

**Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign  
Stage Two Pilot**

**Final Evaluation Report**

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# Summary

(as per Contract Requirement)

**Name of Recipient:** University of New England

**Project Title:** Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign

**Milestones:** Final Evaluation Report.

**Budget:** The project has been completed in accordance with the budget. Final financial reports due 31 August 2014.

**Progress on achieving outcomes:**

1. Five cohorts from three sites, Wilcannia, Bourke & Enngonia, completed Yes I Can lessons
2. Graduations of first four cohorts held March 2014; graduation of fifth cohort to occur October 2014.
3. Total Yes I Can graduates Stage Two pilots: 65
4. Post literacy for first four cohorts completed. Fifth cohort post literacy phase due for completion September 2014.
5. Initial campaign Phase One socialisation work, Site 4 (Brewarrina) commenced; now on hold until funding has been secured to run campaign there.
6. National organisation established for campaign upscale, Literacy for Life Foundation Inc.

**Major issues or developments:** See detailed report, following.

**Copies of any published reports, promotional material, media publicity, pamphlets or other documentation relevant to the Project:**

See Appendices.

## Introduction

On Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2014, over 200 people gathered at Bourke Central Park for the graduation of forty eight students from Wilcannia, Enngonia and Bourke from the Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign. The young boys of the Muda Muda dancers opened the proceedings with a welcome dance. The Master of Ceremonies, Jack Beetson, a Ngemba man from Brewarrina who is the National Campaign Coordinator and Executive Director of the Literacy for Life Foundation introduced Alastair Ferguson, Chairperson of the Bourke Community Working Party, to give the Welcome to Country speech. Speaker after speaker then rose to congratulate the graduates and support the campaign. The diversity was striking, ranging from the local campaign coordinators, to public servants representing both NSW and Commonwealth governments, to the manager of the Panthers NRL football team, to the Cuban Ambassador to Australia. Finally, Ambassador Monzon and the Literacy for Life Foundation Chairperson Donna Ah Chee presented certificates to each graduate. Several students then came back to the microphone, to read out letters they had written in their final lessons, thanking their teachers, the campaign team and their Cuban adviser, Lucy Nunez Peraza. Edward Barker's letter summed up the feelings of many students:

*Your Yes, I Can program helped me a lot because before I started these lessons I couldn't understand many things that they taught me at school. It was really hard to understand most of my teachers. But through the Yes, I Can, it has been easier. We all learned at a slower and easier way. Now I can write sentences, paragraphs and even letters so I can do whatever I want to do in my life because I can read, write and understand better.*

*Thank you to the Yes, I Can Programme for turning my life around.*

That night, the graduation made national news on NITV, and appeared again the following night on SBS.

Since that day, the graduates have continued with their post literacy activities, while in Bourke some have become trainee literacy class facilitators, working in the next intake, which began on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Meanwhile, preparations are underway to extend the campaign to Brewarrina and Weilmoringle, two more of the 14 communities in the Murdi Paaki region of western NSW. If all goes to plan, this campaign will eventually spread to every community in the region, and to other regions around Australia. The aim of the Literacy Campaign, quite simply, is to achieve a substantial reduction in the number of Aboriginal adults who have little or no English language literacy; and by this means, to make a significant contribution to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage in Australia.

Ambitious as this may seem, there is no reason to believe it cannot be done, provided there is sufficient political will. The graduation in March 2014 was a further stage in an extensive pilot research project, which began in the second half of 2011. The first stage took place in Wilcannia, and the second stage extended it to two more communities. The aim of these pilots was to discover if (and how) an internationally-recognised model for mounting mass literacy campaigns, developed by Cuban literacy educators and which has now reached over 6 million people around the world, could be adapted for Aboriginal

communities in Australia. The pilot study, utilising this model under an agreement with the Cuban Institute (IPLAC- UPCEJV) which developed it, was initiated by a group of national Aboriginal health and education leaders and funded by NSW and Commonwealth governments. Since it began, it has been closely monitored and evaluated by the University of New England, which has also acted as the overall project manager.

The results, summarised in Table 1 below, speak for themselves. By July 2014, 81 people from three of the most educationally and socially disadvantaged communities in Australia had participated successfully as students in the campaign, and built their basic literacy skills; and fifteen people from these communities, including some of the graduates, had been trained to work in the campaign as organisers and literacy facilitators. Just as importantly, the campaign gained the support of a wide cross-section of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community, expressed through practical contributions and participation in campaign activities. On the basis of this success, the original Steering Committee has also, in the course of the pilot, worked with a corporate sponsor, Brookfield Multiplex, to establish a national not-for-profit organisation, the Literacy for Life Foundation Incorporated, to take over responsibility at the conclusion of the pilot for rolling the campaign out nationally.

**Table 1. Summary Statistics 2012-2014**

	Wilcannia	Bourke/Enngonia	Total
Adult population	279	486	765
Est target population (40%)	112	194	306
Surveyed	103	173	276
Expressions of interest	41	122	163
Interest/surveyed	39.8%	70.5%	59.1%
Starters	40	78	118
Graduates	23	58	81
Completion rate	57.5%	74.4%	68.6%

**Notes:**

- In Stage Two, the campaign ran five intakes and achieved 65 new graduates, 7 from Wilcannia, 15 from Enngonia and 43 from Bourke. This was 15 more than the targets set in the PACE (15) and WELL/AHO (35) funding contracts;
- Over 60% of graduates are female;
- Average Yes I Can graduates per intake rose by 60%, from 8 in Stage One to 13 in Stage Two;
- Retention rates rose to 74% in the new sites, Bourke & Enngonia.
- Enngonia, where the campaign reached virtually every person in the target population, should be considered 100% literate, once the post literacy phase is ended.

Despite these achievements, there are still a significant number of Aboriginal adults with low literacy in Wilcannia (estimated 90 +) and Bourke (estimated 220+). The campaign will therefore need to continue in those locations to

achieve substantial improvements in health, employment and other social indicators. In the Murdi Paaki region as a whole, which consists of 18 communities, the need remains very high, with an estimated several thousand people with minimal literacy. To achieve a higher rate of literacy at a regional level within five years requires significant scaling up of the campaign.

This report is the final evaluation of the pilot stage. It provides a comprehensive account of the way the campaign model was implemented during the second stage of the pilot, which began as the first stage was completed at the end of 2012. While written to fulfil the requirements of the two main funding bodies, it is also intended for a wider audience, including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders who have participated in the campaign in some way, and interested adult literacy practitioners and researchers.

## The Campaign Model

While never previously attempted in Australia, the mass campaign model for building adult literacy has been a feature of development efforts in many countries over several hundred years, and most recently in countries of the Global South (Arnové and Graff 2008). As two international experts describe it:

The mass campaign approach... seeks to involve all segments of society in order to make all adult men and women in a nation (*or region*) literate within a particular time-span. Literacy is seen as a means to a comprehensive set of ends – economic, social, structural, cultural and political (Lind & Johnston 1990, p.85).

Unlike smaller-scale literacy programs, which have virtually no impact on the overall rate of literacy in a population, literacy campaigns set out to achieve population-level change. The pilot in Australia followed the model originally developed in Cuba and deployed in the national literacy campaign in Timor-Leste (Boughton 2010), described in more detail in previous reports. Following a period of preparation, in which the national structure and resourcing is laid down, the campaign rolls out at a community level in three phases, each of which supports the other two. **Phase One**, called *Socialisation and Mobilisation*, seeks to engage the whole community in addressing the problem, with visits to every household to identify people willing to take part, extensive promotion and publicity, and the signing up local organisations and agencies as campaign partners and sponsors. **Phase Two** comprises a set of *basic literacy lessons*, taught to groups of 15-20 adults per class by specially-trained local facilitators using the Cuban Yes I Can (“Yo Si Puedo”) audio-visual resources. **Phase Three**, called *Post Literacy*, engages the partner organisations working with the campaign team to provide opportunities for the new graduates to consolidate their literacy in structured activities and work experience, with the aim of building pathways into further education, employment and socially-useful community work. All three phases have to begin, in a sense, at the same time, and continue simultaneously, for the campaign to gain the required momentum. We have likened this to the three spokes of a wheel, each of which must be strong for the wheel to continue rolling.

