC OUTCOMES" TO SEE INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY THROUGH GAINING EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS BUILDING.





THE LANDSCAPE

GOVERNMENT FRAMEWORKS

As outlined above, there are distinct differences across numerous factors of health, wellbeing, safety, and socioeconomics that show that First Nations people are experiencing significant disadvantage. To rectify this, the Australian Government has a National Agreement on 'Closing the Gap' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Core to the outworking of the agreement is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a voice; a genuine say in the design and delivery of the services, policies and programs that affect them.³⁴ The Government recognises that partnership with First Nations people is critical to achieving such outcomes, with First Nations people having ownership, commitment and drive over the outcomes alongside all levels of government.³⁵

CORE TO THE OUTWORKING OF THE AGREEMENT IS THAT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE HAVE A VOICE; A GENUINE SAY IN THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE SERVICES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT AFFECT THEM.³⁴

In addition, the Australian Government has developed the Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP) which has been in operation since 2015, and the recently launched Indigenous Evaluation Strategy.

The primary purpose of the IPP is to stimulate entrepreneurship, business and economic development, providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with more opportunities to participate in the economy.³⁶

The Indigenous Evaluation Strategy provides a whole-of-government framework for Australian Government agencies to use when selecting, planning, conducting and using evaluations of policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.³⁷

The Strategy puts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at its centre. It recognises the need to draw on the perspectives, priorities and knowledges of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people if outcomes are to be improved.

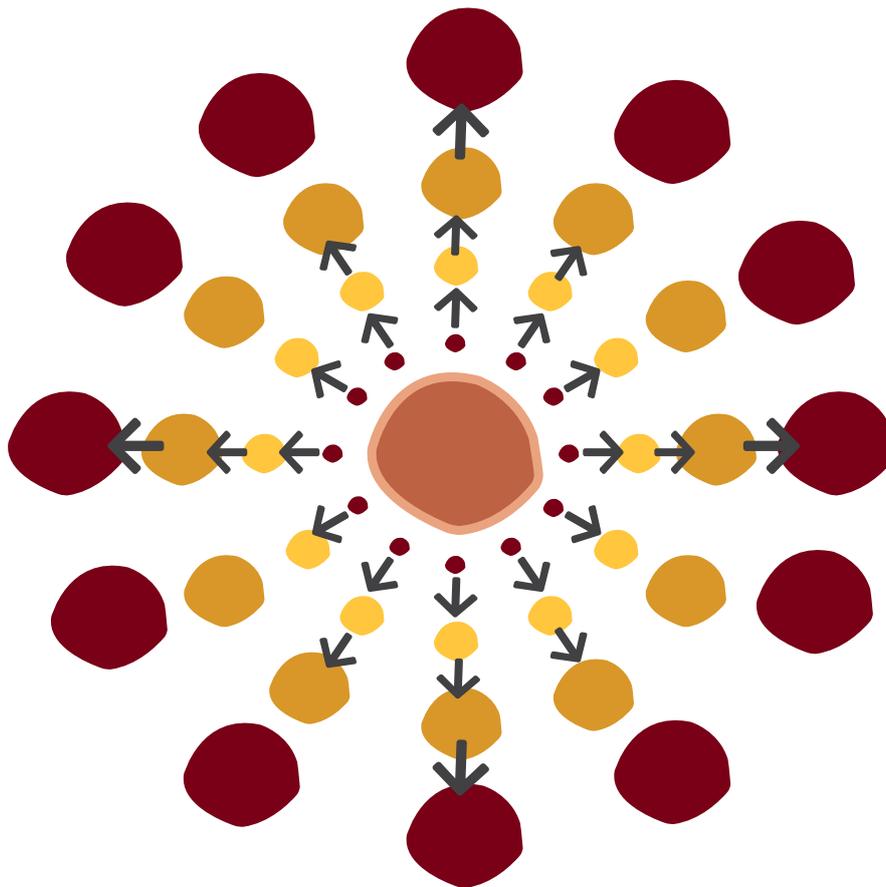


ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING

The Australian Government have a core focus on accountability through the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy and monitoring progress around 'Closing the Gap'. Community First Development also have a core focus on monitoring progress. Our approach to this is to work with communities through yarning and listening and in doing so, we collaborate to identify what their overall 'dream' looks like, and then how that dream can be progressed through projects. To measure progress, we work with each community to identify overall 'dream indicators' for their big picture dreams, and 'project indicators' for each specific project that we partner with them on. These indicators are reviewed at various points along the progression of a project and tracked to measure the success and impact of the projects and partnership.

