

# THE CAIRNS INSTITUTE

Research in tropical societies



## Training for impact: Building an understanding of community development training and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development outcomes

Wontulp Bi-Buya College

2012–2014

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## **Personal reflections and acknowledgements by Mr Eddie Turpin**

As I'm reflecting back on the Addiction Management and Community Development (AMCD) course delivered by Wontulp-Bi-Buya I'm amazed how the time has flown by while working here. I am into my sixth year of delivering the AMCD course in Cairns and other parts of Australia, and what a journey it has been since the day I started on the 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2009.

After being an outdoor man working in the mechanical trades, working for Wontulp and delivering the course has been a complete change of lifestyle and mindset, with the scenes and horizons constantly changing and sometimes challenging and testing me to the core. This has helped me become more rounded in personality and people friendly, especially when delivering the courses in class and out on country to different peoples with a variety of backgrounds and cultures from across Australia. I have enjoyed the change and am looking forward to what the future holds for the College and its courses.

Over the last 5 years I have seen a few changes with the course and in the wider social sector, which in turn changed and shaped my life to a great extent. I think the courses we deliver are relevant and empowering to all who sign up to do the course, that through them, it impacts their communities of where they come from. Since 2009, there has been an increase in students and the places they come from.

Some of the highlights of my time here at Wontulp would be, of course, the students' graduations every year. It is always a joy to participate in these events, and I am proud in knowing that I played a part in changing the direction of their lives. The other highlights would be the travel to different places to promote, recruit and meet the grass roots people, whom the AMCD course is designed for.

I also had the privilege of travelling abroad to India and Israel, and was invited by the former Grand Chief of British Columbia, Canada, to speak at one of their pow wow gatherings. Whilst over there I met the Chief Andy and his wife Phyllis Chelsea, of Alkali Lake, who both starred in the movie *Honour of All*, a DVD that I show students every year. It's a story about Andy and Phyllis tackling the alcohol problems of their reservation and changing their community, which is what the AMCD course teaches.

I would like to acknowledge the many great people who make Wontulp College what it is today. This includes the Board and all staff, past and present including our Principals, David Thomson, Des Rumble and Victor Joseph; teachers Les Baird, Marilyn Clark and Barry Paterson; administration staff, Daniella Crowe, Nola Graham, Davena Munro, Roseanne Naawi, Denise Mackey, and support teachers, Renee Nsengimana, Christine, Melissa Bann and Ann Mohun.

Other important people I want to acknowledge who I consider have played a big part in my life and the success of the course is Prof Komla Tsey, of James Cook University (JCU), Dr Anne Stephens, of JCU, and Barbara Deuchman, of TEAR Australia.

I will continue to work with Wontulp-Bi-Buya because it provides the perfect platform where I have employment, exercise ministry such as evangelism, and enjoy full family life with time for my hobbies and outdoor activities. I will be forever be thankful to Wontulp-Bi-Buya College, and all the people I've mentioned, and all the praise and glory goes to the Lord Jesus Christ, without whom all this would not have been possible.

**Eddie Turpin**

AMCD Coordinator, Wontulp-Bi-Buya

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## Executive Summary

This report is the second evaluation of Wontulp Bi-Buya College (WBBC) commissioned by TEAR Australia to investigate the effectiveness of the Certificate III in Addiction Management and Community Development (AMCD III) training offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The report covers the period 2012–August 2014.

TEAR's assistance of WBBC continues to be used to great effect. WBBC has developed a responsive and relevant course for training and applied learning of Indigenous community leaders drawn from community sectors including health, education, culture and arts, church and community employment. The demand for the College's services exceeds expectations.

Since completing the 2011 report, *How are we doing?* (Stephens & Tsey, 2011) the researcher and primary author of this report, Dr Anne Stephens, has remained continuously engaged in data collection and analysis. This second report builds upon the findings of the 2011 report, generating deeper longitudinal empirical evidence of WBBC's outcomes. With the data generated for the 2011 report, researchers published a theoretical perspective to account for the link between community development training and community development practice in the context of the North Queensland Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in 2012. We found this area to be an under-theorised knowledge gap, and by drawing on the data collated in the TEAR evaluation report, the authors established an emerging framework for understanding the complex nature of community development training and models of successful implementation. The authors attributed the impact the training is having to three key aspects of the WBBC training model. That is:

1. The role of empowerment as a modelled strategy,
2. The pedagogical approach of training delivered at the College, and
3. The importance of social capital ties.

With this background, the objectives of the present evaluation project were refined. The Terms of Reference used to structure the 2011 report remain key categorical organisers of the data collected. However, new evidence was captured concerning the following domains:

1. Evidence of personal empowerment and healing from trauma as a consequence of doing the Certificate III in Addiction Management and Community Development (AMCD III),
2. The strategies and actions individuals took to initiate community development and healing projects within their communities, and
3. The effectiveness of trainee training to build the teaching capacity of the College.

The methods used to collect data remain unchanged from the first project evaluation period. Face-to-face interviews (one on one or small group), written questionnaires, a generic survey and classroom observation and community visitations, were the most effective way to gather data and observe the progress of students throughout their study blocks. However, a key difference between the data collection methods between this research period and the previous report is ongoing researcher engagement with the classes over a three-year period. This has led to familiarity with the classes and a comfortable rapport between students and the researcher that has led to a notable new level of disclosure in students' responses to questions. However, this does not ameliorate some limitations of the method, principally, skewed or misleading statements by students who aim to please or reinforce a positive viewpoint, reticence of some students to talk to a non-Indigenous woman, and difficulty in interviewing students who may have withdrawn from the course due in unfavourable circumstances. Where this has occurred, a perspective of the college staff (trainers, administrators or support personnel) has been sought.

Key learnings and recommendations from this study are listed below.

- Changes in the student profile can be expected over the next phase of growth of the College, as its reputation, scope and appeal widen to capture a more diverse cohort of students interested in studying at WBBC. Contingency and risk mitigation plans need to be prepared, particularly in the first half of the residential teaching blocks where several issues intersect for students that may make respectful engagement with staff and fellow students difficult. These may include casually employed or volunteer support staff for personal counselling and support, as well as literacy and learning support. At present a heavy burden falls upon current administration and teaching staff.
- Literacy support is very highly regarded and in high demand. However, the College may need to consider providing a second, male, literacy support person and that this person also provide disability support for students with physical impairments. In all teaching blocks a balance of male/female teaching staff should be present.
- Teaching and learning might be enhanced if staff had access to Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) props and visual aids. Hands-on educational resources enable trainers to cater across learning styles. Networking with local health and AOD agencies and other service providers will expand the range of teaching resources, including guest speakers, available to the College.
- Sponsorship continues to be a major influence in student success and strategies to foster strong sponsorship needs to be a top priority of the College. Several recommendations concerning sponsorship are made to engage with and educate their community of sponsors.

- The findings of this report demonstrate that students regard the course offerings as relevant to them and their communities, and that the demand to study at WBBC is increasing. Therefore, the need to continue to invest in the future capacity of the College is paramount. The recruitment of four trainee teachers to the College in 2013/2014 has been very successful. A requirement completed their Certificate in Training and Assessment IV prior to undertaking unsupervised trainee-training would improve the skills development and confidence of trainees.
- The College is also commended for its trials of community training ‘hubs’ which fosters stronger relationships with the communities in which they serve. A range of recognised logistical issues have been identified by the College, but, with time, experience and adequate resourcing, these can be overcome. It is believed that the benefits of having a strong community presence outweigh risks to student engagement and retention.
- Opportunities to expand course offerings into business, social enterprise and governance training, would provide students with broader employment and further education pathways.
- WBBC graduates were maintaining active networks with other students they had met during their course. Efforts to strengthen the student alumni through complementary strategies to the WBBC Facebook page, are likely to be well received.

It was noted in the concluding comments of the 2011 report that the connection between education and development has been understood for many decades with education being the largest single factor associated with improving employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians, reducing anti-social behaviours, reducing poverty and stress and improving long-term health (Hunter, 1997; Malin, 2002). With the support of TEAR Australia, WBBC’s work is a testament to these factors, contributing to the long-term positive impacts on students’ personal health, development and incremental wellbeing gains in their communities.

This report is structured in the following way. Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter to establish the background and investigation questions of this report. Chapter two provides an overview of the methodological approach and methods developed to capture empirical evidence and chapter 3 presents the findings organised around key themes: student motivation to study; course delivery; and student outcomes in terms of national Vocational Education and Training (VET) outcomes research. Chapter 4 considers the sustainability and long term impact of TEAR’s funding of WBBC with several projects revisited from the 2011 report. Chapter 5 considers the trainee trainers, and the report concludes with a discussion and set of recommendations geared to strengthen the delivery of training and its outcomes for adult learners.

## Chapter 1. Introduction

Wontulp Bi-Buya College (WBBC) has been providing adult education to Indigenous students from across Australia since 1983. From theological courses the College diversified into community development and management themed courses with the following offerings throughout 2012 – 2014:

- The Certificate III in Addictions Management and Community Development (AMCD III) (which evolved from its predecessor the Cert III in Community Organisation and Development (COD III)),
- Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Addictions Counselling (AOAC IV) (although not offered in 2015), and
- Certificate IV in Indigenous Mental Health (Suicide Prevention).

This report will focus on the outcomes of the AMCD III since 2012 with some enquiry into long-term outcomes of TEAR funded training with visitations and interviews with former COD III graduates.

Since 2012, WBBC has had approximately 140 enrolments in the AMCD III. The course is taught over a one year period with four, two-week training blocks delivered in Cairns or a remote community. Students are provided with workbooks to complement the residential learning experience for the completion of modules containing core course content. These are completed by students in their home communities between residential training.

The course has been adapted to cover a range of issues identified by course participants and trainers as relevant to the specific needs of Australian Indigenous people. The course is both culturally aware and delivered with cultural competence. It offers students opportunities to explore alcohol and drug abuse, community violence, leadership, suicide and mental health, loss of culture and spirit, positive leadership, and the skills and knowledge base within communities, in a safe and supportive environment. Students are given strategies and support to develop and implement projects that respond to community needs.

In 2011 TEAR Australia commissioned researchers Dr Anne Stephens and Prof Komla Tsey to evaluate the community organisation and development course delivery and outcomes from 2008–2010. The authors concluded that WBBC's delivery of training was having a powerful and empowering impact on community development in the communities where WBBC graduates were strongly represented. Participants reported that studying COD III had a profound and often life-changing effect as a means towards gaining personal empowerment.

The outcomes of student learning were evaluated against the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) *Close the Gap* (CTG) policy targets. Factors of importance to the

suitability and potential success of Indigenous community development projects correlated strongly with both the course training, and effective understanding and delivery of training to students leading to projects that may have had the potential to lay foundations for long lasting social change. The reference for this article is:

Stephens, A., Baird, L., Turpin, E., & Tsey, K., (2012). Assessing the impact of Indigenous community development training: The case of Wontulp Bi-Buya College. *Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues*, 15(3).

Triggered by an interest to further explore the reasons for WBBC success, the researchers began to theorise how WBBC's courses have had an impact on community development practice. Published in the high ranking journal *Community Development*, Stephens, Baird and Tsey (2013) reported that the success of the WBBC approach could be attributed to three aspects of the education and training approach taken by the College trainers. Three elements of the training were found to be vital; the role of personal empowerment to stimulate an outward looking approach to civic engagement with community, a heuristic and holistic pedagogical approach taken by trainers, and the role of interpersonal connections through the building and strengthening of social capital ties. The reference for the second article is:

Stephens, A., Baird, L., & Tsey, K. (2012). Australian Indigenous community development: making the link between community development training and community development practice. *Community Development*, 44(3), 277-291.

### *Empowerment*

Empowerment strategies applied in Indigenous Australian settings increase people's abilities to manage disease, adopt healthier lifestyles, use health services more effectively, and exert control over the factors that shape their health and wellbeing (Tsey et al., 2010). Empowerment is also an explicitly stated goal of WBBC (Wontulp-Bi-Buya College, 2013). It is the goal of WBBC to produce graduates who possess the characteristics of the empowered person—leadership, empathy and the capacity to work with others towards common goals. In practice, WBBC students may gain a greater sense of control and mastery over their lives and chose to participate purposefully in the life of their community for social change.

### *Pedagogical approach*

Four principles of adult education were found to be modelled by trainers at WBBC. These principles are:

1. Self-direction,
2. Life-long learning,

3. Responsibility and control by the learner, and
4. Planned versus incidental learning.

When applied, the principles place WBBC trainers within the context of the course as learners, rather than teachers or outsiders. The courses were also found to foster collaboration and social learning opportunities. Learning activities require students to talk about themselves, conduct interviews with others, read widely, and report their findings within a safe and supportive class setting. The collective social awareness process develops an individual's sense of responsibility for enacting change, which is role-modelled through the personal stories and experiences of trainers, Reverend Leslie Baird and Edward Turpin. Their open disclosures were found to promote trusting and respectful relationships and exchange new attitudes and values.

### *Social capital*

Social capital refers to personal, familial and professional networks of individuals and communities and it can be of immense value in helping to build and utilise a network of cooperative relationships between individuals or groups (Dale & Newman, 2010). The benefit of strengthening social capital was found to be two-fold. The building of participants' social capital ties, both within their communities and to a broader social network of people, could be harnessed to source funding, gain exposure and extend influence. Furthermore, personally belonging to a network was likely to enhance the experience of empowerment felt by individuals and communities. Strengthened social capital established through the training provided:

1. The generation of a critical mass of graduates in communities,
2. Broader community engagement with a student's project,
3. Networking opportunities, and
4. Ties to funding and social development agencies.

The publication concluded with a call for a closer examination of these approaches to community development practice. The opportunities provided by TEAR Australia, through ongoing funding of research activity between 2011–2014, contributes to this effort.

This second evaluation report, *Training for Impact: Building an understanding of community development training and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development outcomes*, commissioned by TEAR Australia, documents continuous monitoring and evaluation of the training and learning outcomes of the AMCD III, long-term outcomes of the COD III and occasional reference to the AOAC IV, due to the high number of students progressing their studies. The findings and recommendations of the report will continue to inform course planning and programme design over the next three year funding cycle.

The primary objectives of the evaluation have been to:

- Encourage reflection and analysis of WBBC’s progress toward the stated goal; to train people to lead in community development in their communities,
- Inform TEAR Australia about the outcomes of the course during 2012-2014 to enable its accountability to donors and for satisfaction of TEAR Board requirements,
- Collect supporting evidence to reinforce or dispel the legitimacy and validity of the emerging framework established by Stephens and Tsey (2012), and
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the trainee’s training to build the teaching capacity of the College.

A set of Terms of Reference (TORs) that were developed for the 2011 report, form discussion points throughout the report. These are listed below in Table 1.

**Table 1. Terms of Reference**

1. Effectiveness
Has the course enhanced individuals’ personal and professional development towards leading community development over the duration of the last 3 years? How effective was the learning for the participants? How was the learning applied?
2. Impact
What are the impacts on the individual, family, community and other groups? How has the community been involved in the course?
3. Sustainability
How sustainable are the impacts into the future? What has been done to ensure this?
4. Efficiency
How have the resources (both personal and financial) been used to best obtain the identified impacts?
5. Management
How well has the course and the learning outcomes been managed by WBBC?
6. Future learning
What can be learned from this project about the effectiveness of community development training courses as a strategy for community development in marginal communities?

## Chapter 2. Methodological framework - A developmental approach

The developmental approach to research and evaluation has again been employed to provide a rich picture of the layers of effectiveness, impact and longevity of the training at WBBC. Research participants include students, trainers, trainee trainers, sponsors, auxiliary staff and College administrators. The perspective of 'local' and 'insider' knowledge was sought. The research plan, implementation, reflection and evaluation is undertaken as a process, or learning journey (Eversole, 2003; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006), with high levels of involvement from key participant/stakeholders of the study in particular the trainers Rev. Leslie Baird and Edward Turpin performed key roles as gatekeepers and co-contributors to the interpretation of data analysis. In this way, the methodological framework resembles an Action Research design, where teacher-researchers are legitimate participant/s of the research process (Kennedy-Lewis, 2012). Action Research is distinctive for its four stages of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Dick, 2006) and this evaluation is an example of these processes. The research is grounded in the experience of its participants, is action-oriented, and has had some bearing on the establishment of a learning community and culture focused on continual improvement in response to, and reflection upon, the feedback of participants (Balatti, Gargan, Goldman, Wood, & Woodlock, 2004).

One key difference to the data collection methods used for the preparation of this report from the previous report is the continuous observation and data collection over a three and a half year period (effectively throughout 2011 to August 2014). Interviews and survey data collected for the 2011 report were late stage and one-off collections. With TEAR funding commitments to ongoing evaluation, a research presence has been maintained amongst student cohorts with data captured in surveys and interviews throughout 2012, 2013 and 2014. The researcher has observed staff course delivery over many hours across geographical locations, and interviewed students at the commencement, during, and on completion of their certificate. Familiarity and understanding about the purposes of evaluation research has been embedded amongst cohorts, so too trust, as the depth of personal disclosure by some participants to the researcher on several occasions exceeded those normally given to a stranger.

### *2.1. Method*

The methods of collection of material for this study included:

- Desktop review of the literature and Wontulp-Bi-Buya College documents including interim and annual TEAR reports.
- Interviews with current trainers, other relevant staff/stakeholders conducted over 3 years,

- Five focus groups and individual semi-structured, face-to-face or telephone interviews were conducted with 95 students including present, discontinued and graduates of WBBC,
- 4 discreet instruments were developed to correspond to each teaching block (Questionnaires 1–4, see Appendix 1),
- A casual Likert rating scale instrument was developed to gauge levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the course delivery but is not correlated to age, gender etc. 36 respondents at various stages throughout the course responded to the survey (See Appendix 2),
- Interviews with College trainee trainers (see Appendix 3), and
- Researcher observation and participation.