## **National Campaign Structure & Funding**

The political will which drives a mass literacy campaign is expressed through a national structure. Its role is to provide overall national leadership and planning for the campaign, and secure the essential resources. In some countries, the initiative to establish a national campaign leadership has been taken by government, as was the case in Timor-Leste, which established a National Commission Chaired by the Minister for Education. In others, for example in the state of Kerala in India, or in Argentina, the initial leadership has come from an NGO, which then sets out to 'recruit' the different levels of government to its agenda. In Australia, the process has been closer to the latter. Commonwealth and state government agencies have joined private donors to fund the pilot stage of the campaign, which has been led by an Aboriginal Steering Committee and managed by the University of New England.

### **National Aboriginal Steering Committee**

The pilot was initiated by a National Aboriginal Steering Committee which formed in 2009 with seed funding from the Lowitja Institute. By the start of the second stage of the pilot, the Committee had been reduced through resignations to three members. These were the Chairperson, Ms Donna Ah Chee, a Bandjalung woman from northern NSW, who is currently the Director of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress; the Campaign Coordinator, Mr Jack Beetson; and Ms Pat Anderson, Chairperson of the Lowitja Institute. The main business of the Committee following the successful conclusion of the Stage One pilot was to help secure funds for the second stage; to continue to provide Aboriginal leadership, advice and oversight as the second stage pilot proceeded; and to work with a major corporate sponsor, Brookfield Multiplex and its law firm Clayton Utz to design and establish a new national organisation to take the campaign to its next stage. The major outcome from this work was establishment of the Literacy for Life Foundation Incorporated, a partnership between the national Aboriginal leadership developed through the pilot and a leading international building and development corporation in the private sector, Brookfield Multiplex.

### **Literacy for Life Inc.**

The Literacy for Life Foundation was incorporated on 7 May 2013. The Constitution reads, in part:

*The objects of the Company are:*

- a. to significantly reduce the rate of illiteracy within the Aboriginal adult population and the gap in the English literacy rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, which has stemmed from the poverty and socio-economic disadvantage of Aboriginal peoples;*
- b. to strengthen a culture of literacy whereby the Aboriginal adult community values learning and the various pathways it affords to individuals and the community as a whole, as a means of alleviating poverty, helplessness, crime and substance abuse; and*
- c. to develop the capacity of local Aboriginal community members to lead, own and coordinate a reduction in the rate of illiteracy within the Aboriginal adult population and to further opportunities for participating community members as a way of conquering poverty,*

d. *to be effected by delivering a literacy campaign, implementing an adult literacy campaign model.*

*A literacy campaign involves a co-ordinated and sustained effort to raise the level of literacy of the Aboriginal adult population by mobilising and training local resources, local organisers and local facilitators to support as many Aboriginal adults as possible to learn very basic literacy within a relatively short time-frame, using a simple, standardised method contextualised to the local circumstances of Aboriginal peoples, followed by a period of post-literacy, community-run consolidation activities.*

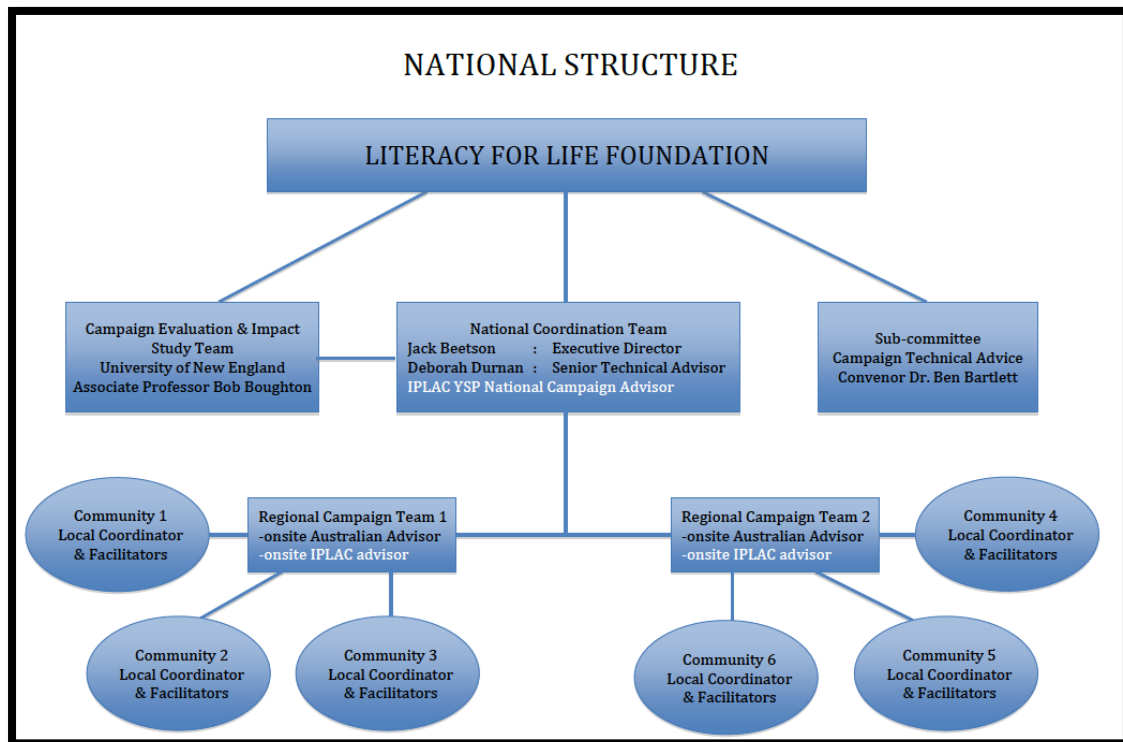
The three remaining members of the National Steering Committee became Foundation Directors, joined by two Directors appointed by Brookfield Multiplex, its Managing Director John Flecker and its Operations Manager Don Aroney. Donna Ah Chee is the Chairperson of the Board and Jack Beetson is Executive Director. The Foundation gained tax-exempt and deductible gifts contribution status in late 2013. The Board resolved to continue to use the University of New England as the campaign evaluator, and one of its first decisions was to allocate \$60000 over two years 2014-2016 as a contribution to an Australian Research Council Linkage Projects grant application to begin a longitudinal study of the campaign's impact. The Board appointed a small Technical Sub-committee to advise it, convened by Dr Ben Bartlett, a specialist in Aboriginal public health., It has now begun negotiations with the campaign's Cuban partners for an exclusive license to use *Yes I Can* in Australia. Diagram 1, on the next page, represents the new national structure which the Foundation proposes for the ongoing roll out of the campaign.

In the last three months, the Literacy for Life Foundation has begun to receive pledges and donations from private sector organisations. Current sponsors include Boystown, Brookfield Johnson Controls, Clayton Utz, Kinetic Super, Master Builders Association of NSW and Tough Mudder. Additional donations have been received from Accor, GMF Contracting and Rotary Club Sydney CBD. The Foundation has also established a partnership with NRL team Penrith Panthers for the 2014 Rugby League season, helping to raise awareness of low literacy levels in Aboriginal adults in Western Sydney, regional NSW and across the country. NRL players Jamie Soward and Jamal Idris have signed on as Literacy for Life Foundation ambassadors, and the Literacy for Life Foundation logo appears on the backs of the jerseys (LFLF Media Release 19 /7/14).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Further details on the Foundation are on its website, <http://www.lflf.org.au/>

**Diagram 1. Proposed National Campaign Structure from 2014**



### Partnership with Cuba

In February 2013, prior to the project funding being received, three members of the campaign team, Jack Beeton, Deborah Durman and Bob Boughton, travelled to Havana, Cuba at the invitation of the Cuban Ambassador to Australia. This visit was funded by the Lowitja Institute and UNE. In Havana, they reported on the first pilot to the Pedagogy 2013 Conference, and began negotiations on a new agreement to cover Stage Two with our Cuban campaign partners, the Ministry of Education and the Institute of Pedagogy for Latin America and the Caribbean (IPLAC) at the Enrique Jose Varona University of Pedagogical Sciences (UPCEJV), where the *Yes I Can* model was originally developed. In May 2014, UNE finalised an agreement to appoint a new IPLAC-trained adviser as a Visiting Academic, along with an Intellectual Property license to use the *Yes I Can* materials. The adviser, Lucy Nunez Peraza, arrived in Australia in June. Ms Peraza worked initially in Wilcannia for six weeks, and then moved to Bourke, where she assisted with the initial and ongoing training of the local *Yes I Can* Facilitators for Bourke and Enngonia, and in monitoring the students progress through the classes for the first three intakes, two in Bourke and one in Enngonia. She also spent some more time in Wilcannia, assisting the local staff to complete the third intake there. Ms Peraza returned to Cuba in late March 2014, at the end of her contract with UNE.