TRACKING CHANGE TOGETHER

At Community First Development we have a strongly relational approach to partnering with communities. We provide expertise and support while communities take the lead.



Each community, and its approach, is unique.
This is a representation of how we partner with communities.



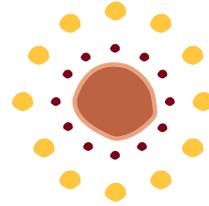
COMMUNITY CENTRED

Each community is at the centre of what we do.



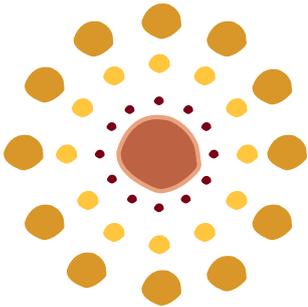
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

At Community First Development, we take time to build a relationship with each community.



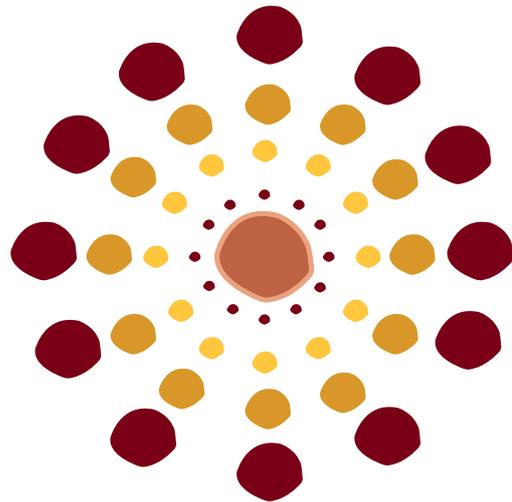
IDENTIFYING DREAMS

The community identify their dream - what they envisage their community could look like. These are written down as 'Dream Indicators' and connect to broader 'Story of Change' areas.



IDENTIFYING PROJECTS

The community identify projects that will help them achieve that dream. These are written down as 'Project Indicators' and also connect to broader 'Story of Change' areas. Projects are supported through Community First Development volunteers across a wide range of areas.



TRACKING PROJECTS

Every project has Project Indicators which are monitored to measure and track progress. Every project is monitored at a minimum at the commencement and conclusion of the project, with larger projects having multiple Monitoring Points.

TRACKING DREAMS

Dream Indicators are also monitored to measure and track progress towards their overall dream.



HOW DO WE MEASURE CHANGE?

Our approach to evaluating impact takes into account both long and short-term performance indicators, which are co-designed with communities. As self-determination is at our core, communities that we work with tell us what success looks like to them in the medium to longer-term and the projects required to achieve this. We then co-design 'dream indicators and project indicators' with each community to measure the progress towards these aspirations.

DREAM INDICATORS

Dream indicators are unique to each community and varied, built around their aspirations. They are statements that reflect the overall positive change that communities we partner with desire to see. These dream indicators can be broad and diverse, reflecting the varying priorities and needs of each community.

Some example dream indicators include:

- A business plan that accurately reflects the vision, goals and objectives of the organisation.
- Lobby and attain support from [Local Council] to develop a Youth Forum.
- Business being successful and providing employment for the Local Aboriginal Organisation.

Every community has multiple dream indicators.

