Literacy for Life:

A Scoping Study for a Community Literacy Empowerment Project

A report prepared for the community of Wugularr, the Jawoyn Association and The Fred Hollows Foundation

By R.G. (Jerry) Schwab and Dale Sutherland
Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University

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Foreword

Most people in Australia take the capacity to read and write pretty much for granted – sadly that is not the case for our countrymen and women. The great irony about this report is that most Jawoyn and other Aboriginal people in our region will not be able to read it. For many of those that can, it will be very difficult.

We have to be honest and hard about this. For us, the lack of literacy in our communities is a deep problem – and one that threatens our future. It affects us throughout our life.

This was brought home to me when we first started talking in the Jawoyn Association about getting this Scoping Study, *Literacy for Life*, done through The Fred Hollows Foundation.

Someone who has knocked around with Jawoyn people for a long time – a whitefella – came to one of our executive meetings with his four month old daughter. He pointed out that he had spent nearly 20 years reading and writing submissions and documents for our people – and that if things didn't change his daughter would have to take over doing the same job in 20 years time!

There is an obvious lesson here. Building the skills of reading and writing is the key to our survival as a people.

That's what this report is about. Without these skills, we cannot run our communities and organisations properly – we cannot build and control our commercial enterprises. Lack of literacy affects our health and our chances of getting good jobs. Not being able to read and write affects our capacity to look after our country. It is vital to the strength of our culture.

Above all, we cannot be independent.

This report is not answer in itself – it is more like a signpost to the future. It is important that our communities and the Territory and Australian governments take it seriously. I hope it can also benefit other Aboriginal people around the nation.

I thank The Fred Hollows Foundation for their help in this project, as well as the people of the Wugularr community who worked so closely with Jerry Schwab and Dale Sutherland in getting the report together.

Let us hope that – in 20 years time – our children and grandchildren can pick this report up and see it as an important historic document that helped change their lives – and the lives of their children and grandchildren.

Robert Lee
Jawoyn Association

The Westpac Foundation
Supporting our communities

The Fred Hollows Foundation would like to acknowledge the support of The Westpac Foundation in the development of this report.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ANU	The Australian National University
ATAS	Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BIITE	Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (formerly Batchelor College)
BRACS	Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
CDU	Charles Darwin University (formerly Northern Territory University)
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (now DEST)
ESL	English as a Second Language
FELIKS	Fostering English Language in Kimberley Schools
MAP	Multilevel Assessment Program
NARU	North Australia Research Unit
NMN Regional Authority	Nyirranggulung Mardrulk Ngadberre Regional Authority
NTDE	Northern Territory Department of Education (now NTDEET)
NTDEET	Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training
NTETA	Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority (now part of NTDEET)
NTU	Northern Territory University (now Charles Darwin University)
SHSAC	Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation
SRP	Strategic Results Projects
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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This project could never have been carried out without the generous assistance and goodwill of many people. First and foremost we wish to acknowledge the support of Robert Lee and the staff and members of the Jawoyn Association who initiated the study. Robert's longstanding vision of empowerment for the Indigenous people of the Katherine region through both education and participation in the regional economy has underpinned this study from the very start. As the project evolved and the decision to focus on Wugularr was reached, the members of that community gave generously of their time and ideas. We wish to thank all the people of Wugularr and especially Veronica Birrell, Lorraine Bennett, Martha Bennett, Richard Kennedy, Edna Snape, Joseph Brown, Sam Ashley, Caroline Wurrben, Jennifer Kennedy and Tommy Lewis. Similarly, the community of Barunga was welcoming and patient with our many questions and many people there assisted us with the study. In particular we wish to acknowledge the support of Anthony Lee (who, very sadly, passed away recently), Barry Robinson, Esther Bulumbara, David Oenpelli, Nell Brown and Sybil Ranch. Our visit to Manyallaluk was brief but we appreciated very much the advice and support of Peter Bolgi.

The Fred Hollows Foundation is a strong and committed partner in a range of health, social and economic projects to improve the well-being of Aboriginal people in the Katherine region; this is but one of such projects. We would like to acknowledge in particular the tireless enthusiasm and support of Olga Havnen and Peter Holt as well as the logistical assistance of Gemina Corpus; Wayne Brocklebank was extremely helpful in one of our early visits to the region and we wish to acknowledge his assistance as well.

An exciting new initiative that was established over the course of this study is the Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation. As we argue in this report, the links between health and education are enormously important and we appreciated very much the assistance of Sunrise staff, especially Graham Castine, Irene Fisher, Lisa van der Maat, Karen Cucilovic and Giselle Lawler. Chips Mackinolty, who was instrumental in the establishment of Sunrise and has long been affiliated with the Jawoyn Association, was supportive and active in the development of this project from the very beginning and we wish to acknowledge his sound advice and constructive comments over the course of the research.

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Gerald Butler, Joyce Vandermaas and Bronwen Scully in the Darwin office of NTDEET all assisted at various stages of the project and we wish to acknowledge their willingness to help with this important task. The staff of Centrelink, Katherine, were responsive and helpful in all our requests and we want to thank Trish Spark and Hayes Buchanan in particular.

One of the unanticipated pleasures of this project has been to witness the inspiring efforts of Indigenous people who give so much of their time and energy to benefit their communities. Many of those people work quietly behind the scenes in schools, health clinics, women's centres and the like while others take more prominent and public positions to work for the betterment of all. We have also been inspired by the many non-Aboriginal people who work in partnership with Aboriginal people and achieve enormous gains. Many of those people are acknowledged above but we also wish to thank Hugh Lovesy and Barry and Colleen Orr who gave us insight and advice into the challenges faced by Aboriginal people in the Katherine region and who have given selflessly to the Aboriginal communities they work in and with.

Finally, we wish to thank colleagues at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the Australian National University, especially, Jon Altman. His support in this lengthy and complex project has been unwavering. Sally Ward contributed greatly as a research assistant in the early stages of the project and Frances Morphy and John Hughes provided much appreciated editorial assistance. We also wish to express our appreciation to John Taylor and Neil Westbury; in this study we have built on their earlier groundbreaking work in the Katherine region. John, especially, provided much useful advice and assistance with analyses of data.

As is usual in academic writings, while we wish to acknowledge the generous assistance of the many people mentioned above, we take full responsibility for any errors or inadvertent misrepresentations in this report.

Executive Summary

The study: history and aims

In 1999 the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) carried out research in the Katherine region that focused on food provision, nutrition and health service delivery to the Aboriginal people in the region. The research was funded by The Fred Hollows Foundation and sponsored by the Jawoyn Association. Key features of that research were its aims to develop sustainable local capacity and to act as a catalyst for improving health in the region. Since that time, however, it has become clear that health improvements are and will continue to be hampered by the low literacy levels of people in that area.

This report is a scoping study commissioned by The Fred Hollows Foundation in collaboration with the Jawoyn Association. It is the first stage of what is envisaged as a long-term project aimed at enhancing health, education and employment outcomes in the Katherine region through a community literacy program. The focus of this study is the Aboriginal community of Wugularr (also known as Beswick), located on country belonging to the Bagula clan of the Jawoyn people, 120 kilometres south of the regional centre of Katherine.

The original research carried out by John Taylor and Neil Westbury provided a range of baseline demographic and employment data that are relevant to this study. One of the aims of this study is to update these data where possible and to augment them with additional quantitative information (e.g. about student performance) where it is available. These baseline data are intended to provide a series of contemporary snapshots which can be used by community members to assess their situation, identify needs and gauge future progress. In terms of data, the study focuses on 2002 and where available, data from previous years is used to provide some tracking of changes. The second aim of the study is to map out community perceptions of literacy and community aspirations for literacy through a series of community consultations. Third, the study provides case studies of international best practice related to community literacy. Finally, the study is intended to provide individuals, and the community of Wugularr, with options and strategies to acquire skills, knowledge and resources to increase literacy levels throughout the region.

Methodology

We began the project with a set of preliminary discussions with The Fred Hollows Foundation and the Jawoyn Association in Darwin and Katherine in late 2001. We then began to conduct a literature review of international and national best practice related to community literacy.

We returned to the Northern Territory in late April 2002 and spent three weeks collecting data and carrying out consultations in Darwin, Katherine, Wugularr, Barunga and Manyallaluk. Our first field trip involved a series of meetings and consultations with members of the Wugularr, Barunga and Manyallaluk communities. Those consultations focused on identifying local perceptions of literacy and education, local people's understandings about the roles and responsibilities of local communities in developing literacy, their perceptions about the role of government and other agencies in relation to education and literacy, and their aspirations and aims for increasing literacy levels. After analysing the community consultation data from the first field trip, we proposed to the two primary partners (The Fred Hollows Foundation and the Jawoyn Association) that the scoping study should focus on Wugularr. This community has the highest levels of activity, and we believed that it had the best chance of designing and implementing a successful community literacy program. That advice was accepted and the project was then focused more sharply on Wugularr.

We returned to Darwin, Katherine and Wugularr for two weeks in December 2002, collecting additional data and providing presentations to members of the Jawoyn Association and the Wugularr community on the nature of the intervention options we were most

likely to recommend in this report. A brief follow-up visit was made to Katherine and Wugularr by Jerry Schwab in September 2003.

Community profile

The Wugularr community is linguistically diverse with a total population of between 350 and 450 speaking more than ten different Aboriginal languages. Kriol is the most commonly spoken language, however, and English is used almost exclusively to talk with non-Indigenous people in the community and wider region. The school has an enrolment of about 110 students with the average attendance rate around 60 per cent. English literacy and numeracy levels as measured against the national benchmark are extremely low for primary school students. The provision of adult, technical and further education has been irregular in recent years and adult enrolments are declining.

The overall population is young in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians and other Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory; nearly 40 per cent of Wugularr residents are under the age of 15 and in recent years the proportion of young people has increased. The economic implication is that the ratio of working adults to dependent children is increasing and with it the economic burden that falls on adults. Virtually all employment is through the Community Development Employment Projects scheme (CDEP) but the number of people in or looking for work has declined. Over the last inter-censual period fewer Aboriginal people in Wugularr had no income and more reported high income, yet the large majority remain impoverished. Dependence on welfare payments increased sharply over the same period.

Community consultations on literacy

One of the aims of this scoping study is to map out community perceptions about and aspirations for literacy through a series of community consultations. To the right is a list of some of the community literacy ideas shared with us during the consultations held with the Indigenous people resident in Barunga, Manyallaluk and most especially Wugularr.

Community literacy: practical suggestions from the communities:

- providing practical literacy and numeracy learning opportunities, such as training and work in the community store (this is happening in Wugularr, but less so in Barunga and Manyallaluk)
- providing local governance training
- providing courses specifically for women through the women's centre (e.g. sewing, cooking and a parent/child program of activities)
- developing early childhood activities for the creche that involve young mothers
- organising community bush trips for children that incorporate the development of stories into books that reflect community interests and activities
- starting a community newsletter
- embedding literacy and numeracy training in art and craft activities
- redeveloping the agricultural plot into a market garden and establishing a produce market; again incorporating literacy and numeracy activities
- the appointment of an adult education coordinator to organise and run adult education activities
- establishing a training program for sport and recreation officers
- initiating sporting and recreational activities that particularly target young people
- show-casing Aboriginal role models who are involved in a range of learning environments and training and employment activities through arranged visits, videos and other materials
- carrying out an audit and establishing a skills register that identifies gaps in community knowledge and skills
- starting a ranger program to carry out land care activities
- providing training for communication with tourists
- increasing training for drug and alcohol and mental health workers
- providing specific training in aged care

The consultations provided both an opportunity for community members to share specific ideas and aspirations about specific ideas to promote literacy and a chance to express views on the nature of literacy and why it is important. Community perceptions of the importance of literacy were articulated at great length. The various comments cluster around six major themes that capture the perceptions of the importance of literacy:

- literacy is necessary in the world of today
- literacy skills need to be improved across the community
- literacy opens up opportunities for meaningful work
- literacy helps people maintain health for themselves and their family
- literacy is crucial for Indigenous self determination and community development
- everyone is responsible for literacy

Best practice models for community literacy

In this section of the report we present a number of snapshots of programs and approaches to community literacy to illustrate some of the sorts of interventions and options community members might want to consider as they look to develop community literacy. Some of the snapshots are detailed and provide overviews of large-scale State or national-level programs; others are simply a set of ideas that might 'fit' in Wugularr or other communities in the region.

Best Start (Victoria)

Best Start is an initiative of the Victorian government aimed at improving the well-being of young children through improving access to child and family support, heath services and early education, assisting parents and carers to increase their skills and understanding, and working with communities to better support families and children. The program is still in its early stages but it shows great promise. Indigenous specific projects are in the planning stages.

Among the ideas from the Victorian Best Start program that could be adopted in the Jawoyn region are:

- formulating a local action plan to strengthen support for families and young children
- developing an early childhood library and resource centre for use by parents and professionals
- setting up a children's services conference for all providers in the region
- drawing a 'map' of the services currently provided to young children and their families and identifying who does and does not use them
- establishing a play group for children not yet in preschool
- initiating a 'walking bus' where volunteers walk through the community and escort children to school

Best Start (Western Australia)

This program is run through the Western Australia Department for Community Development. It is focused exclusively on Aboriginal children (birth to 5 years) and their families. The overarching aim of the program is improvement in life opportunities for Aboriginal children through focusing on improving their health and education, and their social and cultural development.

Components of the Western Australia Best Start projects that could be adopted or adapted in the Jawoyn region:

- health education programs for families and other carers
- cultural camps and activities designed to include children, families, grandparents
- a focus on adult literacy and numeracy skills
- mentoring for young mothers (by mature Aboriginal mothers)
- parenting workshops to target safety in the home, behaviour management, nutrition, hygiene and motor skills development

Scaffolding Literacy (The Accelerated Literacy Program), FELIKS and ESL

This teaching program, referred to as Accelerated Literacy in the Northern Territory, was developed by Brian Gray and Wendy Cowey at the Schools and Community Centre at the University of Canberra. The aim of the program is to accelerate literacy acquisition, particularly among students who have not been able to achieve appropriate literacy benchmarks. A national Accelerated Literacy Program was recently established at Charles Darwin University.

The Northern Territory Department of Education, Employment and Training (NTDEET) is currently supporting a range of English as a Second Language (ESL) initiatives. One approach that has met with success is the Fostering English Language in Kimberley Schools (FELIKS) program, a training package for teachers that focuses on Standard Australian English instruction but recognises the legitimacy of Aboriginal English (most often Kriol in the Jawoyn region). The approach involves professional development training for teachers to assist them to help children develop code switching strategies for moving between Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English. FELIKS has been adopted in Wugularr and proven to be an effective tool for helping both students and teachers. All teachers at Wugularr have participated in FELIKS training.

There is currently a great deal of enthusiasm for Scaffolding (Accelerated) Literacy in the Northern Territory and in the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). The approach is expensive in terms of staff development time but there is every possibility that the approach would yield positive outcomes for children and young people in Wugularr. In addition, there are a range of proven ESL options that could be adopted in the Jawoyn region.

The key lesson here is for community members to use their awareness of such programs to engage with educators and NTDEET officers in discussions of classroom literacy curriculum and to assess program options for Wugularr and Jawoyn region schools. While teachers are professionals with specific knowledge and skills, parents and community members have a right and obligation to engage in discussions about ways of enhancing learning in their schools and communities.

The Kimberley Literacy Project literacy backpacks

Not every community literacy intervention is expensive or dependent on intensive training. The literacy backpack is a simple idea. Children are given backpacks filled with a range of text materials such as books, newspapers, comics and magazines, and audio-visual and/or auditory materials such as music tapes or videos all linked to a particular theme. They also contain an activity to complete at home with help from a family member. Literacy backpacks have been used successfully in many communities in the USA and Canada, and were apparently first introduced to Indigenous Australian families through the Kimberley Literacy Project in the year 2000.

The literacy backpack is a simple and powerful intervention. It has been shown to increase the engagement of families with schools and with literacy materials. There is evidence that these programs can boost the literacy skills of young children. Some version of the literacy backpack program would be useful addition to the strategies taken on by the Wugularr community.

Booroongen Djugun College

Booroongen Djugun College, an independent adult education facility in Kempsey in New South Wales, was established in 1994 specifically to focus on the needs of Aboriginal people in the region. The first accredited courses that the college offered were in the area of community care.

There are number of features of Booroongen Djugun College that are useful for consideration in any Wugularr or Jawoyn region community literacy initiative:

- this is a model for how a community can identify a real need (a growing aged segment of the local Indigenous population that requires care) and develop an educational facility to meet those needs
- it provides an example of how a community took education and training into its own hands rather than wait for State training providers to meet local needs

- it is an education and training program that reaches widely across the community including secondary age students through a Vocational Education and Training (VET) in school program as well as young school leavers and adults
- college curricula are written to meet both personal and community needs and interests
- community elders are involved in both curriculum design (traditional knowledge) and operations (a College Board of Elders)

Even Start Family Literacy Program (USA)

The Even Start Family Literacy Program began as a small demonstration program in the USA in 1989. The aim of the program is to address the basic educational needs of parents and children. It is intended to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy. The program targets low-income families with children up to the age of 8 years. Even Start provides an integrated program that includes three key service components: adult basic or secondary education, assistance for parents to promote the educational development of their children, and early childhood education.

In the context of Wugularr and the Jawoyn region, family literacy programs like Even Start could have a very positive impact in terms of community literacy.