Between 2012–2014, the evaluator has undertaken an estimated 20 hours of classroom observation, 8 days of community visits to interview students, and up to 50 hours of interview and focus group discussions with students.

#### *2.1.1. Case studies*

Case studies and vignettes are provided to demonstrate particular features of the course delivery or its effectiveness. These include case studies of student’s successful outcomes, experience with alternative training institutions and long-term project outcomes from the previous reporting period. Case studies feature throughout the body of this report.

#### *2.1.2. Observational notes*

Observational notes are reproduced from the researcher's field notes. They provide examples of class instruction and are used where appropriate to qualify student or staff interview data.

#### *2.1.3. Interview transcripts*

As mentioned above, interviews were conducted over three years to gauge student’s experience at different periods of their study: at entry, mid-way and near completion. Interviews were conducted in an informal yarning manner to maximise the student’s comfort with the researcher and minimise forced responses. On some occasions a student would bring another student to the interview for support. For small cohorts, the interview was conducted as a focus group discussion. The questionnaires guided discussion but did not restrict students from sharing the thoughts that came to mind at the time of the interview. Trainers were not present during interviews and all students' participation was voluntary.

#### *2.1.4. Enrolment data and survey data*

An audit of all AMCD III enrolments was undertaken to garner a profile of AMCD students. Median age, educational attainment, gender, place of origin and motivation to study are reported in Chapter 3, Findings.

The introduction of a Likert rating scale instrument was used as another means by which students could express their views of aspects of the course. The tool is limited by the selection of responses possible, but as a yarning tool, this provided the opportunity for the researcher to gauge more deeply what the student was thinking/feeling or experiencing according to the stimuli presented on the survey. The results of the survey are presented in basic graph charts and discussed in the context of the interviews conducted (Chapter 3).

#### *2.2. Analysis*

The analytical techniques between the 2011 report and now remain unchanged. Two qualitative techniques, impression analysis and phenomenology, are used. Impression analysis involves observer commentary and observation of the key issues, examined through multiple data set analysis. Phenomenology is the interpretation and evaluation of these findings which has been presented in this report.

The findings together with the relevant literature supporting the key issues contribute to the key recommendations. A draft of this report and key recommendations were presented to the College Principle, Course Coordinators, administration personnel and a representative of TEAR Australia, for comment and the emergent themes were reviewed and incorporated into the current report.

#### *2.3. Limitations of the methods*

The methods employed cannot ameliorate for all bias in researcher perception or student responses. The researcher declares an active interest in preserving and enhancing WBBC and as such has been mindful of the constant need to think critically of the College organisation, its course mode of delivery and effectiveness of its outcomes. As an action research project, there have been multiple opportunities for the researcher to reflect upon the issues that have emerged with stakeholders (this includes academic education specialist peers as well as WBBC stakeholders).

There is also the potential for students to answer questions in such a way that conceal criticisms or negative opinions of WBBC, its staff or fellow students. The researcher has attempted to avoid leading interviewees by making suggestive statements or clarifying the question unless asked to do so. Active listening, watching attentively to body language cues and often long periods of silence between asking a question and hearing a response, were strategies used to help interviewees feel comfortable in saying what they wish to say, rather than what they may think they should say. All interviewees gave their informed consent to

be interviewed and an assurance of that their responses would remain anonymous and de-identified to avoid personal harm, was given on every occasion. Furthermore, all interviews were conducted with the primary researcher, in a private location away from other students or staff.

#### *2.4. Ethical approval*

This study obtained ethical approval with JCU's Human Research Ethics Committee, no. H5025 and is compliant with the National Health and Medical Research Council's "National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research" (2007).

## Chapter 3. Findings

This chapter reports on the findings of three years of student interviews, surveys, and observation of WBBC course delivery of the AMCD III. The chapter is organised into three parts:

- Student motivation to study,
- Course delivery: student satisfaction, pastoral support and pedagogy, and
- Outcomes: aspirational changes of students throughout their learning, skills development, course relevance and the findings of post-graduate interviews.

In the discussions to follow, two of the TORs will be addressed:

- Effectiveness: Has the course enhanced individuals' personal and professional development towards leading community development over the duration of the last 3 years? and,
- Impact: What are the impacts on the individual, family, community and other groups? How has the community been involved in the course?

The discussions will also draw on aspects of the theoretical framework described in Chapter 1, (Stephens et al., 2012), as a further lens to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the training at WBBC. The three elements of the training to be considered are:

- The role of personal empowerment to stimulate an outward looking approach to civic engagement with community,
- The pedagogical approach taken by trainers, and
- The role of interpersonal connections and social capital ties.

The relevant and latest literature from the community development, adult education and Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander socio-political may be drawn into the discussions in order to substantiate or critique findings.

### *3. 1. Student motivation to study*

The motivation of students to study the AMCD III and the community issues that concern them coming into the course was derived from interviews conducted during the first period of the course in teaching Blocks 1 and 2.

There were two levels of motivation to study. The first is personal motivation—a drive for personal achievement and/or to secure further employment/training. The second is driven by altruistic motivations to serve one's community or country.

The researcher asked each student in Block 1 of their studies to reveal their motivation for enrolling in the WBBC AMCD III certificate course. It was recommended to many through family and community networks, but when asked further the following list of personal motivators were identified:

- Building of self-confidence and overcoming barriers to participation in learning

*Make me feel important for once. I was the dumb man. I can't read/write. I'm useless. I'd say this to myself. Now I'm telling myself I can do it. And I'm actually doing it. I never went to Grade 8. I'm feeling I can do it. I believe in myself. (Int 2, 12 Aug 2014)*

- Returning to study

*What WBBC did for me was got me into study again. I used to work for DEET. WBBC got me mixing with other communities. I made friends. We shared culture and stories. Talked about family. This encouraged me to work and study, including doing the 2 week blocks. (Int 2, 19 Aug 2014)*

- Meeting other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from other communities for friendship and cross fertilisation of ideas

- To obtain employment, promotion or go on to further training

*I went to ATODs to ask for a job. I talked about my story. I want to help people. Hope to be working with them next year with this qualification. (Int 1, 12 Aug 2014)*

*My goal is to be a Chaplain at the Hospital. This is how I will help my people. Counsel them in language when they are dying. (Int 1, 14 Aug 2014)*

*University – I want to walk back in with a degree. I can do it. I'm sick of getting knock backs. (Int 1, 5 Mar 2014)*

- Reunite family (return children taken into foster care)
- Maintain sobriety and abstinence from AOD misuse

For some individuals, studying was a means to self-development and recovery from traumatic events.

*It is helping me overcome some issues in life. I lost my first child at 7 months of pregnancy. I was grieving and my partner wasn't helpful. He blamed me. I was stressed out. The course helped me to not feel alone...I'm more confident. (Int 4, 12 Aug 2014)*

Altruistic motivators included:

- A desire to contribute to one's community in a meaningful way, and
- To encourage and continue community public health campaigns concerning alcohol and drug misuse

*I'm concerned about my grand kids. I worry about my people. I want them to be healthy. (Int 1, 12 Aug 2014)*

*The problems related to AOD and substance abuse is wide-spread, therefore, is a great need for people with the skills ability to help community families. (Int 8, 23 Oct 2013)*

*This is what I needed. I got no help from others. Others just put the kids down cause they break in and cause trouble... I can go back better equipped to help and encourage them. Not only youth but Elders too. (Int 5, 5 Mar 2014)*

### 3.1.1. Community issues of concern to students

At the commencement of training students were asked to identify issues that affect their communities. As the AMCD course has a focus on Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) it is unsurprising that addiction and alcohol dependency, misuse or the need for treatment services was prevalent across the cohorts interviewed in Block 1 or 2. However there were 20 other issues named by students. Concern for youth was high, as was the need for education in the community for adults, family wellbeing and community health promotion and programmes. Students came to the course with a recognition that counselling and support services are needed in their communities, and many were keen to see a revival of art, culture and family/community values. Other issues of concern were community justice, which included a desire to deter people from jail, children’s services and community controlled health, small business enterprise, employment, less nepotism and services for the aged and people living with disabilities.

**Table 2. Issue identification**

Drug and or alcohol	24
Youth	8
Education	7
Family wellbeing	7
Health - community, preventative, promotion	7
Counselling and therapy	6
Culture and the arts	6
Justice	5
Children services	5
Health centre, doctors, community control	4
Small business	4
Housing	4
Disability and aged care	3
Transport	3
Nepotism	3
Employment	2
Resource allocations	2

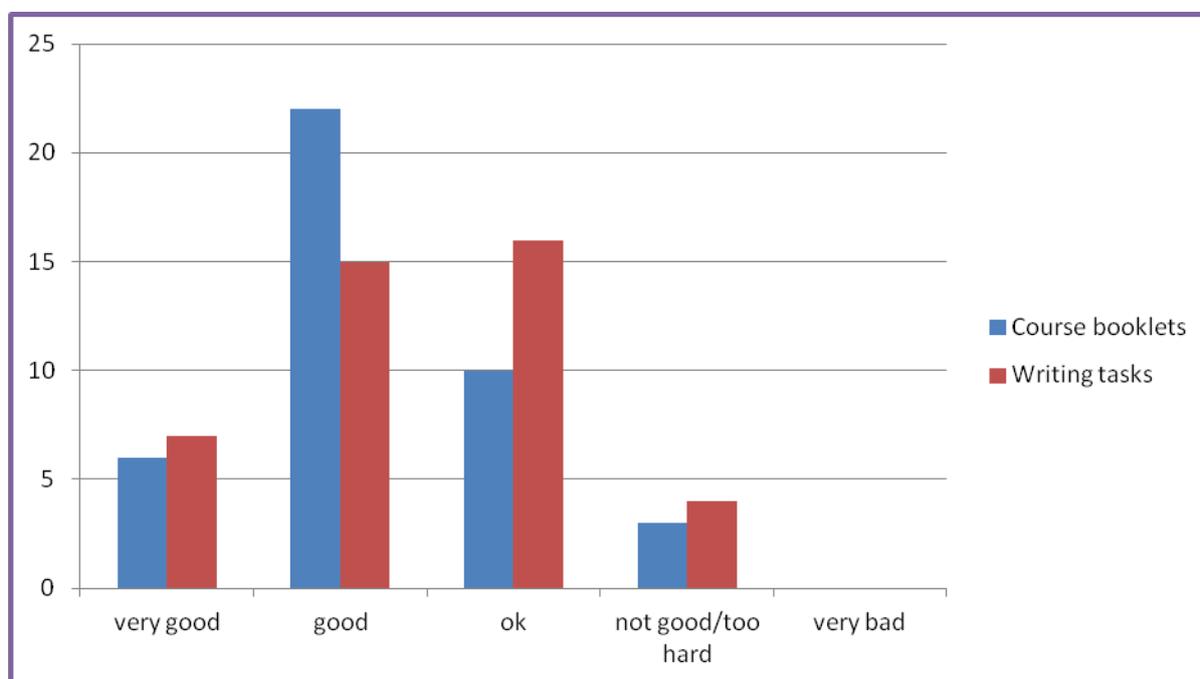
Sport and recreation	2
Native title	1
Homelessness	1
Lack of role model and leaders	1

### 3.2. Course delivery: Student satisfaction

Course satisfaction amongst interviewed participants was high. 36 students completed the survey concerning course satisfaction, the results are in Figures 1–4 below. The interview transcripts and survey outcomes revealed two important themes: course relevance to their lives as employees, Elders or community workers; and satisfaction with the pedagogical and culturally acceptable approach taken by WBBC trainers. A limitation of this study was that identifying and interviewing students who may have not been satisfied with the training course was not possible. Some indication of the causes of course withdrawal are provided by College staff (see Section 3.3 below).

#### 3.2.1. Course materials: Booklets and writing tasks

Students were invited to rate the course booklets and the writing tasks contained within. Most students were satisfied with the course booklets and writing tasks. A small number of students were not satisfied, finding the course materials highly repetitive, too hard and in one instance, too easy.



**Figure 1. Satisfaction with course materials - booklets and writing tasks**

Several students commented on the repetitiveness of the writing tasks. They felt that the questions failed to extend their thinking further, asking them to repeat answers from previous sections/workbooks.

*Language of the booklets – I can't understand the questions.* (Focus Group, 6 Sept 13)

*Repetitious - Fill in the same answer in 3 different books.* (Focus Group, 6 Sept 13)

*The materials of the course needs updating and the teachers need to have a better preparation before the course starts.* (Int 8, 9 Sept 2013)

Only one student interviewed could not respond to the survey as he was found the course workbooks and writing tasks too easy.

*The pace was a bit too slow. I had to help others. Maybe the class could be streamed? The workbooks need review. Lots of repetition. Include something more challenging for the higher achieving students. It is fine for people who don't have a good education.* (Int 1, 20 August 2014)

Whilst others were challenged...

*It's getting easier.* (Int 2, 12 Aug 2014)

*It is very interesting and very challenging.* (Int 2, 9 Sept 2013)

*Enjoyed it? Very much. Even though I had to do a bit of catching up. I used to like doing it. All other students were ahead of me. My eyesight [vision impairment] is very poor. But I still trudge along. I'd catch up at night at the College [in Cairns]. I very very (sic) liked it. Never complained to my teachers or principal. I'd just do it. I aimed to do it. To get it right. Get it completely done.* (Int 2, 12 Aug 2014)

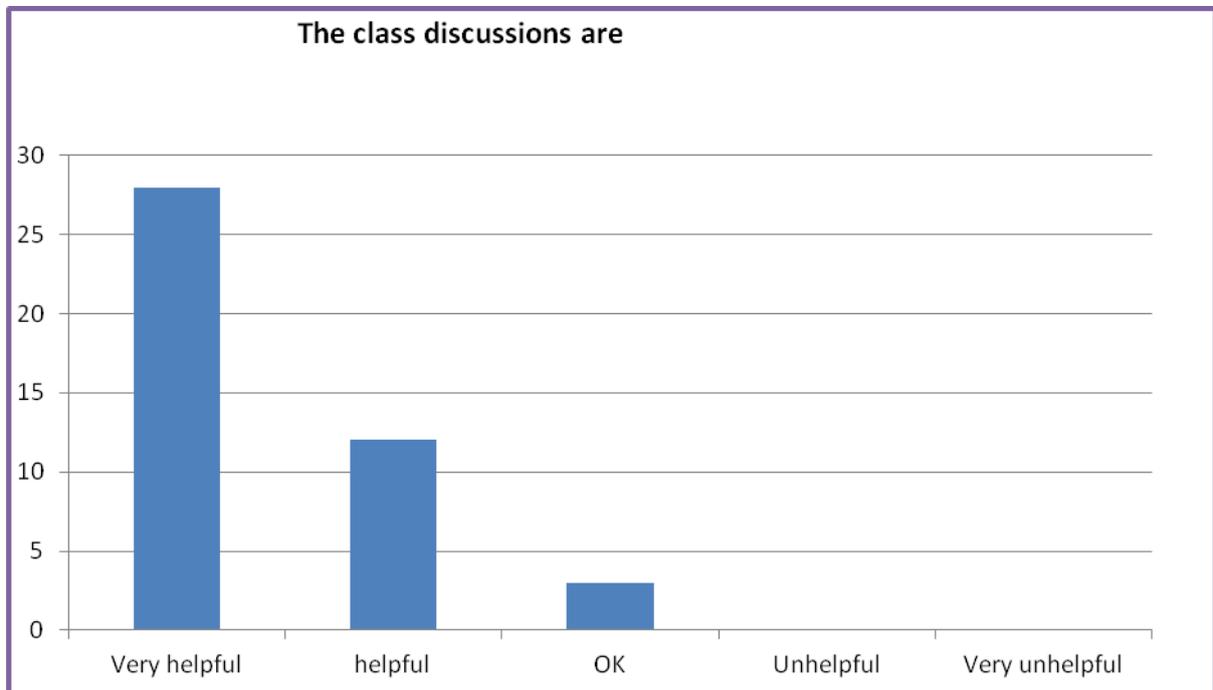
However, more typical comments on the course reflected that students felt that the course materials and pace was adequate for their needs and catered to the variety of abilities of the cohort. Students may continue to experience difficulties with the course, but due to the subject matter and/or personal issues arising and the requirements of personal investment. The course coordinators and trainers are acute to students experiencing difficulties. Literacy concerns with the course materials are managed with the support of the literacy support officer, and personal or motivational issues are managed with student pastoral care from the College administration team, Principal and coordinators. An important mantra of the College is that 'no man or woman is left behind' (Baird, 2014), and this mantra is adopted by all staff at the College.

### *3.2.2. Class discussion*

Consistent with the reported learning styles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, students valued class discussion and a 'two-way' approach, a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning where a respect for the knowledge and culture that participants bring to the classroom and that learning occurs actively from this platform (Hooley, 2002).

*We put all of our experiences on the table and... teachers become the students. I learnt that there at WBBC. It's the Indigenous approach to teaching things. (Trainee 1, 12 Aug 2014)*

As the survey results below show (Figure 2), students rated the class discussions as very helpful.