PROJECT INDICATORS

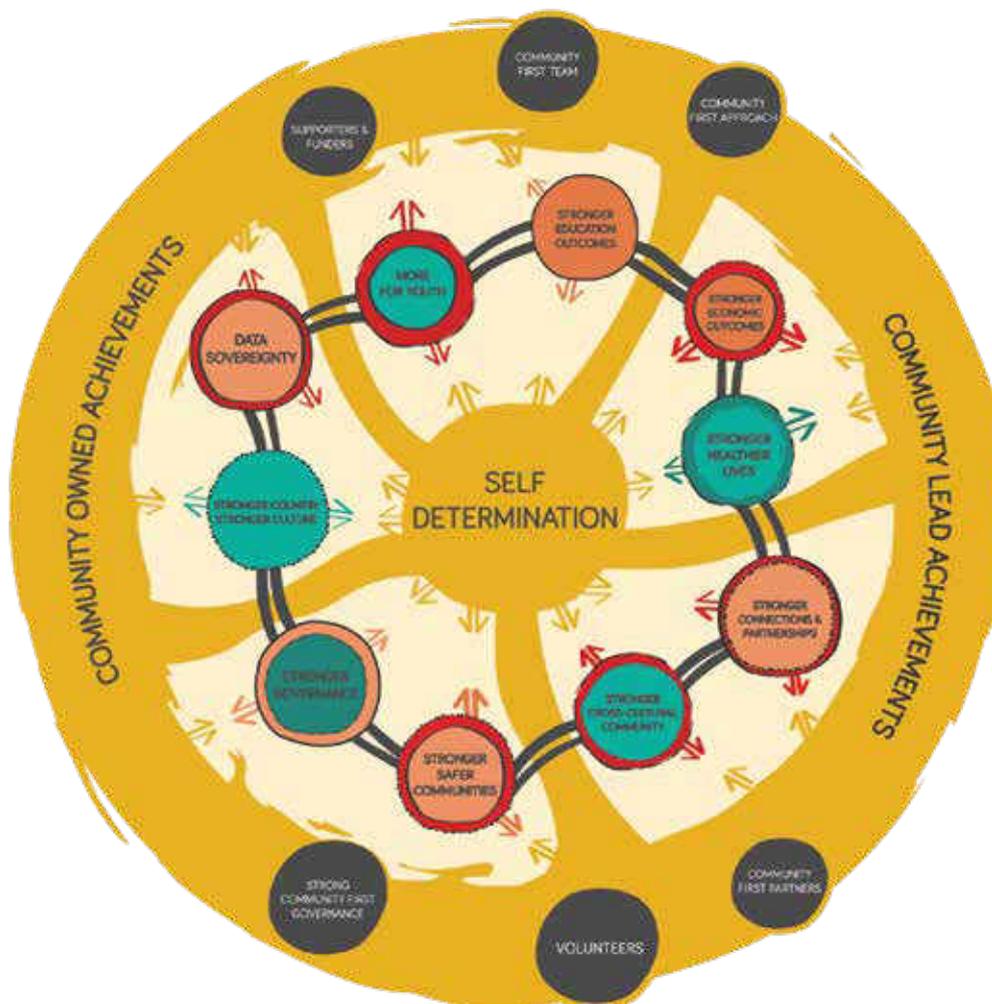
The communities then identify specific projects that they would like to see realised in their communities, which together will progress to seeing the overall dream come to pass. Project indicators relate to the change the communities are aiming for on completion of the project. Once again, projects are diverse in nature, and communities collaborate with Community First Development to identify project indicators so that progress can be measured.

Some example project indicators include:

- Sensitive architectural concept design of facilities that meets community needs in the longer term.
- Completed initial grant proposal submitted.
- Financial information prepared in a timely fashion.

Individual projects often have multiple project indicators.

As the dream indicators and project indicators are determined through listening, yarning and collaborating with the communities, they cover a diverse range of areas. To assist in the measurement and tracking of these indicators, once the indicators have been identified, they are then categorised into one of the ten 'Story of Change' indicator areas (illustrated in the circular Story of Change diagram below). A description of each of these outcome areas is listed in the glossary at the end of the report.





CLOSING THE GAP AND COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT: *OUR SHARED FOCUS AREAS*

The 2020 report on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap provides analysis of the focus areas the Government has prioritised and measured over the past decade. We have presented a snapshot of progress over the decade from the report in this section.

As evidenced below, The Closing the Gap focus areas are broad, encompassing a wide range of health and wellbeing outcomes for First Nations people. Similarly, Community First Development works with a diverse range of communities and projects with First Nations people to achieve positive outcomes. We see the community as an eco-system, where everything is connected. Not one thing is more important than another. When one aspect of community life changes, it impacts other areas as well. By nurturing unique community environments the skills, knowledge and willpower of First Nations people shine and communities grow stronger.



CHILD MORTALITY



TARGET

Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade (by 2018).



DATA SNAPSHOT

In 2018, there were tragically 117 Indigenous child deaths. This is equivalent to the Indigenous child mortality rate being 141 per 100,000—twice the rate for non-Indigenous children (67 per 100,000).



PROGRESS & CHANGE

Since 2008, the Indigenous child mortality rate has improved slightly, by around 7 per cent. However, the mortality rate for non Indigenous children has improved at a faster rate and, as a result, the gap has widened.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



TARGET

95 per cent of all Indigenous four year-olds enrolled in early childhood education (by 2025).