- the program has been carefully evaluated and there is a great deal of evidence to show that it can have substantial impact
- it has been used in American Indian communities where many of the cultural and social issues are similar to those experienced by Indigenous Australians
- the family literacy model is essentially a vehicle for promoting lifelong learning and so is highly appropriate in working at multiple levels in the community – with children and adults
- by providing accessible information on relevant topics, the parenting education initiative may help to alleviate certain social problems in some communities, such as domestic violence and poor mental health

Sure Start (United Kingdom)

Sure Start is a United Kingdom program that seeks to address child poverty and social exclusion through early intervention for disadvantaged children up to the age of 4, their families and the communities in which they live. The aim of Sure Start is to work with parents in promoting the physical, intellectual and social development of their babies and small children, with the intention that children will be better equipped to flourish when they get to school.

Sure Start does not aim to provide a new set of services but to change existing services. This is achieved by reshaping, enhancing, adding value, and by increased coordination among government departments and service providers. At the local level, Sure Start areas are required to form a partnership of statutory and voluntary agencies, professionals, practitioners and parents. The four main facets of the program are: family support, advice on nurturing, health services and early learning.

The British Sure Start program has much in common with the Australian Best Start programs. Like them, it contains a range of very interesting ideas of direct relevance to community literacy enhancement in Wugularr and the Jawoyn region. The establishment of the Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation (SHSAC) with a designated adult educator and a child health educator provide an important resource that could enable many of the initiatives to improve child health, build strong families, and raise community literacy levels. The commitment by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to coordinated service delivery for Indigenous communities should also provide a framework for developing some of these ideas.

A range of intervention options

We are now in a position to present a range of intervention options for the community of Wugularr. Though these options are offered for Wugularr, most would be applicable in some form to the various Aboriginal communities throughout the Jawoyn region (and perhaps beyond). These options:

- focus on issues identified by Wugularr residents as important for the future
- take advantage of emerging or existing activities in the community
- build on a sound theoretical and evidence base

- involve the development of individual and community capacity

We offer the Wugularr community a range of different options that address what we believe are the three critical arenas for community literacy: young children, mothers and families; adolescents and adults; and children at school. Each of the options links to the other two in terms of people and activities, and through those linkages a true community literacy program can be built.

Community literacy option 1: supporting young children, mothers and families

The activities we propose for this option are essentially long-term investment strategies. We believe that the community should pursue ways to enhance literacy among children and adults in the community, but at the same time should be looking for ways to ensure the children who have not yet reached school are healthy and 'school ready'. Research shows that there is a correlation between improvements in literacy and improvements in individual and community health. The impact of health on literacy development begins during pregnancy and continues through infancy and early childhood; throughout these early pre- and antenatal years much of a child's capacity for learning is established. Similarly, increasing literacy levels can have a significant positive impact on health outcomes. Improved literacy assists in developing the skills a person needs to access health services and information as well as assisting a person to be able to interpret and understand that information. Expanding an individual's knowledge base also allows for the development of appropriate health practices, obviously a key opportunity with the arrival of the SHSAC.

The health of babies in any community depends in large part on the knowledge of young women who understand the significance of antenatal care and good nutrition for themselves and their children. Contrary to what many would like to believe, successfully rearing healthy children does not come naturally. Young women can greatly increase the chances that their children will be healthy and school ready if they are assisted in learning about child development, safety, nutrition and the like.

Specific ideas to pursue:

1. **Convene a Child and Family Services Workshop** This workshop would include representatives of key agencies and organisations (e.g. Centrelink, Sunrise, Wugularr School). The aim of this workshop would be to map existing services, identify gaps and develop mechanisms for enhancing future services.

2. **Begin developing a Wugularr Child and Family Support Plan to address issues raised in the workshop** An action plan with identified responsibilities and protocols for working on issues would be essential to making progress.

3. **Recruit an Early Childhood and Family Support Officer** It is clear that there is enormous care and concern for young children and mothers in Wugularr, and that there are many separate services provided by various agencies that address the needs of young children and families. Historically, however, it has been difficult to effectively coordinate the various services. A full time, Early Childhood and Family Support Officer who resides in the community could play a key role in facilitating service delivery. We would imagine the person in this role would act as liaison between individuals (and the community) and a variety of agencies, and would also be a qualified early education specialist able to facilitate and perhaps teach community education courses on parenting skills, childcare, child development, child safety and the like. Key activities could include:

   - liaising with Centrelink to ensure benefits are received and problems sorted out
   - liaising with the SHSAC to ensure Wugularr residents can draw upon the community development, child health, maternal and women's health, and nutrition programs to attain the best possible outcomes for mothers, young children and families
   - working with the Adult Education and Community Literacy Officer (see option 2 below) to build literacy and numeracy training into all of the above
   - working with the Adult Education and Community Literacy Officer, the school and NTDEET to develop a family literacy program
   - working with the school and NTDEET to develop a preschool playgroup

Community literacy option 2: supporting adolescents and adults

Developing a coordinated approach to building community literacy involves working with a range of stakeholders in the community and region. During the consultation phase of this scoping study we quickly discovered that there are many different service providers who could serve the literacy and numeracy training needs of adolescents and adults in the community. Similarly, there are a number (admittedly limited) of potential employers who are in need of workers with more than rudimentary literacy and numeracy skills. We therefore recommend the following options:

1. **Develop a Wugularr Community Literacy Action Plan** Using this scoping study as a starting point, the community could bring together key stakeholders to begin mapping out a specific plan of action to address the literacy and numeracy needs of adults in the community. The plan could identify specific gaps in training as viewed by employers and stakeholders, and nominate appropriate providers and programs (and resources) to deliver the training. For example, with the establishment of the SHSAC in the region, the establishment of the Nyirranggulung Mardrulk Ngadberre Regional Authority (NMN Regional Authority), and the restructuring of the Authority's CDEP scheme into core areas (land care, women's centres, housing and infrastructure, sport and recreation and the like), there should be a range of new jobs in Wugularr and a need to provide community members with the literacy and numeracy skills necessary to perform them effectively.

   The plan also would trace out options for providing young people at the secondary school level with opportunities to use and develop literacy and numeracy skills in work settings such as the store, the women's centre, the clinic, the arts and crafts centre, the NMN Regional Authority, and various Authority jobs. There is certainly a strong need for a plan that makes strategic use of existing programs such as:

   • VET in school training

   • school-based apprenticeships

   • cadetships

   • work experience

2. **Develop or adapt a diagnostic tool to conduct a literacy and numeracy skills audit of current CDEP jobs** This is a high priority need for the NMN Regional Authority's CDEP scheme. As the main employer of people in Wugularr, the Authority provides jobs in a wide range of areas, but up to now it has not been possible to quickly and easily assess the literacy and numeracy skills of workers before placing individuals in a job (for which they often do not have the skills). Further, because there is currently no assessment tool available, there is no efficient way to determine what training would assist people in gaining the necessary numeracy and literacy skills. A tool like this, if developed with care and sensitivity, would be extremely valuable for planning and delivering appropriate training. There are diagnostic tools used in other contexts that could be customised and adapted to the local and cultural requirements of the Jawoyn region.

3. **Recruit an Adult Education and Community Literacy Officer** As for the support of young children and families, we believe the sorts of initiatives above could best be achieved through a dedicated officer who resides in the community. Ideally this would be a person who understands and has contacts with the major adult education providers, and who has experience in developing and incorporating literacy and numeracy training in a range of work settings.

Community literacy option 3: supporting children at school

The revitalised Wugularr community store is drawing national attention for its success in providing a wide range of healthy foods at a reasonable cost, for its management by and employment of community members, and for its ability to generate a profit that is reinvested in the community. Though it is often said that stores in Indigenous communities struggle because of the tension between the requirements for strict financial management and accountability and an Indigenous culture that values kinship and sharing over private property, the Wugularr store is a success in large part because the community sees the store as a family and community asset.

The key to supporting children at school, we believe, is to find ways to shift perceptions about the school so that it too is seen to be community owned, an asset for the people of Wugularr. We have described this process elsewhere in what we have referred to as

building Indigenous Learning Communities (Schwab & Sutherland 2003). Essentially, building a sense of ownership among parents and the wider community is part of a long-term project to build an Indigenous learning community, and many of the activities above will create places and opportunities for members of the community to engage with the school in new ways.

It is important to acknowledge that there are many positive changes occurring in and around the school, but we want to propose some specific ideas to help enhance literacy among school children that we believe will also draw the community into the school:

1. **Develop a literacy backpack program** This simple program has been shown to be an effective way to encourage reading among school children and to open another channel for communication between the school and home.
2. **Open the school library to the community after hours and on weekends** The lack of space in the school has made this impossible up to now, but with the announcement of a new school in the near future, this should be a key component of any future facility.
3. **Work with the NMN Regional Authority to develop an after school program involving sport and recreation** The lack of activity for children after school hours is a major concern. It should be possible to draw on CDEP funds to develop a supervised sport and recreation program.
4. **Engage teachers with the Wugularr community** School teachers have a wide range of skills and insights that can benefit the community beyond the classroom. While we have urged the Indigenous community to build bridges into the school, we also want to urge the community to look for new ways to bring teachers into the community. One obvious avenue for increasing teacher engagement with the community would be to invite them to become involved in developing the Wugularr Child and Family Support and Community Literacy Action plans.

SECTION ONE:

Introduction

The study: history and aims

In 1999 the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) carried out research that focused on food provision, nutrition and health service delivery to the Aboriginal people in the Katherine region of the Northern Territory (Taylor & Westbury 2000). The research was funded by The Fred Hollows Foundation and sponsored by the Jawoyn Association. A key feature of that research was its aim to develop sustainable local capacity and to act as a catalyst for improving health in the region. Since that time, however, it has become clear that health improvements are and will continue to be hampered by the low literacy levels of people in the area.

This report is a scoping study commissioned by The Fred Hollows Foundation in collaboration with the Jawoyn Association, and is the first stage of what is envisaged as a long-term project aimed at enhancing health, education and employment outcomes in the Katherine region through a community literacy program. The focus of this study is the Aboriginal community of Wugularr (also known as Beswick), located on country belonging to the Bagula clan of the Jawoyn people, 120 kilometres south of the regional centre of Katherine.

The original research carried out by Taylor and Westbury (2000) provided a range of baseline demographic and employment data that are relevant to this study. One of the aims of this study is to update these data where possible and to augment them with additional quantitative information (e.g. about student performance) where it is available. These baseline data are intended to provide a series of contemporary snapshots which can be used by community members to assess their situation, identify needs and gauge future progress. The study focuses on data collected in 2002 and, where available, data from previous years is used to provide some tracking of changes. The second aim of the study is to map out community perceptions about and aspirations surrounding literacy through a series of community consultations. Third, the study provides a set of case studies of international best practice related to community literacy. Finally, the study aims to provide individuals, and the community of Wugularr, with options and strategies to acquire skills, knowledge and resources to increase literacy levels throughout the region.

Methodology

We began the project with a set of preliminary discussions with The Fred Hollows Foundation and the Jawoyn Association in Darwin and Katherine in late 2001. We then began to conduct a literature review of international and national best practice related to community literacy. That literature review resulted in a set of case studies that are a part of this scoping study and have informed the interventions that we recommend.

We returned to the Northern Territory in late April 2002 and spent three weeks collecting data and carrying out consultations in Darwin, Katherine, Wugularr, Barunga and Manyallaluk. Our first field trip involved a series of meetings and consultations with members of the Wugularr, Barunga and Manyallaluk communities. Those consultations focused on identifying local perceptions of literacy and education, local people's understandings about the roles and responsibilities of local communities in developing literacy, their perceptions about the role of government and other agencies in relation to education and literacy, and their aspirations and aims for increasing literacy levels in the communities of the region. After analysing the community consultation data from the first field trip, we proposed to the two primary partners (The Fred Hollows Foundation and the Jawoyn Association) that the scoping study should focus on Wugularr. This community has the highest levels of activity and we believed it to be the community with the best chance of designing and implementing a successful community literacy program. That advice was accepted and the project was then focused more sharply on Wugularr.

We returned to Darwin, Katherine and Wugularr for two weeks in December 2002, collecting additional data and providing presentations to members of the Jawoyn Association and the Wugularr community on the nature of the intervention options we were most likely to recommend in this report. The advice and feedback we received during that second visit was crucial to providing a scoping study that reflects community concerns and enjoys community support.

In the course of the two field trips we met with officers from relevant government departments, agencies and education and training providers in Darwin and Katherine to seek advice and to identify and collect data that could be useful in building a community education and literacy profile. We met with representatives of the following institutions and departments:

- The Fred Hollows Foundation
- Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA; now the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST))
- Northern Territory Department of Education (NTDE; now Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (NTDEET))
- Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority (NTETA; now part of NTDEET)
- Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE)
- Northern Territory University (NTU; now Charles Darwin University (CDU))
- Nungalinya College
- Centrelink

Jerry Schwab made a brief follow-up visit to Katherine and Wugularr in September 2003 and held meetings with community members as well as with staff of the NMN Regional Authority, the Northern Land Council and the Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation (SHSAC).

Project rationale

The relationship between literacy and health

For most Australians, 'literacy' means simply the ability to read and write. Indeed, up until the 1970s the word was largely absent from our vocabularies. Since then the definition of literacy has been debated vigorously (New London Group 1996; Venezky 1990; Wagner 1999). As Hull and Schultz have shown in their review of literacy theory (Hull & Schultz 2001), research on literacy has evolved historically from an initial focus on the social and cultural functions of literacy (Heath 1981; Hymes 1964), to the psychological and social organisation of literacy skills, technology and practice (Scribner & Cole 1981) and most recently to the interplay of literacy, identity and power relations (Gee 1996; Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996; New London Group 1996). For our purposes, we define literacy as the ability to read, write, speak, listen and view symbolic information to achieve particular goals and to develop and exchange knowledge and information. In this definition we acknowledge that literacy is much more than a utilitarian skill set – the ability to read and write. It is also a profound practical and conceptual tool for economic, social and political empowerment and social change.

The term 'education' can be similarly debated but most often is used to describe the means by which information is passed on and acquired, either systematically or through some less structured means. Education can take place in a classroom, around a campfire, in the school yard or in an infinite number of other social contexts. The acquisition of literacy is a form of education. Literacy can be acquired through any number of formal or informal, systematic or unsystematic means. In this paper we refer to research that focused sometimes on 'literacy' and at other times on 'education'. In most cases there is an implicit assumption that education involves the application of literacy skills.

We have known for a long time that there is a relationship between literacy and health. What does research tell us about that relationship? There are two ways to look at it: the impact of literacy on health and, from the other direction, the impact of health on literacy. In very general terms, we know that increasing literacy levels seem to result in increased health. This is widely accepted by educators, public health officers, community health workers and policy makers, and is where most of us would focus our attention, but it is really only half the story. We will begin with an exploration of the impact of health on literacy.

The impact of antenatal health on literacy

There is increasing body of research which suggests that ability to learn is affected by biological processes occurring before birth (Wadsworth 1999). It has been shown that brain development, both before and after birth, influences health, learning and behaviour

throughout the individual's life (Mustard 2002). There is evidence to show that if foetal brain development is disrupted or damaged by maternal infection (Hall & Peckham 1997) or toxic substances such as alcohol (Spohr, Willms & Steinhausen 1993) during crucial developmental periods of antenatal growth, neural pathways associated with literacy and mathematics can be negatively affected (Mustard 2002: 31). It is also well established that maternal malnutrition can have damaging effects on the foetus (Perry 1997). For example, research shows that 15 per cent of very low birth weight children and nearly 5 per cent of low birth weight children require special education, compared to about 4 per cent of children born at normal birth weight (Newman 1991). External environmental factors such as stress that affect the mother have been shown to affect foetal brain development which then affects behavioural development of the child (O'Connor et al. 2002). Since behaviour is an important facet in learning interactions there is reason to be concerned that such effects could have a negative impact on literacy acquisition.

The impact of health on literacy during infancy and early childhood

There is a wealth of research to show how cognitive development and educational attainment (including literacy) can be diminished by a range of factors that affect the health of infants. Brain development in the first three years of life is rapid (in this period the brain grows to 90% of its adult weight), and much of a child's capacity for learning is established during this time (Karoly et al. 1998). Breast feeding appears to be associated with later improved cognitive performance while infant malnutrition can have a dramatic negative impact on learning and educational attainment (Wadsworth 1999).

As during the antenatal period, stress early in life has been shown to have a negative effect on neural systems necessary for learning and may modify an individual's ability to moderate or control responses to stress in later life (Cynader & Frost 1999). Perhaps there is a link between this finding and research in the United Kingdom that shows that family conflict and breakdown is associated with reduced educational attainment (Ely et al. 1999). Similarly, and in the context of Australian Indigenous communities, neglect and child abuse have a dramatic negative effect on children's health and on their ability to learn (Memmott et al. 2001; Queensland Government 2002). Chronic ear infections (e.g. otitis media) and subsequent hearing loss are generally agreed to impair language development and educational achievement (Bowd 2002; Couzos, Metcalf & Murray 1999). Related research shows the impact of vision problems on the ability to learn.

