



Halls Creek Employment and Training

For young Aboriginal people in the Halls Creek area, the road to meaningful employment is rarely straightforward. Urgent change is required, if young individuals and communities are to gain economic independence and improve their livelihoods.

This evidence brief is designed to promote and guide discussion about Aboriginal employment and training opportunities in Halls Creek. It aims to build a common understanding about the reforms needed to improve opportunities for people to find and retain meaningful employment, enter into meaningful and relevant training, and to support the development of a shared agenda.

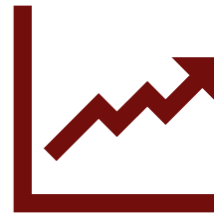
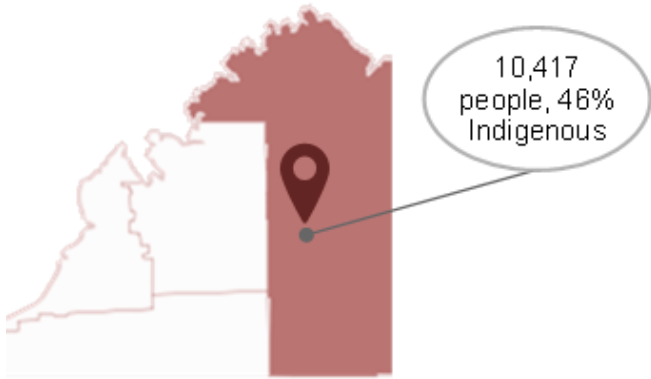
“ Education [and training] determines what life style you are going to lead – if educated you get jobs etc... there’s a difference between school and life.

- Halls Creek participant, Empowered Communities Consultation, 2015

Key Messages

- Local Indigenous leaders in the East Kimberley know that sustainable employment is vital to improving the lives of Aboriginal People.
- Across the region, the Aboriginal employment rate was 30% in 2016. Clearly a new approach is needed.
- Balanced recognition for supply and demand perspectives on the issue is needed, particularly in reference to the location of jobs and labor market conditions.
- Aboriginal people can create their own economic independence through small business and enterprise.
- One of the most effective way to identify employment opportunities is by engaging with local knowledge and taking a ‘place-based, Indigenous-led approach’. This can only be achieved by effective community engagement and genuine partnership approaches.
- There is a need to recognise that motivations and aspirations are different in the East Kimberley. Indigenous worldviews (ways of thinking and being) should be considered to encourage Aboriginal People into genuine employment opportunities.

Halls Creek: Data Snapshot



In 2015 the Kimberley Development Commission has estimated that an additional **18,286** jobs for Aboriginal people will be required across the Kimberley by 2036.

During 2015-17 in Halls Creek:

- 105** cautions (oral and written) to young people offending were issued
- 90** were arrested
- 64** were referred to Juvenile Justice Team
- 32** were summonsed to court

On average, there are 3 offences per offender who is arrested



A majority of offenders in Halls Creek are **Indigenous males aged 13-15**; engaged in offenses of burglary, motor vehicle theft and other theft



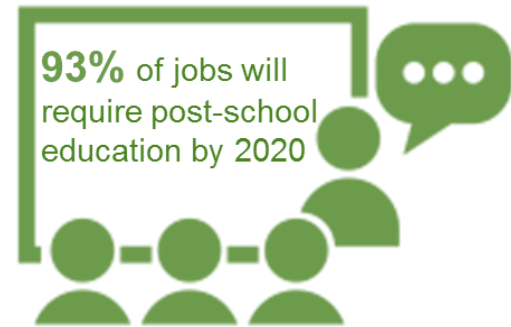
In Jan-March 2018 in Halls Creek, there have been 12 young people arrested, for 39 offences.

Comparatively, this number of offences (leading to arrest) gained in a three month period is **48%** of the *total* offences by young people arrested in 2017.

In 2016 **69%** of Indigenous 10-29 year olds were **NOT** fully engaged in work or study.



compared to the national rate for Indigenous youth not fully engaged of **34%**.



In term 3 2019 at HCDHS, the Indigenous student attendance rate fell to **48%** (from 60% in 2017).



The rate of Aboriginal students attending 90% of the time or more fell to 13% (from 16% in 2017).



In 2016, **36%** (or 1,743 people) of Aboriginal people across the East Kimberley were not in the labour force.



As at December 2017, there were **1,749** Indigenous people participating in the CDP program across the East Kimberley. An additional 133 were suspended at this time.