DATA SNAPSHOT

In 2018, 86.4 per cent of Indigenous four year olds were enrolled in early childhood education compared with 91.3 per cent of non Indigenous children.



PROGRESS & CHANGE

Between 2016 and 2018, the proportion of Indigenous children enrolled in early childhood education increased by almost 10 percentage points.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE



TARGET

Close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance within five years (by 2018).



DATA SNAPSHOT

The majority of Indigenous students attended school for an average of just over 4 days a week in 2019. These students largely lived in major cities and regional areas.

Gaps are evident from the first year of schooling but widen during secondary school. 2019: attendance rate for Indigenous primary school students was 85 per cent (a gap of around 9 percentage points). By Year 10, Indigenous students attend school 72 per cent of the time on average (a gap of around 17 percentage points).



PROGRESS & CHANGE

School attendance rates for Indigenous students have not improved over the past five years. Attendance rates for Indigenous students remain lower than for non Indigenous students (around 82 per cent compared to 92 per cent in 2019).

LITERACY & NUMERACY



TARGET

Halve the gap for Indigenous children in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade (by 2018).



DATA SNAPSHOT

In 2018 about one in four Indigenous students in Years 5, 7 and 9, and one in five in Year 3, remained below national minimum standards in reading. Between 17 to 19 per cent of Indigenous students were below the national minimum standards in numeracy.



PROGRESS & CHANGE

At the national level, the share of Indigenous students at or above national minimum standards in reading and numeracy has improved over the past decade to 2018. The gap has narrowed across all year levels by between 3 and 11 percentage points.

YEAR 12 ATTAINMENT



TARGET

Halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent (by 2020).



DATA SNAPSHOT

In 2018–19, around 66 per cent of Indigenous people aged 20–24 years had attained Year 12 or equivalent.



PROGRESS & CHANGE

Between 2008 and 2018–19, the proportion of Indigenous people aged 20–24 years attaining Year 12 or equivalent increased by around 21 percentage points. The gap has narrowed by around 15 percentage points, as non-Indigenous attainment rates have improved at a slower pace.

EMPLOYMENT



TARGET

Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within a decade (by 2018).



DATA SNAPSHOT

In 2018, the Indigenous employment rate was around 49 per cent compared to around 75 per cent for non-Indigenous people.



PROGRESS & CHANGE

Over the past decade (2008–2018), the employment rate for Indigenous people increased slightly (by 0.9 percentage points), while for non-Indigenous people it fell by 0.4 percentage points. As a result, the gap has not changed markedly.

LIFE EXPECTANCY



TARGET

Close the life expectancy gap within a generation (by 2031).



DATA SNAPSHOT

In 2015–2017, life expectancy at birth was 71.6 years for Indigenous males (8.6 years less than non-Indigenous males) and 75.6 years for Indigenous females (7.8 years less than non-Indigenous females).



PROGRESS & CHANGE

Over the period 2006 to 2018, there was an improvement of almost 10 per cent in Indigenous age standardised mortality rates. However, non-Indigenous mortality rates improved at a similar rate, so the gap has not narrowed.

“...AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO, IS OPERATING IN A WAY THAT SUPPORTS SELF-DETERMINATION SO THAT WE CAN MAKE OUR OWN DECISIONS ON OUR HEALTH, EDUCATION, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES. AND THE CONTINUATION OF OUR CULTURE INCLUDING LANGUAGE.

IT'S A PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE ORGANISATION RESPONSIBILITY TO FOCUS OUR EFFORTS ON THIS GREATER OUTCOME AND IMPACT FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE. ”

CEO STEPHANIE HARVEY





NATIONAL TARGETS & OUTCOMES:

The national agreement has recently been revised. There are currently 16 targets and outcomes for the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. There is much overlap with these Government targets and the Community First Development Story of Change areas. Community First Development has actively been working across diverse projects and community needs that show active engagement across these target areas.

Listed below and on the following pages are a few examples.



BE MY KOORDA



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

Everyone enjoys long and healthy lives



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger healthier lives

Be My Koorda has been operating since 2016 and aims to promote awareness of autism and other disabilities and support Aboriginal children with peer to peer mentors.