The impact of literacy on health

There is a long history of study of the impact of literacy on health. Seminal work by Caldwell in Nigeria revealed that even very modest amounts of education for mothers increased the survival and health of their children (Caldwell 1979). Caldwell suggests that this increase in positive health outcomes results from a range of factors including the implementation of simple knowledge, increased confidence in dealing with the modern world (particularly with health practitioners), and some shifts in family power structures whereby the woman increases her control over health choices for children. This finding has been widely supported by research from around the world. Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen, for example, cites research showing that female literacy has a powerful impact on reducing mortality for children (Sen 1999: 197). Interestingly, he also cites findings that link women's education (including literacy) to declines in fertility across the world (1999: 217). Research from Canada shows that high levels of literacy have a major positive impact on health. This phenomenon is partly associated with the ability of literate people to access health services, implement health practices and understand risks to health (LeVine et al. 1994; Perrin 1990). It has also been associated with the higher levels of respect that an educated person commands (Kaufmann & Cleland 1994).

The interrelationship of literacy and health

Echoing a caution voiced by epidemiologist and anthropologist Stephen Kunitz (Kunitz 1990), Ewald and Boughton (2002) have recently warned that maternal education is not just another biomedical intervention that can reduce infant mortality or improve health simply through education. The links between literacy and health are dynamic and complex – they are truly interrelated. In this report, we acknowledge the interrelationship of literacy and health and look for options that promote both.

SECTION TWO:
Community Profile

At the beginning of this project it was decided to update and extend the baseline demographic and economic data collected by Taylor and Westbury in 1999 (Taylor & Westbury 2000). This was made possible, in part, with the release of the 2001 Census data which provided more recent information. Additional baseline data came from specific agencies (e.g. Centrelink) or education providers (e.g. BIITE). In this section of the report we update Taylor and Westbury's demographic and labour market data and provide a range of new data on education and training provision and outcomes. With the decision to focus this scoping study on Wugularr, we have limited our updates to the Wugularr portions of the data presented by Taylor and Westbury. Much of the data we collected is technical in nature. Consequently, we summarise the key findings in the main body of the report and present the full and more detailed text, tables and figures in Appendices A–H.

Contact history

Contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the Katherine region goes back at least to the mid 1800s with Leichhardt's expedition in 1844, followed by Gregory's in 1855 and John McDouall Stuart's crossing of the Katherine River in 1862. Stuart crossed the river above the Katherine Gorge in his south to north passage of the continent, searching for grasslands appropriate for the pastoral industry. Contact intensified in the 1870s with the arrival of the Overland Telegraph Line and the establishment of a permanent settlement near what would eventually become Katherine.

Gold was discovered in Pine Creek in 1871 and by 1887 there were over 5,000 Chinese labourers in the area. The first pastoral lease in the Top End was granted in 1876 close to Katherine (originally for 213 square miles, it later became Springvale Station and comprised over 1,100 square miles). Stock arrived in 1879. Beswick Station was also among the early pastoral properties. Pastoralism and the mining industry flourished, and the Darwin to Pine Creek railway, built between 1887 and 1889, brought even more non-Aboriginal people into the region. The stock created the most serious problems for the Aboriginal people in the area because they disturbed waterholes and drove away wild game. People were displaced and became dependent on the cattle stations and their rations. Agriculture came into the region in the first two decades of the 1900s with the introduction of peanuts and other crops on leased land along the Katherine River. Tin was discovered at Maranboy in 1913 and the mine and associated services, including a hospital, drew increasing numbers of Aboriginal people to the area to work as labourers.

Together with the arrival of the railway and telegraph line, the pastoral, agricultural and mining industries dramatically changed the way of life for Aboriginal people in the region. Traditional ways of life were severely disrupted and increasing numbers of people were engaged as labourers in these industries. During World War II, relocations of Aboriginal people from the north to the Katherine and Mataranka regions brought further disruption in the region (Merlan 1998: 5). In 1947 Beswick Station was purchased by the government as a site for training Aboriginal workers for the pastoral industry. In 1953 it was gazetted, along with parts of Mataranka and Vledt Stations, as an Aboriginal Reserve (Maddock 1977: 15). Over the next 20 years engagement with the non-Aboriginal economy grew as stockyards were built, land was cleared and fences erected. Beswick Station was never enormously productive – and was perhaps never profitable – but it did provide work and food for a stable population of Aboriginal people. Eventually, however, productivity declined and in many cases enterprises ceased to exist as the welfare economy enabled movement to town and to outstations in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Ellanna et al. 1988: 178–9). The Nagadgoli Cattle Company ceased operations in 1984. In Wugularr today there are few if any cattle, and the fences that remain are no longer stock-proof.

Language

Key findings:

- The Wugularr community comprises members of at least 11 different language groups.
- Kriol is the most commonly spoken language in Wugularr; English is often a second or third language.

The population is linguistically quite diverse. The Wugularr Community Management Plan 2000–2005 (Smith & Jackson, 2000: 47), identifies at least eleven different language groups: Jawoyn, Ngalkpon, Rembarrnga, Mielli (Mayali), Mara, Rithangu (Ritharrngu), Mudburra, Jingli (Jingili), Woyala, Mangurai (Mangarrayi), and Walpiri (Warlpiri). The most commonly spoken languages are Jawoyn, Mangarrayi, Mara, Ngalkpon and Rembarrnga. It is somewhat puzzling that in the 2001 Census 141 people in Wugularr are reported to speak 'English only'. On the ground, this is clearly not the case. There are many in the community who speak English well but the language of communication (or lingua franca) used in the community is Kriol (see also Smith & Jackson 2000). Teachers in the school frequently remind visitors that for Aboriginal children in Wugularr, Kriol is the main language and English is a second or third language. Clearly, this linguistic diversity presents challenges for educators.

School attendance

Key findings:

- In 2002, preschoolers and primary students attended school just over three days a week.
- In 2002, junior secondary and secondary students missed nearly as many school days as they attended.
- While Wugularr student attendance is similar to that of other Indigenous students across the Northern Territory at the preschool and primary level, their average attendance at the secondary level is much lower.

In 2001 Wugularr school had an enrolment of about 110 students. The staff comprised a Teaching Principal and four Teachers, two Assistant Teachers and a small number of part-time Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) Tutors. There has been a high turnover of staff, including three Teaching Principals in the past four years. Until 2001, there was no Territory sponsored preschool or secondary program in Wugularr. The school's preschool program is growing but the secondary enrolments have fluctuated. Plans for a preschool building and a secondary facility have been announced.

Appendix A Tables A1 and A2 and Figure A1 show the average enrolment and average attendance for each of the four sections of the school (preschool, primary, junior secondary and senior secondary) for the years 2001 and 2002. Average attendance for preschool in Wugularr in 2001 was higher than the Northern Territory average for all Indigenous students and increased by a sizeable amount over 2001. Yet overall attendance is a significant problem. Preschoolers in Wugularr attended on average only between three and four days each week; the same is true for primary students. Junior secondary students in Wugularr are missing nearly as many school days as they are attending, while senior secondary students attended fewer than four out of five days each week. The senior secondary figures show a sharp drop between 2001 and 2002 to an average of 50 per cent, with a low of 27 per cent by the end of the year. Attendance at the secondary level is well below that of the average for all other Indigenous students across the Northern Territory. At no time did the average attendance figures come close to the attendance rates of non-Indigenous students in the Northern Territory.

Literacy and numeracy at school

Key findings:

- In 2001 no Indigenous child in Wugularr attained the Year 3 national reading benchmark and only 20 per cent reached the Year 3 numeracy benchmark.
- In 2001 only about 12 per cent of Year 5 Indigenous students attained the literacy benchmark and only 14 per cent reached the numeracy benchmark.
- In 2001, in the Northern Territory as a whole, the proportion of Indigenous students who attained literacy and numeracy benchmarks was far below the proportion of non-Indigenous students who reached the benchmarks. Less than half of the Wugularr students attained even the levels of other Indigenous students in the Northern Territory.
- While the remote location of Wugularr appears to be associated with the lower numeracy and literacy scores, students from Wugularr actually score well below all other 'remote' Indigenous students in the Northern Territory.

Literacy and numeracy assessments for Years 3 and 5 students are carried out annually by NTDEET. These assessments, part of the Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP) yield scores that enable comparisons with national benchmarks. The MAP scores for Wugularr school for the years 2000–2002 are summarised in Appendix B Table B1 and Figures B1 and B2. The interpretation of MAP scores is highly controversial, since they are too often used to make simple and misleading comparisons between individuals, communities or States. Yet they do provide one tool – blunt though it may be – for measuring progress and making a rough comparison against a national benchmark. In the case of Wugularr, the number of children who reach the literacy and numeracy benchmarks is extremely low. Many educators and education department officers argue that releasing such data is unfair and embarrassing to schools and communities because students who are from disadvantaged areas and who do not speak English as a first language will always score lower than children from mainstream and majority families and communities. However, the community members in Wugularr were adamant that the figures be included in this study so they can see clearly where their children stand in comparison to others in the Northern Territory and so they can measure progress in the future.

Interpreting the MAP results over time is a challenge. NTDEET instituted compulsory assessments only in 2001. Previously, if a school principal felt that a student would be unable to complete the assessment then that student was excused. As a result the Territory-level aggregate MAP scores before 2001 gave an inflated (though still very low) and misleading measure of overall literacy and numeracy. The 2001 data show that no Indigenous child in Wugularr attained the Year 3 reading benchmark (though nearly 30% of Indigenous students in the Northern Territory did so) while only 20 per cent reached the Year 3 numeracy benchmark (compared with over 65% of the Territory's other Indigenous students attending government schools). Year 5 Indigenous children in Wugularr scored well below other Indigenous children in the Territory's government schools with only about 12 per cent attaining the literacy benchmark and 14 per cent reaching the numeracy benchmark; just over 30 per cent of other Indigenous students in the Northern Territory's government schools reached the benchmarks.

Some might dismiss the low levels of literacy and numeracy as measured by the MAP test as simply a function of the remote location of Wugularr students. Figures B1 and B2 show this cannot be the only reason their literacy and numeracy achievement is so low. MAP score data for 2002 show that remote Indigenous students have lower literacy and numeracy skills than Indigenous students in urban areas of the Northern Territory and they are even further behind non-Indigenous students. However, students who reside in Wugularr score far below other remote Indigenous students.

Adult, technical and further education

Key findings:

- 36 adults enrolled for adult, technical or further education courses in Wugularr over the period 1999-2001.
- Female students in Wugularr enrolled for 83 modules and completed 61 (73%), and males enrolled for 58 modules and completed 36 (62%) over the period 1999-2001.
- Outcome data for students from Wugularr is extremely poor. Neither CDU nor BIITE is able to report how many of the students who commenced study went on to complete their courses.

The provision of adult education in Wugularr has been irregular in recent years and by any measure it is low. Summary data from NTDEET for Wugularr for the years 1999–2001 are provided in Appendix C Table C1. The main providers of adult and further education in Wugularr are CDU and BIITE (formerly Batchelor College). Private providers enrolled only 9 out of the 36 student enrolments over the period 1999–2001.

According to NTDEET, between 1999 and 2001 adults in Wugularr undertook study in First Aid (offered by a private provider), Health Studies, Art and Craft, Community Recreation, Community Services, Aboriginal Health Work, Health Studies, Indigenous Education Work, Remote Area Local Government, Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS) (Broadcasting and Operations), Community Recreation, and General Construction (also offered by a private provider).

Though most adult education is provided by public providers, specific records kept by those providers are poor in quality. CDU records show only seven students enrolled for study (in the Local Area Government). The age and sex of these students is not recorded by CDU

and, remarkably, the University does not know whether or not they completed their studies. CDU has no other record of students from Wugularr enrolling for study at the University.

BIITE records are also incomplete. According to their records, a total of 15 students (11 male and 4 female) from Wugularr have enrolled for study during the time that Batchelor has been in operation. Precisely when those students enrolled is unknown, according to BIITE staff. Though BIITE has a demountable office in Wugularr, it has not been used for several years. Indeed, several people in the community had no idea the office was associated with BIITE; it functions today as a storage room for CDEP workers' supplies. In recent years Wugularr students have attended classes at the BIITE campus in Katherine. Unfortunately, BIITE records do not provide completion data or allow the students who appear in the records to be identified, so it is impossible to determine if the 15 students are separate individuals or if the figure represents some lower number of individuals who enrolled for several different courses.

The Indigenous population of Wugularr

Key findings:

- The precise size of the Indigenous population of Wugularr is likely to be between 350 and 450 people.
- The Wugularr population is young in comparison to both non-Indigenous Australians and other Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.
- Nearly 40 per cent of the population is under the age of 15.
- The Wugularr population is getting younger.

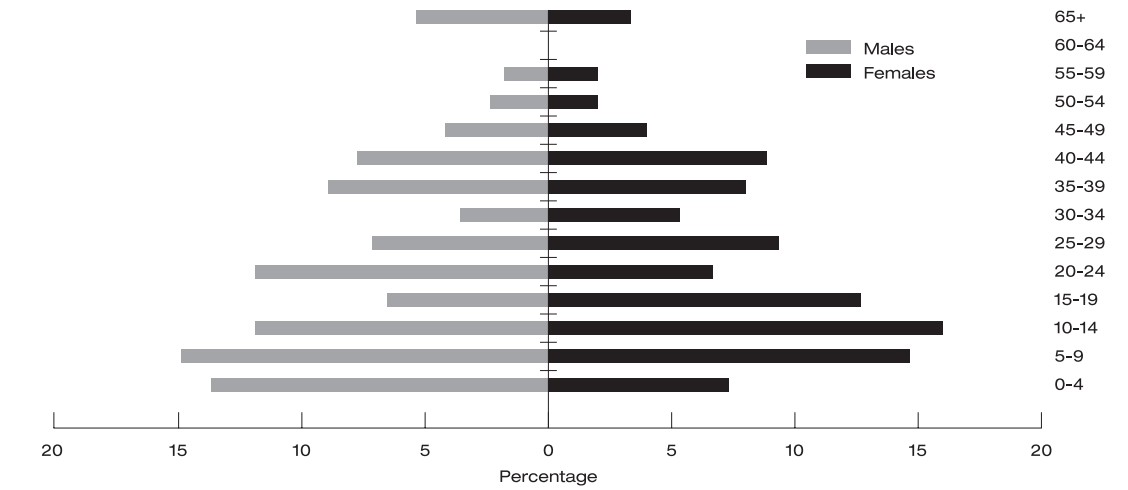
The size of the population of Wugularr, like that of many other small Indigenous communities, is difficult to calculate with precision. There have been many widely varying counts and estimates over the past several years (see Appendix D Table D1). According to the 2001 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census, the population is 318: however a survey carried out as part of the development of a community management plan at the end of 1999 shows a population of 451. One should think of a census count as a snapshot at one point in time; the number of people in the community will be higher or lower at different times over the course of a year as a result of mobility related to seasonal flooding, ceremonial activities, and the like (Martin & Taylor 1996; Taylor & Westbury, 2000: 10). It is likely that the census count for 2001 is too low, yet these are the only demographic data with statistical validity. Consequently, while we suspect the population of Wugularr in 2003 is probably closer to the estimate of 451 provided by Smith and Jackson (2000), we are using the Census data here as our base figure. While it may be low, this count enables the most reliable analysis of the population of Wugularr.

The population of Wugularr is relatively young, and getting younger (see Appendix D Table D2). In 1996 over 35 per cent of the population was under the age of 15, and by 2001 that proportion had grown to over 39 per cent. Interestingly, the increasing youthfulness of the population in Wugularr runs counter to the trend among other Aboriginal people in the Territory, where the proportion of under 15 year-olds had declined slightly during this period.

Among all Australians, 6.7 percent of the population is under 5 years of age, compared to 10.7 per cent of the population of Wugularr. The proportion is even more pronounced if the populations under 10 years of age are compared. In Wugularr in 2001, 25.5 per cent are under 10 years of age, whereas only 13.7 per cent of the total Australian population is under 10 years of age. While nearly 40 per cent of all individuals in Wugularr were under the age of 15 in 2001, only 20.8 per cent of all Australians are in this age group. There are also more males than females in the community, a bias that is most strongly apparent among the very young (see Appendix D Table D3).

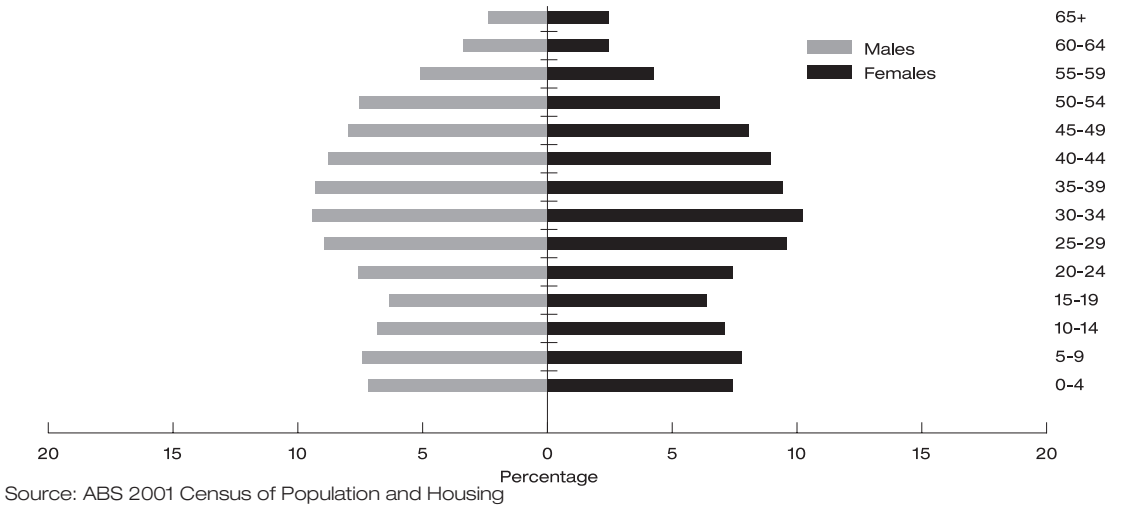
A graphic depiction of the relative youth of the Aboriginal population of Wugularr is provided in Figure 1 on the next page. As can be seen, there is a 'bulge' in the pyramid under the age of 15, indicating a predominance of individuals who will be attaining working age in the next few years. Figure 2, by comparison, depicts the structure of the population of all non-Indigenous people in the Northern Territory: the relative youthfulness of the Wugularr population is again striking.