### National campaign staff

For this pilot stage, the WELL/AHO funding provided support for four key staff at the national level. They included the Campaign Coordinator, Jack Beeton, who undertook this work on a part-time consultancy basis under a subcontract



between the University of New England and his company, Beetson & Associates; the Project Manager and Evaluator, Associate Professor Bob Boughton from UNE, the author of this report; and Ms Deborah Durnan, the Australian Technical Adviser, who also worked part-time under a subcontract with the university. The fourth member of the national team was the Cuban adviser, Ms. Lucy Nunez Peraza, who was appointed as a Visiting Academic at UNE from June 2013 until March 2014, under the arrangement described above. Dr Steven Smith was a part-time Research Associate, assisting with interviews and data analysis. In addition to this core team, the University employed several other people on a casual and fractional basis to assist with aspects of the research and evaluation, some funded through the WELL/AHO grant, and others from other sources described below. In the last few months of the project, it became necessary to employ a part-time Project Administration Manager, Ms. Rowena Childs, to help with the increasingly complex contract management and funding acquittals. For the future roll-out of the campaign, the Literacy for Life Foundation has now employed an Executive Manager, Ms. Joanne Osborne, to provide management and administrations services to the campaign.

In addition to the people mentioned above, the Lowitja Institute funding provided support for two other experts to participate in the evaluation process. These were Professor Anne Hickling Hudson from Queensland University of Technology, a former President of the World Congress of Comparative Education Societies who worked with Paul Freire in the Grenadan literacy campaign of 1981; and Dr Ben Bartlett, a public health physician with extensive experience in Aboriginal health services and policy areas, and a detailed knowledge of research into the social determinants of Aboriginal health. Professor Hudson has now withdrawn from the campaign, but Dr Bartlett continues as the Convenor of the Literacy for Life Foundation Board's Technical Sub-committee.

### **Funding negotiations**

In January 2013, the Aboriginal Steering Committee put a proposal to the Commonwealth Minister responsible at that time for the Skills portfolio, Hon. Sharon Bird, seeking \$865000 funding from the Commonwealth to undertake research and development work on the Literacy Campaign Stage2 Pilot with 3 new sites (2 in NSW and 1 in NT) from March 2013 to June 2014. The aims of Stage Two were:

- a) to customise and refine the Yes I Can model further for Aboriginal communities in Australia, based on findings from the 2011-2012 pilot;
- b) to achieve a further 60-75 Aboriginal adult graduates from the campaign, across four communities;
- c) to develop a campaign handbook, including resources and strategies appropriate to a wide range of remote Aboriginal community settings and contexts;
- d) to design and test a workforce development process to enable the campaign to be up-scaled in 2014-15 to regional and/or national level;
- e) to establish the feasibility and identify the requirements to roll the campaign out across Australia.

The submission specified the total cost of Stage Two as **\$1,310,000**, including continuation in Site One in Wilcannia. It proposed that two thirds of the total

from the Commonwealth (\$865000) and one third (\$445000) from State governments and other sources. Six weeks later, the Minister met with the Campaign's delegation in Canberra. She agreed to look at funding options under two programs in her portfolio, namely the Workplace English Language and Literacy program (WELL) and the Language Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP). She also undertook to seek additional support from another Minister, Hon. Julie Collins, who had portfolio responsibility for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development.

Following on from this meeting, the UNE submitted two applications to Department of Innovations on 13 March, one under WELL Strategic Projects for \$350,000 to undertake the pilot in two new sites in western NSW in partnership with AHO (\$240,000); and one under LLNP for \$200,000 to undertake the pilot in a new site in Central Australia. The first was successful, and in May 2014 UNE signed a contract from WELL for \$350,000 to implement in 2 new sites in NSW in partnership with NSW Aboriginal Housing Office, which had agreed to contribute \$290,000. This brought the total funding to \$590,000. However, there was no response from LLNP for several months, and in the end, that funding program was suspended without a decision being taken. This effectively ended the plan to undertake a pilot in a non-English speaking language community as part of the pilot phase.

In April 2013, negotiations began with Commonwealth DEEWR's NSW office for funding under its PACE program to employ local staff through the Land Council to run a third intake in Wilcannia as part of the pilot phase. In May 2013, a PACE grant of \$67700 was made to Beetson & Associates to cover these costs, allowing work to recommence there in June. Meanwhile, discussions continued with Minister Collins office and in June we were encouraged to put a further submission for \$200000 under the newly-announced Community Development Fund (CDF) of the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP). An offer was made by Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin on 5 August 2013. However, the election intervened, delaying the execution of the contract, which meant funds were not provided to UNE until December. Consequently, this funding runs until December 31 2014, whereas the WELL/AHO funding had to be fully expended, initially by 30 June, and then, following an extension application, on 31 July. The timeline of the funding negotiations is set out below, in Table 2.

**Table 2. Stage Two Pilot Funding Negotiations 2013**

Jan-13	Initial submission to Department of Innovations
Feb-13	Meeting with Minister Bird
Mar-13	Submissions to WELL, LLNP & AHO
Apr-13	Submission to PACE for Wilcannia Intake Three
May-13	PACE, WELL and AHO contracts signed
Jun-13	Submission to CDF
Sep-13	CDF contract signed
Dec-13	CDF funding provided

## **Government Funding Breakdown**

The total budget from our two major funders was \$590000, \$350000 from WELL and \$240000 from AHO. The AHO funds come through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH). The \$590000 was managed by the University of New England, and approximately 50% was paid to Aboriginal organisation subcontractors working on-site. Originally due for completion on 30 June 2014, the contracts with these funders were extended to July 31<sup>st</sup>, to allow work to continue in Bourke and to begin work on extending the campaign to Brewarrina. Additional funds then came under the PACE and CDF programs, as described above. A proportion of the CDF funds were paid to the new Literacy for Life Foundation as a sub-contractor from June 2014, to allow it to begin to take over delivery of the campaign. A further grant to UNE of \$167000 was received from the Commonwealth CDEP program, to work with the literacy campaign staff and participants on researching a local employment development plan, building on the campaign's post-literacy phase in Wilcannia. Finally, another small grant (\$48000) was provided to the Foundation in May 2014 from the Bourke Alcohol Working Group via Medicare Local, to assist with local expenses, including local travel and vehicle hire, and the rent on the house in Bourke which the Bourke Aboriginal Health Service had made available for the visiting campaign staff. In total, the WELL/AHO funding thus made it possible to leverage an additional \$450000 in government grants to support aspects of the pilot in the three communities. This was in addition to the in-kind support provided by partners as detailed below. The 'down-side' was the complex contract management and reporting load this entailed.

## **Contextual background. The Region and the Communities**

While the mass literacy campaign model is designed to operate at a national scale, every community brings its own history and context to the process, and an understanding the local context is essential for its success. The two new western NSW communities which agreed to join the campaign Bourke and Enngonia, are, like Wilcannia, part of the Murdi Paaki region. This is an area of western NSW which has previously been the subject of a major COAG trial, and which has an 'identity' based on a long history of its eighteen communities working together, initially under ATSIC, and more recently via the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) (Urbis Keys Young 2006). The other communities include Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Cobar, Collarenebri, Coonamble, Dareton, Goodooga, Gulargambone, Ivanhoe, Lightning Ridge, Menindee, Walgett, and Weilmoringle. The region includes several Local Government Areas, and also overlaps with the western region of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

Aboriginal people in Murdi Paaki come from many different language groupings, and the pattern of settlement today is a product of a long and often violent history of colonisation. Non-Aboriginal people entered the region in the mid nineteenth century, but already by then, imported diseases which arrived with the invaders had spread inland, reducing numbers by up to 90%. After an initial massive expansion of the pastoral industry forced many of the remaining people off their lands, drought and recession at the end of the nineteenth century led to another change in settlement patterns. For the next seventy years, the region

was progressively divided up into smaller holdings, on which Aboriginal people found intermittent work as shearers, fencers and fruit and cotton chippers (Thompson 2001). The dispossession of the original Aboriginal owners and occupiers of these lands was facilitated through forced removal to several government stations and missions in the region established in the first half of the last century. This period also saw the emergence and slow growth of an Aboriginal civil rights movement, which demanded full citizenship rights and the return of some of the stolen lands (Goodall 1996)

Following the successes of the Aboriginal civil rights movement in the 1960s and the 1967 Referendum, the first 'modern' Aboriginal political organisations were established in the region in the 1970s. In Bourke, an Aboriginal Advancement Association formed, followed by a Housing Cooperative (Kamien 1978). Across the region, there arose other organisations including the Western Aboriginal Legal Service, the Western Women's Council and several local Aboriginal Medical Services. In 1983, the NSW Land Rights formalised the existence of local land councils, and the number and local Aboriginal organisations continued to grow through the 1980s and 1990s.