Be My Koorda coordinator and Chairperson, Evelyn, first approached Community First Development in 2017 requesting support to develop a 12-month strategic plan and to mentor their committee. Since then and with Community First Development's support, they have taken a number of important steps towards achieving their dream including developing a strategic plan, securing a venue, registering with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, gaining Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, and securing public liability insurance.





LITTLEWELL



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

People maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger Country, stronger culture

Littlewell (also known as Jinjamarba Baba) is an Aboriginal Reserve on the outskirts of Mingenew, a small town 100 kilometres south-east of Geraldton in Western Australia. Littlewell was established in 1898 and ran until 1972 when its residents moved to town-based accommodation in Mingenew. The reserve was then given to the Shire of Mingenew to use for recreational purposes. Littlewell has a rich history of connection and belonging but also of hardship and trauma for many local Aboriginal families.

In 2010, a group of Elders – who are either former residents of Littlewell or their descendants – established the Littlewell Working Group. The group's vision was to preserve the reserve and build a heritage trail to celebrate and honour the lives of people who had lived there. They also wanted to record the history of the area and post it online to preserve their stories. The Littlewell Group realised early on that it would be important to work closely with the shire to achieve their dream. They elected a spokesperson, Thomas, who spent time building a relationship with the shire, the local community and other stakeholders. As time progressed, other group members shared the relationship-building roles.

From 2014-18, Community First Development worked with the Littlewell Working Group on projects to capture the community's history. The most recent project was an oral history. Littlewell was one of the first collaborations where Community First Development applied its now-standard monitoring and evaluation approach to define, adjust and measure the project.

The Working Group chose video stories as the way to record community history and welcome all members of the group to share their stories. This was an effective way to capture the voice of the people, word for word, without outside interpretation. The group wanted to own their video stories so the Community First Development volunteer supported them to set up a YouTube channel with the group as administrators. Capability strengthening requested by the group was built into the project and included partnership brokering, videography, interviewing and grant writing skills.



THOMAS CAMERON, RECEIVING NAIDOC AWARD

SITE THE LITTLEWELL WORKING GROUP PLANNED TO PRESERVE

WANGKA MAYA



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

Cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger Country, stronger culture

This project involved a Community First Development volunteer supporting Wangka Maya to identify and develop partnerships with local stakeholders (schools, NGOs and Government agencies) to implement cultural language and history programs. This supports young people to remain strong in retaining their Aboriginal language, culture and history, ensuring cultural continuity.

WE MEET TOGETHER TO LISTEN, YARN, PLAN AND CONNECT SKILLED VOLUNTEERS WITH THE COMMUNITY TO GET THINGS DONE. PROJECTS ARE ALWAYS DETERMINED AND LED BY COMMUNITY.



IMAGE: COPYRIGHT NGAARDA MEDIA ©

NGROO EDUCATION INCORPORATED (NSW): CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SPEECH THERAPY RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT



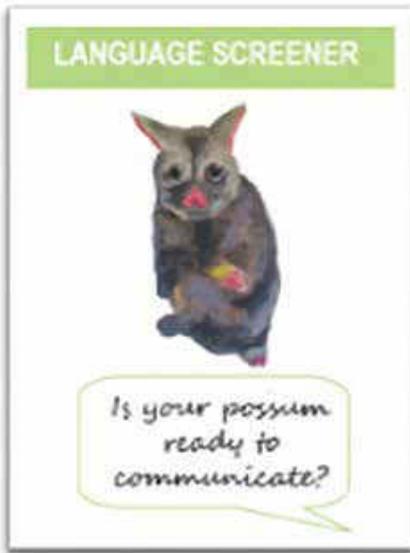
CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

Children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger education outcomes



RESOURCE LANGUAGE
SCREENER BOOK

Ngroo Education works to improve opportunities for Aboriginal children to achieve their potential by increasing their level of participation in mainstream early childhood education.

Ngroo has been focusing on supporting speech development with Aboriginal children, after observing that many of the children were functioning below the normal levels for their age group.

Community First Development connected Ngroo with a skilled graphic designer who worked with a local speech therapist to illustrate a children's book that will use imagery and wording taken from the local Aboriginal language and culture. This resource is an early intervention tool that families and communities can use to identify whether children may need assistance in this developmental area.

Ngroo developed a resource language screener book (see image to the left) which was designed using a possum, the local Darug totem. In this project, Community First Development connected Ngroo with a skilled graphic designer who designed the booklet using totems for four other areas in NSW. These resources have been distributed to the four language areas covering 136 preschools, 12 schools, and 20 community groups across NSW.