Figure 1. Age distribution of Indigenous population, Wugularr, 2001



Source: ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing

Figure 2. Age distribution of non-Indigenous population, Northern Territory, 2001



Source: ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing

Measuring the economic burden

Key finding:

- The economic implications of the relative youth of the Wugularr population are significant and will be increasingly so over time.

One useful way to understand the implications of the Wugularr age structure is to attempt to measure the potential economic burden of this relatively young population through dependency ratios. There are a number of different ways to carry out this analysis, but essentially all compare the number of dependent children with the number of working-age adults. These various analyses are presented in full in Appendix E Table E1.

The childhood burden ratio provides a somewhat more refined measure of dependency by incorporating a calculation of the ratio of the number of children to the number of persons who are employed. The childhood burden grew from .86 to 1.5 between 1996 and 2001. If workers under the CDEP scheme are not

included for this calculation, the ratio jumps nearly fourfold, from 10.3 to 41.7 during this period. In other words, for each employed (but non-CDEP) worker in Wugularr in 2001 there were about 42 children. The ratio is ten times that of the childhood burden of all Indigenous people in the Northern Territory as a whole in 2001, underlining the heavy dependence of the Wugularr workers on the CDEP scheme. When adults who are economically inactive are included in the analysis, and when CDEP work is not classed as employment, the Wugularr economic burden ratio is ten times that for the rest of the Northern Territory. The economic burden for Wugularr in 2001, where CDEP is not considered employment, translates as each employed person carrying the economic burden of over 70 individuals.

Employment and income

Key findings:

- Non-CDEP employment dropped by two-thirds between 1996 and 2001.
- CDEP employment dropped by nearly 20 per cent between 1996 and 2001.
- 96 per cent of employed people in Wugularr were employed under the CDEP scheme.
- If CDEP employment were to be removed from the calculation, the employment rate would drop to 3.5 per cent and the unemployment rate would be as high as 93.0 per cent.
- Labour force participation (the number of people in or looking for employment) dropped from 63.5 to 50.6 per cent between 1996 and 2001.

Wugularr, like most remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, was established as a result of Aboriginal welfare policies rather than because of the existence of a local or regional economic base. The primary avenue for employment in Wugularr is through CDEP. Workers are employed through CDEP to undertake construction and maintenance tasks. In addition, small numbers of workers are employed by the store, the school, the clinic, the women's centre, and arts and crafts. In some cases, individual wages are 'topped up' with additional funds.

By any measure, the employment situation in Wugularr has deteriorated between 1996 and 2001. Census figures for 2001 indicate a working population of 83 persons, down from 108 in 1996 (see Appendix E Table E2). Of those 83 people, 62 per cent were male and 96 per cent were employed by the CDEP scheme. As Taylor and Westbury pointed out in their earlier study of the region, the dependence on CDEP is probably even greater than the figures indicate since the employment question on the census asks only about work in the last week; CDEP work is irregular and part-time and so may not be reported (Taylor & Westbury 2000: 17).

At 48.9 per cent, the employment rate in Wugularr in 2001 is below the national Indigenous rate of 54.4 per cent (see Appendix E Table E3). The unemployment rate rose between the two census dates. In 2001 it was 3.5 per cent, far below the national rate of 9.2 per cent. Obviously, the Wugularr rate is far higher if CDEP employment is not counted as employment. Indeed, when CDEP employment is removed from the calculation the employment rate drops to 3.5 per cent and the unemployment rate rises to as much as 93.0 per cent. The labour force participation rate, a function of the persons in the labour force as a percentage of individuals of working age, dropped from 63.5 to 50.6 per cent between 1996 and 2001.

Gross annual income

Key findings:

- In comparison to 1996, fewer Aboriginal people in Wugularr had no income in 2001 and more report higher income levels.
- Aboriginal people in Wugularr remain impoverished, with 84.4 per cent of individuals reporting an average $10,399 gross income for the year.
- Compared with 1996, fewer families in 2001 have incomes in the lowest category (down from 12 to 6), and nine families report income over $41,600 in 2001 where no Aboriginal family reported these higher incomes in 1996.

Aboriginal people in the region derive their income from a number of sources including salaried employment in CDEP or in other more mainstream forms of work, unemployment benefits and other welfare payments from Centrelink, royalty payments, and private income from the sale of art works, crafts and other products. In addition, there is some fraction of imputed income for some individuals that would

come about from subsistence activities, but there is no way to calculate that at present.

When comparing the 1996 figures with those reported for 2001, there is some indication that individual gross income for working age adults in Wugularr has risen over the five-year period (see Appendix F Tables F1 and F2). While some of that rise is obviously a function of rises in the cost of living and consequent adjustments in wages and pensions, it does appear that fewer people have no income and that more report higher income levels. According to the census figures, Aboriginal people in Wugularr remain impoverished on the whole, with 84.4 per cent of individuals attaining an average gross income of $10,399 for the year – an amount well below the widely used Henderson poverty line. Yet one should be cautious in interpreting these data since, as will be shown below, a close look at welfare payments to Wugularr residents suggests income is probably much higher than the census shows. The census data are probably most useful for comparing changes within the community between 1996 and 2001.

Employment income

Key findings:

- Average annual individual income for Aboriginal people in Wugularr decreased between 1996 and 2001.
- The people of Wugularr are highly dependent on welfare and becoming more so. Income from welfare comprised nearly a third of all income in 1996, but nearly half in 2001.
- CDEP wages made up nearly half of all income in Wugularr in both 1996 and 2001.
- If CDEP wages are classed as welfare and not true employment, 95 per cent of the income among Aboriginal people in Wugularr is from welfare.

According to the census, the average annual individual income for Aboriginal people in Wugularr decreased from $7,736 to $7,334 between 1996 and 2001 (see Appendix G Table G1). Looking more closely at the source of income one immediately notices that income from welfare for those who classed themselves as unemployed or not in the labour force comprised 30.1 per cent of all income in 1996, but 46.7 per cent in 2001. Clearly, dependence on welfare income has increased greatly in recent years. CDEP income, essentially 'work for the dole' wages, comprised nearly half (48%) of all income in Wugularr, a proportion that has remained constant between the two census dates. If one considers CDEP income as welfare rather than true employment, the proportion of community income from welfare swells to 95 per cent. This is an increase from 78.3 per cent in 1996. Clearly, the level of welfare dependence in Wugularr is extreme.

Non-employment income

Key findings:

- Centrelink payments more than doubled between 1999 and 2002, probably as a result of more accurate identification of eligible claimants.
- Centrelink payments alone (extrapolating from the fortnight snapshot in 2002) amounted to an annual community income of $2,474,654 in 2002.

Centrelink payments provide a measure of community income that is more accurate than the census. Snapshot details of these payments for two fortnightly periods in 1999 and 2002 are presented in Appendix H Tables H1 and H2. A comparison of the 1999 and 2002 figures shows that Centrelink payments have more than doubled within three years. This is unlikely to be explainable as a function of inflation or increased population. More likely, it reflects increasingly accurate payments to individuals who were eligible in the past but who, for whatever reason, did not claim or did not receive their benefits. The most common payment in 2002 was the Family Tax Benefit; the number of individuals receiving that payment type increased from 43 to 67 in three years. The number of individuals receiving the Parenting Payment Single increased from 10 to 30, with a total value of $17,352 in 2002 compared with $3,292 in 1999.

The 2002 snapshot calls into question the accuracy of income reported for individuals who are unemployed or not in the labour force. In one fortnight in late 2002, a total of $95,179 was paid to Centrelink clients in Wugularr, up from $46,042 in the 1999 snapshot. This suggests that the total income for Wugularr as derived from the 2001 Census is probably quite low when compared with actual income. While the 2001 Census reports a total annual income of $1,415,440, the Centrelink payments alone (extrapolating from the fortnight snapshot in 2002) amount to $2,474,654. If only the non-employment income is considered for 2001 ($661,440), the extrapolation suggests the Centrelink figures are 3.7 times higher than those indicated in the census a year earlier.

Community profile: summary

The Wugularr community is linguistically diverse with total population of between 350 and 450 people speaking at least 11 different Aboriginal languages. Kriol is the most commonly spoken language, however, and English is used almost exclusively to talk with non-Indigenous people in the community and wider region. The school has an enrolment of about 110 students with the average attendance rate around 60 per cent. English literacy and numeracy levels as measured against the national benchmark are extremely low for primary school students and the provision of adult, technical and further education has been irregular in recent years; adult enrolments are declining.

The overall population is young in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians and other Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. Nearly 40 per cent of Wugularr residents are under 15 year of age and in recent years the proportion of young people has increased. The economic implication is that the ratio of working adults to dependent children is increasing and with it the economic burden. Virtually all employment is through CDEP but the number of people in or looking for work has declined. Over the last inter-censual period fewer Aboriginal people in Wugularr had no income and more reported high income, yet the large majority remain impoverished. Dependence on welfare payments increased sharply over the same period.

SECTION THREE: Community Consultations on Literacy

One of the aims of this scoping study is to map out community perceptions of and aspirations for literacy through a series of community consultations, in both scheduled and unscheduled meetings. On the various visits to the region, we had formal meetings in a range of settings throughout the communities including council offices, schools, health clinics, women's centres, and many informal meetings sitting on the ground under trees, in vehicles on the road, and even on the floor of the social club.

These consultations were primarily focused on literacy and discussions of options, successes, problems and opportunities in these communities, but many people also shared openly their frustrations, disappointments and fears about the past, present and future of their communities. We will not attempt to go beyond the aims of the study to conduct an analysis of many issues that arose, but will mention those that have a direct bearing on the situation or the options we will highlight later in this report. In this section of the report we provide a dot-point list of the community literacy ideas shared with us during the consultations held with the Indigenous people resident in Barunga, Manyallaluk and most especially Wugularr (where, as discussed earlier, we eventually focused most of our energies). We then provide a summary of the themes that emerged in the broader consultations. These pertain to community perceptions of the importance of literacy, linkages between literacy and other realms of well-being, the roles that have and should be played by various agencies and the community itself, and community aspirations around increasing literacy levels across the community.

A collection of literacy ideas from the community

Community residents identified a number of practical ideas and opportunities for enhancing community literacy. They are presented here without any assessment from the authors of this report. Some of these ideas, however, are picked up in the recommendations for interventions in Section Five:

- additional practical literacy and numeracy learning opportunities could be provided through training and work in the store (this is happening in Wugularr, but less so in Barunga and Manyallaluk). For example an introductory literacy and numeracy store course could encompass pricing, buying, selling and marketing of product
- local governance training, particularly for the NMN Regional Authority and other community committees
- courses specifically for women could be offered through the women's centre (for example, sewing, cooking and a parent–child program of activities)
- early childhood activities involving young mothers could be developed for the creche
- community bush trips for children that incorporate the development of stories into books that reflect community interests and activities
- a community newsletter
- embedding literacy and numeracy training in art and craft activities
- redeveloping the agricultural plot into a market garden and establishing a produce market; again, literacy and numeracy activities could be incorporated
- appointing an adult education coordinator to organise and run adult education activities
- training for sport and recreation officers
- sporting and recreational activities that particularly target young people
- show-casing Aboriginal role models who are involved in a range of learning environments and training and employment activities through visits and the provision of video and other materials
- a skills audit and register that could then be used as a tool to identify gaps in community knowledge and skills

- development of a ranger program to carry out land care activities
- with the emergence of the 'Corroboree' tourist event in Katherine it has been suggested that participants need training in effective communication with tourists. This would include English oral communication, how to approach tourists, cross-cultural understandings and understanding of the tourism industry in general
- training for drug and alcohol and mental health workers
- training in aged care

Community perceptions of literacy

The consultations provided an opportunity for community members to share aspirations and specific ideas for promoting literacy and a chance for them to express views on the nature of literacy and why it is important. What follows is a summary of community perceptions of the importance of literacy, grouped into six major themes.

Literacy is necessary in the world of today

There was a clear recognition of the importance of English literacy among Indigenous people in the region, though the region is linguistically diverse and few people learn English as a first language. English is commonly spoken in a non-standard form, and more often people speak Kriol. There is a widespread perception that competence in spoken English is necessary and that English literacy is extremely valuable. While there is still a strong traditional culture among the Indigenous people in the region, no one operates under the false perception that the non-Indigenous world can be kept totally at bay. English literacy is a necessity in the Indigenous world, and people aspire to greater literacy both for themselves and for their children.

Literacy skills need to be improved across the community

There was a belief among some people that English literacy skills among many adults are higher today than among children who are currently enrolled or who have recently attended school. This 'golden age' of literacy is referred to in many Indigenous communities across the country, and though it is often claimed, there is little evidence to indicate it is actually true. In reality, little is known about the actual literacy levels of Indigenous adults in remote parts of Australia (Kral & Schwab 2003). It is clearly not the case that English literacy skills among Indigenous children in remote areas are high (the MAP scores indicate they are not), but it is not at all clear that literacy skills among Indigenous adults are much higher. Yet it is clear that people believe the literacy skills of young people are lower than they should be. We were told many times that children do not read and write English to the standard that they should. Similarly, various agency managers, government officials, teachers, CDEP supervisors and the like stated that many adults struggle with written English. Essentially everyone we spoke with acknowledged that there is a need to boost literacy and numeracy skills right across the community.

Literacy opens up opportunities for meaningful work

We were told many times during the consultations that in order to hold a 'good job' Indigenous people need to be able to read and write English. Again, without conducting a literacy assessment it is impossible to know if that view is supported by evidence, but there is no question that employment options are limited when an individual has limited English literacy skills. This is no different to the experience of other Australians across the country. Obviously this is not the case where an individual is working in an arena – as an artist, for example – that does not require a high level of literacy, but without literacy skills it is very difficult if not impossible to attain and hold a position that requires reporting, accounting or myriad other tasks performed by skilled workers and managers. We were told that there is anecdotal evidence to indicate that literacy levels among members of the community who are employed are higher than among those who are not, and that the children of people who work are often the most consistent in attendance at school and tend to have more highly developed literacy skills. This intergenerational literacy effect is important and we will return to it later.

Literacy helps people maintain health for themselves and their family

There was widespread agreement that literacy was important for maintaining the health of individuals and their children. Being able to read and understand information related to medicine or medical procedures was seen to be important, as was the ability to read product labels and make informed choices about nutrition in the context of food purchase and preparation. There was also an awareness that

individuals who could read and write were more receptive to information that cautioned about the effects of drugs and alcohol.

Literacy is crucial for Indigenous self determination and community development

It is often said that literacy is much more than a set of technical skills for decoding symbols; it is a tool for empowerment. This sentiment was captured in the views put forward by many people we consulted. Essentially, we were told that in order to steer the course of a future they had determined themselves, Indigenous people needed to be able to read and write English. Running effective meetings, keeping records, dealing with and generating correspondence and evaluating options often involve literacy skills, and the people we spoke with were all aware that those who are unable to read and write are effectively blocked from full involvement in the affairs of their daily lives. Few Indigenous communities have escaped some version of the unscrupulous town clerk or store manager or school principal who has misappropriated funds or assumed decision-making powers that did not have the support of the community; in many cases these situations have arisen out of the inability of Indigenous people to interpret and understand written English or financial information. People we consulted are well aware of this sort of vulnerability and often remarked that literacy is crucial to their ability to protect themselves and their communities. In this sense literacy is a key capacity for community development.

Everyone is responsible for literacy

There is among most of the people we talked to a deep ambivalence about education (typically in the guise of 'school') and training, and yet in most people's minds literacy is invariably linked to them. In most of the world today, school is considered the primary site for literacy acquisition. Consequently, the ability of children (and later, adults) to read and write is often seen to be in very large part a function of how well teachers have met their responsibility to families, parents and children. Put simply, if a child is unable to read and write, it is the 'fault of the 'school'. Yet this perception is giving way to a realisation that children and their families are also responsible for the acquisition of literacy. The difference between these two views is profound: the first view is passive, the second empowering.

Among the Indigenous people we spoke with, it is clearly the case that they hold the latter view and are increasingly willing to accept joint responsibility for the education of their children. It should be noted, however, that there were many people in the communities we visited who chose not to engage in the consultations about community literacy; the people who wanted to speak with us were a self-selected sample who by definition were interested in the issue of literacy. One could sensibly assume that others would likely hold to the view that literacy is no concern of theirs. Yet it seemed clear to us that there is a growing and consistent view that everyone is responsible and should play some role in ensuring that efforts are made to increase the English literacy skills of their children and the wider community.

In the section that follows, we will detail some examples of best practice in community literacy from Australia and overseas. Our consultations revealed some excellent ideas for increasing community literacy and we will return to them in Section Five when we draw together the local proposals and aspirations of people in Wugularr, Barunga and Manyallaluk with the experience and lessons from communities around the world.