**Figure 2. Satisfaction with class discussions**

The discussions were highly valued because they provided an opportunity to clarify ideas, consider issues from multiple viewpoints, including Western and Indigenous, check for meanings of the language being presented (most students had a dictionary beside them throughout the residential block) to demystify the 'secret English' (Durnan, Beetson, & Boughton, 2013), and share personal stories at these points in time, in a dialogical approach that served to share experience, break down the isolation of singular experience and encourage collective problem solving. Several comments affirmed this approach:

*The teaching is good – the way they teach. Boys need help like this. (Int 5, 5 Mar 2013)*

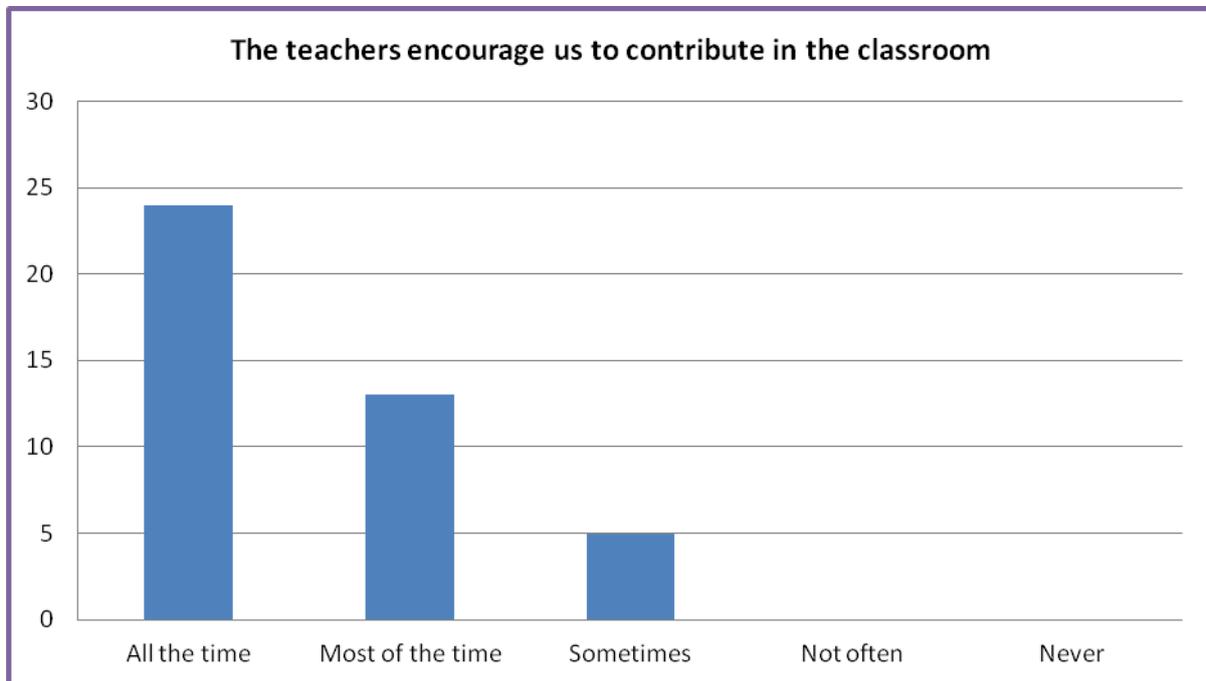
*Yeah – pretty good. I got a clear understanding of the AOD issues in Aboriginal communities. [The teachers are] very good at explaining things. (Int 2, 20 Aug 2014)*

*We learn off each other mostly. New terminologies, names and characteristics. (Focus Group, 9 Sept 2013)*

Some students were extroverted and capable of expressing their viewpoint more so than others. However, many students come to the residential college with a personal sense of shame and fear, so it was important to ask students how they were encouraged to participate in class discussions, and if they felt listened to when they did. Most students interviewed throughout their studies felt that they were given opportunities to be heard if

they chose, and that they were actively encouraged to speak by the trainers (Figure 3 below).

*I feel listened to by the class. (Int 5, 12 Aug 2014)*



**Figure 3. Satisfaction with classroom contribution opportunities**

The heuristic, two-way approach is a deliberate teaching strategy but is open to failure if a trusting and respectful classroom culture is not established (Hooley, 2002). Rev. Les Baird and Eddie Turpin both encouraged student discussion, to question, share, criticise and affirm others. The strategy was intended also to help people overcome shyness, reservation and reluctance to speak, which they see as a skill-development objective of the course. “Public speaking, sharing an informed opinion and challenging others appropriately within a public forum is a needed skill-set of our people” (Baird, 2014). A strongly held view by one student was that more work should be done by the College in terms of public speaking and presentation of ideas.

*Interviewer: Do you think the course is teaching you new skills which will be helpful to you after the course? Can you give any examples?*

*Student: Not really – it’s just teaching us from the book, gaining intellectual knowledge. We have to learn to interact, learn to stand out the front without being embarrassed. We have to have the confidence to speak at meetings. We have to have the confidence to counsel and address issues. And I believe that these needs are not being met. (Int 9, 9 Sept 2013)*

Albeit the view of this participant, WBBC recognise that the enrolled students arrive with various traumatic and painful life experiences, educational levels and little experience in working in group settings. Therefore, some students need a little encouragement to join in,

enjoying and appreciating the opportunity to discuss the subject material during classroom time. As one Torres Strait woman stated, “We’re not reading people – we don’t sit down and read things” (Focus Group, 6 Sept 2013).

But it is much harder for others. One woman described being confronted by the demands of the course to speak in public and of having to ‘break down barriers’ to participate in class. This student attributed overcoming her fear to her spiritual faith and stated that:

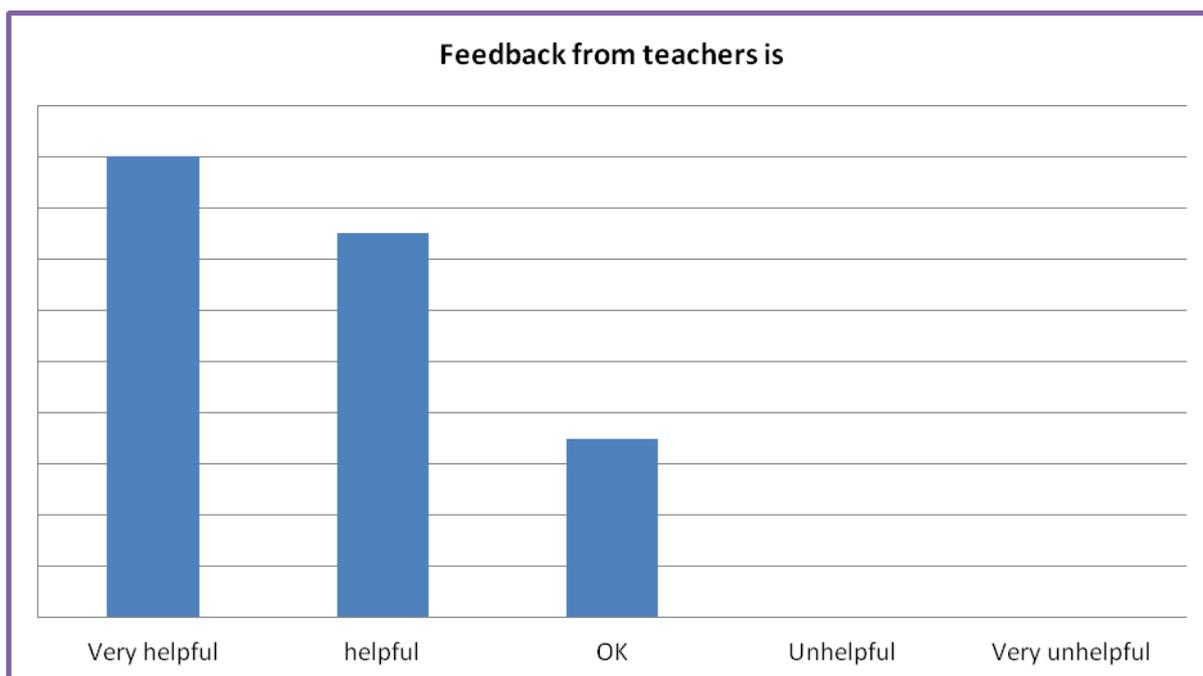
*...but by block 2 I heard a voice and sat up the front. That was breaking down the barriers for me because it was putting me in front of the class. And then I started talking more... (Int 2, 12 Aug 2014)*

Other people may have continued to be paralysed by the fear of speaking in front of a group. A very strong sense of shame experienced by many Indigenous people makes it harder for them to speak about damage, loss and personal suffering. Also observed by Durnan et al, (2013) they state that this may be due to people’s internalisation of responsibility and guilt for what may have happened in the past. It is a sensitivity that is well understood by the trainers who exercise professional judgment before pushing individuals beyond their ability to cope, coupled with one-on-one counselling, and if invited, prayer. With gentle and careful coercion, one woman described her gratitude to the course and trainers for taking “all my shame out of my physical body” (Int 4, 5 Mar 2014).

### *3.2.3. Teacher feedback*

It is also useful to reflect on the students’ high regard for the teachers. In the previous report it was noted that “during the community visits, the evaluator/author observed joyous reunions of students meeting with Father Les and/or Eddie Turpin. Communities regard the [College trainers] in very high regard in every community visited” (Stephens & Tsey, 2011, p. 16). This observation has not lessened in recent class observation and interviews. High levels of affection and respect for the College trainers remain long after the training event.

Figure 4 below reports the survey’s ratings concerning the helpfulness of trainer feedback to students throughout the course. The survey did not ask students to differentiate between course coordinators and it does not reflect on trainee teachers or auxiliary support staff. Figure 4 shows that the majority of students rated feedback as helpful and very helpful. This is consistent with the interview discussions had with past and present students.



**Figure 4. Satisfaction with teacher feedback**

### 3.3. Course delivery

#### 3.3.1. Pastoral support

Other factors that may contribute to the high level of regard students have for the trainers may include the attention the trainers give to each individual student's personal issues that often arise during the residential course. Prior to residential blocks, a risk management strategy is made to provide additional counselling and support personnel in place (Joseph, Baird, Turpin, & Munro, 2014). Students made regular comments regarding the role of trainers, the College Principal or support staff in providing much needed one-on-one support during difficult times. Support is also fostered by students themselves supporting other students.

*Students supported each other – share ideas. (Int 2, 13 Aug 2014)*

*Strong peer-to-peer. We relate personal experiences. Counsel others... with joy, healing and happiness. (Int 1, Mar 5 2014)*

*Yes. I reach out and we all support each other. Aunty J is sharing. We have an issue in common... Partner abuse. I didn't leave him. So I had to deal with him... Now I see [family/friends] going through similar stuff and they come to me. (Int 14, 12 Aug 2014)*

*Students really supported me all the time now my eyesight is really bad. (Int 1, 14 Aug 2014)*

*Some people get stressed out by the travel away from home. Women are away from their kids/spouse. This is true for men too. Being away for 2 weeks is hard on them. They get irritable and issues come up. But WBBC deal with them as they arise. Some of those issues might be medical. But they'll go to Wuchopperen or whatever. (Int 1, 15 Aug, 2014)*

### 3.3.2. Pedagogical approach

The nexus between personal learning and community development practice is attributable to pedagogical practice (Durnan et al., 2013; Ramirez, 1990). Therefore, the pedagogical approach observed at WBBC is a crucial aspect of WBBC's impact – both on students and trainee teachers (see Chapter 4 for a discussion on trainees). Four principles of adult education have been observed in the pedagogical approach taken by WBBC trainers (see Stephens et al., 2012). These principles are:

1. Self-direction,
2. Life-long learning,
3. Responsibility and control by the learner, and
4. Planned versus incidental learning.

Important implications for learning were found when analysing these principles at play. Firstly, the principles place WBBC trainers within the context of the course as learners, as opposed to 'the teacher' an assumed role that places the trainers outside the learning experience of the students. The trainers participate in a two-way learning process as mentioned in (Section 3.2.2. above).

It is also important to note, however, that the College's responsibilities to its learners to protect the safety of students and set the context of the community of learning is not compromised by a less authoritative positioning of the trainer (see Section 3.3.4. regarding changing cohorts). On the contrary, trainers are afforded higher levels of respect for not assuming a hierarchical position 'over' the students that is widely appreciated and differentiates the College from other training organisations.

Personal stories and experiences of the trainers' role modelled the processes and desirable outcomes of community development. Importantly, as they act as role models for others, they also draw on the skills and capacity of others in the class, acknowledging the age, talents, experiences and cultural importance of the men and women in the room.

*The course teachers have the relevant experiences.* (Focus Group, 9 Sept 2013)

*[The teacher] recognises the skills of people in the room and uses those skills.* (Int 1, 15 Aug 2014)

The collective social awareness processes helped to develop the students' sense of responsibility for enacting change. Again, their open disclosures reinforce trusting and respectful relationships and sharing of attitudes and values.

The following student has a university education, but made the following comments about her observations of the teaching and learning process at WBBC.

Interviewer: *Can you describe the way the course is taught?*

Student: *In a culturally appropriate manner – down to earth, but which brings easy learning, teaching, understanding. Due to the fact that not all are on the same comprehension level, the style of teaching brings a commonality to the group’s diversity. It is how a person, individual from a grass roots perspective would easily comprehend, learn and understand.*  
(Int 9, 9 Sept 13)

Box 1 below contains the observational field notes written by the researcher, reproduced to provide further insight into the strategies, skills and approach taken by WBBC trainers. In the example below, the topic was personal and community violence, determined by the class’s place in the module they were completing at the time. A discussion about violence ensued. What is apparent in the observational notes reproduced below is the trainer’s ability to carry a difficult set of topics with compassion, honesty and with an absence of shame.

**Box 1. Researcher observation of WBBC teaching**

Researcher’s observational notes

Setting: Remote DOGGIT community, Cape York

October 2013

Class theme:

Exploring violence - Domestic/family violence and community violence

Method:

Trainer introduced topic and scoped students’ familiarity with the concept of violence.

Brainstorm/group discussion on whiteboard of types/expressions of violence, symptoms and impacts

Discussion of forms of abuse: sexual, emotional, physical, social, racial etc

Trainer probed participants and generated deeper discussion of sensitive issues. Clear personal association and connections were identified with these concepts. “We all know about it” was a way the trainer was able to suggest that this is collective knowledge rather than personal experience only.

Talking about they do/have deal with forms of violence

Discussion of abuse of substances/other addictions, and that things are ok until abnormally used, therefore, abusive and harmful. Clear lack of blame of individuals. "But the thing isn't necessarily bad therefore people aren't bad".

Avoidance of shame/shaming

Discussion evolved into discussion of rights and breakdown of traditional lore/cultural mores to contain violence and abuse. Participants discussed a return of personal responsibility and importance of leaders to deal with these issues now that they have an education, and awareness of the issues.

Trainer reiterated the importance of not blaming. Need to stop blame and take responsibility. Practice non-blame/model to youngsters/children, educate community

Sexual and child abuse was discussed – inappropriate touching. Any age. One woman talked about her experience as a sexual health worker. Graphic details were shared between 6 people. Others present and write. Trainer and class listened to each story.

Trainer reinforced the need to express experiences towards personal and community healing. He stated: "I asked these questions so you can be clear in your own mind about where you're coming from."

Discussion of how normalised verbal abuse is. Cultural pointing the finger, swearing, social media, etc, name calling, criticism. Many stories shared with reference to both whites and blacks "didn't want us. We were right in the middle with all this [verbal abuse]"

Spiritual and cultural abuse: Discussion of black magic and Christianity, familiar spirits of the ancestors/dream time which led to a great deal of discussions about vision being an important aspect of leadership. Participants talked about collective actions and delegation of work amongst their community to enact this vision. Also discussion of plants/environment/ecosystems to make the vision happen. This was summed up on the white board as a simple graphic:

Leader – vision

leads to

Community – plan

leads to

Today – do

Mood of the room:

Remained cordial, open, absence of shame as they went on to complete the relevant section of their workbook. Despite the content being discussed, children played inside the teaching space. Food was cooking in kitchen.

Heaps of laughter, moments of quiet respect, concentration on writing responses in the workbook, and a strong camaraderie and rapport with the trainer.

Despite the difficult subject matter and potential for shame, my presence as an observer seemed to be unobtrusive and unnoticed, which is a testament to the skill of the trainer to have established a learning environment that is trusting, open, honest and lacking in fear of consequence.

### 3.3.3. Literacy support

WBBC students have on average, a formal education up to year 10 (see Section 3.4.1. below). Therefore, literacy levels, that is students' confidence with reading and writing, varied. There is also no clear connection between prior educational attainment and completion of the AMCD III course. Therefore, successful outcomes can also be credited to the presence of WBBC's dedicated learning support teacher, Ann Mohan.

From student interview data, appreciation for the role of the literacy support teacher was ubiquitous across the cohorts throughout the years of training observed.

*This course is very, very, very good. I feel clear minded. In the past, I would always feel stupid... I was so stressed that it was going to be too hard for me. But it's so good. So easy. Ann is very very good. (Int 4, March 5, 2014)*

*Tutors – helped me with things I couldn't understand. (Int 1, 14 Aug, 2014)*

*The teachers are knowledgeable about the students' problems. I think there's enough help here. (Int 5, 9 Sept, 2013)*

### 3.3.4. Alternative training settings

In the previous report, research by Balatti et al., (2004) cited attrition rates of Indigenous students from courses delivered within the mainstream TAFE sector, and provided a brief analysis of TAFE training as a comparative experience to WBBC training was reported (see Section 4.4 and Stephens & Tsey, 2011). During this research period, students were again asked throughout the interviews and focus group sessions if they had undertaken training in

other post-secondary settings to see if the perception of Indigenous-specific or culturally aware training offered in alternative settings to WBBC had changed.

Three interviewees described post-TAFE courses, funded by Queensland Health, as positive experiences. Two interviewees had undertaken business studies with Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) which provided community-setting three-month courses. However, a majority of students continued to compare WBBC favourably to TAFE, as the following comment attests.

*[WBBC training]... was very well delivered. I also did justice training (TAFE) which was off campus and suited [Indigenous people]. But within the strict TAFE guidelines, if you drop out, that's it. WBBC though – they follow up. If you drop out they'll ask what the problem is etc. Therefore students feel supported. People care. People come back later on. Or they return in the next block. They've thought about and realise WBBC really want them to do the course.*  
(Int 5, 15 Aug, 2014)

Case Study 1 in Box 2 below provides an interesting anecdotal insight into the experience of adult Indigenous learners in a mainstream VET setting. It is the personal story of a WBBC graduate who attempted TAFE studies but had difficulties with the system. The story demonstrates the impact and difference of the approaches taken between the two training organisations, and the importance of role modelling and inclusive pedagogy.