YUENDUMU YURRAMPI CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE COMMUNITY RE-BRAND PROJECT - CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CENTRE



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

Children thrive in their early years



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger education outcomes

This project involved a Community First Development volunteer working with the senior women on the reference group for the Yurrumpi Child and Family Centre in Yuendumu to develop a new brand and logo that shows the Warlpiri ownership and leadership of the centre. The volunteer provided graphic design skills and supported them with a locally based art competition to source ideas for the logo.

With Community First Development's support, Yurrumpi Child and Family Centre created a new brand and logo that has been digitised for a range of formats.

The volunteer also worked with Warlpiri educators from the neighbouring Bilingual Resource Development Unit, to digitise their drafts of the icons for each stage of the Warlpiri Theme Cycle.

The longer-term impacts of the project are starting to be felt. There is already widespread recognition of the logo among the community. This has resulted in community ownership, pride for the Warlpiri leadership, and greater community respect for the place and people working there.

A WINNING ARTWORK



SENIOR WOMEN OF THE REFERENCE GROUP



VICTORIA DALY SHIRE COUNCIL (VDSC) - KALKARINDGI (NT)- RSAS VIDEO PRODUCTION



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

Students achieve their full learning potential



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger education outcomes

Community First Development, in partnership with VDSC, their school attendance team and Kalkaringi School, developed a community-owned video on school attendance.

Kalkarindji and nearby community of Daguragu are the population centres of the land formerly held by the Wave Hill Cattle Station, located 480km south west of Katherine. At the 2016 census it was estimated the community of Kalkarindji had a population of 334 people. The school has 165 students enrolled and an average attendance rate of 52% over the past three years.³⁸

Community First Development worked in partnership with Victoria Daly Regional Council and their school attendance team as well as Kalkaringi School to develop a video on school attendance with the Year 2 students and supported by the broader school and community.

The students developed the concepts for the video by designing simple story boards of how they get ready for school each day. At the start of the project, the students required prompting and lots of questions to reflect on their personal experiences of getting ready for school.

The Community First Development team used the concepts from the story boards to direct a short film, starring the students who acted out each element of the story boards. A separate film on how the Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) team works with families to support school attendance was also developed.

At the end of the week, the children had an improved understanding on the importance of getting ready for school and when asked 'how do you get ready for school' would, unprompted, and excitedly chant the instructions: "Get out of bed, wash face, get dressed, brush hair, eat breakfast, brush teeth and walk or catch the bus."

The students developed the video concepts by designing simple storyboards which the Community First Development team then used to direct the short film. The project gave students the chance to learn new skills, work collaboratively, improve self-image and develop positive attitudes to their own education and well-being.

ONE OF THE YEAR TWO STUDENTS
LEARNING ABOUT FILM MAKING



GHURRUMBIL DREAMING GRANT APPLICATION - YOUTH FORUM



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

Youth are engaged in employment or education



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

More for youth

This project involved a Community First Development volunteer working closely with Ghurrumbil to develop a grant application for funding of a youth centre. This youth centre will provide counselling, financial and other support services to Indigenous youth in Lismore.

Ghurrumbil Dreaming Indigenous Corporation (GDIC) is primarily focused on engaging with young Aboriginal adults and youth in Lismore and the Northern Rivers Region. Established in 2018, the community wishes to provide avenues and opportunities for individuals and social development through training and education in a client-focused and culturally sensitive manner that acknowledges each individual's unique history, song lines³⁹ and aspirations.

Lismore currently does not have a Youth Centre, nor does it have free counselling services that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal youth. GDIC first invited Community First Development to work with them to develop a Business Development Plan for a Youth Centre aimed at providing training, mentoring and development services to young people, particularly Aboriginal youth, that supports their vocational progression in accordance with their level of skills and abilities. Community First Development volunteer, Richard, mentored, guided and worked with GDIC's young board (most members are around 30 years old) to develop a grounded pathway to attain funding and realise their vision for the Youth Centre.

WITH COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT'S SUPPORT, GDIC PREPARED AND LODGED AN APPLICATION FOR THE YOUTH CENTRE WITH THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AGENCY (OUTCOME UNKNOWN); AND DEVELOPED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE AROUND POLITICAL LOBBYING.



