

SUMMARY REPORT FORECAST SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT ANALYSIS

Strong Culture, Strong Community program

Prepared for Community Arts Network

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1 SROI ANALYSIS SUMMARY

The Forecast Social Return on Investment (SROI) undertaken for Community Arts Network's (CAN's) Strong Culture, Strong Community program in Narrogin, Western Australia (WA), was specifically for the youth programs at the Narrogin Senior High School (NSHS) from 2010 to 2015.

The objective of the CAN Strong Culture, Strong Community program in the Southern Wheatbelt was to improve wellbeing and resilience within Aboriginal communities through participation in culture and the arts. The specific objective of involving NSHS students in the program was to find ways of engaging young Noongar people to learn to connect with their language and culture, and to re-engage Noongar students with high school.

From 2010 to 2015, CAN has delivered numerous programs to the Narrogin and surrounding Southern Wheatbelt communities, however, the SROI analysis undertaken was for the Strong Culture, Strong Community projects involving NSHS students, particularly those programs delivered in partnership with NSHS including; Noongar Pop Culture and Noongar Pop Fashion (2012 to 2015).

1.1 Snapshot of the Narrogin community

Narrogin is a regional town in the Wheatbelt region of WA, 192 kilometres southeast of Perth. It is predominantly a rural community and serves as a regional Wheatbelt hub. It has a high standard of infrastructure including rail, highways access, water supply, power, and connection to the optical cable network.

As a regional centre, the town has a regional hospital which is just about to undergo a \$565 million upgrade. Narrogin has an equipped recreation centre complex with a heated indoor pool, sports ground, sporting clubs, regional library, heritage museum, three primary schools, a senior high school with a residential college, an agricultural college and a TAFE college.

Narrogin has a population of 4,210 people, of which 2,031 are male and 2,188 are female. The median age is 37 and there are 1,049 families residing in Narrogin. The average people per household is 2.4, the median weekly household income is \$955.¹

1.2 Social context for intervention with at risk NSHS Noongar students

- Suicide rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are approximately twice those of non-Aboriginal Australians. Rates are particularly high among younger (15 to 34 year old) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The age-specific suicide rate for 25 to 29 year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males was 90.8 deaths per 100,000 people for the combined 10-year period.²
- For teenagers (12-17 years) in the Narrogin ATSI region and throughout the state, 21% were at high risk of mental health problems compared to 13% in the non-Aboriginal population.³

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011

² Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011

³ The Social and Emotional Well-being of Aboriginal Children and Young People, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

- Studies have shown that young people who do not complete school or gain equivalent education and training are more likely to become unemployed or stay unemployed for extended periods of time, earn lower wages and accumulate a lower level of wealth across their lives⁴

1.3 What is Social Return on Investment Analysis?

SROI is a framework for accounting and measuring for social value. SROI measures change in a way that is relevant to people or the organisations that contribute to it. It tells a story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes and it uses monetary values to represent them for a range of stakeholders.

CAN decided to use SROI methodology to demonstrate the social impact they had created through working in the Narrogin community between 2010 and 2015 and to ascertain how they could create more social impact going forward.

The major stakeholder groups who benefitted from the NSHS Strong Culture, Strong Community projects included:

- **NSHS Noongar students** who benefited from obtaining increased confidence to obtain new skills and perform, as well as improving their attendance and re-engaging with the learning process
- **Parents, caregivers and Elders of NSHS students** who benefited from observing an overall increase in the resilience of their children
- **NSHS** which benefited from an increased attendance and engagement by Noongar students as well as changing the perception of Noongar students in the school environment
- **CY O'Connor Institute** that assisted the delivery of some of the Strong Culture, Strong Community projects, in particular the 'Honouring our Elders' Portrait Exhibition and, through project involvement, CY O'Connor students improved their perception of Aboriginal people
- **Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (Office for the Arts, later Ministry for the Arts)** funding which can be demonstrated to have contributed towards improved attendance and engagement of Noongar youth in Narrogin and hopefully, in the longer term, will lead to improved social and emotional wellbeing for Narrogin youth and improved relationships between Noongar families in Narrogin.

⁴ Rumberger and Lamb (2003);Levin (2010)

The following is a summary of the social value created for each stakeholder group.

Table 1-1: Summary of social value created for each stakeholder group (including negative values in red.)