## Box 2. Case Study 1

"After WBBC I was excited and I had ambitions and goals to study Business Management at University. I had to do a Cert 3 and 4 and then I could apply to Uni. So I enrolled in the Cert 3 Business Management at TAFE but I had a clash with the teachers there. I lost it. I told 'em to get stuffed.

It was way different to how Les teaches. He was understanding and open and willing to tutor and teach. TAFE just pick select groups. They stand out the front and talk at you. They send you to the library but we'd spend more time there trying to work out what we were supposed to be doing than studying.

I left WBBC with a clear understanding of what I wanted to do. But at TAFE I had constant arguments with the Teacher. She'd apologise, but in private, after I'd been embraced and shamed in front of others.

My dream of finishing at TAFE and going to Uni – gone. I don't care now. I have no interest. They really turned me off.

WBBC – I use it in everything I do. I live what I was taught. Still a volunteer counsellor in community. WBBC also taught me how to balance my work and family life. I grew up sleeping under the table of meetings my parents were at to make our community better. Then when my kids were little they were sleeping under the table. But I learnt that, how can you develop a community if you don't have a family foundation?

But no more studies. TAFE really turned me off."

### *3.4. Retention and course withdrawal*

WBBC's primary concern is to approach teaching and learning with cultural competence. However, there are several other influences students bring to bear on the learning experience which may include their prior education, age, student location and gender. An audit of the enrolment files was conducted to collate profiles of the AMCD III cohort across the three years.

Course completion is higher than the data suggests. Fifty-seven percent of students graduate from the course. This figure conceals a higher completion rate. Twenty students across the 2012 and 2013 intake did not pay the course fee, yet had completed the course requirements. Several students have gone on to find employment or further training opportunities, yet due to non-payment of the WBBC course fee, have been unable to graduate and receive their competency-based course accreditation. As this report was being prepared the College was working with 11 students from the 2014 cohort to collect outstanding payments in order to graduate in November (Joseph et al., 2014). Other causes including course expulsion (for inappropriate conduct) or gaining a new employment opportunity, were the primary reasons cited for early withdrawal. Close to ten students re-

enrolled in the AMCD III. One student re-enrolled three times, building confidence, skill and resolving serious post-traumatic stress disorder, to graduate in 2014 (Turpin, 2014).

Every student is contacted regarding their progress, particularly if they are falling behind in their course work, or indicating that they will withdraw. Every student is offered supportive, individualised plans, to enable them to complete the modules. Similarly, payment plans are negotiated with students to help them meet the course fee costs. It is suggested that some students lack the financial management skills to make regular repayments (Joseph et al., 2014). From the data collected, the following observations concerning student withdrawal can be made.

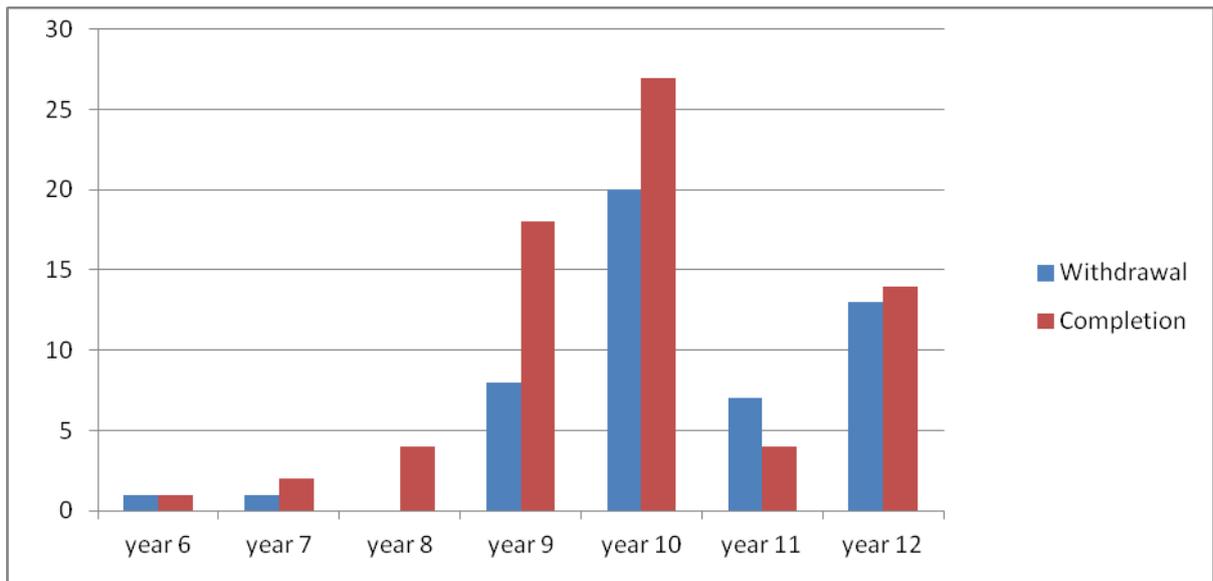
### 3.4.1. Prior education

The average level of high school education completion for AMCD III enrolees is Year 10. Table 3 below shows the high school educational attainment and percentage of students enrolled in the AMCD III certificate. Data was obtained from student enrolment files. Not all students enrolled declared their educational attainment on the forms, therefore n = 120 students. The data shows, however, that most students enrolling at WBBC have not completed year 11 or 12, with 9% and 23% of students respectively. Nearly 40% of students have completed up to year 10, and 30% of students have up to year 9 or fewer years of high school completed. This is consistent with known national Indigenous schooling completion rates (ABS, 2009).

**Table 3. High school education attainment and course completion (n: 120)**

Year level achieved	Number of students	% students enrolled	AMCD III Withdrawal	AMCD III Completion
year 6	2	2	1	1
year 7	3	3	1	2
year 8	4	3	0	4
year 9	26	22	8	18
year 10	47	39	20	27
year 11	11	9	7	4
year 12	27	23	13	14
Total	120	100	50	70

In terms of completion and withdrawal from the course, Figure 5 below shows that the highest number of students to complete the course had year 9 or 10. Lower levels of formal schooling do not translate into higher levels of withdrawal.



**Figure 5. Course completion and prior educational attainment**

However, prior education does have an important bearing on the mode in which the course is delivered and resources allocated to additional literacy support (see Section 3.3.3. above). Students are also able to disclose on the enrolment forms their post-secondary qualifications. Table 4 below was compiled from that data. Certificate courses named included hospitality, tourism, business, health and safety, childcare, security, IT and trade certificates.

**Table 4. Post-secondary qualifications (n: 20)**

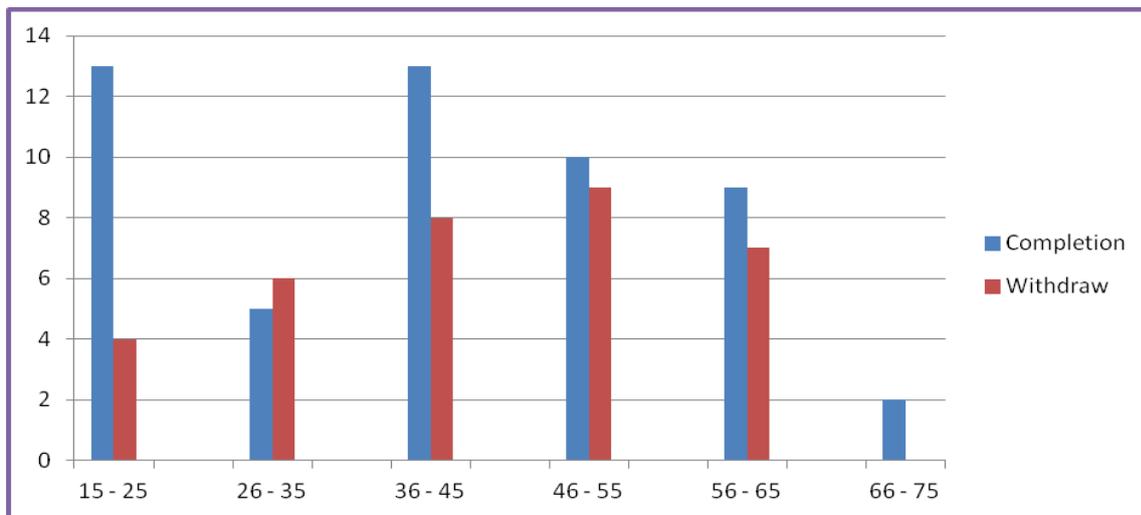
University Degree/Post- Graduate Diploma	3
Associate Diploma	2
Cert 4	2
Cert 3	5
Cert 2	8

### *3.4.2. Average age and gender*

The average age of WBBC students is 40: men, 38, and women, 41. Several enrollees selected did not disclose their age. From the data provided it can be noted that the oldest student is a woman (74).

**Table 5. Completion and withdrawal by age (female n: 86)**

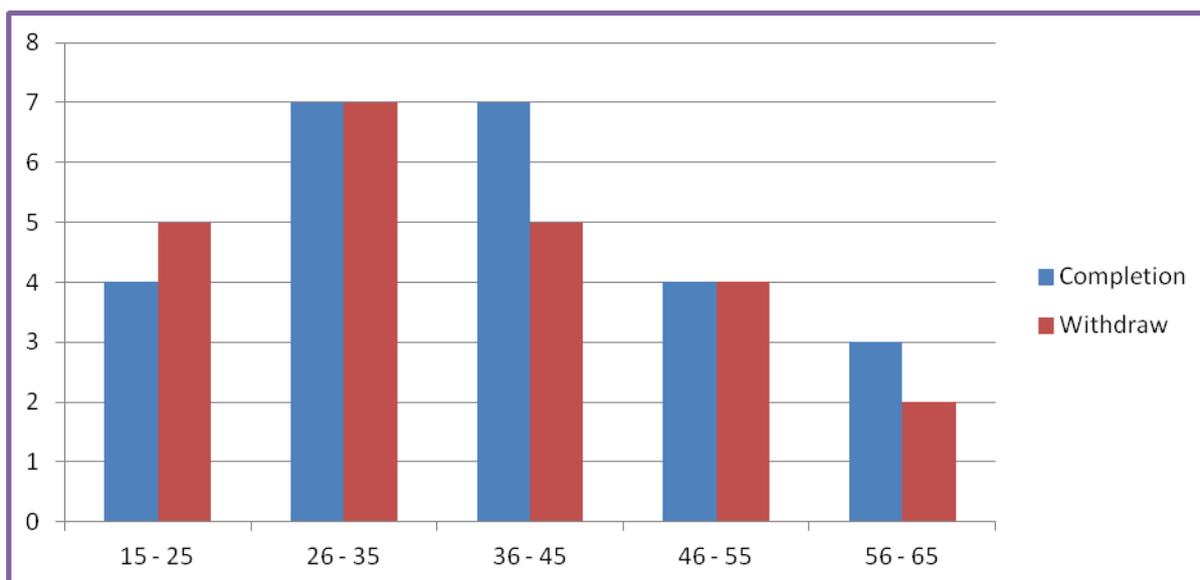
Age range	Completion	Withdraw
15 – 25	13	4
26 – 35	5	6
36 – 45	13	8
46 - 55	10	9
56 - 65	9	7
66 - 75	2	0



**Figure 6. Female completion and withdrawal by age**

**Table 6. Completion and withdrawal by age (male n: 48)**

Age range	Completion	Withdraw
15 - 25	4	5
26 - 35	7	7
36 - 45	7	5
46 - 55	4	4
56 - 65	3	2



**Figure 7. Male completion and withdrawal by age**

Since 2012 female enrollees have been nearly double males (94 women to 47 men). Table 7 below shows the percentage of total completions and withdrawals by men and women from a total of 141 students. Fifty-nine percent of women and 53% of men who enrol complete the course.

College staff suggest that the course appeals more to women. The qualifications lead to entry into the female dominated social sector. Men choose to undertake training that leads to a trade (Joseph et al., 2014).

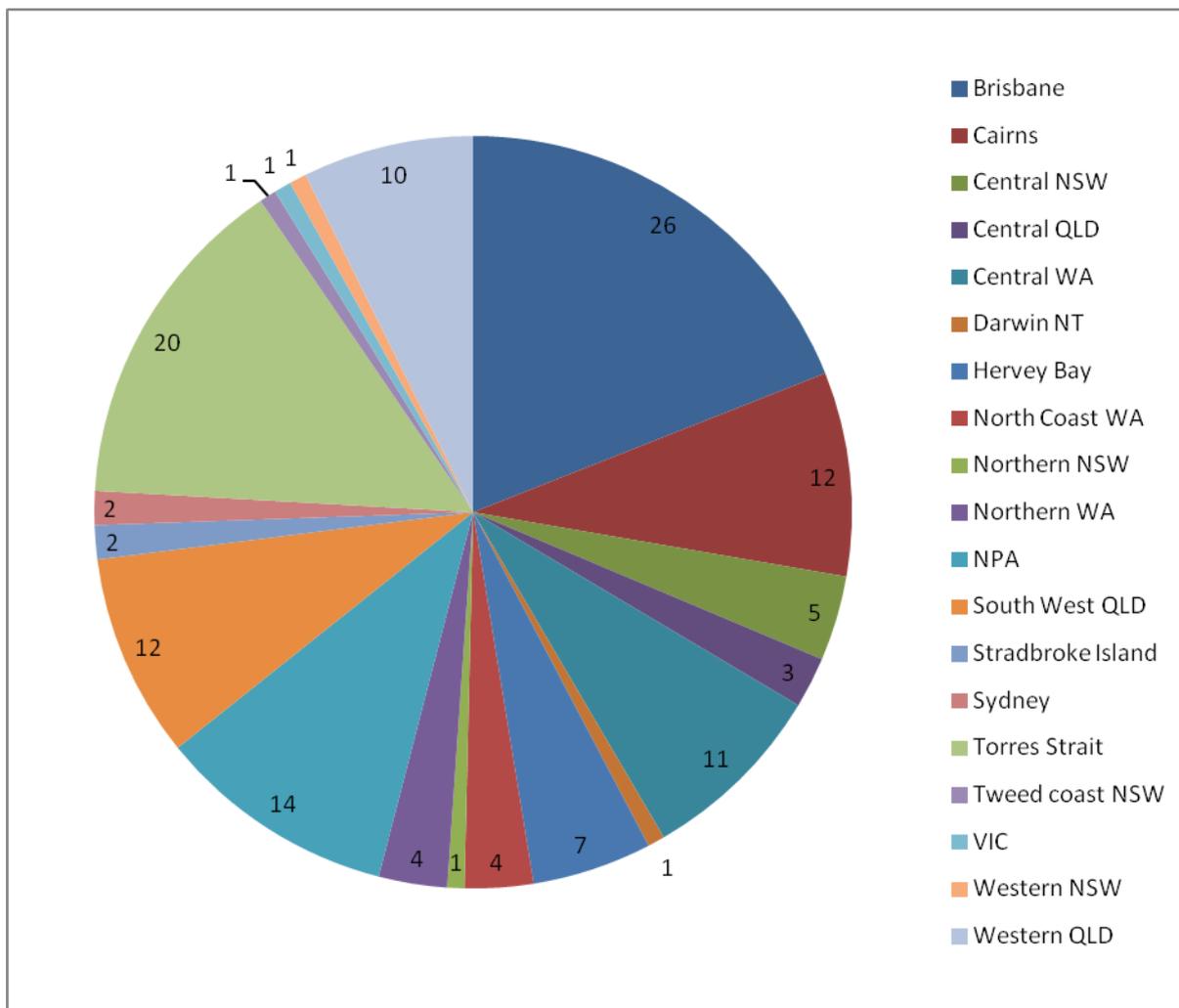
**Table 7. Completion and withdrawal by gender (total n: 141)**

	Completion	Withdrawal	Total	% of total enrolments complete	% of total withdrawals
Female	55	39	94	59	41
Male	25	22	47	53	47

Another factor that may influence student retention and outcomes is the location from which students are drawn to study at WBBC. Since the 2011 report, there has been an expansion in the regions around Australia to include South East Queensland, areas of northern Western Australia, Sydney, Brisbane and regional NSW and central Queensland (see Table 8 below). Despite this, a high number of students continue to be attracted to the College from the communities of the northern Cape York Peninsular (NPA) and Torres Strait Islands (TS).

**Table 8. Origins of students from around Australia**

Brisbane	26
Cairns	12
Central NSW	5
Central QLD	3
Central WA	11
Darwin NT	1
Hervey Bay	7
North Coast WA	4
Northern NSW	1
Northern WA	4
NPA	14
South West QLD	12
Stradbroke Island	2
Sydney	2
Torres Strait	20
Tweed coast NSW	1
VIC	1
Western NSW	1
Western QLD	10



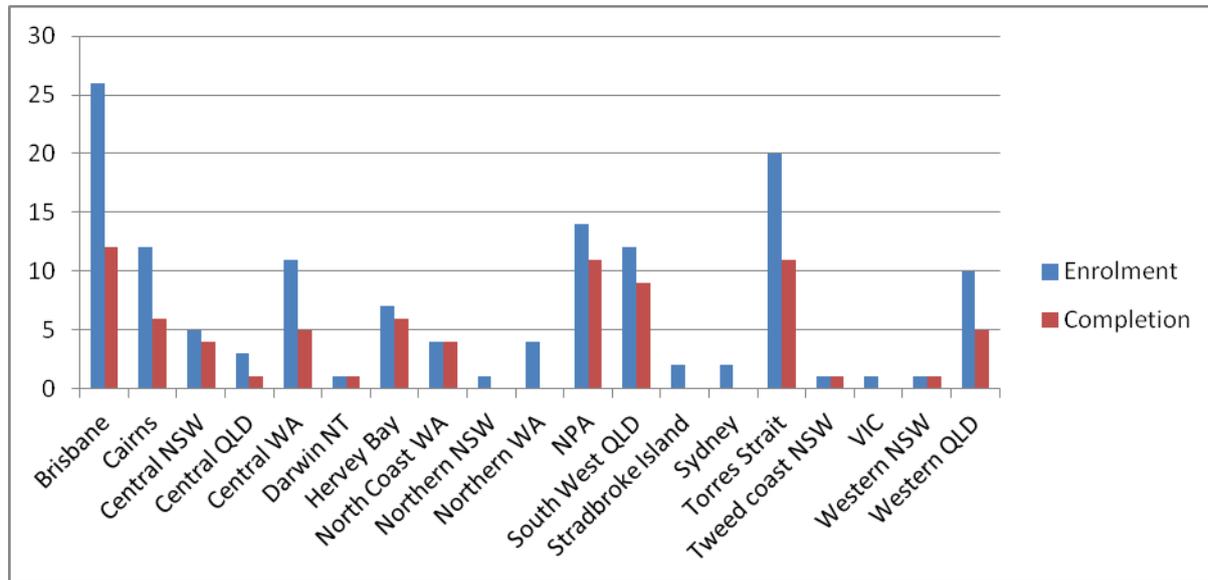
**Figure 8. Origins of students from around Australia**

Communities that have several students and/or graduates continued to have a higher likelihood of successful course completion and community outcomes.