BALUK ARTS



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

Strong economic participation and development of people and their communities



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger economic outcomes

Baluk Arts is a wonderful urban Aboriginal Community Arts Centre in Mornington, Victoria. Baluk is a local Boonwurrung word meaning *many or group of people* and this reflects the diversity of their artists and their work.

Through Baluk Arts, emerging and established artists, family groups and members of the stolen generation have reconnected with their culture and express their histories through strong artistic practice to support their cultural and creative wellbeing.

Baluk's Manager, Nicole, has been doing an amazing job during COVID-19 as the only full-time staff member, supported by one part-time staff member. But to keep this art centre flourishing, more was required.

Community First Development have been working with Baluk Arts after they invited us to assist them with HR support. Their goal was to recruit for new staff and develop a program for Baluk to reach out to local volunteers for additional support during exhibitions and peak times.

This will allow Baluk to expand their creative and community programs in a sustainable way and build upon their already strong reputation of meaningful arts engagement.

Our skilled volunteer, Diane, has been working with Nicole to develop volunteer documents and processes, along with preparing position documents for new roles. Despite the many challenges of COVID-19, Nicole and Diane found time to connect and continue working on the project. Baluk is excited to now be in the recruitment phase.

BALUK ARTS "ELEMENTS" AT LINDEN NEW ART, ST KILDA



WRECK BAY - HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

People can secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger economic outcomes

Community First Development facilitated development of a draft strategy approach towards a Housing Management Plan for Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council. A key highlight was enabling the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council board and Wreck Bay community members to be aware of suitable options in regards to home ownership, resulting in a way forward to maintain community control and decision making in the community.

NGALLA MAYA - REINTEGRATION PROGRAM SUPPORT



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

Adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger safer communities

Ngalla Maya deliver a reintegration program which supports people transitioning from prison into employment and training. This project resulted in significant outcomes, with Community First Development supporting Ngalla Maya to:

- Develop a business case;
- Secure charitable status and connect with corporate partners;
- Develop four major funding submissions, resulting in increased capacity and skills in this area; and
- Secure and attend meetings with ministers and senior Federal public servants, including one that resulted in Ngalla Maya securing \$1.5 million funding through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

Completion of the project enabled Ngalla Maya to expand its program. As of June 2018, 57 people were employed through Ngalla Maya's support, compared to 17 people in 2015.

"NGALLA MAYA'S FUNDING ENABLES US TO CARRY OUR VITAL WORK TO THE MOST CRITICALLY VULNERABLE AND TO THEIR FAMILIES ALSO."

AARON - NGALLA MAYA

SOUTHERN TANAMI KURDIJI - STRATEGIC PLANNING



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

Young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger safer communities

Community First Development worked with the Directors, Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation (STKIC) staff and the General Manager to facilitate the co-designing of a draft two-year Strategic Plan. This document outlines approaches to strengthen the night patrol, community safety and mediation programs operations, and explores a franchise model to replicate their community mediation services with interested communities across the NT.

ABORIGINAL MALES HEALING CENTRE (WA)



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

Families and households are safe



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger safer communities

Aboriginal Males Healing Centre's (AMHC) long-term aim is to build a healing centre that can serve as an alternative to incarceration for men who engage in domestic or family violence. AMHC identified a website as a key requirement to achieve this outcome. Community First Development facilitated development of a website that will improve communication to those it provides a service to, but importantly, to existing and future partners, supporters and funders.

Other steps including a land survey, submission writing for funding grants and proposals have also been undertaken with AMHC.

*"WE ARE JUST PASSING THROUGH. OUR PURPOSE
HERE IS TO OBSERVE, TO LEARN, TO GROW, TO
LOVE...AND THEN WE RETURN HOME."*

ABORIGINAL PROVERB



NAIRM MARR DJAMBANA ABORIGINAL GATHERING PLACE



CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

People enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing



COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT STORY OF CHANGE AREA

Stronger healthier lives

In Frankston, Victoria, Nairm Marr Djambana provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with a safe cultural space to meet up through activities such as community lunches and children's playgroups.

Our skilled volunteers have supported community-led projects in landscape design, architecture and accounting and the organisation's first promotional video.

"THIS GATHERING PLACE TRULY DOES HAVE A MAGICAL WAY OF HOLDING, COMFORTING AND EXPANDING EVERYONE WHO WALKS THROUGH ITS DOORS."