Stakeholder group	Outcomes from the project	Social value creation (2010 to 2015)	Social value per stakeholder group
NSHS students who participated in the Strong Culture, Strong Community projects	Increased confidence leading to making more friends, learning new skills and having the confidence to participate in public performances	\$225,750	\$12,345,950
	Increased attendance in school as they become actively involved in the learning process	\$11,245,200	
	Increased connection to their Aboriginal culture and feeling proud to be a young Noongar person	\$875,000	
Parents, caregivers and guardians of NSHS students participating in the Strong Culture, Strong Community projects	Increased resilience to deal with community feuding	\$304,500	\$304,500
NSHS	Reduced academic performance for Noongar students as a result of being taken out of the classroom to participate in programs	(\$420,000)	(\$420,000)
CY O'Connor Institute	Increased workload for CY O'Connor personnel as a result of additional coordination of Strong Culture, Strong Community projects	(\$60,000)	(\$60,000)
	Improved perception of Aboriginal people	\$18,000	\$18,000
Total present value		\$11,004,446	
Total invested		\$592,200	
Social return per \$ invested		\$18.58	

**Social value created prior to discount rate being applied*

An investment of \$592,200 in NSHS Strong Culture, Strong Community projects from 2010 to 2015 creates \$11,004,446 of present value, resulting in an indicative SROI ratio of \$18.53:\$1. That is, for the equivalent of every \$1 invested in the NSHS Strong Culture, Strong Community projects, \$18.58 is returned in social value.

It is possible that if the NSHS Strong Culture, Strong Community projects were able to improve on the amount from 10 to 20 of students' attendance and being engaged in the learning process (a 100% increase), then the SROI ratio obtained would increase from \$18.58 to \$35.73:1.

1.4 Key Findings/Conclusions of the SROI Analysis

The SROI analysis focused on understanding the current impact the Strong Culture, Strong Community program had on its stakeholders.

In addition to social value being created by the Strong Culture, Strong Community projects, the following conclusions were drawn from the SROI analysis:

- The Strong Culture, Strong Community projects delivered in NSHS between 2010 and 2015 have been instrumental in encouraging Noongar students to return to high school and re-engage in the learning process. The impact of students returning to school and re-engaging with the education process is significant for the wider community in terms of future pay-offs that accrue over the lifetime of an individual, including improved career paths, improved health and welfare and improved social interactions.
- The Strong Culture, Strong Community projects at NSHS have increased student confidence to make new friends, learn new public performance skills.
- The Strong Culture, Strong Community projects at NSHS have reconnected Noongar students with their Aboriginal culture.
- Parents and guardians of Noongar students believe that the Strong Culture, Strong Community projects have made their children more resilient and better able to deal with community feuding.
- The Strong Culture, Strong Community projects have provided Noongar students with opportunities that have enabled them to improve the perception of Noongar students amongst their non-Noongar peers. This had led to students feeling more proud, capable, taking on leadership skills and seeking support to help them re-engage with learning.
- The Strong Culture, Strong Community projects have established a model using arts and culture to engage Noongar students which can be viewed as a type of **Hands on Learning Model**. This successful and sustainable method of learning through arts and culture is in strong alignment with the priorities of the Australian Government, in particular the Indigenous Advancement Strategy of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- The approach that CAN has taken in the delivery of the Strong Culture, Strong Community projects in NSHS strongly supports the approach recommended in the *Gonski Review (2011)*⁵, ensuring that funding is directed to students who need it most.

Quotes from interviews with participating Strong Culture, Strong Communities Students and Teachers from NSHS

“Before CAN, I was coming to school but I was bored, I started to wag a few classes. I knew school was important to get a good job, a career and a house. When CAN came, it entertained me and showed me that I could do other things like singing. This was the same for all of the Noongar kids. They always ask me when Noongar Pop Culture is coming back as they want to do these things too.”

“I wouldn’t be able to do what I am doing now if it wasn’t for the CAN courses. That is the reason that I am still at school now.”

“I felt more confident – felt stronger about culture, proud of who I am. I hadn’t had a chance to celebrate Noongar culture before except through NAIDOC Week.”

⁵ The 2011 Gonski Review concludes that a significant shift is required in the way that all governments provide funding to address educational disadvantage.

“These programs gave us a common language and opportunity to help people change their perceptions and form relationships with people. They allow us to form positive relationships with the students and the families.”

“These types of projects need to continue with Year 7 and 8 students. If we want students to engage, we need these extend these types of projects. It is really important because in our society we have large groups of disadvantaged students. We need to put energy into getting students to school and enabling them to develop a sense of belonging to the school community.”

“Young Aboriginal people feel a sense of helplessness – what’s my future, I’m not going to get a job, no one is going to employ me, I don’t have the skills, I can’t do anything. Low self-esteem leads to mental health issues, when you withdraw from engaging in education. We need to show them the opportunities available to learn skills, feel empowered and to make choices to succeed as adults.”

1.5 Recommendations

The SROI analysis revealed a number of areas where the Strong Culture, Strong Community program can improve its implementation and better demonstrate the social value it creates.

The following recommendations are based on findings from the program’s preliminary outcomes to date and the consultation that was undertaken with material stakeholders in the Narrogin community who have had direct involvement with CAN and the Strong Culture, Strong Community projects:

RECOMMENDATION 1: CAN and NSHS need to work collaboratively to develop a sustainable delivery and funding model that enables Strong Culture, Strong Community projects to move away from an activity-based approach to programs that can be integrated into the school curriculum for Noongar students from Years 7 through to 12 continuously. This model should focus on building the capacity of NSHS teaching staff and the Narrogin arts and culture community.