*We had several students attend WBBC from here and they are involved in several programmes here. They get up and speak at Island custom events. These people wouldn't do that, if it weren't for the training. They see different perspectives/ the strength and weaknesses in... [our community] and talk about that publicly. (TSRC Councillor, Sponsor and Past Graduate, 15 Aug 2014)*

In the cohorts enrolled since 2012, the following trends emerged. Figure 9 below shows that in the NPA, South West Queensland and Hervey Bay had high completion rates as a proportion of their enrolments. The enrollees of the NPA and South West Queensland were geographically clustered and students in these regions had the benefit of strong sponsorship. In the Torres Strait a little over half of the enrollees completed, and similarly in Western Queensland, but it is important to note that in these regions, students were not clustered together geographically. In the cities of Brisbane and Kalgoorlie (Central Western Australia) WBBC students were drawn from large populations (i.e., Kalgoorlie 31,107) and

across large geographic areas in the case of Brisbane with a population of over 2 million people.



**Figure 9. Enrolment and completion by region**

Several observations can be made regarding the College’s presence in the communities listed above. Two ‘hubs’ in the Torres Strait and NPA were trialled. A hub is a training centre, a community selected for its proximity to students’ home communities. Feedback from students frequently includes expanding training locations. It is also seen as important to WBBC for community people—both students and sponsors—to see the College and establish a first-hand understanding of its work. It is also important for the College staff to know the places where their student’s come from. Both Seisa, St Pauls and Wujal Wujal (non-TEAR funded) were trialled. Several learnings were made from these trials.

1. Logistics – Staff have built relationships with local service providers, particularly in the NPA where they were less well known. Building the trust of a community and the service providers will take time, but is a necessary step in building engagement with the community and the reputation of the College (Joseph et al., 2014). There is no evidence of student attrition caused as a direct result of less than optimal logistical arrangements.
2. Student engagement – Cairns blocks are said to contain a degree of risk for some students who may be tempted to use block teaching time to meet with friends and family, shop, or visit bars or nightclubs. However, on the flipside, students commented on the opportunity to leave their community as an advantage, leaving a range of home-based distractions behind. Therefore, for some students, bringing training to them is not an advantage. The Saisa hub trial demonstrated to the College staff, that hosting training close to where ‘people have to deal with life’ caused higher levels of absenteeism (Joseph et al., 2014, n.p.).

### 3.4.3. Employers and family support

Students who reported having supportive families and/or employers were more likely to complete the course. Students were more likely to successfully complete learning objectives between the Cairns-based teaching blocks, when they had time off to study provided by employers. Several students stated an intention to do further WBBC or other study, but that they would have to take their personal leave time to be able to complete Cairns-based residential training. This is an impediment to course enrolment. Similarly, students with family responsibilities described difficulties in attending residential training in Cairns. Several mothers interviewed stated that they could only leave their children because of the care and support provided by husbands or extended family.

### 3.4.4. The impact of a changing cohort

With the introduction of AOD studies offered through the community development themed course stream, a variation in WBBC enrollees and sponsors has been observed. Staff and the researcher have noted the strong sponsorship and support offered to students from organisations that deal exclusively with AOD health promotion. These organisations are supporting students to undertake the AMCD III as part of their own recovery and healing from substance misuse. As the AMCD III course coordinator, Eddie Turpin has stated:

*Although one the goals and achievements of the College is to have a national reputation, attracting people from all locations, different states, country to cities, and from all walks of life and ages, it also has its challenges that naturally occur when people of all sorts are attracted to the College to study.*

*As the teacher and facilitator of the AMCD course I have found that the dynamics of the course is changing. (Turpin, 2013)*

Eddie has observed that while traditionally, students have derived from the Cape York and Torres Strait areas, and are noticed for being 'tolerant, respectful and teachable'. With students accepted from across Australia, particularly those supported for their personal development, Eddie has noted that a number of students challenge the College's policies and rules causes conflict. The pastoral care provided is sufficient to support these students, and it is the whole-hearted desire of the College to provide an opportunity to the most marginalised people in Australian society (Joseph et al., 2014), however, Eddie noted that it "takes time for students of this type to adjust, time that this college and course hasn't got" (Turpin, 2013, n.p.).

In later reports, Eddie noted the power of the AMCD III course to help facilitate healing and hope, stating that:

*AMCD Block 3 was a wonderful, different experience and of good report. I am amazed in what is happening among the students at this time, after what was a turbulent and*

*challenging time during the last 2 blocks this year. The course is still showing its power to change people as they progress through the course. This is what is amazing about the course.*

*One particular student, (CS diagnosed with ADHD) in my opinion has improved much and actually attended all classes, participating in discussions, and working in the books along with the other students. He also was working on his language to stop the bad words coming from him. He's looking to the future and signed up for the Cert IV next year. (Turpin, 2013)*

Eddie has reflected that diversity in the student cohort has been a positive development for WBBC and for his professional development as a teacher and facilitator. He has also passed on these learnings to the trainee trainers in his charge. As WBBC continues to grow and appeal to a wider number of people, contingency measures will need to be adopted to cope with the increased workloads beholden upon trainers and support staff. Similarly, several of these students are likely to have completed the course but may not have completed the course payment fees, precluding them from formal graduation (Turpin, 2014). This issue is factored into the recommendations made for the College in Chapter 6.

### *3.5. AMCD III outcomes: From changing aspirations to personal empowerment*

Like the 2011 report, there are a wide range of beneficial outcomes of completing the AMCD III at WBBC, principally among them, the potential to transform individual personal empowerment, which, for some, has an ongoing effect in the communities in which they live and wish to make a meaningful contribution.

A difference between the 2011 and this report was the continuous engagement of the researcher with the student cohorts. This enabled the researcher to observe changes in individuals over time. To capture the changes in outlook that students experienced during the course, a thematic category called 'futures' was used to record instance of students identifying a new aspiration or plan, emerging after the second teaching block, and that had not previously been considered as a motivation to study the AMCD III course (see Table 9). Plans to continue with further education or training were included, as were aspirational gestures of what students would like to, or see themselves doing, with the qualification. This included a job prospect or promotional opportunities in their present employment.

**Table 9. Futures: Where AMCD III students see themselves following course completion**

Start a community project	11
WBBC Certificate III Mental Health (Suicide Prevention)	11
Actively seek employment	10
Career aspiration	7
Promotion at present employment	5
Training other (course or institution)	4
Commence university studies	3
Voluntary community work	3
Start a business	2
Complete year 12	1

Student comments about their future prospects included:

*I'm now applying for counselling jobs and I feel very confident that I will find a counselling job. (Int 1, 18 Aug 2014)*

*Do more through WBBC. It is the natural choice to educate through WBBC. They can relate to me. I get on pretty well with staff. (Int 1, 12 Aug 2014)*

*I'm considering further training with IBA. (Int 3, 19 Aug 2014)*

*I can get a job at the rehab. (Focus Group, 6 Sept 2013)*

*Really excellent for the future. We really want to do something for country. We all feel the same way. We can band together. (Int 3, 5 Mar 2014)*

### *3.5.1. Personal empowerment*

Empowerment strategies can transform people's sense of personal control over their wellbeing and health. It is also an explicitly stated goal of WBBC to produce graduates who possess the characteristics of the empowered person—leadership, empathy and the capacity to work with others towards common goals (Wontulp-Bi-Buya College, 2013).

The interviews conducted reflect WBBC students experiencing moments of insight and potentially life-transformative change. It can be speculated that many students, particularly those who completed the course, are likely to gain a greater sense of control and mastery over their lives and chose to participate purposefully in the life of their community for social change, as a consequence of doing the AMCD III course (Joseph et al., 2014). The following sample of comments from the interview transcripts reveal individuals' sense of personal

transformation and change as they attempted study or returned to it after a period in their lives.

*It opened my mind. (Int 2, 20 Aug 2014)*

*I've never learned stuff like this before. (Int 7, 12 Aug 2014)*

*Great. Eye opener. Every block. Entices us to want to learn more. (Focus Group, 9 Sept 2013)*

*I finished my training and I deliver education myself now. I do education with ATODs and healthy lifestyles. I have the strength to talk because I have knowledge. What I didn't have I now know. I deliver education programmes on my own. (Int 2, 20 Aug 2014)*

*People are getting the message... People are more educated about alcohol now. So therefore it is so important to be educated about AOD and WBBC is the ideal place for our people to be involved. (Int 1, 13 Aug 2014)*

*Since doing this course and observing the growth of participants, some I feel have grown intellectually, but not confidently in terms of speaking out. Others are very. I have grown myself in terms of knowledge, confidence, empowerment. (Int 9, 9 Sept 2013)*

*We graduates have a different mindset to others. More open. Then there are those who don't have it. They're know it all people. (Int 5, 19 Aug, 2014)*

### *3.5.2. Literacy and applied skills acquisition*

A wide range of important skills were developed through the course modules and residential blocks—literacy skill development being a critically important outcome. Durnan et al., reflect on literacy education and its relationship to socially transformative practices arguing that literacy skills and “how people learn to read, speak and write words” gives people power. The ramifications of which are manifest in self-determination politics and safer communities (2013, n.p.).

Strengthening literacy skills in the AMCD III course is complemented by a wide suite of oral and practical skills developed by the course-work and collectively, these skills enhance personal empowerment and a sense of control and mastery over one's personal life, environment and circumstances. Students studying AMCD III develop the following skills:

- Counselling skills – group therapy, one on one interview techniques, active listening,
- How to identify addictive personality types and individuals suffering,
- Knowledge of where to refer people for support,
- How to talk to community leaders, council, Elders and government agencies,
- Project planning, research and evaluation skills,
- Public speaking, reading aloud and teaching,

- In-class leadership and mentoring roles,
- Conducting interviews,
- Short answer writing,
- Consultation – community and target group,
- Negation (including conflict negotiation), and
- Committee procedure, preparing agendas, and minute keeping. (Joseph et al., 2014)

Interviewer: *Can you give some examples of the new things you have learnt?*

Student: *How to do interviews. How to help people in the community.* (Int 6, 12 Aug 2014)

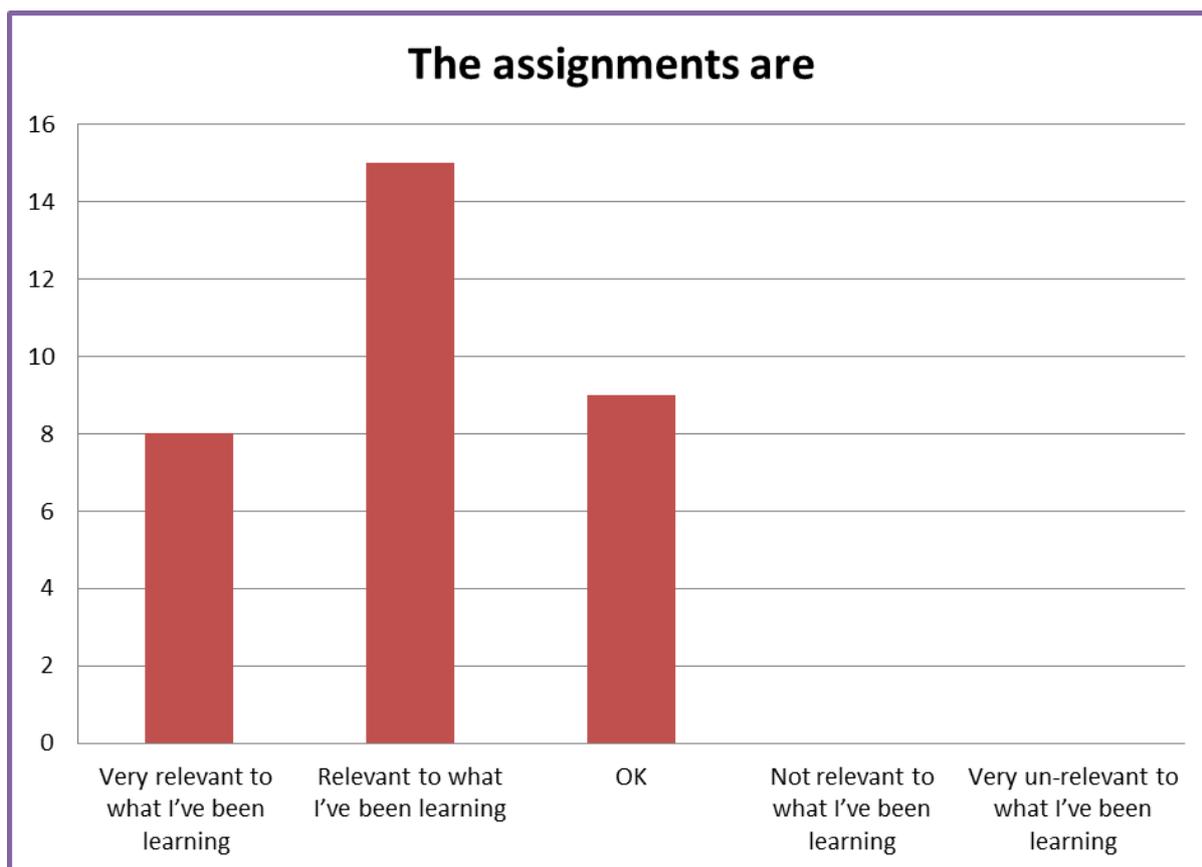
Experiential learning opportunities enhanced the residential block training and were overwhelmingly well received. These included guest speakers and field trips. Yarrabah's Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service was frequently cited by students. These are invaluable opportunities for students to witness their trainers as community development mentors, to be inspired by the collective actions of others, generate strategic insights into how communities self-organise and to demystify the institutional and governmental supports available to them.

*I enjoyed it. Liked the blocks. Going away for a while. Learning about other communities, meeting other people, learning from other communities. I particularly enjoyed going to the Yarrri Health Centre.* (Int 4, 19 Aug 2014)

### 3.5.3. Course relevance

Continuing on from the above themes learning activities included case studies, excursions, guest speakers and hands-on group problem solving activities. These provided multiple opportunities to reflect both individually and within a community of learners. This is carried over to the assignment work students undertake when at home, between residential block visits to Cairns.

From the student survey, which asked students to rate the relevance of the assignment work to what they had been learning in the classroom (which effectively connects their residential and home-based learning experiences) students agreed that the assignment work very relevant, relevant and ok (see Figure 10). The home-based tasks offer sets of engaging experiences for the students as they take them through an asset-based approach to community development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Students are encouraged to find the social assets and capabilities of their community, documenting its tangible and intangible resources. Consistent with the strengths-based approach to community development, asset mapping is a process that starts from a positive premise, viewing a community as a place with assets to be enhanced, not deficits to be remedied.



**Figure 10. Relevance of course work - assignments**

Students studying whilst employed, agreed that what they were learning contained some to high levels of relevance to their work. Comments included:

*Relevant to my sermons when I did the course and are very relevant to my work today. You have to understand alcohol and how it affects the mind. (Int 1, 13 Aug 2014)*

*As a church warden, I've needed the skills I learnt in planning. Not to make things too complex, but keep things basic/simple... It gave me understanding and insight, knowledge I've retained... built on. (Int 3, 13 Aug 2014)*

*Relevance of training to present activities? Especially to the Elder Justice group. I am a member of the Elder Justice and we help the young ones when they go to court. Judge asks us what we want to do with them. There are 6 of us. (Int 1, 14 Aug 2014)*

*WBBC course was very relevant to me when I was with the Council, but here in Queensland Health less so. (Int 2, 19 Aug 2014)*

#### 3.5.4. Networking and social capital

An ongoing strength of the course was in developing a network of Indigenous leaders. The teaching blocks in Cairns continue to rate highly in terms of building social cohesion and the opportunity to learn from one another. As mentioned above, students express an interest in remaining in communication with people from other communities.

Social capital is the personal, familial and professional networks of individuals and communities (Balatti, Black, & Falk, 2006). Social capital was found in the 2011 report to be valuable in helping students to build and utilise a network of cooperative relationships between individuals, organisations and for WBBC students, other Aboriginal or Torres Strait communities.

The benefit of strengthening social capital was found to have a two-fold effect. Students strengthened their social capital ties both within their communities and to a broader social network of people which gave them access to sources of funding, exposure and influence. Secondly, the sense of personal belonging to a network enhanced the experience of empowerment felt by individuals and communities. The presence of strengthened social capital established through the training provided:

1. The generation of a critical mass of graduates in communities,
2. Broader community engagement with a students' project,
3. Networking opportunities, and
4. Ties to funding and social development agencies.