ARPITA, COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT VOLUNTEER





JOIN US!

At Community First Development we are determined to see change in our life time. We are inspired by the strong communities we work with daily. We celebrate their strengths and ability to overcome challenges and barriers. Each community story is a powerful contribution to closing the stubborn gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia.

Together with communities and our supporters we are looking beyond the gap and measuring, tracking and celebrating stories on a micro and macro scale.

We are committed to long-term sustained change. We know that how we go about this is important and we will continue to hold self-determination at the core of our approach. There is much to do and strong community demand for our support that currently exceeds our resources. We warmly invite you to join us in making a difference in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

For more information on how you can get involved please visit our website:
www.communityfirstdevelopment.org.au



ENDNOTES

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GLOSSARY OF STORY OF CHANGE OUTCOME AREAS



STRONGER ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Increased participation in the economy such as financial recognition and salaries for important roles in community, gaining employment or building a business. It can lead to improved incomes for families and communities. Other outcomes may include strengthened self-esteem and reduced social alienation.



STRONGER GOVERNANCE

Governance is the evolving processes, relationships, institutions and structures by which a group of people organise themselves to collectively achieve the things that matter to them. Relationships are at the heart of many First Nations organisations, emphasising internal accountability and clear, culturally-informed and regular communication. Governance within a community may also include Western accountability requirements including financial and risk management, compliance and reporting.



STRONGER COUNTRY, STRONGER CULTURE

Knowledge and practice of culture, and respect for culture among the wider community. There are environmental, physical, spiritual, emotional and cultural benefits through connection to Country and practice of culture.



STRONGER CONNECTIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

Participation builds social connections and networks and fosters a sense of belonging, its impact extends beyond the number of people attending events or accessing services. Participation and connection is an important part of decision making and self-determination.

While partnerships have long been recognised as important for the development of effective and culturally-competent services, many First Nations people have had negative experiences of tokenistic relationships labelled as partnerships. Genuine partnerships can, however, have multiple benefits including: building cultural competence in services and guiding non-First Nations organisations and professionals to understand and respond to the priorities of First Nations communities.



STRONGER HEALTHIER LIVES

Physical health can be strengthened by people's living environment, access to and use of health services and the decision of individuals about their own health. Mental health can be strengthened through supports to address a range of complex medical issues, historical factors, stressors associated with trauma or entrenched disadvantage and substance misuse.



STRONGER SAFER COMMUNITIES

Safe and supportive families and communities provide a resilient, caring and protective environment. Safe and healthy living conditions are influenced by the homes in which people live, the food and water consumed, access to reliable electricity (or gas) supply for cooking, refrigeration, and running household appliances and the safe removal of waste.

For many people, individual wellbeing is closely tied to the wellbeing of their community as a whole. Environmental health is especially important for children's physical and emotional wellbeing. Suitable crime prevention and support services, grounded in culture, can also contribute to stronger, safer communities.



STRONGER EDUCATION OUTCOMES

Cultural studies and teacher quality are key to enhancing educational outcomes. Family environments can also influence educational outcomes including family involvement with the school, literacy levels at home, the level of value placed on learning and social and economic factors. Improved literacy and numeracy levels can improve social, educational and employment outcomes in a community.

People with a vocational or higher qualification are more likely to be employed and education can also have a positive influence on health and inter-generational flow-ons.



MORE FOR YOUTH

Young people often require additional support to successfully make the transition from education to work. Investments in young people need to recognise the challenges faced by youth and to build and enhance their capabilities, resilience and strengths through their creativity, capability, leadership potential and achievement. Young people need to have hope, opportunities and choices combined with the relevant skills and resources to succeed.



DATA SOVEREIGNTY

Reinforcing the right of First Nations people to exercise ownership of their data, and to use it to guide and make decisions to improve community outcomes and influence policy and funding decisions that impact them. Communities record and document information about their development story (and theory) and outcomes achieved and are able to use the data to their benefit.



STRONGER CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNITY

'Walking in two worlds' is a strength that communities use to stay connected to culture while navigating Western systems to access services, overcome barriers and achieve their aspirations. Conciliation can sometimes form part of this process. Conciliation is an active, ongoing process that has elements of truth, justice, forgiveness, healing, reparation, and love. This may be achieved through brokering major partnerships with non-First Nations organisations, raising awareness of culture more widely in community, through to building trusting relationships with individuals.



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