In 2007, the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly's Regional Plan described the makeup of the regions different Aboriginal peoples as follows:

Many Aboriginal people today have difficulty tracing their descent to particular language groups because of the disruption brought about by European settlement. However many people in the Murdi Paaki region can trace their ancestry to the Paakantji/Baakandji, Ngiyampaa, Wangaaybuwan, Ngemba, Wayilwan, Murrawari, Wangkumara, Muti Muti, Ularai, Baranbinja, Malyangapa, Gamilaroi, Kuja, Budbadjui and Gunu nations. European influence came relatively late to far western and north western NSW and it has been possible for Aboriginal people of the Murdi Paaki region to conserve and pass on more of their culture and language than many of the Aboriginal peoples of coastal areas. Numbers of Paakantji/Baakandji, Ngiyampaa, Murrawari, Ularai/Yuwaalaray, Gamilaroi and Wangkumara speakers learned their language from Elders, and a resurgence of language is currently taking place. Aboriginal people of the region are reclaiming and revitalising their language and culture. (GDH 2007, p.12),

In total, at the 2011 Census, the Murdi Paaki region had an Aboriginal population of 8378 people, an increase of 3% since the last census, over which period the region's population as a whole was in decline. Aboriginal people now comprise over 17% of the total population, making them a very significant minority. The Aboriginal population is also much younger than the non-Aboriginal population, with an average and a median age of 15 (AANSW 2014). This means the Aboriginal population's importance in the region's social and economic development is set to grow in coming years. At the same time, there has been a major decline in opportunities for so-called unskilled work, and so the education level of the population will be crucial to any attempts to maintain a viable regional economy. Already in 2013, the Commonwealth's Remote Jobs &

Communities Program (RJCP) website identified 251 job seekers in the Far West Region NSW, and 768 in the Upper Darling region, i.e. 1016 people overall. We can safely anticipate that a significant proportion of this population will have very low English language literacy.

In 2011, only 48% of the Murdi Paaki region Aboriginal teenagers aged 15–19 were in education, compared with 66% of non-Aboriginal teenagers. There is also a significant and growing gap, as in NSW more generally, in Year 12 completions, with only 14% of the Murdi Paaki region Aboriginal adults having completed 12 years of school, compared with 30% of non- Aboriginal adults. Similar participation gaps exist in TAFE and Higher Education participation and completions, with only 32% of the Murdi Paaki region Aboriginal adults aged 15+ with a post-school qualification, compared with 45% of non- Aboriginal adults (AANSW 2014).

The first step in any effective development strategy must be to raise the overall literacy level in the adult population, since a more literate culture in the community is an essential foundation for ongoing educational improvement. To get an indication of the size of the problem, Table 3 below uses the same estimates for the region as have been used in previous reports for the national population. This indicates that there are between 1600 and 3000 Aboriginal people aged 15 and over in the Murdi Paaki region who have low or very low literacy. It is safe to assume that this section of the Aboriginal population will be over-represented in the regions unemployment figures, in the people with health problems, in the families which have trouble getting children to go to school, and in the people who are caught up in the criminal justice system.

**Table 3. Estimates of literacy, Murdi Paaki Aboriginal adult population**

Murdi Paaki Aboriginal population	8378
15+ (77%)	6451
Low Lit @ 25%	1613
Low Lit @ 35%	2258
Low Lit @ 45%	2903

For a literacy campaign to overcome this problem in, for example, a five year period, requires between 300 and 600 people to achieve basic literacy per year. This was not the goal of the pilot stage, however. Rather, the aim of Stage Two was to undertake further testing and development of the campaign model, to discover what would be required to upscale it to a regional level.

### ***The Pilot Communities***

Bourke was one of the largest towns which the colonisers established in the region, originally as a river port, as was Wilcannia. In 1938, an abattoir opened on the edge of town which then provided unskilled and semi-skilled work, as did the Department of Main Roads and the Shire Council. In the 1940s, a new wave of Aboriginal occupation began, with the arrival of Wangkumara people who had

been forcibly removed from Tibooburra in South West Queensland to Brewarrina Mission Station, from where they had begun a long walk home, but were stopped by flooding. The Bourke Aboriginal reserve was established in 1946 on 46 hectares on the western edge of town.

Aboriginal people lived at Enngonia since the nineteenth century, but the Aboriginal reserve, where the majority now live, was only gazetted in 1957. As with Bourke, Enngonia people came from a range of other localities, but in the 2005 Community Working Party Plan, it was said that the majority identified with the local land owning language group, the Murruwarri people; while some families claimed Kunye and Bidgiti descent. Many of the Murrawari people living at Enngonia came from Weilmoringle and nearby localities, and still had ties with families living at Weilmoringle (Burns Aldis 2005) .

In the 1970s, at the same time as Aboriginal organisations were emerging, the rural economy was heading into a long term decline, in part due to drought but also to mechanisation and rationalisation which resulted from the growing dominance of agribusiness companies in the rural sector. As economic conditions declined, social problems increased, race relations became more toxic and rates of arrest and incarceration climbed. Worsening relations between sections of the Aboriginal community and police culminated in outbreaks of street violence (called 'riots' by the media at the time) in 1988 and 1998 with multiple arrests (Cowlshaw 2004). The government focus on indicators of so-called community dysfunction continued in 2010 and 2012, with Bourke and nearby Brewarrina the subject of two separate investigations by NSW Ombudsman, focussing on child protection issues. The reputation of Bourke as a dangerous place was further reinforced by media reports in early 2013 stating:

The remote north-western NSW town of Bourke has topped the state in six of the eight major crime categories in the past 12 months, prompting a call for a "full-hearted attack" to fix drug and alcohol problems in the town. (SMH 2 February 2013).

These conditions have not been improved by the failure of many local Aboriginal organisations to overcome problems of internal conflict and mal-administration.

Table 4, below, shows that in 2011, the adult population of the two new communities (15 & over) not enrolled in school or further education was approximately 500 people. The initial target population for the literacy campaign, based on the conservative assumption of 40% having low literacy, is therefore approximately 240 people.

**Table 4. Adult population not in education, Bourke & Enngonia 2011**

Location	Males	Females	Total
Bourke	202	247	449
Enngonia	22	15	37
Total	222	262	484

Source: 2011 Census Tables

Note however, that according to Aboriginal Affairs NSW, the ABS 'undercount' means that, on average, the Aboriginal population may be about a fifth larger than counted. So our target at the outset was 250-300 people. Obviously, this is more than can be reached in one year, with each intake consisting of a maximum of 15-20 people. Doing three-four intakes per year, three to four years will be required to reach the entire target population. In this pilot stage, our aim was simply to reach as many as possible within the funding period, and in doing so to learn more about how to implement the campaign model in Aboriginal communities.