Data sources can be obtained from *Binarri binyja Yarrowoo Aboriginal Corporation*

Youth specific programs

Specific support for work-readiness and personalised **support through key transition years** (early education to kindergarten, primary to high school and high school to work/further study) are successful [33] [27], particularly when families are involved and engaged and parents take responsibility. This is enhanced through:

- **Clear and accessible pathways** to tertiary education with high expectations improve outcomes for employment in the long term [28] [29] [30]. These pathways can be supported by early career coaching in the form of mentoring, and providing early exposure to opportunities to attain context-relevant job-specific skills such as trade certifications.
- Holistic and multi-disciplinary approaches and **tailored individual student support** through coordinated and collaborative case management facilitated by local Aboriginal support staff has shown anecdotal effectiveness [9]. Individual students who require additional supports (in school and out of school) can access those supports through coordinated response mechanisms providing referrals and tailored interventions, while involving the family and **links to culture** and language [29] [31].
- However, recruitment and retention of the right staff in these roles to provide quality and consistent services to students is a key barrier to overcome.
- Engaging with other supports such as **strong Elders** who proactively support educational attainment and a wider community acceptance in communities where education is valued, employment pathways are visible, and the school is supportive and inclusive of culture and traditional knowledge [32].



The road to employability for an individual in remote Australia is impacted by diverse political, social, cultural, economic and environmental considerations, as illustrated above. Improving employability will require addressing other social issues and highlights the need for an intensive case management approach and co-ordination of wrap-around services.

Training

Vocational Educational Policy is focused on training students to be job-ready for the future needs of industry, which can have limited relevance for remote communities.

A systemic change would allow for a move from a job-ready focus towards a capacity building approach that incorporates local knowledge and aspirations with capabilities and activities necessary for engagement in the local job markets [19]

Local evidence: What's needed

A review of local reports and consultation notes (ASEIA, 2004 [4]; Pearce and Jennings, 2014 [5]; Enzyme, 2015 [16], RSRU, 2017 [15] ; evidence the strong and persistent call by Aboriginal people for recognition of **community strengths and provision of local opportunities**. Reports dating back to the 1990's (as referenced in ASEIA) call for community involvement in planning opportunities (particularly for those with access to land) to provide self-led social and economic gain, and employment.

- ✓ Funding is required- or requires redirection- to be focused on employing and training for Aboriginal people to be the workers to help their own communities, such as drug and alcohol counsellors and housing maintenance workers.
- ✓ Affordable and long hours child care where Aboriginal parents and carers feel secure leaving their children, while they actively engage in training or meaningful employment.
- ✓ Deeper interaction with the education system and the academic success of children. As young adults exit schooling into employment or training, there is often a transition gap which individuals with heightened vulnerabilities can fall through, leading to interactions with drugs and alcohol, crime and lowered mental health, impacting their employment options.
- ✓ Flexibility from mainstream employers (or job contracts), and managers being responsive to employee requests for cultural or family responsibilities, or personal wellbeing (such as time required to access support services).

What we don't know yet:

Which cultural drivers support people to retain long term employment [8] [6].

We can be sure that one size does not fit all, hence the importance of focusing on adapting models to discover the various ways that can support Aboriginal people to engage with employment opportunities, and ways that people can be supported to be retained in meaningful employment [8].

What we don't know yet:

Which jobs are viewed as legitimate by family and community (and why).

There is emerging and strong evidence that Aboriginal Ranger programs working on country and community run Aboriginal art centers are seen as positive for employment [15], as they make a positive and tangible connection between culture, community and economic development. However, an evidence base has not been well developed in the East Kimberley.

What we don't know yet: The impact of transiency and labor mobility in the Kimberley and impacts of seasonal contracts.

While the impacts of wet and dry seasonality within the labor market is well recognised in the Kimberley [13] [23], the impact that this has on Aboriginal employment outcomes and wellbeing has not been thoroughly assessed.

However, research to date suggests that casual or insecure employment (which is largely what is on offer with seasonal work) has a negative impact on wellbeing and is associated with depression and anxiety [17]. This would suggest that longer term employment opportunities that provide job security and career progression are preferred.



Literature Review: What Works

Within literature relating to Aboriginal employment outcomes, particularly in remote settings, there is a focus on what doesn't work. This brief literature review will focus on what does work, to change the narrative surrounding Aboriginal employability and employment.