SECTION FOUR:
Best Practice Models for Community Literacy

In this section we explore a range of diverse programs that focus directly or indirectly on enhancing literacy at the individual, family and community levels. It is our view, after having examined dozens of programs from Australia and around world and from consultations with members of communities in the Jawoyn region, that while there is a natural tendency to look to 'the school' as the key site for developing literacy, there is enormous value in resisting this obvious linkage and looking also for other contexts and opportunities.

We present a number of snapshots of programs and approaches to community literacy to illustrate some of the sorts of interventions and options community members might want to consider as they look to develop community literacy. Some of the snapshots are detailed and provide overviews of large-scale State or national-level programs; others are simply a sets of ideas that might 'fit' in Wugularr or other communities in the region. A few of the programs are mature and have been carefully tracked and evaluated, and so provide evidence of how well they work. Others are relatively new and so far lack objective assessments of their impact.

In all of the models or approaches we present below, we are drawing out the experiences of other communities in a search for ideas that can increase literacy across a community. Some of the ideas we highlight would have immediate impact, others would be long-term investments with many years required to see a result. Many of the activities deal directly with literacy, others address 'upstream' problems related to health and development. As we argued at the beginning of this report, there is a direct link between literacy and health, and so addressing upstream problems related to infant health, for example, would make learning and thus literacy less problematic for children several years down the track.

We have examples of what we believe are excellent programs and approaches that not only focus on literacy but often focus explicitly on empowering individuals and communities. The desire to determine and shape interventions and programs to increase community literacy was clearly articulated by the Indigenous people we consulted, and we have kept that in mind as we considered examples of best practice that might assist the people of Wugularr and the Jawoyn region to identify appropriate programs and activities in the future.

In each of the snapshots below, we have described examples of best practice we believe are of relevance to the community of Wugularr and the wider Jawoyn region. In each example we provide a brief overview of the program and then we highlight particular elements we believe could be adopted or adapted. In the final section of this report we will draw together suggestions from the community that arose during the consultations with some of the activities and strategies we identified in these best practice cases.

Best Start (Victoria)

There are two major programs underway in Australia at the moment titled Best Start. The first is an initiative of the Victorian government aimed at improving the well-being of young children through improving access to child and family support, health services and early education, assisting parents and carers to increase their skills and understanding and working with communities to better support families and children. The program is still in its early stages but it shows great promise. Significantly, it is based on a thorough analysis of Australian and international research evidence that shows conclusively the importance of focusing investment on the early years of life – the prenatal, postnatal, infant and early childhood periods (State of Victoria, Department of Human Services 2001).

The program involves a range of three-year demonstration projects dispersed around the State in regional, rural and metropolitan settings. The projects are based on partnerships between government departments, parents and service providers. A feature for many of these projects is the development of new ways to engage parents and children in early and

family literacy activities and programs. There were initially 11 demonstration projects with additional Aboriginal-specific projects planned for the future. Each of the demonstration sites has developed (or is developing) a series of activities to promote the well-being of children.

Among the ideas from the Victorian Best Start program that could be adopted in the Jawoyn region are:

- a local action plan for strengthening support for families and young children
- an early childhood library and resource centre for use by parents and professionals
- a children's services conference for all providers in the region
- a 'map' of the services currently provided to young children and their families, which identifies who does and does not use them
- a play group for children not yet in preschool
- a 'walking bus' where volunteers walk through the community and escort children to school

An evaluation of the Victorian Best Start program is scheduled for completion in late 2006. The evaluation will include both formative and summative components. The evaluation team will assess the impact and effectiveness of the Best Start projects.[1]

Best Start (Western Australia)

This Best Start program (a separate program from the one discussed above) is run through the Western Australia Department for Community Development. It is focused exclusively on Aboriginal children (birth to 5 years) and their families. The overarching aim of the program is improvement in life opportunities for Aboriginal children through focusing on improving health, education, social and cultural development. Like the Victorian program, Best Start in Western Australia is an early intervention approach and involves projects in rural, remote and metropolitan areas that are developed in partnership between the community and key government departments in the context of local needs and aspirations. The Best Start program is based on the premise that the first five years of a child's life are critical to the future of that child, and by extension the health of the community. Best Start was also designed to improve the coordination of services and collaboration between agencies that serve children, families and communities.

The program was established in the mid 1990s as a three-year pilot with seven sites. The Department for Community Development has since extended and expanded the program: in 2001–2002, 22 projects were funded and in 2002–2003 an additional 17 Best Start programs were put into place across the State. Following a review in 2001, the program now places increased emphasis on community involvement and cultural appropriateness.[2]

Among the components of the Western Australia Best Start projects that could be adopted or adapted in the Jawoyn region are:

- family/carers health education programs
- cultural camps and activities designed to include children, families, grandparents
- adult literacy and numeracy skills
- mentoring for young mothers (by mature Aboriginal mothers)
- parenting workshops encompassing safety in the home, behaviour management, nutrition, hygiene and motor skills development

Scaffolding Literacy (The Accelerated Literacy Program), FELIKS and ESL

Scaffolding Literacy (referred to as Accelerated Literacy in the Northern Territory) is a teaching program developed by Brian Gray and Wendy Cowey at the Schools and Community Centre, University of Canberra. The aim of the program is to accelerate literacy acquisition, particularly among students who have not been able to achieve appropriate literacy benchmarks. The program involves a very specific approach to teaching where the teacher helps students to learn how to read and write by providing intensive, ongoing support through a process of continuously modelling and providing information to learners that helps them engage with text. Though the Scaffolding Literacy approach is not a community-

[1] For more information on this program see http://www.beststart.vic.gov.au
[2] For more information on this program see http://www.fcs.wa.gov.au/templates/looking_after_kids/

based literacy program, there is perhaps scope to expand it in that direction. It is a school-based literacy approach and as such has significant pedagogical implications for the way in which teachers and schools currently approach literacy teaching. It also has significant resource implications in that it requires intensive and continuing professional development of the teacher.

The Scaffolding Literacy approach was implemented in 2001–2002 and trialled in six schools in the Northern Territory under the title 'Accelerated Literacy'. One of these schools, Ngukurr Community Education Centre, is a remote school where the vast majority of students are Aboriginal. Nearly 70 per cent of the 570 participating students across all six trials are Indigenous students, many of whom speak English as a second language.

The approach has been utilised in a number of Indigenous contexts and has been producing quite positive outcomes. Two project sites, established as part of the non-capital Strategic Results Projects (SRPs), a component of the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program and undertaken in 1999, included Amata Primary School, south of Uluru, and Woodville High School in Adelaide. Prior to the implementation of the Scaffolding Literacy approach students were tested for reading and writing according to the Levels of the National English Profile and associated running records. The outcomes of the intervention resulted in an overall average improvement from 1.5 to over 2 profile levels.

From 1999 to 2003, the Schools and Community Centre undertook a major DEST-funded project, *Scaffolding Literacy in Indigenous Schools*. This project also produced significant results in terms of improvements in English literacy outcomes for Indigenous students. For example, the results from Wongatha School in Western Australia, a Year 11 and 12 Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institution, are notable because the students involved were young adult learners. Impressive outcomes in that setting indicate that the Scaffolding Literacy approach is also applicable to the learning needs of older students and adults who are unable to read. As such the approach is quite a relevant when contemplating program development in the area of wider community literacy and educational needs (Gray, Cowey & Axford 2003).

A national Accelerated Literacy Program was recently established at Charles Darwin University.

In our consultations, there was interest among some community members in bilingual education as an option for Wugularr. At the base of that interest is the recognition that standard approaches to literacy instruction are inadequate for the needs of speakers of languages other than English in the Indigenous Australian context. Yet in those consultations with Indigenous people who stated a desire for bilingual education, it was not clear that the full complexity of the approach is understood. Bilingual education has had a long and troubled past in the Northern Territory. Few issues in Indigenous education have generated such passionate debate. Many argue that bilingual programs have never been shown to be an effective mechanism for achieving high levels of English literacy in Indigenous communities, others argue that where the right conditions prevail they can and do (see Devlin 1999; Hoogenraad 2001). It is beyond the scope of this report to attempt a balanced evaluation of the value of the bilingual approach, but consideration of how to best meet the needs of Aboriginal children who do not speak English as a first language is a critically important issue that the Wugularr community should engage with. From one perspective the bilingual education model is a dead issue. The Northern Territory government has determined it will not support additional bilingual education programs but it will instead emphasise English as a Second Language (ESL) strategies to assist Indigenous children.

There are a range of different ESL approaches and strategies currently being supported by NTDEET. One approach that has met with success is the Fostering English Language in Kimberley Schools (FELIKS) program, a training package for teachers that focuses on Standard Australian English instruction but recognises the legitimacy of Aboriginal English and Kriol (most often the latter in the Jawoyn region). The approach involves professional development training for teachers to assist them to help children develop code switching strategies that enable movement between Aboriginal English (or Kriol) and Standard Australian English (Berry & Hudson 1997). FELIKS has been adopted and has been proven to be an effective tool for helping both students and teachers in Wugularr where all teachers have participated in FELIKS training.[3]

[3] For more information on Accelerated Literacy see: http://www.cdu.edu.au/sspr

There is clearly a great deal of enthusiasm for Scaffolding (or Accelerated) Literacy in the Northern Territory and in DEST at the moment. The approach is expensive in terms of staff development time but there is no reason to think that the approach would not yield positive outcomes for children or young people in Wugularr. In addition, there are a range of ESL options that have been shown to work that could be adopted in the Jawoyn region. The key lesson here is for community members to use their awareness of such programs to engage with educators and NTDEET officers in discussions of a classroom literacy curriculum, and to assess program options for Wugularr and Jawoyn region schools. While teachers are professionals with specific knowledge and skills, parents and community members have a right and obligation to engage in discussions about classroom and other options to enhance learning in their schools and communities.

The Kimberley Literacy Project literacy backpacks

Not every community literacy intervention is expensive or dependent on intensive training. Literacy backpacks are a simple idea involving a child's backpack filled with a range of texts such as books, newspapers, comics or magazines, visual and/or auditory materials such as music tapes or videos all linked to a particular theme, and an activity to complete at home with help from a family member.

Literacy backpacks have been used in many communities in the USA and Canada, but were apparently first introduced to Indigenous families through the Kimberley Literacy Project in the year 2000. The Kimberley backpack project was aimed at early childhood classrooms and was developed in response to the need to improve the skills of Aboriginal students in the use of Standard Australian English. The literacy backpack trial was undertaken in three Catholic schools in the Kimberley and had a range of specific aims. First, it provided young children with an opportunity to take home a variety of literacy resources they might otherwise not have access to. Taking home those materials created the opportunity for children to explore, discuss and manipulate a variety of Standard English texts in an environment that was comfortable for them and their families. The literacy backpacks were 'stocked' by school staff and parents, a process that encouraged parental involvement in decision-making in relation to the material contained in the backpacks. Because the backpacks were intended for home use, families had the opportunity to explore the materials together, informally and according to whatever interests they shared. Because there was no prescribed task, parents with little or no literacy could still engage with the materials and as a result model literacy behaviour for their children. In addition, the continual movement of backpacks between home and the school opened a channel for communication between parents and teachers that was positive and non-threatening and provided insights for both.

The trial was not rigorously evaluated, but reports from all three of the trial schools indicated student gains in self esteem, extensive community involvement and support for the backpack project, increased parental interest in school activities, increased attendance by children, increased confidence and higher levels of classroom participation, and significant progress in literacy skills (Kelly 2002). Few problems with the program were identified, though all agreed that the success of the project depended in large part on the efforts of a coordinator to manage the backpacks.[4]

Literacy backpacks are a simple and powerful intervention. They have been shown to increase the engagement of families with schools with literacy materials. There is evidence that these programs can boost the literacy skills of young children. Some version of the literacy backpack program would be useful addition to the strategies taken on by the Wugularr community.

Booroongen Djugun College

Booroongen Djugun College, an independent adult education facility in Kempsey in New South Wales, was established in 1994 specifically to focus on the needs of Aboriginal people in the region. The first accredited courses that the college offered were in the area of community care. These courses were developed in direct response to community needs, particularly in relation to the care of older members of the community; the college is affiliated with a state-of-the-art Indigenous owned and operated aged care facility on the same campus. The aim of the college is to provide opportunities that will lead to employment and to expand career choices for participants.

[4] For more information see http://www.faess.jcu.edu.au/downloads/Kelly%20.doc

Booroongen Djugun is not presented here as a model for the Jawoyn region to pursue in its full form (though that in itself it is not an impossible option), but it does have elements that are worth noting in a range of different community literacy contexts. We will return to those below.

The philosophy that underpins college programs is:

> *that the college is a community institution and as such should provide intellectual and practical skills for social action; the college is a means to individual and community empowerment. In this sense, the college sees itself as an instrument of social change, providing skills for personal and community development. Finally, while a community institution, the college is also distinctly an Indigenous institution. Tradition and custom are married with sound pedagogy to enable learning that fits comfortably with the cultural backgrounds of Indigenous students, many of whom have never felt totally at ease with mainstream education* (Schwab 2001: 35).

Importantly, the college promotes the notion of 'Aboriginal learning styles' in the development and delivery of courses. For instance, in the case of theory, learning occurs around observation, hands-on activities, the practical aspects of tasks, and the use of audio-visual aids in order to stimulate discussion and role-playing. In 1997 the college was able to offer courses for youth in the surrounding region, incorporating VET in Schools programs. These included health care and community care, nursing, and aged care courses. Courses have been accredited by the New South Wales Board of Studies and as a result course content has been carefully developed to meet the necessary standards. All courses have an emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and course modules are also structured to account for self-paced learning. There are also a number of factors that have been acknowledged as instrumental to the success of both the college and the programs that it offers. These include staff and teachers never losing sight of the fact the college is an 'Aboriginal' college – the valuing of that aspect underscores all training. School students who have participated in programs that the college has offered have attested to the importance of the role that the college played in keeping them in school. Also, Indigenous Elders are included in activities across the college, including advice and direction in the development of course materials, guest lectures and so on, and this is also highlighted as an important factor in the college's success. This involvement was formalised through the establishment of the college Elders Board.

The college seems to be a success for a range of important reasons. It is truly a community controlled institution. Education and training are based around community needs and issues; being an independent education and training provider allows for flexibility in the ways in which the college is able to respond to those local community needs. In this way, the links between education and the community are seamless. The primary purpose of the college is to articulate people into employment, and courses and programs reflect this purpose. What students are learning is also immediately relevant to them and their community, particularly in relation to employment. The programs are designed to recognise individual achievement, particularly in reference to prior learning and experience, but there are explicit expectations in relation to attendance and participation, and students who do not meet these requirements do not complete their studies.

Initial observations have found that students participating in courses that the college offers exhibit increased confidence and self-esteem because of the contact with, and the support that they receive from, community Elders involved with the college (McRae et. al. 2000: 339). There was a course completion rate of over 78 per cent for all students. During 1999 there were 54 students enrolled in Year 10, 11 and 12 across the secondary schools in the region; 90 per cent of those students continued study in 2000 with a completion rate of 70 per cent.[5]

There are number of important features of the Booroongen Djugun College that are useful for consideration in any Wugularr or Jawoyn region community literacy initiative:

- this is a model for how a community can identify a real need (a growing aged segment of the local Indigenous population that requires care) and develop an educational facility to meet those needs
- it provides an example of how a community took education and training into its own hands rather than waiting for State training providers to meet local needs

[5] For more information see http://www.whatworks.edu.au/4_7_1.htm

- it is an education and training program that reaches widely across the community, to secondary age students through a VET in school program, as well as to young school leavers and adults
- college curricula are written to meet both personal and community needs and interests
- community elders are involved in both curriculum design (traditional knowledge) and operations (a College Board of Elders)

Even Start Family Literacy Program (USA)

The Even Start Family Literacy Program began as a small demonstration program in the USA in 1989. That early program distributed US$14.8 million to 76 projects nationwide. The program in 2002–2003 distributes US$250 million. The aim of the program is to address the basic educational needs of parents and children and to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy. The program targets low-income families with children up to the age of 8 years. Even Start provides an integrated program that includes three key service components: adult basic or secondary education, assistance for parents to promote the educational development of their children, and early childhood education. Unlike Head Start, the US program to assist low income preschool children, Even Start has an exclusive focus on families.

Families enrolled in the Even Start program participate in each of the three core service components with the support of other community service providers. The focus of adult education may be on completing a high school diploma (or General Educational Development Certificate), on acquiring more general skills in basic reading and mathematics, or on learning English as a second language. Adult learners with a very low level of literacy skills may be offered one-on-one instruction. An Even Start project's staff generally consists of project coordinators, adult education teachers, early childhood education teachers and secretaries. Those people who provide adult education services may be qualified certified adult education teachers or may be volunteers with no official qualifications.

Within the Even Start model there are other, more targeted projects aimed at specific groups such as migrants and Native Americans. Further, under the umbrella of the basic program model, individual projects are given a certain amount of freedom in designing their service delivery. For example, individual projects control the frequency and duration of program activities, whether the activities are primarily centre-based or home-based, and whether or not they develop curricula from scratch or build on existing material. More home visits are conducted in the Tribal (Native American) Even Start projects than other projects due to factors of geography and transportation. The majority of projects provide a centre-based early childhood program, and school-age children generally receive Even Start services (for example, after-school homework assistance and summer activities) in conjunction with their regular schooling.