## **Implementation in Stage Two Pilot Communities**

### **Phase One. Mobilisation and socialisation**

Mobilisation and socialisation of the literacy campaign occurs through a range of activities designed to increase awareness of the extent of the problem of low literacy, the value of collective community action to overcome it, and the way that the campaign model works to achieve this. This requires the campaign team to establish a local working group to help drive the campaign; to recruit and train local campaign staff; to train local people to conduct a household survey to raise awareness and seek expressions of interest from potential participants; to publicise and build support for the campaign across all sectors of the community; and to organise public events including a launch and graduation functions which build community involvement in the campaign and provide support and recognition for the participants. These activities begin at the start of the campaign, and continue for the whole time it is operating. As the campaign develops, the more the community has become involved, the more that community resources can be mobilised to support the participants and campaign staff in this and the other phases, and the more that the problem of low literacy becomes the responsibility of everybody, rather than simply a problem of the people who have been 'left behind' by the formal education system.

Phase One activities are essential for building and consolidating the local leadership and political will to ensure the campaign is able to do its work and becomes sustainable over time. In the two new communities, this began with meetings of the national campaign team with the Aboriginal Community Working Party in Bourke (BACWP) and the Murrawari Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC) in Enngonia in June 2013. Aboriginal staff and participants from the Wilcannia campaign assisted with these initial negotiations, and their input was crucial in convincing the two new sites to join the campaign. Because of the close family and cultural relationships among communities along the Darling River, the three communities are now supporting each other and sharing experiences. This has included:

- Wilcannia staff, students and working group members participating in the launch of the campaign in Bourke and Enngonia in September 2013;
- Wilcannia staff, students and working group members participating in a major graduation in Bourke in March 2014

- A combined ‘mini-conference’ in March 2014 in Bourke involving participants and staff from all three communities to evaluate the campaign to date and plan the next steps.

As a result of this initial work, each community was able to establish a local working group to help the local and national staff formulate strategies, and to provide advice attuned to the specific needs of their communities.

The success of this phase of the campaign is demonstrated in a number of ways, including

- Successful recruitment and training and of effective a local campaign team;
- Level of participation and engagement in local working group meetings;
- Level of community participation in the launch, and in the graduations;
- Response to the local household survey and the number of people who expressed an interest in taking part;
- Number of organisations who sign up to support the campaign and provided direct practical assistance;
- Positive coverage of the campaign in the local media; and
- Extent to which staff and participants reported feeling that they were being supported by their community.

### ***The Local Campaign Teams***

In Bourke, a local coordinator, Lillian Lucas, commenced work in June 2013, and then assisted the national team to recruit two local facilitators, Fiona Smith and Rick Ellwood. In Enngonia, because of the small size of the community, the coordinator, Tannia Edwards, also took on the role of facilitator, and was joined by Judy Shillingsworth.

### ***Household Survey***

As with the Wilcannia pilot, the first Phase in Bourke and Enngonia included a household survey, conducted under UNE’s Research Ethics Committee approval, based on written support from the local Working party. The survey is an essential part of ‘socialising’ the campaign, because it involves visits by local staff to each household, to discuss of the campaign, and the literacy needs of the adults in that household. It results in a much greater awareness of the campaign in the community at a ‘grass-roots’ level, and the expressions of interest obtained at the end of the visit give an indication of the level of demand, that is, of self-assessed literacy need. Local survey workers were trained in July 2013 to carry it out; with some follow up training an some further surveys conducted at the end of the first intake. To date, approximately 35 Aboriginal households in Bourke and 23 in Enngonia have been surveyed. The initial surveys covered all the houses in Enngonia except one, but in Bourke we focused mainly on the western part of town, including the Alice Edwards Village. This was because the local staff were more familiar with those neighbourhoods, and felt they would get more initial support. All houses surveyed were matched to their housing provider with AHO assistance. At the 2011 census, there were 298 houses in Bourke with Indigenous residents, so we have reached less than 15% to date. In the final month of the Stage Two pilot, work began to survey more of the households in Bourke, to establish the level of ongoing demand for future funding submissions.



### **Local Working Groups**

In Wilcannia, the local working group established in the Stage One pilot continued to meet throughout 2013 and into 2014, and assisted with all phases of the campaign there. The Bourke Working Group was established in June 2013, as a sub-committee of the Bourke Aboriginal Community Working Party. The Enngonia Working Group was formed by representatives of the lead agency there, the Murrawarri Local Aboriginal Land Council. These working groups met regularly throughout Stage Two, to review the progress of the campaign and to advise the campaign staff on any issues and problems arising.

### **The Role of MPREC**

In Stage Two, Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation (MPREC) was our major regional partner, working under subcontract to UNE. This was a new arrangement, since in Wilcannia our partner was the LALC, where our Campaign Coordinator Jack Beetson was the Acting CEO. MPREC had been a partner in Wilcannia, providing the facility where classes ran, but this was a much bigger role. Utilising the WELL/AHO funds, UNE subcontracted MPREC to provide and equip the campaign office and classroom, as well as the classroom in the Land Council Office in Enngonia; to employ the local staff; and to provide campaign transport, materials and consumables, at a total cost for the period July 2013-June 2014 of \$200000. Our aim was to develop a sustainable long-term relationship with MPREC so they could play a leading role as the campaign rolled out across the Murdi Paaki Region.

MPREC is a Not-For-Profit Public Company Limited by Guarantee, established in 2003. It describes itself as “the peak provider of services to indigenous communities in western NSW”, and currently employs over 70 people in its six divisions, which include a building company and a registered training organisation, Australian Integrated Training (AIT). As the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) provider, they already had a relationship with many of the participants and local staff in Bourke and Enngonia, who were registered job seekers with them. Bourke office staff consider that the majority of their jobseekers require literacy and numeracy support, providing another indication of the level of demand.

**Table 5. MPREC Bourke jobseeker data**

MPREC Bourke	Jobseekers by sex		
	M	F	T
Bourke (incl Alice Edwards Village)	170	110	280
Enngonia	9	8	17
	179	118	297

Source: MPREC

AIT provides accredited VET courses in a range of areas, and therefore is potentially an excellent partner with whom to develop pathways for participants

beyond the post-literacy phase. In reality, it has proven more difficult than expected to utilise this connection, as described in the final section of the report.

### **Network of partners & supporters**

A list of new local partner agencies and supporters as at July 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 appears below. This is in addition to the network built in Stage One.

**Table 6. Network of partners & supporters**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Role in campaign</b>
Bourke Aboriginal Community Working Party (BCWP)	Bourke Lead agency; and Working Group member
MLALC	Engonnia Lead agency; and Working Group member
Bourke Aboriginal Health Service	Accommodation; facilities for workshops; co facilitation of Health & well Being workshops; Campaign working group member
MPREC CEO and Board of Directors	Employer of local staff, fund manager and provider of facilities;
MPREC RJCP local office Bourke	Referrals for structure activity; working group member
MPREC RJCP local office Wilcannia	Referrals for structure activity; working group member
MPREC AIT	Training and assessment services
NSW Land Council Zone manager	Supporter
Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly	Chairperson an active supporter
Bourke AECG	President; Campaign working group member
Medicare Local Bourke	Funding & post literacy activity
Bourke Alcohol Working Group	Funding
Bourke Men's Group	Launch & graduation BBQ
Maranguka	Supporter; post literacy workshops
Mission Australia	Referrals
Bourke Community Justice Group	Post literacy workshop
Bourke Magistrate	Referrals
NSW Department of Corrections, Bourke	Referrals
Bourke & Enngonia Police	Referrals
Enngonia Primary School	Involvement in post literacy
Bourke Primary School	Supporter
Bourke High School	Referrals; working group member
CentreLink Bourke	Bourke Working Group member
Community Technology Centre Association	Provided desk tops, laptops & internet support & resources;
AANSW, Bourke office	Support and in-kind assistance
Aboriginal Community Housing Providers	Support with literacy-housing links

As a result of MPREC being appointed as the RJCP provider for the whole region. it gained use of a major facility in Bourke, the former Gundabooka CDEP centre, which became the literacy campaign headquarters and classroom in Bourke.

The campaign's success during the pilot stages in building a broad base of support among government and non-government service agencies in the region is consistent with the 'social capital' model for increasing the effectiveness of adult literacy provision been proposed by several literacy studies writers in Australia and overseas in recent years. However, the campaign goes beyond simply enlisting these agencies as supporters; it also encourages the literacy campaign participants and staff to use the opportunities provided by the campaign to advocate actively for agencies to become more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the less literate members of their communities.