In order to build on the positive results generated by the Strong Culture, Strong Community projects in NSHS to date, it is recommended that CAN and NSHS build a business case for ongoing funding from the WA Education Department and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet which aligns to the recommendations of the *Gonski Review* in relation to improving the academic performance and retention of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The preliminary finding of the SROI analysis offers a case for future investment.

The co-designed model between CAN and NSHS should advocate for the ongoing delivery of arts and culture to Noongar students and aim to develop into a **Hands on Learning Model**⁶ that is embedded into the school curriculum for “at risk” Noongar students. This model could also involve the CY O’Connor Institute as a delivery partner, as well as local Narrogin artists and Noongar Elders and community members.

⁶ Hand on Learning is an in-school early intervention program run one day a week for students who are at risk of disengagement from school.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Future Strong Culture, Strong Community projects at NSHS should be integrated into the curriculum and build on the existing human capital of the NSHS teaching staff and Narrogin arts and culture community.

Given that CAN is a Perth based organisation with broad arts and culture objectives, CAN's role in NSHS may need to shift from a delivery partner to that of an enabler/capacity builder for NSHS Strong Culture, Strong Community projects. This would result in NSHS becoming more self-reliant in the delivery of an arts and culture curriculum to Noongar students, supported where required by CAN and other Narrogin community arts and culture delivery partners.

The following are some key points for future Strong Culture, Strong Community project design in NSHS:

- Consider integrating projects into the curriculum in a way that allows students to obtain credits/marks against their school work, e.g. a multimedia project may obtain credits against another subject area. This would allow students to demonstrate application of skills and knowledge in a **Hands on Learning** environment rather than in a traditional classroom setting.
- CAN to provide professional development opportunities for NSHS teaching staff and other Narrogin community arts organisations that enable NSHS to confidently deliver an arts and culture curriculum to Noongar students utilising the existing human capital of the Narrogin arts and culture community.
- Identify opportunities to develop vocational employment pathways from Year 10 onwards that provide opportunities for employment in arts and culture in the Narrogin community. Examples might include arts administration (CY O'Connor Institute have the capacity to deliver this course), arts centre or venue management, stage management, curatorial qualifications, cultural tourism and/or event management. For those students who are artistically gifted or creative, payment of TAFE fees for arts classes could be considered to remove the current barrier that exists with Centrelink only subsidising courses which lead to mainstream employment.
- Ideally, students involved in future Strong Culture, Strong Community projects at NSHS would study towards Certificate level qualifications while still at school, or be able to enrol in these courses when they have finished Year 12.
- Future programs should aim to connect Noongar students back to their traditional culture and involve Elders in the delivery of these programs.

1.5.1 Recommendations specifically for Strong Culture, Strong Community programs with Narrogin Arts and Culture stakeholders

The Wheatbelt Development Commission to support the development and funding of an Arts and Culture Plan for the Town of Narrogin

The Wheatbelt Development Commission, as the key economic development agency for the region, should assist the Narrogin community to plan, develop, fund and implement an Arts and Cultural Plan for the Town of Narrogin that considers arts and culture as an alternative emerging economy, building on the existing community arts and culture capital in Narrogin.

The Arts and Cultural Plan should include the Noongar community at the centre (via the soon to be formed Noongar Regional Corporations) and other key stakeholders such as CAN, NSHS, ARtS Narrogin and Nexus Gallery.

A key component of the plan should be how future employment can be created for Noongar people in the town, either through the commercialisation of their artistic work, or via the establishment and running of venues such as Noongar artist studios, galleries and art centres. The planning could be incorporated into a broader tourism strategy for the Town of Narrogin, making the community an arts and culture destination in the Wheatbelt region.

CAN to continue to work with all Noongar families, despite feuding, and seek opportunities to bring all parties together through shared planning and pursuit of initiatives that provide economic and cultural benefit to all.

Build on the healing that has taken place between Noongar families in Narrogin by facilitating a joint planning process to facilitate a shared vision for Narrogin becoming an artistic and cultural centre that creates employment and economic prosperity for all Noongar families through the Narrogin Arts and Culture Plan.

As indicated, a possible future funder of this initiative could be the Wheatbelt Development Commission and future Noongar Regional Corporations formed from the Noongar Native Title Claim process.⁷

Collection of data to validate future program outcomes

As part of its future approach to data collection CAN needs to demonstrate, in both a quantitative and qualitative way, how it is achieving the outcomes outlined in the Forecast SROI analysis. The Impact Map outlines some possible indicators and sources of data collection. It is strongly recommended that this be a joint framework established with NSHS and other key community stakeholders to track individual student, Noongar Community participants and key stake holder outcomes.

⁷ Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) currently being determined in relation to name and location of Regional Corporations, adoption of rule books, and developing key policies including a cultural advice policy.