Evaluations of the Even Start Family Literacy Program have shown numerous benefits (including long-term outcomes) for participating families. For adults, participation in a quality family literacy program enhances their academic skills, their personal growth, and their social development. Gains in literacy also seem to improve the quality of learning and other interactions with their children. Job skills, and subsequently employment prospects, increase. Children participating in family literacy programs appear to be more school-ready than children who do not. These children also appear more engaged with learning, show greater literacy achievement, are more interested in literacy activities, and upon entering school they perform better than those who have participated only in school-based programs (Padak, Sapin & Baycich 2002).[6]

In the context of Wugularr and the Jawoyn region, family literacy programs like Even Start could have a very positive impact in terms of community literacy:

- the program has been carefully evaluated and there is a great deal of evidence to show that it can have substantial impact
- it has been used in Native American communities where many of the cultural and social issues are similar to those experienced by Indigenous Australians
- the family literacy model is essentially a vehicle for promoting lifelong learning and so is highly appropriate for working at multiple levels in the community – with children and adults

[6] For more information see http://www.abtassoc.com/reports/3rd-EvenStartEvaluation.pdf and http://www.evenstart.org/

- by providing accessible information on relevant topics, the parenting education initiative may help to alleviate certain social problems in some communities, such as domestic violence and poor mental health

Sure Start (United Kingdom)

Sure Start is a United Kingdom program that seeks to address child poverty and social exclusion through early intervention for disadvantaged children aged 0–4 years, their families and the communities in which they live. Inspired in part by the US Head Start program, the first Sure Start programs began operating during late 1999; by 2004 there will be at least 500 Sure Start local programs. The local programs are large, serving between 400 and 800 children under the age of 4 years. The aim of Sure Start is to work with parents in promoting the physical, intellectual and social development of their babies and small children, with the intention that children will be better equipped to flourish when they get to school. The program objectives of Sure Start are:

- improving social and emotional development
- improving health
- improving children's ability to learn
- strengthening families

Sure Start aims not to provide a new set of services but to change existing services. This is achieved by reshaping, enhancing, adding value, and by increased coordination among government departments and service providers. At the local level, Sure Start areas are required to form a partnership of statutory and voluntary agencies, professionals, practitioners and parents.

The four main facets of the program are: family support, advice on nurturing, health services and early learning. While there are blanket core services and key principles across all Sure Start programs, there is a built-in flexibility for programs to be tailored to local needs. Thus the services on offer differ between programs. Some examples include: ante-natal clinics, baby clinics, access to specialists, nurseries, child minding and home childcare, children's centres, extended schools, neighbourhood nurseries, help with parenting skills, story telling sessions, drop-in centres, post-natal depression initiatives and home health visits.

The relationships within Sure Start groups (parents, professionals, practitioners, etc.) are said to be the most significant factor in setting up a program. Many programs have links between homes and schools and 90 per cent of programs have links with educational institutions to encourage parents to take up training or education. Many programs rely on volunteer staff.

Evaluation is currently underway but an early impact study shows a high level of satisfaction with the program and increased parental involvement. Some 90 per cent of parents felt that services for young children had significantly improved over the year. One of the main early benefits identified was the high quality play and learning experiences offered to children including the development of social skills such as sharing. Most parents felt that their children would be more ready for school as a result of Sure Start. An increase in parental confidence in teaching and playing with their children was also noted. Courses to assist parents in continuing to learn and develop were popular, for example literacy and numeracy refresher courses as well as cooking and nutrition classes. Home visits from health workers and other Sure Start workers were very highly valued by parents. Parents reported that since Sure Start was established in their area, the sense of 'community spirit' had increased, and that 'involving the whole community and including all members of the family, was seen as crucial to the success of Sure Start' (Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions, 2001).[7]

The British Sure Start program has much in common with the Australian Best Start programs. Like them, this program contains a range of very interesting ideas of direct relevance to community literacy enhancement in Wugularr and the Jawoyn region. The establishment of the SHSAC with a designated adult educator and a child health educator provide an important resource that could enable many of the initiatives to improve child health, build strong families, and raise community literacy levels. The commitment by COAG to coordinated service delivery for Indigenous communities should also provide a framework for developing some of these ideas.

[7] For more information see http://www.surestart.gov.uk/_doc/index.cfm?Document=402

Case studies: summary and lessons

In many ways, these summaries speak for themselves. Each program was designed to address a particular need but each has been adapted and customised to meet the realities of life in the communities in which the projects were implemented. Evaluations of these programs show a positive impact on adults in terms of increased literacy skills, job skills, employment and a positive impact on children in terms of health and school readiness.

There are many exciting ideas and specific strategies and practices that can be explored more fully in later stages of this project, but there are a handful of very important immediate lessons we can draw from the experience of these community programs around the world:

- build on what children and adults know (where possible develop literacy materials that reflect the local cultural context)
- focus on the skills of relevance to the community
- involve community members, parents and families
- engage with local resources and address local needs
- women's health is often a critical doorway
- healthy babies have a better chance of going on to be successful students
- early childhood education is critical for later success
- family support is crucial
- parenting skills don't necessarily come naturally
- literacy development for children can be interwoven with literacy development for adults

SECTION FIVE:
A Range of Intervention Options

We are now in a position to present a range of intervention options for the community of Wugularr. Though these options are offered for Wugularr, most would be applicable in some form to the various Aboriginal communities throughout the Jawoyn region. These options:

- focus on issues identified by Wugularr residents as important for the future
- take advantage of emerging or existing activities in the community
- build on a sound theoretical and evidence base
- involve the development of individual and community capacity

A clear message that came out of the consultation process was that the Wugularr community wants interventions that empower members of the community. What we offer here is a set of options for the Literacy for Life project that seek to increase the empowerment of individuals and the wider community rather than simply to boost literacy and numeracy levels.

For any intervention to work there must be individual and community capacity to manage the implementation successfully. Empowerment is inextricably tied to the capacity of individuals and communities to implement or enact change. This is no less true when the change desired is itself about capacity development. The interventions we are proposing involve a web of different actions, all of which involve much more than imparting skills or knowledge; they are also intended to enhance capacity and build social capital. If capacity does not exist, it needs to be built into the intervention. In some of the options we recommend below the interventions can simply be adopted or adapted to the needs of individuals or the community. Ideally, where capacity is lacking, the intervention itself can be designed so as to enhance the capacities of participants.

Building community literacy is a long-term process. Literacy levels do not rise, particularly for adults, through a simplistic process of sitting people at desks and 'filling them' with literacy. Literacy is an enormously complex and situated set of skills and understandings. The process of raising literacy levels requires considerable time and effort, with initiatives addressed at many levels and contexts. One of the clear lessons of international and Australian best practice is that improving literacy across the community often requires a community-wide change in perceptions, expectations and attitudes toward education and training.

Similarly, we have learned from literacy research and best practice interventions that building community literacy is everyone's concern, not just the school's. There is a tendency to view literacy as something that develops through formal education, and therefore as something that is the responsibility of 'the school'. However, there is good evidence from around the world that where communities succeed in raising literacy levels, they invariably do it in a way that acknowledges family and community responsibility and engages individuals and families – as well as agencies, government departments and employers – in effecting change.

Intervention options

In earlier sections of this report we provided a baseline profile of the Wugularr community, and documented perceptions of community needs in general and education and training needs more specifically. In addition, we identified a range of literacy and community development approaches that could be drawn upon in building a community literacy program for Wugularr. Here we provide what we believe is the starting point for a community literacy program. An earlier set of options was presented to community members in Wugularr in December 2002, and comments and advice from that consultation have been incorporated into what we propose below.

This is an extremely exciting time for Wugularr – a time of opportunities. As a result of the enormous efforts of the Indigenous people in the region, the community store is thriving, engagement with tourism through visual and performing arts is growing, the SHSAC and the NMN Regional Authority are creating new services and opportunities, and the school is being revitalised. We propose that there are several ways to link community literacy efforts with these important organisations and initiatives. We offer the Wugularr community a range of different options that address what we believe are the three critical arenas for community literacy: young children, mothers and families; adolescents and adults; and children at school. Each of the options links to the other two in terms of people and activities, and should, through those linkages, a true community literacy program can be built.

Community literacy option 1: supporting young children, mothers and families

The activities we propose for this option are essentially long-term investment strategies. We believe that the community should pursue ways to enhance literacy among children and adults in the community, but at the same time should be looking for ways to ensure the children who have not yet reached school are healthy and 'school ready'. As noted above, research shows that there is a correlation between improvements in literacy and improvements in individual and community health. The impact of health on literacy development begins during pregnancy and continues through infancy and early childhood; throughout these early pre- and antenatal years much of a child's capacity for learning is established. Similarly, increasing literacy levels can have a significant positive impact on health outcomes. Improved literacy assists in developing the skills a person needs to access health services and information as well as assisting a person to be able to interpret and understand that information. Expanding an individual's knowledge base also allows for the development of appropriate health practices, obviously a key opportunity with the arrival of the SHSAC.

The health of babies in any community depends in large part on the knowledge of young women who understand the significance of antenatal care and good nutrition for themselves and their children. Contrary to what many would like to believe, successfully rearing healthy children does not come naturally. Young women can greatly increase the chances that their children will be healthy and school ready if they are assisted in learning about child development, safety, nutrition and the like.

Specific ideas to pursue:

1. **Convene a Child and Family Services Workshop** This workshop would include representatives of key agencies and organisations (e.g. Centrelink, Sunrise, Wugularr School). The aim of this workshop would be to map existing services, identify gaps and develop mechanisms for enhancing future services.
2. **Begin developing a Wugularr Child and Family Support Plan to address issues raised in the workshop** An action plan with identified responsibilities and protocols for working on issues would be essential to making progress.
3. **Recruit an Early Childhood and Family Support Officer** It is clear that there is enormous care and concern for young children and mothers in Wugularr, and that there are many separate services provided by various agencies that address the needs of young children and families. Historically, however, it has been difficult to effectively coordinate the various services. A full time, Early Childhood and Family Support Officer who resides in the community could play a key role in facilitating service delivery. We would imagine the person in this role would act as liaison between individuals (and the community) and a variety of agencies, and would also be a qualified early education specialist able to facilitate and perhaps teach community education courses on parenting skills, childcare, child development, child safety and the like. Key activities could include:
    - liaising with Centrelink to ensure benefits are received and problems sorted out
    - liaising with the Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation to ensure Wugularr residents can draw upon the community development, child health, maternal and women's health, and nutrition programs to attain the best possible outcomes for mothers, young children and families
    - working with the Adult Education and Community Literacy Officer (see option 2 below) to build literacy and numeracy training into all of the above

- working with the Adult Education and Community Literacy Officer, the school and NTDEET to develop a family literacy program
- working with the school and NTDEET to develop a preschool playgroup

Community literacy option 2: supporting adolescents and adults

Developing a coordinated approach to building community literacy involves working with a range of stakeholders in the community and region. During the consultation phase of this scoping study we quickly discovered that there are many different service providers who could serve the literacy and numeracy training needs of adolescents and adults in the community. Similarly, there are a number (admittedly limited) of potential employers who are in need of workers with more than rudimentary literacy and numeracy skills. We therefore recommend the following options:

1. **Develop a Wugularr Community Literacy Action Plan** Using this scoping study as a starting point, the community could bring together key stakeholders to begin mapping out a specific plan of action to address the literacy and numeracy needs of adults in the community. The plan could identify specific gaps in training as viewed by employers and stakeholders, and nominate appropriate providers and programs (and resources) to deliver the training. For example, with the establishment of the SHSAC in the region, the establishment of the NMN Regional Authority, and the restructuring of the Authority's CDEP program into core areas (land care, women's centres, housing and infrastructure, sport and recreation and the like), there should be a range of new jobs in Wugularr and a need to provide community members with the literacy and numeracy skills necessary to perform them effectively.

   The plan also would trace out options for providing young people at the secondary school level with opportunities to use and develop literacy and numeracy skills in work settings such as the store, the women's centre, the clinic, the arts and crafts centre, the NMN Regional Authority and various Authority jobs. There is certainly a strong need for a plan that makes strategic use of existing programs such as:
   - VET in school training
   - school-based apprenticeships
   - cadetships
   - work experience
2. **Develop or adapt a diagnostic tool to conduct a literacy and numeracy skills audit of current CDEP jobs** This is a high priority need for the Authority's CDEP program. As the main employer of people in Wugularr, the Authority provides jobs in a wide range of areas, but up to now it has not been possible to quickly and easily assess the literacy and numeracy skills of workers before placing individuals in a job (for which they often do not have the skills). Further, because there is currently no assessment tool available, there is no efficient way to determine what training would assist people in gaining the necessary numeracy and literacy skills. A tool like this, if developed with care and sensitivity, would be extremely valuable for planning and delivering appropriate training. There are diagnostic tools used in other contexts that could be customised and adapted to the local and cultural requirements of the Jawoyn region.
3. **Recruit an Adult Education and Community Literacy Officer** As for the support of young children and families, we believe the sorts of initiatives above could best be achieved through a dedicated officer who resides in the community. Ideally this would be a person who understands and has contacts with the major adult education providers, and who has experience in developing and incorporating literacy and numeracy training in a range of work settings.

Community literacy option 3: supporting children at school

The revitalised Wugularr community store is drawing national attention for its success in providing a wide range of healthy foods at a reasonable cost, for its management by and employment of community members, and for its ability to generate a profit that is reinvested in the community. Though it is often said that stores in Indigenous communities struggle because of the tension between the requirements for strict financial management and accountability and an Indigenous culture that values kinship and sharing over private property, the Wugularr store is a success in large part because the community sees the store as a family and community asset.

The key to supporting children at school, we believe, is to find ways to shift perceptions about the school so that it too is seen to be community owned, an asset for the people of Wugularr. We have described this process elsewhere in what we have referred to as building Indigenous Learning Communities (Schwab & Sutherland 2003). Essentially, building a sense of ownership among parents and the wider community is part of a long-term project to build an Indigenous learning community, and many of the activities above will create places and opportunities for members of the community to engage with the school in new ways.

It is important to acknowledge that there are many positive changes occurring in and around the school, but we want to propose some specific ideas to help enhance literacy among school children that we believe will also draw the community into the school:

1. **Develop a literacy backpack program** This simple program has been shown to be an effective way to encourage reading among school children and to open another channel for communication between the school and home.
2. **Open the school library to the community after hours and on weekends** The lack of space in the school has made this impossible up to now, but with the announcement of a new school in the near future, this should be a key component of any future facility.
3. **Work with the NMN Regional Authority to develop an after school program involving sport and recreation** The lack of activity for children after school hours is a major concern. It should be possible to draw on CDEP funds to develop a supervised sport and recreation program.
4. **Engage teachers with the Wugularr community** School teachers have a wide range of skills and insights that can benefit the community beyond the classroom. While we have urged the Indigenous community to build bridges into the school, we also want to urge the community to look for new ways to bring teachers into the community. One obvious avenue for increasing teacher engagement with the community would be to invite them to become involved in developing the Wugularr Child and Family Support and Community Literacy Action plans.

SECTION SIX:
Literacy for Life – Into the Future

This study set out to accomplish a range of tasks and we hope we have been successful in that regard. First, we sought to provide a profile of the socio-economic situation in Wugularr as the community entered the new century. Specifically we sought to benchmark and then reflect on the nature of the population, income, employment, education and training in the community. These benchmarks should allow the people of Wugularr to assess their current situation and to track changes into the future. What we found gave reason for concern. Between 1996 and 2001 employment appears to have deteriorated while dependence on welfare payments increased. Literacy and numeracy scores for Wugularr school children are well below those of other children in 'remote' Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. While there has been some level of participation in adult training opportunities, there is little information to help people gauge the quality of those training experiences or the outcomes of their investment.

Our second aim in this study has been to gather and document community perceptions of literacy and community aspirations for literacy through a series of community meetings, individual interviews and broad-ranging consultations. What we found was that members of the Wugularr community have very clear desires for increased literacy and sophisticated understandings of how important such skills and capacities are for their economic and social futures. In addition, we were able to document many very useful ideas about where to start and how to promote literacy in the community. We were heartened to find that there are already many positive initiatives under way and that community members are keen to find ways to support them.

Finally, we set out to identify a set of options and strategies for achieving increased literacy levels through an analysis of national and international best practice; we paid particular attention to programs that had been objectively evaluated so as to provide options for the Wugularr community that are based, where possible, on tangible evidence of effectiveness.

In addition, we attempted to distil some of the strategic and practical principles of these programs which could be of value. What we documented was a range of very specific programs and activities, some of which we believe can be adopted directly and others which could be easily adapted for Wugularr.

Ultimately, we identified three arenas for community literacy: young children, mothers and families; adolescents and adults; and children at school. Within each of these three arenas we identified a series of specific options and ideas we believe will further empower the people of Wugularr to achieve higher literacy levels across the community. These three areas are distinct but interrelated and effort is required simultaneously in each. It is our hope that this scoping study will provide some of the tools to assist the people of Wugularr in those efforts.