### **Phase Two. The Yes I Can lessons**

Intake Three Yes I Can lessons began in Wilcannia in July 2013, after the new Cuban adviser had finished her initial training of a new facilitator to replace the ones who had left once Stage One was completed. The first lessons in the two new communities of Bourke and Enngonia began in September that year. Over the period from May 2013 until July 2014, there were five separate intakes.

**Table 7. Start and end dates for Stage Two cohorts, Yes I Can**

	Start	Finish
Wilcannia 3	1/07/2013	29/08/2013
Bourke 1	16/09/2013	5/12/2013
Enngonia	16/09/2013	3/12/2013
Bourke 2	25/11/2013	6/03/2014
Bourke 3	22/04/2014	24/07/2014

In this section of the report, there is a brief description of the lessons themselves, followed by a discussion of the outcomes. The section ends with an evaluation of this stage of the pilot and the lessons learned for the proposed upscale.

### ***The Lessons***

The Cuban-made DVD lessons are a defining feature of the Yes I Can model. When participants arrive for their class, they sit in chairs, behind desks, with a large TV screen at the front of the room. The facilitator introduces the lesson briefly, and then the students watch a 30-minute DVD on a TV screen. On the DVD, they see a class of five "actor-students" learning how to read and write from an "actor-teacher" and an "actor-assistant teacher". From time to time, topics being talked about in the class will be illustrated with footage of scenes from the region of the actor-students. In Australia in the pilot stage, DVDs from the 2003 Grenada campaign are being used. During the lesson, the facilitator stops the DVD, so the "real" students can discuss a topic, or complete an activity in their workbooks which they have just seen completed by the actor-students. Following the DVD lesson, participants spend another 30 minutes doing practice activities. Watching the DVD lesson and completing the activities takes a maximum of one hour.

The teacher on the DVD uses a "traditional" phonics instruction method, building letter and sound awareness, and the technique of writing, then the ability to hear,

read and write letters, words and phrases, progressing by the final lessons to sentences and paragraphs. Each letter is learned in the initial 42 lessons through association with a specific number, using a Guide Table e.g. 1 – a; 2 – e; 3 – i; 4 – o; all the way to 26, in the case of the English version. The Cubans call this method “alphanumeric”, and it was adopted because of the belief that, even in communities with very little literacy, there is some familiarity with numbers because of money and markets. The numbers correspond to the importance of the letter in constructing words, e.g., in the English version, vowels are 1–5; and the subsequent numbering follows as closely as possible to the frequency of each consonant’s use in the language of instruction.

The lessons are divided into three stages. There are 7 basic introductory lessons, 45 reading, writing and revision lessons, and 12 consolidation and extension lessons with assessment activities. Lesson 1 introduces the model, and Lesson 64 is an evaluation activity for the facilitators. Lessons 2–7 are designed for people with no prior experience of reading and writing, and include exercises to practise holding a pen and forming simple shapes. Because almost all the participants in Australia have had some basic instruction in the past, we have been able to skip over these lessons and go straight from Lesson 1 to Lesson 8.

Each lesson follows a predictable structured sequence, which the Cubans call an “algorithm” and which the students and facilitators quickly learn. As further discussed below, the lesson begins with a discussion topic, which introduces a key letter or word. Easily recognisable icons in each lesson cue the students to observe, listen, speak and write, following the example of the students on screen. From time to time, the lesson is paused to allow students to complete exercises in pre-printed workbooks or writing pads, exercises they have just seen the actor-students do on screen. The lesson ends with another period of practice of the activity learned during that session. As suits people with minimal or no prior literacy and minimal confidence as learners, the initial steps are very small, beginning with motor skills, then vowels and consonants, then diphthongs, reading, generating and writing words using these graphemes. Progress remains slow until lesson 46, at which point participants begin to write words into sentences and then learn “connector words” to form paragraphs. Along the way, very basic punctuation is also taught. From Lesson 50 onward, comprehension of more complex blocks of text is regularly checked, and students learn to fill out forms with basic personal data. Then, in the last 8 lessons, students complete exercises which form the basis of the assessment of their competence at the exit point, in that they learn to produce in their workbooks a simple letter to a friend including description and opinion. An outstanding feature of this structured pedagogy, which emerged from our direct classroom observations, is that local facilitators fairly quickly learn how to teach the lessons through following the example of the actor-teacher, while, at the same time, students are learning to become literacy learners by the same process, watching and copying the learner behaviour of the actor-students. A ‘community of practice’ is quickly established, and is one of the aspects of the model which students and staff most value.

### ***Assessment***

There is no formal assessment in the Yes I Can model, in the sense of a test. Instead, the local staff and the Australian and Cuban advisers review student progress by observing the class and the student work that is completed in the pre-printed workbooks and locally-generated worksheets. This is in effect a continuous assessment process. Detailed weekly records are maintained showing who is “advancing” and who is not, and those who are falling behind or struggling receive additional support.

That said, we have previously mapped Yes I Can’s outcomes against the ACSF. Completion of 64 YES I CAN lessons means students exit with basic reading, writing and learning competence at level 1 minimum or 2 max on the ACSF. This enables them to fill out basic forms; write personal letters; and write up to 2 paragraphs on a personal topic; read with comprehension up to 2 paragraphs on a familiar topic. Obviously some students can perform at a higher level but this is the minimum standard. Importantly students gain significantly in terms of self-esteem and confidence, ability to follow a daily routine, ability to complete tasks, ability to work as part of a team, ability to manage own time, capacity to identify as a learner, and valuing literacy and learning as a core part of their own life, family life and community life.

### ***Schedule and Catch-up***

Each community decides, through a process of discussion among staff, the working group and the students who enrol, what will be the weekly timetable. In Bourke, each of the 3 intakes opted for running the classes over three days, Monday-Wednesday, in the mornings. In Enngonia, they chose to have longer classes, but only meet on two days, Monday and Tuesday, to fit in with local arrangements for getting to Bourke for shopping. Following on from the pilot in Wilcannia, in Stage Two we continued with a practice called ‘catch-up.’ This involves local staff, with adviser support, timetabling three additional one hour sessions at different times for students who have missed a regular lesson, to ensure no one falls too far behind.

### ***Positive messages***

This is a critical element in the Yes I Can model. At the beginning of each lesson, the actor-teacher introduces a simple sentence which includes the letter to be learned in that lesson, but which also contains a particular message in relation to attitudes and values, comparable in some respects to the “generative themes” of Paulo Freire’s culture circles. After watching the “actor-student” class discuss this topic on the DVD, the local facilitator stops the player to allow a discussion to occur in the “live” class. We ask our students “what do you think about this message?” or “Is this important here for us?”; or some other simple question to try to stimulate discussion. This assists in contextualising the lesson to the local circumstances of the students, and it generates new local words, using the letter for that day’s lesson. The sentences on the DVD lessons include:

1. Open the gate
2. Let kids be kids
3. People love peace
4. My thoughts are with you

5. Take care of the sea (from over fishing, pollution etc)
6. Our future is secure
7. Love your family
8. Put the rubbish away ( recycling and disease)
9. Look after the woods/forest (we say 'scrub', or bush)
10. Give me a hand (solidarity)
11. Music is part of our culture
12. I am a friend
13. Elderly are important. They need our love and respect
14. Mind the time
15. Help your family.

***Participation and outcome data***

Table 8 below provides the summary data over the five separate intakes of Yes I Can classes during Stage Two

**Table 8. Summary data, Stage Two Yes I Can cohorts**

Intake	Wilcannia 3	Bourke 1	Bourke 2	Bourke 3	Enngonia	Total
Expressions of interest		40	34	24	24	122
Starters	16	16	22	19	21	94
Withdrawals	9	5	7	2	6	29
Graduates	7	11	15	17	15	65
Retention	44%	69%	68%	89%	71%	69%

The 'expressions of interest' are derived from the survey process, when the local staff ask people who have been identified as needing assistance with literacy to 'sign up' to join the Yes I Can classes. Additional expressions of interest are gained from people who come into the campaign offices to ask if they can join, having heard about it from friends and family. However, people are only counted as 'starters' if they attend a minimum of 3 lessons in the first four weeks. In other words, people who attend for only one or two days and leave are not counted as genuine enrolments. In fact, some of these people subsequently return to join a new intake. To date, we have received 10 new expressions of interest for a fourth intake in Bourke which is scheduled for October 2014, subject to funding.