*I believe that by completing the Cert III course I will have made new contacts with Indigenous people from various regions... The coming together at the course provided the opportunity to catch up with old friends/families. The highlight was finding out we all have a common ground towards learning skills to deal with these social issues. (Int 9, 23 Oct, 2013)*

*For one student on their own it would be very hard. But when you have a team to help each other, that makes it better. We can run a program in the community. To demonstrate what they have done back in their community. (Int 1, 18 Aug, 2014)*

Recommendation 3 of the 2011 report suggested that a student alumni, or graduate group would be a valuable service provided by the College for graduates to help them maintain their connections with fellow learners, discuss projects and proposal and support each other to find the resources required for their community development practice. WBBC has been initiating activities to foster an alumni community. It has, for example, established a Facebook page to help students continue to communicate and share information about the College. Both Rev. Les and Eddie report regular use of the page (Joseph et al., 2014).

For students, however, the Facebook page is used, but not widely. Many of the past graduates interviewed (see Chapter 4), said they were not aware of it, which is likely as it was introduced by the College after 2011. Considering the age profile of WBBC students it is also unsurprising that several students are not Facebook users and have low levels of computer literacy. But for those who can and do use Facebook, it was found to be a productive vehicle.

*I talk to others on Facebook – we exchange numbers and talk to others. (Int 4, 12 Aug, 2014)*

*The exchange of participants contact details have enhanced the opportunities to stay further connected. (Int 9, 9 Sept, 2013)*

### 3.5.5. Sponsors

A social capital tie between students and their community is manifest in the role of the WBBC 'sponsor'. Sponsors are local mentors to WBBC students. They are individuals residing within the church, community organisations or service agencies, who are willing to provide support to the student/s (Wontulp-Bi-Buya College, 2013). The sponsors have minimal impact over curriculum and pedagogical issues, but play a vital role in the ongoing, nurturing function, financial and tutorial support within students' home communities. The strength of the sponsor/student relationship can influence course completion. Enrolment forms ask students to name their sponsor and sponsors are required to sign-off on the student's enrolment.

It was observed that a large number of the students coming from the NPA were sponsored by the Alcohol and Other Drugs (ATODS) office in Bamaga, which is a Queensland Health funded programme. Similarly, a contingent of students from Brisbane were sponsored by a rehabilitation service where some students had undertaken treatment for AOD addictions. Other students were sponsored by Education Queensland, land councils, regional councils, and churches. Most respondents agreed that they had a sponsor. Several respondents reported enthusiastically about the support they received from their sponsor.

*Interviewer: Have you been talking to your sponsor about the course and the progress you are making?*

*Student: Yes they give me good advice. (Int 5, 9 Sept, 2013)*

*Yes! My sponsor is very proud of me that I'll be completing this course very soon. (Int 8, 9 Sept, 2013)*

*My church [sponsor] is 100% supportive. (Int 2, 5 Mar, 2014)*

However, despite the conditions of enrolment, a proportion of students were not familiar with WBBC sponsorship, answering 'no' to the question, 'do you have a sponsor?' One respondent seemed to confuse the term 'sponsor' with the employer, as when asked if he had a sponsor, and if so, were they supportive of the course, he replied:

*If I was successful in obtaining employment, I would be requesting that I be able to complete the course. (Int 8, Oct 23, 2013)*

Sponsoring organisations have the potential to significantly strengthen students' vertical and horizontal social capital ties into realms of employment, mentorship, further education and training pathways and community organisations. For students, the difference between

weak and strong sponsorship is significant. The researcher met with several sponsors who described the work of the College in terms complementary to their own community and social objectives. Therefore, supporting students to enrol and complete the course was viewed as a mutual responsibility shared with the student. However, in some communities, where the WBBC sponsorship concept is less well known, people may be seeing the term 'sponsor' on the enrolment form more like a 'referee'. In this way, students are obtaining a signature on the enrolment form, but the individual or organisation has not made a commitment to continue to support the student (Joseph et al., 2014).

A recommendation made in the 2011 report was for the College to educate sponsors in their role and responsibilities, and develop strategies to engage proactively with sponsors. They are recommendations repeated as the researcher is of the view that sponsors remain an under-utilised resource to the College in strengthening its own standing and opportunities in communities.

### *3.5.6. Employment opportunities and leaving community*

Over 70% of enrolees identified themselves as seeking full-time or part-time employment. According to recent data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to be unemployed - 10.8% compared with 5.5% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

Students commented on the lack of employment generally within their communities but felt positive about opportunities presented through AMCD III as a result of learning skills relating to clearly defined community sectors, in particular, community violence, alcohol and drug related harms and family support. As reported above, they saw opportunities to work with community-based and service agencies in AOD treatment, social and community work, health and education. Many expressed interests in establishing services according to community need.

The ABS also report that while health and remoteness have some effect on the unemployment rate, education was the single largest contributor to determining one's participation in the labour market. Educational qualifications which includes Year 12 and a Certificate II or above reduced the unemployment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in both full-time and part-time employment categories to a rate less than half that of people who do not have these qualifications (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

If, as noted in the previous report, people are required to leave their community for work, it is likely that in time they may return with newly acquired and complementary workforce skills. The following two case studies document former WBBC students' personal stories of acquiring employment in their respective communities. Both are young community leaders

who express desires to train and travel Australia and the world, but serving their communities are their primary concerns.

### Box 3. Case Study 2 - J's story

J was born and educated in the NPA region of Cape York. In his early 20s, he enjoys the quality of life that the NPA can provide – year round fishing, outdoor sports, faith and an extended loving family.

*“I wanted to work in the health industry, so I enrolled in AMCD III. I was encouraged to do it from my grandmother who is also a past graduate. I had a strong thought that this could lead me to Uni. The course has led to a career pathway.”*

Before completing the AMCD III, J was employed by Queensland Health’s ATODs Office in Bamaga.

*“I got a job at ATODs because of it. I’m a community support worker with QH. I do health promotion: smoking, cannabis and alcohol. I had no prior experience. My employment is directly related to my training.”*

ATODs managers continued to support him to complete his certificate.

*“I’m enjoying this job but I have goals to do further study. A diploma of Social Work with Community Training Australia and then I’ll apply for recognition of prior learning towards a Degree in Social Work at JCU which I can study off campus.”*

J believes in the 12 to 18 months of his employment with ATODs, he is seeing a difference in his community.

*“Usage is falling in this community. We also deal with binge drinking and domestic violence. There’s four of us. Two of us have done WBBC training. We work closely with the mental health team too.*

*“I recommend WBBC widely to others because those are the people who need help. They might like a career in health or to get some community development skills. Young people are the priority, therefore I encourage them to get into study. Especially school drop-outs or our homeless youth. Schooling here is of a low standard and there is poor attendance. WBBC is fine for people who don’t have a good education.”*

#### Box 4. Case Study 3 - P's story

Whilst P completed WBBC training in 2011, she credits her current employment to WBBC.

*"I had many ideas but not enough hours of employment to support them" she said when discussing her current role as MyPathways Coordinator on Moa Island.*

*"I was shortlisted against two people with Uni Degrees. All I had was WBBC in my application... I didn't think I'd get it. I expected to keep applying and do plan B – more education. But they told me my letter of application was impressive. I'd said what course I'd been doing and what community development work I wanted to implement. Working in, and studying community development, really helped me. I know how to canvas ideas and plan projects. I learnt how to manage workshops from both the mentoring and training I got at WBBC".*

When asked about the practical skills she acquired through her training, P stated that counselling to help people with their underlying issues, was the most important, especially to help people gain the confidence to seek employment.

*"They tell me their problems. I didn't realise I'd be a counsellor. I put all I've learnt and achieved from WBBC into here. People are comfortable talking to me. It is now natural and comes easily to me but I needed the training in counselling. Now my colleagues are wanting to do WBBC training in counselling too. I think the Suicide Prevention issues are coming to the fore and are being recognised as a growing concern.*

*"In my role I run a daily debriefing session about issues that affect people in the workplace. Stuff from way back comes up. And I have to provide counselling and caring for them. They are learning that how each other behaves affects one another.*

*"Culture is slowly, slowly dying. The physical/spiritual/cultural aspects all need to be aligned – and I realised these needs through what I've been taught. So in the last 3 years I was just doing what I could do – pushing on doors. Now I'm doing the whole lot of them in the one position.*

*"Some of the programmes I help manage here include the Market Garden, Landcare, improvement at the Lodge (Community Organisation owned accommodation), Girls Rugby team and the Dance Team.*

*"The community garden was a casual, flowing, community thing. But I wanted more from it. We need to look at it as a business. There are new people in place at IBIS who are interested in buying produce. I'm planting seeds to empower them. We have plans for hydroponics and a nursery. Machinery is one its way. We have a seedlings nursery.*

*"The girls rugby team is about nutrition and health. I'm President of the club. I'm encouraging and supporting. I'm told that I'm doing more than that. I'm up at 4am with them for training. I help them deal with problems. They appreciate that I'm there with them.*

*"The dance team: We performed daily at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF). We were in the opening and closing ceremonies. We led the opening ceremony procession. Others are coming up in elected into key roles so that they organise coming events. They are mostly younger dancers. The aunties/uncles sing and make music.*

*"WBBC opened the lid of the jar of knowledge. 3 years ago it was bottled up. Now it's all spilling over.*

*"I get a lot of encouragement from peers/elders/council. They see me as being able to get things done. Council are telling my employer that I'm an asset to the community.*

*"For years the government have been telling us... Now the community tells MyPathways what it wants and MyPathways monitors the workers".*

### *3.6. WBBC standing on the national VET stage*

The findings of this report were categorised around key themes that are consistent with national VET Provider Collection of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) (NCVER Collection, 2012-2013). This is useful to provide some relative comparability between WBBC's outcomes and national outcomes, and addresses the TOR 'Efficiency: How have the resources (both personal and financial) been used to best obtain the identified impacts?' and management practices. Note that this is indicative only, as the national data includes all courses by TAFE, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and school-based training, in all states and across all ages, and the statistical compilation and analysis methods differ to the data presented in this report.

In 2013 there were 86,138 people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent undertaking VET training in Australia. The annual growth rate in Indigenous participation in VET training is 3.4 percent. In 2013, 12.3% of the Indigenous population were engaged in VET training. In 2012, 30.7% and 17% of Indigenous VET enrolments were in Certificate III and IV respectively (NCVER Collection, 2012-2013).

#### *3.6.1. Employment*

After training as at 31st May, 2013, 68.5% of students were employed. This figure was up from 67.1% in 2012. Of these, 62.1% were employed before training, therefore, the difference in proportion employed from before training to after is 6.4%. 14.2% reported being employed at a higher skill level after completing their training.

In terms of those seeking employment, WBBC qualifications lead to employment in the 'health' and 'society and culture' fields, with 66% of all VET students in these fields aspiring to be professionals in their chosen occupation, and the remainder qualified as community and personal service workers (Department of Industry, 2014).

There are at least five confirmed student completions from the 2013 WBBC cohort now in full-time employment as a direct consequence of completing the AMCD III (Turpin, 2014). This figure does not account for those working voluntarily or in a part-time capacity, or students who now have the confidence to enter the labour market and actively seek employment. Post-course data collections are not undertaken by the College, which is a resource-intensive activity to undertake.

Over 20% of the WBBC cohorts were not employed and not seeking employment. This is indicative of the percentage of very mature-age students (over 55) participating in education and training – some for the first time since leaving school.

### *3.6.2. Further study*

Nationally, 38.4% of students enrol in further training after their study which is consistent with 2012 data. 4.7% study at University, 21.4% enrol at TAFE and the remainder with RTOs (NCVER Collection, 2012-2013).

Thirteen graduates of the AMCD III enrolled in WBBC's Certificate IV Alcohol & Other Addictions Counselling in 2012 and 2013. It is not known how many other students completed training in other institutions. At least two students enrolled in undergraduate university studies.

### *3.6.3. Course satisfaction*

Like WBBC data, Indigenous students are generally satisfied with VET training provided in Australia (see section 3.2 above). The NCVER data shows that over 90% are satisfied with the teaching and assessment and 87% are satisfied with the generic skills and learning experiences provided (NCVER Collection, 2012-2013).

### *3.6.4. Benefits and relevance of training*

Of those employed after training, 85.6% of graduates found the training relevant to their current job and 78.7% could report at least one job-related benefit (NCVER Collection, 2012-2013).

Section 3.4 above details the range of benefits derived by WBBC students, much of which applies to their employment and community-based work.

### *3.6.5. Course withdrawal*

Between 2012 – 2014, approximately 140 students were accepted into the AMCD III course. As Table 11 below shows, 57% of students graduate. This is less than the WBBC's stated objective to have "65% of commencing students graduate within 3 years" (Wontulp-Bi-Buya College., 2010). This is also less than the national VET full-year training equivalent completions for Indigenous students. In 2013, 67.6% of the national cohort completed training (Certificates I through to Graduate Diploma levels). 19% of the cohort withdrew or

discontinued their studies and 5.8% failed or did not achieve competency in their course undertaken.

The WBBC course enrolments have risen between the two research periods. Table 10 below is reproduced from the 2011 report. It shows graduations per intake for an average intake of 25 students. Table 11 shows AMCD III graduation numbers. Enrolment intakes now average 43 students each year, which has nearly doubled, and half of these people can expect to graduate. The 2014 data is skewed in that research period end-data was not available at the time of writing this report, however, if the College has no further withdrawals in the period leading up to Block 4 of 2014, it can expect over 75% of the cohort to graduate.

**Table 10. Completion of COD course of average yearly intake 25 students**

	COD graduates
2007	19 students graduated
2008	9 students graduated
2009	10 students graduated
2010	12 students graduated

Source: Wontulp Bi-Buya College

**Table 11. Completion of AMCD III course of average yearly intake 47 students**

	AMCD III graduates	Actual enrolment	% of students to graduate
2011		No data collected	
2012	29 graduates	53	55
2013	19 graduates	46	41
2014*	30 graduates	43	69.8
Totals	81	142	57

\* Recorded withdrawals up to the end of Block 3

Source: Wontulp Bi-Buya College

As mentioned above, failure to pay the course enrolment fee was a common course of students not receiving their certification on completion of the course.

It is also important to note that WBBC has nearly double the student load per course compared to previous periods in the Community Development course stream. This adds a significant teaching load without additional new resources to support the trainers (Joseph et al., 2014). However, there is no evidence of student attrition linked to increased administration or trainer workloads.

### *3.7. Concluding comments: WBBC efficiency in the delivery of adult Indigenous VET*

WBBC achieves high levels of student satisfaction; repeat course attendees, and strong word of mouth demand has doubled course enrolments since 2011. In addition to this, the College is building its teaching capacity with the recruitment and training of four enthusiastic and capable trainees, and has had an additional nationally accredited Certificate IV in Indigenous Mental Health (Suicide Prevention) to its suite of community development and theological course offerings.

These outcomes are being achieved despite changes to Abstudy<sup>1</sup> and student eligibility to undertake training, Queensland State Government sectoral reforms towards competitive tendering and marketisation of VET training, and national welfare reforms effecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's mutual obligation and assistance.

The pressure of resource constraints on the College to maintain staffing levels to cope with present student numbers has been keenly observed over the last three year period by the researcher. The College administrators have been proactive in seeking a diverse range of funding sources, including philanthropic support, non-government funds, private donations, competitive tendered training contracts and Federal grants.

It is of the view of the investigator that WBBC pursues high value returns against its spending, and as such is competent and efficient in its management and delivery of courses. WBBC is led by highly experienced Indigenous leaders. As reported in 2011, the trainers are passionate educators, role models and mentors, who are working towards building the training capability of the College to deliver a wider number of courses in a variety of remote settings.

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<sup>1</sup> Abstudy is an Australian Commonwealth Government payment to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who are studying or undertaking an Australian Apprenticeship.

## Chapter 4. Sustainability: Stories from past students

### 4.1. Introduction

This research period provided a unique opportunity to revisit graduates of TEAR funded WBBC community development courses to consider the ongoing impact of training in graduates' lives, several years after they had graduated from the courses.

Yarrabah, Mossman, the NPA, St Pauls and Thursday Island were visited and a total of 18 interviews were conducted, including five by phone to past students in Yarrabah, Coconut Island, Brisbane and Cairns. In some instances, there was an opportunity to tour the community development project.

The interviews were open-ended discussions with past students, all of whom had been interviewed by the researcher in 2011 or 2012. Most students had completed the Community Organisation and Development III course, however graduates from the AMCD III completed in 2011 or 2012 were also included.

Three case studies are provided below providing a richer description of the project's outcomes and its originator's personal story.

The discussions sought answers to the following key questions:

- What projects are you now involved in, because of doing the course?
- How does this project help your community?
- How long will your project go for?
- Who is funding and helping you with your project?

From the discussion transcripts, the following summary Table 12 below has been assembled to list the variety of projects and positions in which graduates have been engaged.