Appendices

Appendix A. School Attendance

Until 2001, there was no Territory sponsored preschool or secondary program in Wugularr. Table A1 shows the average number of students enrolled and the average number who attended each of the four sections of the school – preschool, primary, junior secondary and senior secondary – for the years 2001 and 2002. The table also shows the lowest attendance rate, highest attendance rate and average attendance rate for these years. For comparative purposes, the average attendance rate for Indigenous students and all Non-Indigenous students in all Northern Territory schools is shown in Table A2. It is important to note that every school is unique and there are risks in making comparisons where the numbers of individuals in a sample are small; where numbers are small, even minor variations in enrolment or attendance can result in what appear to be large shifts. However, the data is presented here to provide as complete a picture of education outcomes as can be collected. This is important so the community can have a realistic understanding of how their children and their school are performing in terms of these important indicators. It also provides a baseline from which they can track improvements or deterioration in attendance over time.

The 2002 data indicate that average attendance for preschool was higher than the Northern Territory average for all Indigenous students, and that it increased by a sizeable amount over 2001. Still, the figures show that preschoolers in Wugularr attend on average only between three and four days each week. The same is true for primary students, and there has been a slight decline in primary school attendance in 2002 when compared to 2001. Attendance at the secondary level has been constant for both years but is markedly lower than the average for Indigenous students across the Northern Territory. With a average attendance rate of 56 per cent, junior secondary students in Wugularr are missing nearly as many school days as they are attending. The senior secondary figures show a sharp drop between 2001 and 2002 to 50 per cent. A closer look at the lowest and highest senior secondary attendance rates reveals that attendance actually dropped quite sharply at one point in 2002 to a low of just over 27 per cent. Though the data are not shown in this Table, that drop was at the end of the academic year. At no time did the average attendance rate for Wugularr come close to the attendance rate for non-Indigenous students in the Northern Territory. Attendance averages for Wugularr School between 1995 and 2001 are shown graphically in Figure A1.

Table A1. Enrolment, attendance and attendance rates, Indigenous students, Wugularr School, 2001-2002

Level of schooling	Average enrolment (no.)	Average attendance (no.)	Average attendance rate (%)	Lowest attendance rate in year (%)	Highest attendance rate in year (%)
Preschool					
2001	24	10	41.67	41.67	41.67
2002	22	14	67.46	56.52	80.00
Primary					
2001	80	57	70.98	58.24	78.48
2002	85	55	64.87	54.32	72.94
Junior secondary					
2001	36	20	55.56	55.56	55.56
2002	19	11	55.19	55.00	55.56
Senior secondary					
2001	31	23	72.82	67.74	82.14
2002	24	14	50.42	27.27	72.97

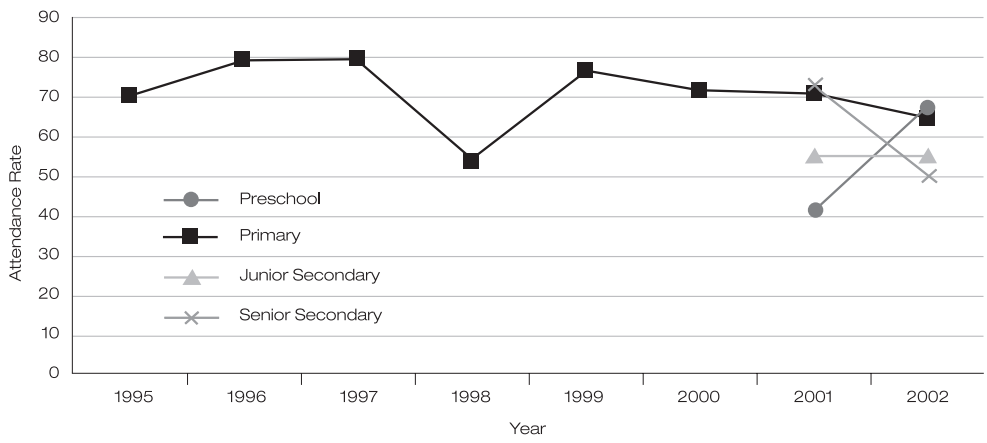
Source: Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training

Table A2. Comparison of average attendance rates, Indigenous students Wugularr School and all Indigenous and all non-Indigenous students in Northern Territory government schools, 2001-2002

	Wugularr School	All Northern Territory government schools:	
Level of schooling	Indigenous students	Indigenous students	non-Indigenous students
Preschool			
2001	41.67	59.16	84.6
2002	67.46	58.73	84.4
Primary			
2001	70.98	70.04	91.5
2002	64.87	70.20	92.8
Junior Secondary			
2001	55.56	81.22	90.2
2002	55.19	80.81	90.4
Senior Secondary			
2001	72.82	83.05	90.6
2002	50.42	90.30	90.1

Source: Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training

Figure A1. Wugularr School average attendance rates by level, 1995–2002



Source: Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training

Appendix B. School: Literacy and Numeracy

Literacy and numeracy assessments for Years 3 and 5 students are carried out annually by NTDEET. These assessments, which are part of MAP, yield scores that enable comparisons with national benchmarks. The MAP scores for Wugularr School for the years 2000–2002 are summarised in Table B1. It should be noted that the use of such assessment scores is highly controversial, since they are too often used to make simple and misleading comparisons between individuals, communities or States. Yet they do provide one tool – blunt though it may be – for measuring progress and making a rough comparison against a national benchmark.

In the case of Wugularr, the number of children who reach the national literacy and numeracy benchmarks is extremely low. Many educators and education department officers argue that releasing such data is unfair and embarrassing to schools and communities because students who are from disadvantaged areas and who do not speak English as a first language will always score lower than children from mainstream and majority families and communities. And as with the data on attendance, changes over time can fluctuate greatly as a result of the low numbers of students involved in the data collection. For this reason as well, caution should be used in interpreting these data. It must also be noted, however, that the community members in Wugularr were adamant that the figures be included in this study so they can see clearly where their children stand in comparison to others in the Northern Territory and so they can measure progress in the future.

Interpreting the MAP results over time is a challenge. NTDEET instituted compulsory assessments only in 2001 and prior to that if a school principal felt that a student would be unable to complete the assessment then that student was excused. As a result the Territory-level aggregate MAP scores before 2001 gave an inflated (though still very low) and misleading measure of overall literacy and numeracy. The 2001 data show that no Indigenous child in Wugularr attained the Year 3 reading benchmark (though nearly 30 per cent of Indigenous students in the Northern Territory did so) while only 20 per cent reached the Year 3 numeracy benchmark (compared with over 65 per cent of the Territory's other Indigenous students attending government schools). Year 5 Indigenous children in Wugularr scored well below other Indigenous children in the Territory's government schools, with only about 12 per cent attaining the literacy benchmark and 14 per cent reaching the numeracy benchmark; just over 30 per cent of other Indigenous students in the Northern Territory's government schools reached the benchmarks.

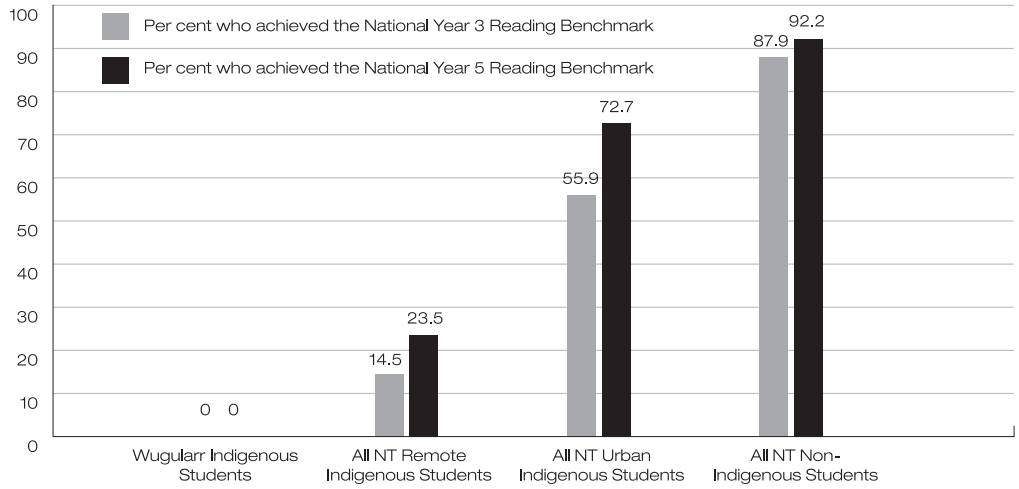
Table B1. MAP results, Indigenous students, Wugularr and Northern Territory, 2000-2002

	2000		2001		2002	
Year	Wugularr	All NT govt schools	Wugularr	All NT govt schools	Wugularr	All NT govt schools
Year 3 reading benchmark:						
Participation rate	60.9	59.0	100.0	62.9	80.0	64.2
% achieved	7.1	23.4	0.0	29.7	0.0	38.1
Year 5 reading benchmark:						
Participation rate	69.6	69.1	100.0	77.4	25.0	72.6
% achieved	0.0	31.6	12.5	32.8	0.0	47.1
Year 3 numeracy benchmark:						
Participation rate	52.2	60.5	100.0	66.4	90.0	68.8
% achieved	8.3	45.3	20.0	65.6	44.4	73.9
Year 5 numeracy benchmark:						
Participation rate	69.9	68.8	87.5	78.9	100.0	74.1
% achieved	0.0	33.7	14.3	31.2	0.0	39.6

Source: Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training

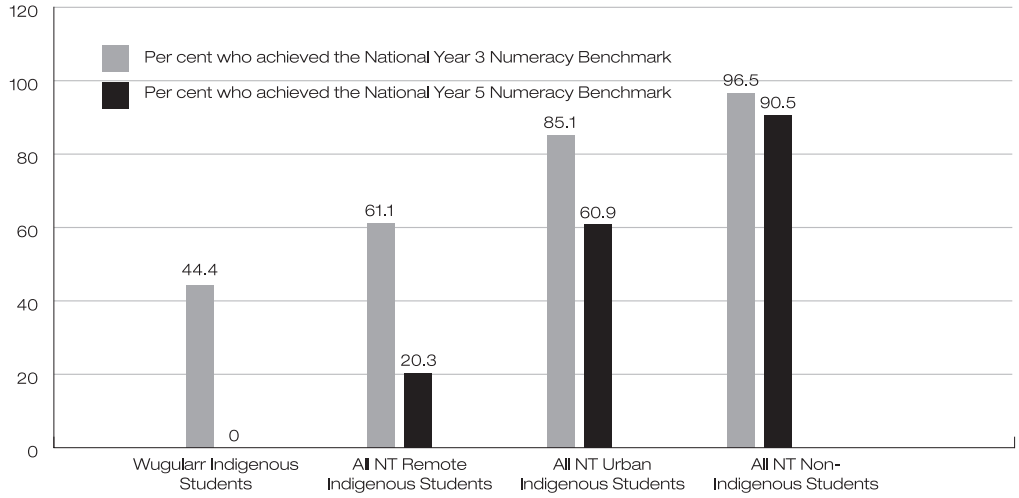
Some might dismiss the low levels of literacy and numeracy as measured by the MAP test as simply a function of the remote location of Wugularr students. Figures B1 and B2 show this is not the only reason their literacy and numeracy achievement is so low. Drawing on MAP score data for 2002, the figures show that while it is true that remote Indigenous students have lower literacy and numeracy skills than Indigenous students in urban areas of the Northern Territory and they are even further behind non-Indigenous students, students who reside in Wugularr score far below other remote Indigenous students.

Figure B1. Percentage of students who achieved the National Reading Benchmark: Wugularr (Indigenous), all NT remote (Indigenous), all NT urban (Indigenous) and all NT non-Indigenous, 2002



Source: Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training

Figure B2. Percentage of students who achieved the National Numeracy Benchmark: Wugularr (Indigenous), all NT remote (Indigenous), all NT urban (Indigenous) and all NT non-Indigenous, 2002



Source: Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training

Appendix C. Adult, Technical and Further Education

The provision of adult education in Wugularr has been irregular in recent years and by any measure it is low. Summary data from NTDEET for Wugularr for the years 1999–2001 are provided in Table C1. The main providers of adult, technical and further education in Wugularr are the CDU and BIITE (formerly Batchelor College). Private providers enrolled only 9 out of the 36 student enrolments over the period 1999–2001.

Course enrolment data should be interpreted with caution. The numbers of enrolments shown in Table C1 do not necessarily relate to unique individuals but may involve individuals who enrolled for more than one course. According to NTDEET, in 1999 there were 11 females and 7 males enrolled for study in First Aid (offered by a private provider), Health Studies, Art and Craft, and Community Recreation. In 2000, 11 females and 3 males enrolled for study in Community Services, Aboriginal Health Work, Health Studies, Indigenous Education Work, Remote Area Local Government, BRACS (Broadcasting and Operations), and Community Recreation. The 2001 data show 2 males and 2 female enrolments for General Construction (offered by a private provider), Community Services, Health Studies and Art and Craft.

Table C1. Wugularr adult, technical and further education course enrolments, 1999–2001

Year	Course	Female (no.)	Male (no.)	Total (no.)
1999	Senior First Aid*	6	3	9
	Health Studies	5	2	7
	Art and Craft		1	1
	Community Recreation		1	1
2000	Community Services	2		2
	Aboriginal Health Work	1		1
	Health Studies		1	1
	Indigenous Education Work	1		1
	Remote Area Local Government	6	1	7
	BRACS (Broadcasting and Operations)		1	1
	Community Recreation	1		1
2001	General Construction*		1	1
	Community Services	1		1
	Health Studies	1		1
	Art and Craft		1	1

Note: * Private provider.

Source: Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) courses comprise a series of modules. Students enrol in particular modules, and when the required modules are completed, they qualify for a certificate or other credential. Module enrolment numbers need to be interpreted with caution because single individuals typically enrol for multiple modules during a year, and NTDEET data do not show individual student numbers for module enrolments. When looking at the module enrolments for Wugularr during the period 1999–2001, there are dozens of different modules in which students enrolled. These vary enormously. By way of example, students enrolled in modules in Jewellery Making, Psycho-Social Issues, Meetings, Fixing Timber Mouldings and a wide range of others. In 1999, the female students in Wugularr enrolled in and completed a total of 35 modules compared with males who enrolled in 44 modules; of these 44 modules, only 33 were successfully completed. In the year 2000, women enrolled in 37 various modules, 19 of which were successfully completed; another 5 modules were continued into the following year. By contrast, in the year 2000, men enrolled for 12 modules but none of the modules were completed. In 2001, though the NTDEET data show only a total of 2 course enrolments by a male or two males, it appears

3 modules were completed and another 38 modules were continued into 2002. Female students enrolled in 11 modules in 2001. Of these, 7 out of 11 were successfully completed.

As the NTDEET data show, most adult education is provided by public providers. Specific records kept by those providers are poor in quality. CDU records show that 7 students enrolled for study in the Local Area Government TAFE program in Semester 2, 2000. Those records fit with what the NTDEET data show. The age and sex of these students is not recorded by CDU and, remarkably, whether or not they completed their studies is not known by the university. CDU has no other record of students from Wugularr enrolling for study at the University.

BIITE records are also incomplete. According to their records, a total of 15 students (11 male and 4 female) from Wugularr have enrolled for study during the time that Batchelor has been in operation. Precisely when those students enrolled is unknown according to BIITE staff. Though BIITE has a demountable office in Wugularr, it has not been used for several years. Indeed, several people in the community had no idea the office was associated with BIITE; it functions today as a storage room for CDEP workers' supplies. In recent years Wugularr students have attended classes at the BIITE campus in Katherine. Unfortunately, BIITE records do not provide completion data or allow the students who appear in the records to be identified, so it is impossible to determine if the 15 students are separate individuals or if the figure represents some lower number of individuals who enrolled for several different courses.

Appendix D. Population Demography

The size of the population of Wugularr, like that of many other small Indigenous communities, is difficult to calculate with precision. While populations of particular communities may grow or decline over time, the ways in which populations are enumerated may also yield different results. For example, while census figures are derived from actual counts on a particular day or night, other types of population figures are based on surveys, desk estimates or calculations from administrative data sets.[8] The variation among different types of counts and estimates is illustrated in Table D1. This table portrays a range of different counts and estimates of the population of Wugularr for the period 1986–2001.

According to the 2001 ABS Census the population is 318, but a survey carried out as part of the development of a community management plan shows a population at the end of 1999 of 451. Derived from a count of individuals on a particular day, a census is unable to take into account the various social, cultural and economic patterns that influence mobility. For example, Wugularr residents have strong connections with the communities of Barunga, Bulman and other communities further into Arnhem Land, and travel frequently to those areas for various reasons. In addition, Katherine is only an hour and a half away by vehicle, and at various times large sections of the community may be in Katherine rather than in Wugularr. Thus one should think of a census count as a snapshot at one point in time; the number of people in those communities will be higher and lower at different times over the course of a year as a result of mobility related to seasonal flooding, ceremonial activities, and the like (Martin & Taylor 1996; Taylor & Westbury 2000: 10). It should be noted, too, that the accuracy of census data for remote Indigenous communities can be highly problematic (Martin et al. 2002). It is likely that the Census count for 2001 is low, yet these are the only demographic data with statistical validity. Consequently, while we suspect the population of Wugularr in 2003 is probably closer to the estimate of 451 provided by Smith and Jackson, we are using the census data here as our base figure (Smith & Jackson 2000). While it may be low, this count enables the most reliable analysis of the population of Wugularr.