***Withdrawals***

Regular attendance in the first four weeks is generally maintained unless there are significant personal and family crises, or if people move or take up employment. As described above, every effort is made through catch-up classes to ensure that everyone who wants to can complete the lessons and graduate. The withdrawals are slowly being reduced as local staff become more experienced, and as the processes for working around local crises become more effective. The main issues which cause people to withdraw are childbirth, grief, moving away, poor health, drug and alcohol problems, family issues, and police, court and probation/parole problems.

The graphs in Appendix 2 provide a further breakdown of the participant data in each intake by age and gender.

### **Phase Three. Post literacy**

Post literacy aims to build on Phase 2 achievements through a process of consolidating and extending adult literacy competence and confidence, and strengthening the culture of literacy within the community. Building on the general knowledge activities and discussions in Yes I Can lessons, post-literacy supports the graduates to engage in a range of structured activities, including work experience, for 6 hours per week over a further 8 to 12 weeks. These activities encourage participants to continue to use literacy as an everyday social practice.

In many ways Phase 3 is the most critical component of the Campaign Model. During this phase participants are prepared to walk from the safe and secure Aboriginal space through the next “gate” into the wider mainstream world of learning, employment and social life. We call this building a pathway into further training at the VET level, employment, social enterprise and/or improved participation in family and community development activities. Post literacy is recognised by the Commonwealth government under RJCP program as a structured activity for job seekers. A key aspect of the post literacy phase is that our network of partners and supporters are called on to participate, by providing opportunities and resources for the post literacy program. In this way, the campaign provides a solid bedrock upon which the community can slowly build its future with people who have previously been ‘left behind.’

Overall, the post-literacy phase should achieve two key outcomes:

- Each student to have participated in a minimum 4 to 6 hours per week of activities over 8 to 12 weeks;
- A pathway established for each individual student into relevant formal VET training, work experience and /or employment; social enterprise and/or community work.

### **Participation**

In Bourke and Enngonia, post literacy activities have run for 28 weeks in Stage Two, beginning with 2 weeks at the end of the first intakes in December, and continuing from February until now (August 2014). In total, this has involved 168 hours of activity in both communities. In Bourke, there were three two-hour sessions per week, while in Enngonia there were two three-hour sessions. Currently, there are 17 participants in Bourke, and the average daily attendance is 8, rising to a maximum of 14. In Enngonia, there are 20 participants. This is more than the total number of Yes I Can graduates (15) because one of the facilitators now participates in post literacy as a structured activity under RJCP, as does one other already literate person who did not attend the classes, but now wants to participate. Three more participants are graduates from classes held in Bourke who have now moved to Enngonia. The average daily attendance in Enngonia is 9, rising to a maximum of 12.

## **Program**

In Stage Two, a coordinated post literacy strategy was gradually elaborated, in consultation with the Working Groups, participants, staff and local partners and supporters. The elements of such a strategy, we have discovered, include:

- building literacy (learning, reading, writing, speaking, numeracy & IT skills);
- assisting students to grow as strong, independent citizens confident in their own identity;
- introducing critical literacy to enable students to navigate the modern world and engage with it as equals;
- expanding knowledge in important areas across one or more of the eight domains of adult literacy impact (see section on Impact, later in this report);
- developing a culture of literacy within the community.

The program of structured activities was negotiated with participants and staff and determined by the availability of instructors, support from relevant agencies, and available resources including funding. Themes or topics which were suggested by participants included computing; local & family history; family & community health & well-being; indigenous rights; tenancy, consumer, legal & welfare rights; core work skills including work experience; kids reading; critical literacy.

A monthly program of learning activities was drafted for each intake. The role of the national team and the local staff was primarily to broker other local or regional agencies or individuals to deliver workshops, information sessions, work experience, mentoring and other hands on experiences to encourage participants to step up and engage with the mainstream world as strong, proud and confident learners and citizens. The Campaign team delivered a limited range of sessions including a non-formal introductory critical literacy program and casual instructors were engaged if required to run some non-formal sessions such as computing, art & cooking. To date, the following activities have been organised:

- Computing classes
- Harmony social & emotional well being workshop by MPREC in Enngonia
- Social determinants of health & acupuncture workshop (Dr Ben Bartlett)
- Health & Nutrition:
  - cooking classes;
  - BAHS sessions on eye health and glasses; healthy foods & growing own vegetables; sexual health
- Art classes
- Speech writing for student graduations;
- Team work workshop
- Completing written interview questions on YIC Campaign for AHO publication;
- Reading to Kids
  - 2 sessions including writing a kids book;
- Workskills workshops covering
  - job ads, resumes, applications preparing for interviews; rights & responsibilities at work; work experience;
- Family & local history:



- workshops with UNE lecturers on using AIATSIS and other history resources
- Culture & Hunting:
  - trip to Enngonia for bush tucker and local history; & trip to Brewarrina; Trip to Gundabooka
- National indigenous issues workshops:
  - Apology, Constitutional reform, Sorry Day, International Indigenous Day & Rights Declaration; Racism; National Aboriginal Children's day in Enngonia School;
- Film appreciation:
  - Films shown: Mandela, 12 Years a Slave, Redfern Now, Person of Interest.
- Literacy For Life Mini-Conference preparation and participation
- AHO workshops
  - 1 workshop, to produce a comic on housing issues
  - 3 to date run by Birrang covering budgeting, healthy homes; health & nutrition )
- Young Leaders workshop in Enngonia by MPREC
- Welfare Rights
  - workshop & clinic on social security and Centrelink;
  - workshop on advocacy skills;
- Community governance:
  - MLALC workshop in Enngonia;
  - Maranguka (new local organisation): understanding, writing brochure and talking to community;
- Work Development Orders workshop with Aboriginal Legal Service
- Guest speakers invited to speak about local job opportunities:
  - police,
  - National Parks;

As part of post-literacy, staff also worked with AIT MPREC and other RTOs to assist participants to engage with the formal post school education system by accessing one or more accredited courses at the appropriate level. e.g. the white card, OH&S, First Aid, driver's license course, and hygiene certificate for catering work experience.

As a result of the pilot, several agencies are working actively with the campaign to deliver activities in areas of their interest and expertise. For example, the Bourke Aboriginal Health Service, which has been a strong supporter since the start, clearly understands the connection between adult literacy and improved health outcomes. BAHS staff collaborated with us to deliver a health & well-being program covering nutrition, reproductive health, eye health including the provision of reading glasses. Another example is the Community Technology Centre Association, whose staff installed and maintain computer laboratories with wireless internet access in each location, and provide online support and training. Successful workshops have also been run through our partnership with the Aboriginal Housing office, and the Sydney-based Welfare Rights Centre ran workshops for the cost only of their travel.

However, there are still challenges in enlisting the active support of service agencies in each community. Most agencies continue to see the campaign as a competitor rather than a stepping stone into their programs. This seems especially the case with training providers, including the local TAFE and even AIT, the training division of our major partner. More work therefore needs to be done to communicate the purpose and benefit of post literacy whereby we serve to link with not replace other agencies' activities. This experience also points to an underlying problem, in that the 'professional' service provider staff, even those in Aboriginal organisations, appear to be challenged, perhaps threatened, by the degree of local community control the campaign has established, and the passionate advocacy for the rights of the low literate participants that the campaign has promoted. This relates to the continuing influence of old-style racism in rural towns, which breeds division and hostility on both sides, and especially in relation to the more marginalised Aboriginal people with whom that the literacy campaign works, people who have previously been viewed at best as victims but also as 'troublemakers' by formal education institutions (Cowlshaw 2004).

As the NSW Ombudsman discovered, division and competition among agencies divides the available resources into smaller and smaller units, until no one can achieve any major change within the community as a whole. A strategy to build a solid network of support requires the Coordinator, on-site advisors and local Aboriginal leadership to make it a priority beginning in Phase1. In other countries, e.g. Timor Leste, this was achieved through establishing a post literacy 'Commission' involving representatives of all the government and non-government agencies operating in a locality, to ensure a united effort to build local literacy.