**Table 12. Comments from transcripts of open interview discussions**

**Comments/instances of personal and community empowerment**

*I'm giving back. Womens' group. Learn from our Elders. Youth group in the church. (Int 2, 13 Aug, 2014)*

*It gave me understanding and insight, knowledge I've retained... built on. (Int 3, 13 Aug, 2014)*

*I did the course to get a job. I'm a recovering drinker. I thought that doing the course would help my commitment not to drink. It teaches you about healthier lifestyle. (Int 1, 18 Aug, 2014)*

*I never finished a Uni degree in Teaching so WBBC got me back on track with study. (Int 4-5, 19 Aug, 2014)*

*It built on what I'd learnt from Indigenous women's leadership. It developed a greater outlook so that I saw community in a different way. Going away to study was good. I got fresh ideas. It gave me energy. See what I was doing in a constructive way. Helped me to get results. To get outcomes. It's very important to me to get results. (Int 6, 19 Aug, 2014)*

*I'm driven by my people so they learn something, contribute to family, make lifestyle better, to be independent. Not to depend on government. To be more self sufficient. (Int 6, 19 Aug, 2014)*

*It helps me to bring healing to people. I talk in my own language. I can explain more that way and I plant a better seed. (Int 2, 20 Aug, 2014)*

**Comments/instances of community-based projects led by WBBC graduates**

*I learnt about public health campaigns, and key messages of a public health campaign ... So therefore it is so important to be educated about AOD and WBBC is the ideal place for our people to be involved. (Int 1, 13 Aug, 2014)*

*Another WBBC student and I want to implement a programme [like mission Australia's Circles of Families]. Aunty [name omitted] and I want to introduce a programme through the church and school. Spiritual and physical. Early intervention – prep age children. (Int 2, 13 Aug, 2014)*

*Relevance of training to present activities: Especially the Elder Justice group. I am a member of the Elder Justice and we help the young ones when they go to court. Judge asks us what we want to do with them. There are 6 of us. (Int 1, 14 Aug, 2014)*

*Strong women group: Jun Kurrji. The Murri Court closed so I moved back here to Mossman. Now I work in the Justice group here and we have funding to start a women's group through the justice group. (Int 2, 14 Aug, 2014) (see Case Study X below)*

*I was on a community board at Yarrabah and we thought COD would help us manage the organisation better. Writing submissions, getting funding etc. It was very good. We got better at understanding organisational structure – the role of Board, CEO, Finance people, workers and consultants. And this helped us know who we should be talking to. (Int 2, 15 Aug, 2014)*

*It's been so helpful in teaching communications skills. Understanding the general circumstances arising in people's lives. Helping them to find and answer and help themselves. Willingly find their own answers. (Int 1, 18 Aug, 2014)*

*We do get events when doctors visit. I manage all that. We do all the health checks of the ladies. And talks with the RFDS. I put these events together. I did the International Women's Day Morning Tea with ladies from Cubin and St Pauls. I organise a guest speakers. We talked about what IWD is about and had about 30 ladies young and old. (Int 2, 19 Aug, 2014)*

*I learnt knowledge and skills to put towards community. [In the] early times I'd have women's group. (Int 4-5, 19 Aug, 2014)*

*I've run many many programmes since doing the COD course. Every year a different programme.*

- *All our Children*
- *Cultural programmes*
- *Healthy Island Homes*
- *St Paul's Raft Race*

*Healthy small garden: 'Migi' garden - Home gardens. (Int 6, 19 Aug, 2014) (See Box 5 below).*

**Instances where students reported course helping them in their employment or to gain a promotion**

*Relevant to my sermons when I did the course and are very relevant to my work today. You have to understand alcohol and how it affects the mind. Therefore its connection to suicide. (Int 1, 13 Aug, 2014)*

*I'm in the Mothers Union and I'm the rep for the Gulf/Cape. I'm directly under the Bishop. I am interested in family and married life. I'd like to see more people do the WBBC training and get good jobs from it. (Int 2, 13 Aug, 2014)*

*As a church warden, I've needed the skills I learnt in planning. Not to make things too complex, but keep things basic/simple. I've learnt about target groups/aid groups. Knowledge about issues. It was and still is relevant to the work I do now, including when I was the behaviour management teacher at the school. (Int 3, 13 Aug, 2014)*

*[I'm with the] Dept of Community Services, Child Protection. The skills are so relevant to my work. Especially the AOD stuff. Get something out of each [module] you do. All relevant to what I do. (Int 1, Aug 15, 2014)*

*I work at Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service as a Life Promotion Officer. When I was doing the course I was looking at [Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder] FASD at the school. The training was excellent for that. (Int 2, 15 Aug, 2014)*

*I enrolled because of my activities in the church and community. Counselling - I learnt I'd always done it ok, and that I do it well... [It was] really good. Because of my age I've been through much of it. So it was easy for me. Younger people find it a bit harder. They haven't had as much life experience to bring to their role as a counsellor. I'm now the Chair of the Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service Board. (Int 5, 15 Aug, 2014)*

*I was with the TSR Council as HR manager when I did the COD course... Following the council amalgamation I moved over to Qld Health [recognises ongoing employment due to COD qualification]. (Int 2, 19 Aug, 2014)*

*I was the training and hospitality manager of the Lodge. I moved into council admin and was promoted to acting Islander Manager TSRC. [I used my] COD skills and knowledge and applied to council and got the position. (Int 3, 19 Aug, 2014)*

*I learnt a lot about counselling and gained new skills, particularly talking one-on-one. I'm also now doing community workshops and working with families. My role at work has expanded. (Int 2, 20 Aug, 2014)*

*I'm a community support worker with QH. I do health promotion. Smoking/cannabis and alcohol. I had no prior experience My employment is directly related to my training. (Int 1, 20 Aug, 2014)  
(See case study X below)*

### **Instances/comments of social capital**

*I met my partner a Torres Strait Islander man, at WBBC. (Int 2, 13 Aug, 2014)*

*For one student on their own it would be very hard. But when you have a team to help each other, that makes it better. We can run a program in the community. To demonstrate what they have done back in their community... I talk to others. I would talk to Pastor Etti. He is our leader. If I have ideas I'd go to him to get action plans. (Int 1, 18 Aug, 2014)*

*WBBC got me mixing with other communities. I made friends. We shared culture and stories... I still keep regular contact with past students including friends I made who live on Mornington Island. A network is important while you study for support but also group impact. Young people and older keep the younger ones on track.... I've applied that in my work and when I was doing the course, I was using the support of another bloke/lady and we talked about what we were learning. I know that they were putting aspects of the course into their programmes too. So no, we didn't work together, but we studied together and applied it in our own ways. (Int 2, 19 Aug, 2014)*

The meaning of the term ‘sustainability’ remains unchanged from the 2011 report in that it is used to refer to the longevity of the training outcomes. The opportunity of the researchers to interview past students, particularly graduates of the COD III course, provides a rare glimpse into impact beyond the immediate term (first year post-graduation). Four case studies are provided below detailing stand-out exemplars of past COD III graduates continued impact with their home communities.

#### **Box 5. Case Study 4 - Community Garden St Pauls**

In 2011, the evaluator, AS, interviewed two residents of St Paul’s and graduates of the COD III course about their ongoing Community Garden project.

At that time, the graduates had identified a community resource that had fallen into disrepair in large part due to the withdrawal of CDEP funding. The COD III graduates consulted the TSRC and their Elders, obtained their permission, blessing and some funding, and rebuilt the community garden to supplement the diets of the community with fresh food, provide for significant cultural and community events and promote healthy, active lifestyles.

The evaluator revisited the garden in August 2014. One of the COD graduates had since been employed as the manager of the local employment network and had incorporated the community garden into the employment training scheme. The garden is now in a transitional phase from community to market garden. The network’s workers are using this project to develop skills in business and strategic planning. A 5 year business plan is being developed and the coordinator is in talks with the IBIS food stores to become a commercial supplier of fresh fruit and vegetables to the IBIS food outlet on Moa Island. Planning accounts for both sustainability of the garden and replicability of the model to other Island communities.

*“The community garden was a casual, flowing, community thing. But I wanted more from it”* said the COD III graduate during an interview conducted at St Paul’s.

*“We need to look at it as a business. There are new people in place at IBIS who are interested in buying produce. I’m planting seeds to empower [the job network participants]. We have plans for hydroponics and a nursery. Machinery is one its way. We have a seedlings nursery.”*

The COD III graduate appointed a local coordinator to manage the day to day operations at the garden. He described the activity at the garden as ‘exuberation’.

*“People are coming again. It bonds the community. It uplifts people.”*

*“I’d like to see it feed this community, restore community life and help us be self-reliant. It’s right here under our feet!”*

### Box 6. Case Study 5 - Poruma (Coconut Island) Dance Troupe

Poruma is a small community of 150 people. In 2011 the evaluator spoke to an Island Councillor and COD III graduate about emerging economic and cultural development opportunities for the Island.

The Poruma Dance Troup was a flagship social and economic community project designed to “take the image of the product” on tour, has undertaken a wide range of dance touring events across Australia and internationally. This includes a visit to the United Kingdom in 2012.

The troupe continues to be an important vehicle for cultural learning and participation particularly of the Island’s young people. The troupe has expanded to include sister Island communities.

*“Our motive is the same. To teach our young, to pass on culture, traditional knowledge and dialect. Re-telling the stories in song and dance is very powerful. This is the most practical and effective way to pass this on. So young people can take pride in their culture, value those things and then this will be influential in the decisions they make in the future.”*

The coordinator, Philamon Mosby holds a Bachelor of Arts in Community Management and Development, but continues to credit this project and several others on the island, to the participants of the COD III course, and he recommends and promotes WBBC to his community.

*“We had several students attend WBBC from here and they get up and speak at Island custom events. These people wouldn’t do that if it weren’t for the training.”*

### Box 7. Case Study 6 - Aunty Betty, Mossman

Aunty Betty is an empowered woman owing much of her strength and passion, in her view, to the training in COD III and AOAC IV, she did at WBBC.

*“Well both were really good.”*

As an Elder and community leader, Aunty B works closely with the local magistrate in the Justice Group in her home community.

She told the evaluator in an interview conducted in August 2014, that when we had first met, she was a member of the Murri Court in Cairns. This initiative was defunded in the change of Queensland Government. Aunty B used this as an opportunity to return to her home community where her skills were noticed by the local magistrate.

*“The judge isn’t happy cos’ he sees the same people. He’s says to us, you need your own women’s group.”*

*“So we formed the Jun Kurri (Strong Women’s Group). And now the judge can, instead of sending a woman to jail, she comes to our women’s group.”*

*By utilizing her skills in community organization and counselling, Aunty B has recruited and trained other Elder women of the community to work with her in the group to provide much needed mentoring and support for young women and mothers.*

*“We will teach them beading/sewing/painting but we do this while we’re talking to them and giving them one-on-one counselling and mentoring/advice. We pass on our language and culture. We’ll teach them what each woman needs to learn. It might be personal hygiene for themselves and their children, or how to make up the house, you know. So they can go on and take responsibility themselves and their families.”*

*“We also visit our girls in Townsville and our men in Lotus Glen. We try to do what we can for them when they come out.”*

*“If it weren’t for WBBC training, I don’t know how we’d manage.”*

*“I learnt about many different of types of counselling. Not just one-on-one but lots of different techniques. I have the skills to know how to talk to different people in different situations.”*

*“I’m excited. There are lots of things that people can do for a community, that they can put into a community that has nothing. A community is somewhere where everyone helps one another. But if it weren’t for WBBC, I [couldn’t do it].”*

## Box 8. Case Study 7 - Aunty Isabel, St Paul's

Aunty Isabel is an energetic and passionate Elder and role model for the community of St Pauls. Crediting her approach to community development from her training at WBBC several years ago, she says, *"WBBC helped me look at my community from another angle. Do I really want to help my people and participate? How will I be active and help my community?"*

Since completing her COD course, *"I've run many many programmes.... Every year a different programme."*

*"All our Children is about child protection. If parents/family are not well neither are the children. It is preventative and early intervention to support adults/brothers/sisters – whole family with children to help families. We target dysfunctional families but we're non-categorical. We're open to everyone who wants it."*

*"We run cultural programmes. Art lino-print on fabric and traditional coconut cooking and weaving workshops."*

*"Healthy Island Homes is like the TV series, The Block. We do a room makeover in someone's home. We sew fabrics etc. to make new pillows/curtains etc. Mostly kids bedrooms. Girls and teenage girls."*

The St Paul's Raft Race was another very successful community event. Aunty Isabel's submission for funding from TRSA was approved. Entrants in the event made their own raft and complete on the day against other home-made rafts.

*"It's for St Pauls residents. We used it to promote Pink Ribbon. It's a big family day. A trophy is awarded to the winner. We have prizes for the best dressed. Non-alcoholic, BBQ event. People can BYO but public drunkenness is a shame thing. People might quietly enjoy a drink."*

*"The healthy small garden, 'Migi' garden - Home garden" is the only programme that didn't work. People didn't understand having a little garden when we have a community garden. But the idea was to be active. Good incentive to push it but the community didn't take to it."*

*"The COD training built on what I'd learnt from Indigenous women's leadership. It developed a greater outlook so that I saw community in a different way. Going away to study was good. I got fresh ideas. It gave me energy. I could see what I was doing in a constructive way which helped me to get results. It is very important to me to get results."*

*"I'm driven by my people so they learn something, contribute to family, make our lifestyle better, become independent and not depend on government. We want to be more self sufficient."*

*"Yes. I recommend WBBC training. The simplicity of the course was enjoyable and because they make you bring the workbooks home you think about it at home."*

#### *4.2. Conclusions: Sustainability and lasting impact of community development courses at WBBC*

From the four case studies presented the following can be observed:

- Lasting projects are place-based with high levels of community engagement from within their own, and neighbouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- All projects are (relatively) low cost and potentially replicable for other communities. Funding is sourced from private and public sources. Several projects are funding-reliant and others have the potential to generate revenue, i.e., community gardens and the arts.
- Projects that attract external funding and interest from non-Indigenous organisations may have a lasting impact, whilst led by and for the community. For example, IBIS stores interest in the Market Garden; the local Magistrates interest in the Women's Justice Group in Mossman and international interest in the Coconut Island Dance Troupe.
- As reported in 2011, high standards of good governance (governing institution, leadership, self-determination, capacity building, cultural match, and resourcing) (SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision), 2011) are responsive to local need and attract the support, and permission, from the communities' Elders.
- Individuals involved accrue personal benefits. Employment, personal wellbeing (health and physical improvement), education, cultural understanding and a sense of belonging are implicit throughout the case studies.

## Chapter 5. Trainee trainers

During the three-year research period, four WBBC trainee-teachers have been interviewed on at least two occasions. At the commencement of their training, students discussed their aspirations. In the second interview, the trainers were better equipped to reflect on the experience of learning to be a WBBC trainer.

The two-way, participatory approach to pedagogy and classroom management, which foregrounds the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective to each and every aspect of the curriculum and content, continues to be a highly effective method of course delivery. Embedding a strong sense of cultural identity promotes greater participation and achievement in education and training for Indigenous people generally (Balatti et al., 2006; Hooley, 2002) and therefore, the College's well established approach is being passed onto a new generation of community development trainers.

There is also a clear need for qualified staff who are more representative of the cohorts' genders, heritage and cultural backgrounds, particularly Torres Strait Islander background, and female trainers.

The following reflections provide some insights into the experience of these four individuals, who reported enjoying and wanting to be a trainee, as they receive mentoring and support to become WBBC casual staff.

### 5.1. Orientation

Each trainee has been selected by the WBBC teaching staff and approved by the College Principal. The trainees have or are completing a WBBC course. They demonstrate qualities of enthusiasm for learning, optimistic and positive outlook for their future and the future of their communities, community leadership and role modelling particularly to younger people. They are patient, kind and generous in spirit, and accepting of the WBBC Christian orientation, although being a practicing Christian is not requisite.

*I want to and really enjoy working with other Indigenous people. And I have lots of student contact as both a trainer and student. People ring me [with their problems]. I talk to them. They all know me around Cairns and in the remote communities. Most know me because of my role and I get to know the students as a trainer. (Int 1, 15 Aug, 2014)*

### 5.2. Teaching experience

Several trainees have experience in public speaking through their work as community workers and pastors. One trainee has a master's degree in Australian Indigenous studies and another undertook training in education at the University of Sydney, and whilst not completing the degree, worked as a teacher's aide in public education settings for many

years. Therefore, the experiences of trainee-teachers varies considerably as a group, however, all trainees were spoken of highly by their students, as well as their supervising trainers, Rev. Les and Eddie Turpin.

*I can contribute by advocating for students. I am helping Les with evaluations of teaching blocks. I've done my Cert IV Training and Assessment. I feel I'll slot into this. I've worked on the ground before, tutoring prisoners. (Int 1, 5 Mar, 2014)*

### 5.3. Practice sessions in WBBC classrooms

Each trainee described a process of being 'thrown into the deep-end'.

*Teaching the class without Father Les there. He had to leave after week 1. My 1<sup>st</sup> day was a challenge but after that I enjoyed it. When Father Les is there he has a calming effect. If you can't explain, he comes in and brings clarity. (Int 1, 6 Sept, 2013)*

Despite the requirement to undertake a concurrent Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, only one of the interviewees had completed this training at the time of the second interview (Block 3). Such training will help equip students with practical pedagogical skills and can be completed at RTOs online or in person. Typically, a Certificate in Training and Assessment orientates students to plan for individual and group-based learning, in person and by distance-based education, design learning activities and programmes and design and implement assessment processes. These are skills modelled by WBBC trainers, but not necessarily taught in an explicit manner with the trainees. The following observation of a trainee's experience teaching a class of over 20 adult learners, demonstrates the difficulties encountered by trainee teachers.

### Box 9. Researcher observation of classroom teaching by trainee trainer

#### Observational notes

6 September 2013

Trainee Trainer: [Name withheld]

Learning Activity: Counselling role play

Situation: Trainee facilitating a counselling role-play assessment. 2 students volunteered to 'go first'. Performed a scripted role-play in front of the class twice. Each demonstrating their skills as a counsellor. This followed on from previous sessions unobserved.

Observation notes:

Overall communications between Trainee Trainer and class was not well developed. Instructions weren't clear and students didn't know what was happening. Particularly the two role-play volunteers seated at the front of the class.

Opportunity to negotiate with class was not structured and the trainee was indecisive. The students were unaware that it was for assessment purposes, and the trainee's apology for the poor communication was humble and genuine.

The volunteers completed their role play and feedback was sought from the class, facilitated by the trainee. One volunteer student got very defensive, interpreting the comments from a classmate as criticism. His agitation escalated. He had misunderstood the comment and took it negatively. The trainee was anxious, and reinforced the student's agitation by failing to hear the comment from the classmate again, and therefore provide an opportunity for the fellow classmate to placate the agitated student.

The trainee did manage to diffuse the young man's agitation but it took another student to do that with him. The trainee appeared nervous and not in command of the situation. I wonder what would have happened if it had escalated further? The WBBC Trainer was not present but Ann M was.

Following this experience, a fellow student grumbled about ambiguous instruction. She seemed very unhappy about unclear directions given in the book or by the trainee-trainer.