Table D1. Population counts and estimates, Wugularr, 1986–2001

1986 (a)	1986 (b)	1987 (c)	1991 (d)	1992 (e)	1995 (f)	1996 (g)	1998 (h)	1999 (i)	1999 (j)	1999 (k)	2001 (l)
316	284	163	347	370	459	273	634	650	600	451	318

Sources: Derived in part from Taylor & Westbury (2000): (a) ABS 1986 Census of Population and Housing; (b) Northern Territory Department of Community Development Aboriginal Communities database; (c) Ellanna et al. (1988); (d) ABS 1991 Census of Population and Housing; (e) ATSIC (1993); (f) ABS (1995: 3); (g) ABS 1996 Census of Population and Housing; (h) Northern Territory Department of Local Government Community Information Access System; (i) ATSIC (2000); (j) Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission (1999); (k) Smith & Jackson (2000); (l) ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing

As Table D2 shows, the population of Wugularr is relatively young, and getting younger. In 1996 over 35 per cent of the population was under the age of 15, and by 2001 that proportion had grown to over 39 per cent. Interestingly, the increasing youthfulness of the population in Wugularr is opposite to the trend among Aboriginal people in the Territory, where the proportion of under 15 year olds had declined slightly during this period.

[8] A useful discussion of the complexities of population counts and estimates with particular reference to the Katherine region is provided in Taylor and Westbury (2000)

Table D2. Distribution of the census-based Aboriginal population by broad age group in Wugularr and the Northern Territory, 1996 and 2001

	Wugularr 1996		Wugularr 2001		Northern Territory 1996	Northern Territory 2001
Age group	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**%**	**%**
0–14	93	35.4	125	39.3	37.6	35.9
15–44	142	54.0	153	48.1	49.0	49.7
45–64	19	7.2	26	8.2	10.6	11.4
Over 65	9	3.4	14	4.4	2.7	2.9
Total	**263**	**100.0**	**318**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.9**
Sex ratio (m:f)	124.8		112.0		97.2	98.6

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1996 and 2001

When compared to all Australians in 2001, the youthful nature of the Wugularr population is especially apparent. Among all Australians, 6.7 per cent of the population is under 5 years of age, compared to 10.7 per cent of the population of Wugularr. The proportion is even more pronounced if the populations under 10 years of age are compared. In Wugularr in 2001, 25.5 per cent are under 10 years of age; though we have not presented the figures in this table, only 13.7 per cent of the total Australian population is under 10 years of age. While nearly 40 per cent of all individuals in Wugularr were under the age of 15 in 2001, only 20.8 per cent of all Australians are in that age group.

Table D3 shows the Wugularr population by age and sex in 2001. As can be seen, there are more males than females in the community, a bias that is most strongly apparent among the very young.

Table D3. Population distribution (Indigenous status by sex and broad age groupings) Wugularr, 2001

Age group	Male	Female	Persons
0–4	23	11	34
5–14	45	46	91
15–24	31	29	60
25–44	46	47	93
45–64	14	12	26
Over 65	9	5	14
Total	**168**	**150**	**318**

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2001

Appendix E. Employment and Income

One useful way to understand the implications of the Wugularr age structure is to attempt to measure the potential economic impact of this relatively young population through dependency ratios. These ratios appear in Table E1, together with comparative measures for the Northern Territory population as a whole. Childhood dependency, the first ratio, expresses the number of children in the population (aged 0–14) as a ratio of the working age population (aged 15–64). A ratio of 1.0 would result from an equal balance between children and individuals of working age. A figure greater than 1.0 indicates there are more children than individuals of working age while a ratio of less than 1.0 would result if there was a greater number of working age individuals than children. It is important to keep in mind that this ratio assumes a number of potential workers and does not take into account individuals who are of working age but who are not employed. In Wugularr in 2001 the childhood dependency ratio was 0.70. This increase from the 1996 ratio of 0.57 is in alignment with what would be expected from the increase in the overall youthful nature of the population between the two census counts. This trend also contrasts with the decreased proportion of young children among Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory as a whole.

Table E1. Dependency ratios for the Aboriginal populations of Wugularr and the Northern Territory, 1996 and 2001

Dependency ratio	Wugularr 1996	Northern Territory 1996	Wugularr 2001	Northern Territory 2001
Childhood dependency	0.57	0.64	0.70	0.59
Childhood burden	0.86	2.1	1.5	1.8
Childhood burden (excl. CDEP)	10.3	3.6	41.7	3.6
Economic burden	1.4	4.0	2.6	3.9
Economic burden (excl. CDEP)	17.1	6.8	70.7	7.7

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1996 and 2001

The childhood burden ratio provides a somewhat more refined measure of dependency by incorporating a calculation of the ratio of the number of children to the number of persons who are employed. The childhood burden at Wugularr grew from 0.86 to 1.5 between 1996 and 2001. If CDEP workers are not included for this calculation, the ratio jumps nearly four-fold between 1996 and 2001, from 10.3 to 41.7. In other words, for each employed (but non-CDEP) worker in Wugularr in 2001 there were about 42 children. The ratio is ten times that of the childhood burden of all Indigenous people in the Northern Territory as a whole in 2001, underlining the heavy dependence of the Wugularr workers on the CDEP scheme.

The economic burden ratio is a calculation of the number of children plus those adults who are economically inactive to the number of employed persons. Where the CDEP scheme is counted as 'employment', Wugularr's economic burden ratio is low in comparison to other Aboriginal communities across the Northern Territory, but when CDEP work is not classed as employment, the Wugularr rate is ten times the rate for the rest of the Northern Territory. The economic burden for Wugularr in 2001, where CDEP is not considered employment, translates as each employed person carrying the economic burden of over 70 individuals.

Wugularr, like most remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, was established as a result of Aboriginal welfare policies rather than because of the existence of a local or regional economic base. The primary avenue for employment in Wugularr is through CDEP, in which workers are primarily employed to undertake construction and maintenance tasks.

In addition, small numbers of workers are employed by the store, the school, the clinic, the women's centre, and arts and crafts. In some cases, individual wages are 'topped up' with additional funds.

As Table E2 shows, the census figures for 2001 indicate a working population of 83 persons, down from 108 in 1996. Of those 83, about 62 per cent were male and about 96 per cent were employed by the CDEP scheme. As Taylor and Westbury (2000) pointed out in their earlier study of the region, the dependence on CDEP is probably even greater than the figures indicate, since the employment question in the Census asks only about work in the last week; CDEP work is irregular and part-time and so may not be reported (Taylor & Westbury 2000: 17). Data collected during 1999–2000 as part of the development of the Wugularr Community Management Plan provides a slightly different picture, with 16 community members (about 89 per cent) indicating they were in full employment and 128 others that they were on CDEP (Smith & Jackson 2000: 52).

Table E2. Aboriginal labour force status, Wugularr, 1996 and 2001

Labour force status	1996	2001
Employed (CDEP)	99	80
Employed (Other)	9	3
Unemployed	0	3
Not in labour force	61	84
Total aged 15+	169	170

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1996 and 2001

Table E3 provides a summary profile of labour force status in Wugularr for the years 1996 and 2001. The employment rate, a calculation of the percentage of persons 15 years of age and older who indicated they were employed the week prior to the census count, fell between the two censuses. At 48.9 per cent the employment rate in Wugularr in 2001 is below the national rate of 54.4 per cent. The unemployment rate – calculated here as the proportion of individuals who indicated they were not employed but were actively seeking employment the week prior to the census – rose between the two census dates. The unemployment rate in 2001 was 3.5 per cent, far below the national rate of 9.2 per cent. Obviously, the Wugularr rate would be far higher if CDEP employment is not included in the calculation. Indeed, when CDEP employment is removed from the calculation, the employment rate drops to 3.5 per cent and the unemployment rate would be as high as 93.0 per cent. The labour force participation rate, a function of the persons in the labour force as a percentage of individuals of working age, had dropped from 63.5 to 50.6 per cent between 1996 and 2001. In other words, by any common measure, employment in Wugularr deteriorated between the two census dates.

Table E3. Aboriginal employment, unemployment and labour force participation rates, Wugularr, 1996 and 2001

Labour force status	1996	2001
Employment rate	63.5	48.9
Unemployment rate	0.0	3.5
Labour force participation rate	63.5	50.6

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1996 and 2001

Appendix F. Gross Annual Income

Taylor and Westbury (2000: 17–18) provide a very useful introduction to the complexities of determining income in Aboriginal communities such as Wugularr. As they point out, Aboriginal people in the region derive their income from a number of sources including salaried employment in CDEP or in other more mainstream forms of work, unemployment benefits and other welfare payments from Centrelink, royalty payments, and private income from the sale of art works, crafts and other products. In addition, there is some fraction of imputed income for some individuals that would come about from subsistence activities, but there is no way to calculate that at present.

Accurate data on overall levels of income are difficult to collect, since many of the conceptual assumptions underpinning census data collection on income are problematic in remote regions where populations are highly mobile and a 'usual' week's income is highly variable. Similarly, Indigenous workers in remote areas are often employed through a highly variable mix of casual, part-time and longer term jobs, and little is known about the circulation of cash between individuals and households.

As Taylor and Westbury point out, the census provides the most comprehensive source of income data for the region, but those data are reported in categories with the highest category left open-ended, so that actual incomes have to be derived (Taylor & Westbury 2000: 18). Consequently, total and mean incomes are only estimations.

In their 2000 study, Taylor and Westbury point out that census data on individual gross income does not accurately reflect individual disposable income or the value of assets; a more accurate picture would require a detailed individual or household survey of income and expenditure. Yet, when comparing the 1996 figures with those reported for 2001 (Table F1), there is some indication that individual gross income for working age adults in Wugularr has risen over the five-year period. While some of that rise is obviously a function of rises in the cost of living and consequent adjustments in wages and pensions, it does appear that fewer people have no income and that more report higher income levels. Still, Aboriginal people in Wugularr remain impoverished on the whole, with 84.4 per cent of individuals reporting $10,399 gross income for the year.

Table F1. Distribution of individual annual gross income: Aboriginal adults in Wugularr, 1996 and 2001

	1996		2001	
Income category	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Nil income	12	7.1	7	3.6
$1–6,239	62	36.5	29	15.0
$6,240–$10,399	82	48.2	127	65.8
$10,400–$20,799	11	6.5	12	6.2
$20,800–$31,199	3	1.8	12	6.2
Over $31,200	0	0.0	6	3.1
Total	**170**	**100.00**	**193**	**100.00**

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1996 and 2001

Table F2 shows the breakdown of annual gross family income for the years 1996 and 2001. Similar to the pattern for individual annual gross income, gross family income in Wugularr has increased for most between 1996 and 2001. Yet that increase should be interpreted with caution. There is an increase in the number of families identified by the ABS, up from 55 in 1996 to 72 in 2001. While the categories have remained fixed between 1996 and 2001, there have been increases in various salaries and payments to adjust for inflation. In addition, because these categories are so broad that it is impossible to know the size of the actual increases in income that enabled more families to indicate higher incomes in 2001 than did families reporting in 1996. Nonetheless, the data show that fewer families have incomes in the lowest category in 2001 (down from 12 to 6) and that 9 families report income over $41,600 in 2001 where no Aboriginal family reported these higher incomes in 1996.

Table F2. Distribution of annual gross family income: Aboriginal residents of Wugularr, 1996 and 2001

	1996		2001	
Income category	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**
$1–10,399	12	21.8	6	8.3
$10,400–20,799	29	52.7	41	56.9
$20,800–$41,599	14	25.4	16	22.2
Over $41,600	0	0.0	9	12.5
Total	55	100.00	72	100.00
Average	$16,120		$23,862	

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1996 and 2001

Appendix G. Employment Income

Table G1 presents a breakdown of annual income by source. As can be seen, the total annual income for the Aboriginal residents of Wugularr increased between 1996 and 2001 from $1,315,080 to $1,415,440. However, this increase is illusory, as the population of working age adults also increased from 170 to 193. In fact, the average annual individual income *decreased* from $7,736 to $7,334 between 1996 and 2001. Looking more closely at the source of income one immediately notices that income from welfare (those who classed themselves as unemployed or not in the labour force) comprised 30.1 per cent of all income in 1996 but 46.7 per cent in 2001. Clearly, dependence on welfare income has increased greatly in recent years. CDEP income, essentially 'work for the dole' wages, comprised nearly half of all income in Wugularr (about 48%), a proportion that has remained constant between the two census dates. If one considers CDEP income as welfare rather than true employment, the proportion of community income from welfare swells to 95 per cent in 2001. This is an increase from 78.3 per cent in 1996. Clearly, the level of welfare dependence in Wugularr is extreme.

Table G1. Distribution of annual income from employment and non-employment sources: Aboriginal residents of Wugularr, 1996 and 2001

	1996		2001	
Labour Force Status	**Income ($)**	**% of total income**	**Income ($)**	**% of total income**
Employed (CDEP)	634,400	48.2	683,800	48.3
Employed (Other)	285,480	21.7	70,200	5.0
Unemployed	0	0	21,840	1.5
Not in the labour force	395,200	30.1	639,600	45.2
Total	**1,315,080**	**100.0**	**1,415,440**	**100.0**

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1996 and 2001

Appendix H. **Non-Employment Income**

In their study of Barunga, Manyallaluk and Wugularr, Taylor and Westbury provided a snapshot of Centrelink payments for each of these communities for one fortnight in 1999 (Taylor & Westbury 2000: 22–5). Those data were provided to show another (more accurate) measure of community income in contrast to that provided by the census. We have reproduced their Wugularr data in Table H1 and have updated those figures in Table H2 with another snapshot taken three years later. The two snapshots show the full breakdown of payments by age group and payment type. The key at the bottom of each table defines the payment types.

Table H1. Centrelink payments by type of payment and age of client: Aboriginal residents of Wugularr, 1999.

	Payment type							
Age group	Age	DSP	PPS	PPP	FPA/FTP	NSA	YAL	Other
14–19			2	1	6		1	
20–24		1	1	1	4	5	1	
25–29		1		1	10	9		1
30–34		2	2	2	9	7		
35–39		1	1	1	5	15		1
40–44		2	1	1	3	6		1
45–49			1	2	2			
50–54		1			1	1		1
55–59		1		1	1	1		
60+	12	1	1		2	1		
Total	12	10	9	10	43	45	2	4

Key: Age = Age Pension; DSP = Disability Support Pension; PPS = Parenting Payment Single; PPP = Parenting Payment Partnered; FPA/FTP = Family Allowance; NSA = Newstart Allowance; YAL = Youth Allowance; Other = Child Disability Allowance, Wife Pension, Widow Allowance, Carer Pension, Partner Allowance, Family Tax Payment.

Source: Centrelink, Katherine; Taylor & Westbury (2000)

Comparing the 2002 snapshot with that from 1999 suggests Centrelink payments have more than doubled within three years. This is unlikely to be explainable as a function of inflation or increased population. More likely, this reflects increasingly accurate payments to individuals who were eligible in the past but who – for whatever reason – did not claim or did not receive their benefits. The most common payment in 2002 was the Family Tax Benefit, a payment that replaces the earlier Family Allowance. The number of individuals receiving that payment type increased from 43 to 67 in three years. In the 2002 snapshot, the Family Tax Benefit brought $23,633 into the Wugularr community in one fortnight. Another significant increase in benefit payments can be seen in the Youth Allowance category. While the number of recipients increased from only 2 to 4, the total payment to the community increased from $472 to $17,903. Similarly, the number of individuals receiving the Parenting Payment Single increased from 10 to 30 and with a total value of $17,352 in 2002 in comparison with $3,292 in 1999.

Table H2. Centrelink payments by type of payment and age of client: Aboriginal residents of Wugularr, 2002

	Payment type							
Age group	Age	DSP	PPS	PPP	FTB	NSA	YAL	Other
14–19			1	5	6		4	
20–24		1	5	5	4	5	.	
25–29			3	7	10	9		
30–34		1	3	8	9	7		
35–39			2	1	5	15		
40–44		1	1	3	3	6		
45–49		2	3	1	2			
50–54		1	1		1	1		1
55–59		4			1	1		1
60+	12	1	1		2	1		
Total	12	10	20	30	43	45	4	2

Key: Age = Age Pension; DSP = Disability Support Pension; PPS = Parenting Payment Single; PPP = Parenting Payment Partnered; FTB = Family Tax Benefit (replaces FPA/FTP); NSA = Newstart Allowance; YAL = Youth Allowance; Other = Child Disability Allowance, Wife Pension, Widow Allowance, Carer Pension, Partner Allowance, Family Tax Payment.

Source: Centrelink, Katherine

The 2002 snapshot calls into question the accuracy of income reported for individuals who are unemployed or not in the labour force. In one fortnight in late 2002 a total of $95,179 was paid to Centrelink clients in Wugularr, up from $46,042 in the 1999 snapshot. This suggests that the total income for Wugularr as derived from the 2001 Census is probably quite low in terms of actual income. While the 2001 Census reports a total annual income of $1,415,440, the Centrelink payments alone (extrapolating from the fortnight snapshot in 2002) amount to $2,474,654. If only the non-employment income is considered for 2001 ($661,440), the extrapolation suggests the Centrelink figures are 3.7 times higher than those indicated in the census a year earlier.

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ACN 070 556 642

The Fred Hollows Foundation
4 Mitchell Street
Enfield NSW 2136 Australia

24hr Donation Line 1800 352 352

Telephone +61 2 8741 1900
Facsimile +61 2 8741 1999

Email fhf@hollows.org
Website http://www.hollows.org

ACN 070 556 642

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200

Telephone +61 2 6125 0587
Facsimile +61 2 6125 2789

Email admin.caepr@anu.edu.au
Website
http://online.anu.edu.au/caepr/