1. The most effective way to identify employment opportunities is by respecting local knowledge and taking a **'place-based, Indigenous-led approach'** [19]. This knowledge can only be attained through effective community engagement and genuine partnership in the design and delivery of programs [1]. It is acknowledged that Aboriginal aspirations and measures of success may differ from dominant non-Indigenous notions of education and employment pathways [1], and economic independence remains central to empowerment.
2. Employment programs focusing on **demand and supply** sides of the employment issue will contribute to progress for Aboriginal people. In the East Kimberley, awareness and understanding of what is happening in the broader labour market is a key determinant of Indigenous workforce participation and employment, as changing industry structures have disproportionate impacts on Indigenous Australians [1]. Engaging with the demand aspects of Aboriginal employment includes realigning opportunities to the location of jobs, adjusting opportunities as structural changes to job markets occur, and building awareness of industry needs within job seekers and people in training. On the supply side, health, education and training, work experience and caring responsibilities can have an impact on participation in the workforce [1]. Case management **support to address non-vocational barriers** to employment can support people to enter the labour force in a genuine way.
3. **Adaptive approaches** will ensure that Aboriginal people can realise their potential when local employment opportunities are limited. Aboriginal people may seek to do this through further education, or through training for employment in self-owned or community-owned enterprise [4] [5] [2]. Emerging opportunities in the East Kimberley in local **Aboriginal enterprises** should be encouraged. It is estimated that by the year 2026, an additional 73,250 Indigenous Australians will join the working ages of 20-44 across Australia. Based on current Indigenous self-employment rates around 2,200 will start a business [3]. It is only fitting that Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley be encouraged to create their own opportunities for employment and economic independence. To support emerging enterprises locally, industries and employers must be prepared to be creative and embrace new pathways that may challenge existing thinking, which can allow job seekers to attain their aspirations and provide alternative sources for skill building.
4. Intervening early with young workers to put them back into **education and employment pathways**. While education alone does not determine employment outcomes, it is certainly a contributing factor. It is estimated that by 2020, over 90 percent of jobs will require a post-school education- young people not directly entering the job market after school should be engaged in education or training, boosting their employability in the future. These education and employment pathways must be relevant to the local labour market and match up to the job opportunities available, particularly in industry specific courses.
5. Supporting local employers to recruit and retain quality Aboriginal employees and facilitating **genuine work placements** can assist in achieving long term sustainable employment, particularly for young people. Strong partnerships between workplaces, placement organisers and the employee are essential to the success of a person moving from placements to genuine work. Partnerships need to be strengthened to enable Aboriginal people to trust that they will be provided with guaranteed jobs [6] that can lead to careers upon completion of training [3] and to ensure a culturally safe workplace culture.

Strong Pathways to Employment



Work Readiness, Life Skills & Mentoring

Building capabilities in individuals and households is critical to sustain success for long term employment. Capability building in life skills (such as goal setting, problem solving, time management and managing conflict) will contribute to a person's personal confidence and aptitude in the work place [8], especially for young people and school leavers.

Effective Recruitment

Supporting work roles that recognise the value of both traditional and contemporary knowledge and build on the inherent strengths of individuals. Pathways that build on local identities and aspirations will create better outcomes [9] [15] [18].

Building of Workplace Competencies

Committed corporate leadership, willingness to provide extra support to the employee and suitably qualified personnel in training and liaison positions can all assist with supporting retention and ensuring increased workplace participation [8].

Professional Development

Mentoring should address the ongoing development need of the employee and be conducted outside and inside the workplace [8].

Moreover, it has been identified that Aboriginal employees want careers- not just jobs [3]. Career progression opportunities can incentivise and motivate employees where skills and aptitude are well matched.

Call for Action:

In the East Kimberley, Aboriginal employment has been a multi-industry focus for many years. To be successful in making meaningful and sustainable change, communities, employers and industry partners must commit to new ways of thinking:

1. Evidence demonstrates that 'more of the same' is not good enough – there is an urgent need to think differently about how to genuinely engage young Aboriginal people in the economy. Local customisation of service delivery models that are designed with Indigenous people are required, alongside provision of individualised supports.
2. There is a need to recognise optimum supply and demand conditions to support Aboriginal engagement in workplaces- employee motivation, effective retention strategies, career progression opportunities, and optimum labour market conditions can align to produce a long term positive outcome for Aboriginal employment.