When asked to reflect on what the trainee trainer had learnt about teaching that day, he commented, "I learnt that preparation is the key".

#### *5.4. Concluding comments: Trainee trainers at WBBC*

The four WBBC trainees interviewed remained enthusiastic throughout the year and keen to obtain the Training and Assessment qualification to begin teaching WBBC courses in both Community Development and Theology. Interviewees had a strong appreciation for the two-way teaching and learning approach. They were humbled to be considered a suitable WBBC trainer. They understood the importance of education as an Indigenous human rights issue and the need for individual and collective understandings of the legacy of colonisation. They were also inspired by the WBBC staff. Two trainees expressed a strong desire to further their own education towards obtaining university degrees. Three trainees regarded the vocation as a 'calling' to 'serve our people'.

However, they all agreed that more structured training could be provided by the College. Whilst the mentoring process provided by the trainers and opportunities to teach with them both present and at times not present in the room, is a necessary, it was described by one interview as 'ad hoc'. In the absence of a completed Certificate in Training and Assessment, Trainees may require higher levels of supervision than they have received. On occasions where the course trainer/coordinator is required to leave the premise (counselling or other business) trainees are left to facilitate the training – often with little notice given. They report feeling overwhelmed and under-prepared.

## Chapter 6. Discussion and recommendation

Revisiting the objectives of this three year research period, this report has presented evidence that points to WBBC's delivery of highly effective training, delivered in an efficient and strategic manner toward sustainable growth of the College.

The research has stimulated important professional conversations about the nature of training, the profile of the students now enrolling at the College, and the sustainability of present staff levels as a ratio to student class sizes.

The College is mindful of the need to establish a creative mix of funding sources. In addition to regular activities to source funding from commonwealth and state sources it is pursuing private donorship and contract-based training delivery. These are strategic responses to profound changes in the VET training sector that are deliberative, responsive and informed.

The following recommendations fulfil the TOR future learnings, and were developed in consultation with the WBBC community; staff, students and stakeholders. It is to support the College's measured growth as it builds its capacity to provide its highly valuable and important services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia.

### *6.1. Changing cohorts*

In coming years the College may continue to see a changing profile of the WBBC student cohort. It is possible that a higher proportion of enrolments are derived from sectors in the community other than the mature community leaders. In 2013 and 2014 the College has managed cases of anti-social behavioural from students, not often seen in previous years. These situations include disrespectful and disorderly conduct, substance misuse, and the potential for aggression or violence in the classroom disrupting the learning of others and placing at risk the safety of all. It is important to note that these issues are not widespread and have not impacted on overall levels of student satisfaction. The issues are managed with professionalism and great care by WBBC staff, and class culture is orientated towards an attitude of tolerance, kindness and consideration of people who are in distress, suffering or not coping with their circumstances. However, due to reforms in the welfare and training sectors and the changing appeal of the College to students, the College may need to take additional measures to mitigate for new sets of challenges in the future. The following recommendations are made to provide stronger supports for the College's trainers.

1. It has been observed that the most disruptive period for new classes is during Block 1 and Block 2 residential training. These are periods where the culture of the community of learners is being established and for some, the temptations of being in Cairns are alluring. Demands of the course further impact on some individuals who may resist the rigour of the classroom setting, demands of course work or are uncomfortable with the content of class discussions. Strong pastoral support is

required at this time. The College may benefit from additional resources to support the provision of a suitably qualified counselling service/counsellor to be available to students during the residential block training. Presently this burden falls heavily on College administration and training staff.

2. Literacy support is very highly regarded, and as a service is in high demand. Many students sympathise with the work load of the literacy support teacher. The College needs to consider providing a second literacy support person, preferably a male, as a comment received from several interviewees was that several men won't ask for help from a woman. In some instances, this derives from cultural norms. "Men feel shame for getting help from a woman. They're not used to support like that from women" (Int 2, 15 Aug, 2014). The recommendation here is that the College be mindful of providing a man/woman training team for every class.
3. The probability of students entering the College with chronic health disease and disability may also rise in the future, with larger intakes of students from diverse backgrounds. This may include poor eye-sight, hearing loss, memory dysfunction and mobility issues, related to conditions such as type II diabetes which is four times more prevalent in the Indigenous population than the non-Indigenous populations of Australia (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, 2007). A second literacy support person may also double to provide disability support for students who are impacted by disability.
4. Teaching resources in relation to AOD training would enable trainers to cater to a wider range of learning styles. Students have suggested that acquiring props and visual aids on AOD and the impact on human health would be highly valuable, as then they themselves, armed with this deeper knowledge can teach others using similar training devices. Students suggest the College network with local health and ATODs agencies to obtain props typically used by Queensland health promotion teams that they see visit their communities.

## *6.2. Sponsors*

Good sponsorship is a major indicator of student success. Sponsors provide more than material support with advice, motivation and even employment in addition to helping students complete their workbooks, develop project ideas, planning and sourcing funding.

The recommendations made in the 2011 report are reiterated here as they continue to be an under-utilised resource for the College.

5. The College need to prioritise strategies for engaging and educating their community of Sponsors.
  - A proposed brochure for sponsors should be developed for distribution in the new year with student recruitment drives for 2015.
  - Establish regular communications with sponsors. This might be through informal email newsletter updates, Facebook or other online communication forums.
  - Strategies to engage with sponsors may include a formal induction session, regular updates of their student's progress and suggesting ways they might take an active role in mentoring students.
  - Sponsors can also help the College to monitor students. Sponsors can report on graduate's projects and whole of community involvement/responses to graduate's initiatives.
  - Sponsors can be invited to get more involved in the College activities. They may be invited as guest speakers during training, invited to graduations and a sponsor representative join the College Board and/or sub-committees.

### *6.3. Trainees and WBBC capacity building*

The findings of this report demonstrate that students regard the course offerings as relevant to them and their communities, and that the demand to study at WBBC is increasing. Therefore, the need to continue to invest in the future capacity of the College is paramount.

6. Trainee trainers have been a very successful strategy for recruiting people of best fit to the College and it is recommended that potential trainers continue to be identified and supported with on-site training by experienced course coordinators.
7. Trainees must undertake the Certificate in Training and Assessment IV at the outset of their training and prior to undertaking unsupervised training during any training block in Cairns or in community. Recognition of prior learning should not be encouraged unless the trainee demonstrates significant competence and experience in the preparation, delivery and assessment of adult learners.
8. Networking with other community service agencies. Strengthening relationships with community NGO agencies in communities and in Cairns could involve inviting representatives to team teach, guest speak, or utilising their teaching props and aids.

#### *6.4. In-community delivery*

There was much discussion by students of the desire for WBBC to have a presence in the communities—to deliver courses, recruit future students and help strengthen community-relations across communities themselves through alumni networks. The College is to be commended for its efforts in 2013 and 2014 to deliver in training ‘hubs’ in locations across Cape York. Discussions with various other communities across Australia are being undertaken. The strategies achieve several objectives. The visitation of WBBC training staff in a community helps to familiarise the community with its work and its people. This builds trust, fosters relationships and generates future clientele. Secondly, the trainers establish deeper understandings of the culture and issues facing the communities in which they serve. They are then better equipped to discuss and share the stories of students from these communities with others. Thirdly, knowledge of the benefits of WBBC training coupled with its capacity to deliver in-community training may generate invitations from other communities.

A range of logistical issues were reported which have been internalised by the College staff as ‘learning opportunities’ (Joseph et al., 2014). It must be recognised the level of difficulty associated for Cairns-based administrators in supporting students and staff accommodation, training facilities, transportation and meals. It was agreed that the College will become more efficient in delivering hub-based residential blocks with experience.

9. With very strong consensus from students and staff it is recommended that training hub models continue to be developed and funding sourced to support the efficient delivery of services in remote locations across Australia.

#### *6.5. Governance and enterprise training*

10. In the 2011 report, a recommendation was made to expand the suite of course offerings to students. This recommendation, whilst difficult to implement, remains a high priority. Studies that offer skills in business and social enterprise management; sustainable development and climate change adaptation for Indigenous communities, IT, e-commerce and e-marketing; governance training and youth leadership, have all been identified. It was suggested that of these, governance training might be one of the most pressing issues of Indigenous people at this time.

#### *6.6. Alumni networks*

A key benefit that was reiterated by most interviewees was the value of social networking. Meeting other students from different places and cultures was highly valued. Many students, particular the graduates interviewed, maintained these networks.

11. The College still has a role to play in actively maintaining and strengthening networks. The introduction of the Facebook page has been noted, and is used well by student/Facebook users. Complementary measures to assist graduates need to be introduced.

#### *6.7. Professional development for staff*

It is commendable that the College staff continue to engage in higher education. The actions of staff are highly influential on trainee trainers and students.

12. Support from the College to support ongoing studies is strongly encouraged. Support for staff to engage in short-term courses, workshops or other professional development activities that strengthen their knowledge and skills/experience related directly to the courses in which they are teaching, should also be maintained.
13. Course coordinators and some administrators develop ways of gathering ongoing information about the outcomes of courses outcomes that include the impact of training on livelihoods and wellbeing in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities in which WBBC serve.

#### *6.8. Concluding comments*

Wontulp Bi-Buya College in Cairns exhibits best-practice community development training for effective and lasting impact. It is an organisation that is growing and its reputation as a culturally acceptable RTO amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is leading to high levels of demand for their courses. This is unfortunately not matched with proportional increases in funding, but creative responses to broadening the base-funding are being pursued by the College Principal and management team. So too are the College's efforts to continually improve and expand on their course offerings, to remain highly relevant to, and fill needed niches, in the Indigenous adult VET sector.

The dedication, commitment and selfless ethic of service to fellow men and women, particularly those most in need, is exemplary. Despite increase student enrolment loads from a wide-range of Australian regions, the mantra 'no student is left behind' is adhered to. This requires many additional hours of work from all staff at the College, providing pastoral care, learning support, the preparation of rich learning experiences and timely feedback on course work and student progress.

WBBC is responsible for producing rich outcomes. Their goal to produce graduates who possess the characteristics of the empowered person—leadership, empathy and the capacity to work with others towards common goals, were developing characteristics in students interviewed over three years. For past students, still practicing a community development project fostered by WBBC training, these characteristics are role modelled and passed on to others. The work of the Aunty's of the Justice Group, the coordinator of

MyPathways in the Torres Strait, and a councillor managing international cultural dance teams, are just some of the examples of WBBC graduates who explicitly connect their community development training to their present day activities. They recommend the College to others and several are WBBC sponsors. They demonstrate highly effective, place-based community development responses to address the issues that matter most to their communities—addressing language and culture, substance misuse and community safety, employment and training, or reviving community values.

With the additional focus on training for social awareness of alcohol and other drug addictions, the value of training to community members has shifted in emphasis, scope and relevance. The profile of the student cohort is changing in response to this, as will the outcomes of the training. The College is addressing major skills and staffing needs of the communities, delivering qualified people to work in community health, social work, pastoral care, cultural and youth work. The health and community sectors are the main source of employment in Indigenous rural and remote communities, employing between 30–50% of people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Too many of these occupations are filled by fly-in, fly-out agents.

The AMCD course is also being recommended for its potential to support people in their own personal quest to overcome addictive behaviours and substance misuse in their own lives. In this regard, the College is supporting people to overcome personal trauma, heal and develop leadership qualities, making them then ready to move onto new phases of their lives.

Establishing an evidence-base for the effectiveness of these shifts in training emphasis should be an ongoing focus in continuing monitoring and evaluation. If the WBBC training intervention has an impact, it will be in marginal changes in indicators such as the recruitment and retention of graduates in service sector employment; self-reports of, and community-wide reports of falls in anti-social behaviours; community development projects and programme initiatives instigated and led by WBBC graduates; and the ongoing use of networking across students and graduates between communities. It is important to maintain moderate and realistic expectations of these changes, but at the same time, not under-estimate the empowering influence that just one graduand can have on a whole community.

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## Appendix 1. Questionnaires 1 - 4

### Questionnaire 1

Training for Impact: Building an understanding of community development training and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development outcomes  
*Evaluation of Wontulp Bi-Buya College*

Date: ..... Participant no:.....

**Dear student,**

**We are keen to follow the story of how this course changes your approach to issues in your community. We will be inviting you to share with us your progress several times during the course and possibly once after the course. The names of other people do not have to be included. You can use the letter X or Y to stand in for people's names.**

**To get us started, we'd like you tell us a bit about yourself now? Please write as little or as much to the following questions.**

1. Where do you live. Can you describe the great things about living in your community.
2. What changes would you like to see in the community where you live?
3. Who is responsible for making social changes happen where you live?
4. What help do people get if they have a social and emotional needs?
5. How do you think this certificate will help you?
6. How did you find out about the course?
7. Do you have a sponsor and if so, are they supportive of you doing the course?
8. What new skills do you expect to have at the end of this course?
9. Do you think there is a need for people with these skills in this community?
10. Do you expect to meet other students or past students of Wontulp Bi-Buya College during or at the end of the course?
11. Are you happy that the location of the course?

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### Questionnaire 2

Training for Impact: Building an understanding of community development training and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development outcomes  
*Evaluation of Wontulp Bi-Buya College*

Date: ..... Participant no:.....

**Dear course participant. You are invited to help me assess the value of the WBBC training by writing as little or as much as you like to the following questions.**

**Your name is removed to ensure your confidentiality and anonymity. The names of other people do not have to be included. You can use the letter X or Y to stand in for people's names.**

1. Please explain what you think of the course.
  2. Can you give some examples of the new things you have learnt.
  3. Describe the way the course is taught.
  4. Some students have reported feeling upset or disturbed by some of the course content or issues that are discussed in class may make people feel uncomfortable, sad or unwell. How well have the teachers helped manage discussion about unpleasant issues?
  5. Do you or other students need support from other friends, family or counsellors to help them with these issues?
  6. Has talking about difficult issues of the past helped people grow strong?
  7. Can you describe anything you would like to change because of the things you are learning in the course?
  8. Do you think the course is teaching you new skills which will be helpful to you after the course? Can you give any examples?
  9. Have you been talking to your sponsor about the course and the progress you are making?
  10. Have you connected to other students (past or present) to talk about community development and community healing projects?
- 

### **Questionnaire 3**

Training for Impact: Building an understanding of community development training and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development outcomes  
*Evaluation of Wontulp Bi-Buya College*

Date: ..... Participant no:.....

**This is the third questionnaire that we have asked you to complete for our evaluation of the Certificate III in Addiction Management and Community Development course. You have finished or have nearly finished the course. Congratulations!**

**Your name is removed to ensure your confidentiality and anonymity. The names of other people do not have to be included. You can use the letter X or Y to stand in for people's names.**

**Please write as little or as much to the following questions.**

1. Please explain what you thought of the course.
  2. Do you feel like a better person for having done the course?
  3. Can you give some examples of the new things you have learnt.
  4. Describe the way the course was taught.
  5. Explain briefly, the community development project you are going to do.
  6. Have you talked to your sponsor about the course?
  7. Have you connected to other students (past or present) to talk about community development and community healing projects?
  8. Has completing the course led to a new employment opportunity for you?
  9. Do you have plans to do further study? If so, what course and who is the provider?
  10. Can you suggest any changes to the College to improve the course?
- 

#### **Questionnaire 4**

Training for Impact: Building an understanding of community development training and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development outcomes  
*Evaluation of Wontulp Bi-Buya College*

Date: ..... Participant no:.....

#### **Semi-structured interviews:**

1. Please explain what you thought of the course.
  2. Please describe the community work you have been doing since completing the course.
  3. Please explain how the course has helped you personally in your life?
  4. Please explain how the course has helped the whole community?
  5. The course may have, at times, dealt with sensitive or difficult issues for you or your fellow students. How did the class turn this into a positive force for change? What role did the teacher play in helping people feel strengthened and empowered?
- OR
- Do you think anyone was hurt by the way the course was taught?
  6. Would you recommend the course to others?
  7. Do you think the College should run courses, like this one, in other communities?
  8. Please explain if you have made new connections to other student graduates from Wontulp Bi-Buya College either in this community, or from anywhere in Australia. How have those connections helped you plan your project, get funding, ideas or help from other people?
  9. Can you suggest any changes to the College to improve the course?

## Appendix 2. Student satisfaction survey

Please tick one box below and give a brief reason for your answer

	5 Very good	4 Good	3 OK	2 Not good	1 Very bad
The course booklets are:					

	5 Very relevant to what I've been learning	4 Relevant to what I've been learning	3 OK	2 Not relevant to what I've been learning	1 Very un-relevant to what I've been learning
The assignments are:					

	5 Very Good	4 Good	3 OK	2 Hard	1 Too hard
Writing tasks are:					

	5 Very helpful	4 helpful	3 OK	2 Unhelpful	1 Very unhelpful
The class discussions are:					

	5 All the time	4 Most of the time	3 Sometimes	2 Not often	1 Never
The teachers encourage us to contribute in the classroom:					

	5 Very helpful	4 helpful	3 OK	2 Unhelpful	1 Very unhelpful
Feedback from teachers is:					

## Appendix 3. Trainee Trainers interview questionnaire

### Q 5

Training for Impact: Building an understanding of community development training and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development outcomes

*Evaluation of Wontulp Bi-Buya College*



Date: ..... Participant no:.....

Interview with WBBC Trainee Trainer

1. What teaching qualifications do you now have?
2. Please describe the quality of the teaching instruction you received from the College.
3. Were there challenges to the training that you were not expecting?
4. Did you get support from the College to help you?
5. Would you recommend becoming a WBBC trainer?
6. Do you have any plans to do further training? If so, what course and which provider?
7. Has the College discussed possible openings for you to teach WBBC courses in the future?
8. If the College offered you teaching opportunities in the Torres Straits, would you likely accept the job?
9. Would you teach courses for WBBC in places other than the Torres Strait, ie. Cairns or further afield?
10. Has the training qualification led to other employment prospects?