References and further reading

1 References

- [1] Biddle, Hunter, Gray and Yap, "Eight ways we can improve Indigenous employment," *The Conversation*, 2016.
- [2] M. Morrison, J. Collins, P. Basu and B. Krivokapic-Skoko, "Determining the factors influencing the success of private and community-owned Indigenous businesses across remote, regional and urban Australia.," Charles Sturt University, 2014.
- [3] Prime Minister and Cabinet, "Indigenous Businesses Factsheet," 2016.
- [4] Kimberley Land Council, "Aboriginal Social and Economic Assessment of the Ord River Irrigation Project," 2004.
- [5] Pearce, D; Jennings, A., "MG Social Development Priorities Review," Kimberley Boab Consulting (with MG Corp), 2014.
- [6] M. Gray, B. Hunter and S. Lohoar, "Increasing Indigenous Employment Rates," *Closing the Gap Clearinghouse*, 2012.
- [7] APO NT, "Remote Employment," 2017.
- [8] Ninti One, "Submission to the review of Indigenous Training and Employment," 2013.
- [9] L. Rivers, "Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathways: A literature review," *Ninitone*, 2012.
- [10] National Centre for Vocational Education Research, "VET Retention in Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities," 2017.
- [11] B. Ewing, G. Sarra, R. Price, O. G and C. Priddle, "Access to sustainable employment and productive training: workplace participation strategies for Indigenous employees," *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, Issue 2, 2017.
- [12] J. Guethner, E. McRae and C. Kilgariff, "Engineering employment pathways in remote communities and the (false) hope of collaborative service provision," *NARU Seminar Series*, 2014.
- [13] Kimberley Development Commission, "2036 and Beyond: A Regional Investment Blueprint for the Kimberley," 2015.
- [14] Generation One, "Everybodys Business: A Handbook for Indigenous Employment," *GenerationOne, Reconciliation Australia, Social Ventures Australia*, 2013.
- [15] Remote Services Reform Unit, "Resilient Families, Strong Communities: Consultation Paper," *Government of Western Australia*, 2017.
- [16] Enzyme Consulting, "Kununurra and Halls Creek: Community Leadership Workshops," 2015.
- [17] E. Malbon and G. Carey, "Implications of worktime flexibility for health promoting behaviours," *Evidence Base*, Issue 4. Vol. 2017, 2017.
- [18] E. McRae, "Pathways to Employment: Case Study research about aspirations for employment and education," *Ninitone*, 2015.
- [19] J. Guenther, M. Bat, A. Stephens, J. Skewes, B. Boughton, F. Williamson, S. Woollorton, M. Marshall and A. Dwyer, "Enhancing Training Advantage for Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners," *National Centre for Vocational Education Research*, 2017.
- [20] K. Jordan, L. Fowkes, J. Altman, I. Kral, W. Sanders, J. Morrison, J. Paterson and E. Klein, "Job Creation and Income Support in Remote Indigenous Australia: Moving Forward with a Better System," *CAEPR*, 2017.
- [21] Jobs Australia, "What to do about CDP," 2016.
- [22] Jawun, "Learnings and Insights, Indigenous-Led Innovation and Empowerment," 2014.
- [23] Social Compass, "Real Jobs II," *Wunan Foundation*, 2010.
- [24] Senate: Finance and Public Administration References Committee, "Appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of the Community Development Program (CDP)," *Commonwealth of Australia*, 2017.
- [25] P. M. a. C. C. Program, "CDP Data Provided to Empowered Communities East Kimberley," 2016.

- [26] S. Dockett, T. Mason and B. Perry, Successful transition to school for Australian Aboriginal children, Charles Sturt University, 2006.
- [27] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, "Australia's Welfare 2017," 2017.
- [28] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, "SCSEEC successful school attendance strategies evidence-based project - Summary Report," Australian Government, 2014.
- [29] IESIP SRP National Coordination and Evaluation Team, "What works? Explorations in improving outcomes for Indigenous students," Australian Curriculum Studies Association, Canberra, 2000.
- [30] Osbourne and Hargreaves, "Choosing VET: aspirations, intentions and choice," National Centre for Vocational Research, 2017.
- [31] SNAICC, "Supporting Transition to school for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children: What Works?," 2013.
- [32] N. Niddrie, S. Barnes and K. Brosnan, Understanding family perspectives of school attendance in remote communities: Evaluation of the Remote School Attendance Strategy, Commonwealth of Australia 2018, 2018.
- [33] T. M. a. B. P. S. Dockett, Successful transition to school for Australian Aboriginal children, Charles Sturt University , 2006.