### **Participant Evaluations of the Campaign**

The participation and completion levels are an indication that the campaign is achieving outcomes for those who join; but the real meaning, the impact that becoming more literate has on the participants themselves, is more clearly demonstrated in their own accounts. One source for discovering this has been the letters which the students compose at the end of the Yes I Can lessons, in which they are encouraged express in their own words some of the experiences and benefits they gain. Each student has consented to these letters being made public, to assist others to see the value of the campaign and what they have achieved. The introduction included the words which Edward Barker read from his letter out at the march graduation. The extracts below from a representative sample of other student's letters provide additional testimony of the campaign's value.

*I'm writing this letter for letting you know about all good things this programme campaign has done. It has brought a lot of families together, and taught them well, as for me, it has made me confident in myself, receive and give respect, and also gave me knowledge, I didn't get in school because I didn't get to complete my schooling. I found it challenging and fun that made me want to get involve more. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for this programme as my people and self-needed it. I have learned a lot*

*and would like to keep on going with it, and help my people more. Chelsea Dennis, Enngonia.*

*When I first started this Yes, I Can Programme, I was very scared because I was the eldest in a class of younger students. But now I am enjoying every moment of it. The Yes, I Can Programme taught me how to respect my fellow students and also taught me how to spell properly and write letters, also how to read books to my grandchildren. I also enjoyed the way teachers have taught us. June Smith, Bourke*

*I did a lot of practice in the lessons and it taught me to do better in my reading and writing and it stopped me from being shame and learnt me how to spell and write sentences and paragraphs so I've learnt so much in this Yes, I Can program and it is so special because we have got our own mob teaching us. Thank you Yo si puedo. Yes, I Can is mad, thank you. Kelvin Smith, Bourke*

*I am so glad I joined the Yes, I Can program. I have learned so much in the past 12 weeks. Now I can help my kids with their homework from school. It's just really good we learned so much from this program, so thank you for the effort in helping us and time and driving out to this little community. Stephanie Gillon, Enngonia*

*I'm Bettyanne Edwards. I felt that I wasn't confident with myself. I'm very proud of myself and two sons, for trying the Yes, I Can program. I'm confident that I can do anything I put my mind too. I hope that everyone enjoys it as much as I did. Bettyanne Edwards, Enngonia.*

*I would like to thank you all for giving me a chance to learn in the programme. I did not do much schooling as I was growing up and didn't get a good education but now I feel I can do anything. You helped me to do things I didn't think I could do like help my grandkids with their homework and writing letters but the best thing of all you made me feel good about myself. Also a big thank you to Fiona and Rick for being such good facilitators and also to Lucy and the rest of the staff. If I can do it anyone can. Rebecca McKellar, Bourke*

Further evidence from the participants is provided through interviews, some of which were conducted by UNE Research Associate Dr Stephen Smith and some by freelance journalist Chris Ray, who did a feature article for the Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend. A number of themes emerge from this qualitative data, the analysis of which will continue in coming months. Among the key themes to have been identified so far are:

- Participants feel safe, supported and relaxed because they are being taught by family and people they know
- School and other formal education experiences in the past have left them feeling they could not learn, but the campaign classes have shown them that they can
- The classes have brought families in the community together in ways they have not previously experienced

- Many people now feel that they can go on to do more study, and to apply for jobs
- One of the most important goals that people have is to be able to help their children and grandchildren do better in school
- There is a great deal of gratitude and respect for Cuba the Cuban advisers for their contribution to them and their families, and for the work they are doing to build literacy in other countries
- Other people in their community and people in other Aboriginal communities should be given the chance to join the campaign

Appendix 3 includes some extracts from interview data which reflect these themes.

## Workforce Development

*If sufficient organisational and workforce capacity is not built into communities prior to funding being allocated, then government agencies are setting communities up to fail. (NSW Ombudsman 2012, p.49)*

One of the Stage Two objectives was to develop strategies to build a sustainable workforce for the campaign. This was identified in the WELL/AHO funding contract clauses as:

- 1.1 Customising and refining the 'Yes I Can' model further for Aboriginal communities in Australia, with a specific focus on the determinants of successful region-wide deployment and *the development of a sustainable local workforce*; and
- 1.3 Designing and testing *a workforce development process* to develop locally-based Aboriginal literacy organisers and facilitators, with a view to further up-scaling in 2014-15;

In countries of the Global South, the success of *Yo Si Puedo* is based on its use of local organisers and facilitators, who can be trained quickly and cheaply to apply the model on a mass scale. The DVDs make it possible to run the classes without qualified literacy teachers present all the time. However, the local facilitators and organisers are always supported by a team of literacy advisers, usually Cubans or people they have trained, and usually qualified teachers. The advisers provide initial training to the local staff before the campaign proper begins, both in how to lead the lessons, and also how to organise the other phases of the campaign. They then provide ongoing training and support as the campaign rolls out, each adviser 'mission' staying in-country for two to three years. This was the model used in Timor-Leste (Boughton 2010).

During the Australian pilot, the local workforce in each community has consisted of a Campaign Coordinator and two Yes I Can Facilitators. As in Wilcannia, we discovered in Bourke and Enngonia that it is necessary to have two local facilitators working in each Yes I Can class. This provides for a 'back-up' when

one cannot attend, but more importantly, the two facilitators support each other, and are able to provide more intense support to individual students. It is also preferable for cultural reasons to have one man and one woman, though this did not prove possible in Enngonia, where the campaign coordinator was also a facilitator. We also trained the Bourke coordinator to be a facilitator, providing a second 'back-up.' After the second intake in Bourke, we recruited two trainee facilitators to assist with the third intake, as we had also done in Wilcannia.

### The workforce

A total of 21 people have been employed at different times to deliver the campaign in the three locations over two stages. This on-site workforce was 75% Aboriginal, and 65% of the Aboriginal staff were female. Of the five non-Aboriginal staff, two were the Cuban advisers. The National Team included the Aboriginal campaign coordinator, the two Cuban advisers, and the Australian national adviser. Two female non-Aboriginal staff were employed in the latter stages of the campaign as on-site advisers, but neither stayed beyond three months. This data is summarised in Table 9, below.

**Table 9. Staffing by Aboriginality by sex**

	Aboriginal			Non-Ab'l			Persons		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
National	1	0	1	1	2	3	2	2	4
Bourke/Enngonia	3	5	8	0	2	2	3	7	10
Wilcannia	2	5	7	0	0	0	2	5	7
Total	6	9	16	1	4	5	7	13	21

In addition to these staff, the evaluation team included the UNE Project Manager, a member of the Technical Committee, and several part-time and casual staff who undertook specific research tasks e.g. interviews, database work and demographic data analysis. The university also employed a part-time contract administration manager for the final six months of the pilot. Some of this work was separately funded. All the university staff were non-Aboriginal.

### Workforce capacity development program

The capacity development of the local workforce has been the responsibility of the national campaign team, namely the National Campaign Coordinator, the Senior Australian Technical Adviser, and the Cuban Technical Adviser. When the Community Development Fund grant application was developed, the idea was to use some of these additional funds to recruit and train another Australian adviser to take over more of the workforce development at a local level, so the Coordinator and Senior Technical Adviser could focus on preparing for the upscale. However, the delay in funding meant that the position was not filled until January 2014, and the person chosen left within three months. Her replacement also left after only two months.

The role of National Campaign Coordinator Jack Beetson has been crucial, and without his input it is almost certain the campaign would not have achieved the outcomes it did in terms of developing the local staff. Jack is a highly-effective

and respected Aboriginal leader with direct connections to the region in which we are working, and the staff and students see him as a role model. He is a qualified adult educator and development worker, with several decades experience in Aboriginal-controlled education, and has particular skills working in conflict-sensitive situations, uniting people across family and language groups, and across different organisations. The local staff regularly acknowledge his contribution to their increasing confidence and capacity, e.g.:

*I speak to Jack ... because you get so many people vilify, you know they make accusations against you, they slander your name – and you don't know who to turn to. Because you're doing something right in the community - it feels like your own community is dragging you back down. So, I spoke to Jack about that, because I've experienced that. And his advice was "stick to the line". You know "follow your heart; keep the passion" and you know because that man he's been around the world and he's put up with this for a long time. You know, I try to learn from the best. (Lillian Lucas, Interview, 18/3/14*

For the campaign to upscale, it will require other leaders with similar capacity to be trained in the model, so they can assist in the work of mentoring and supporting local staff. This process began in Bourke, with the Community Working Party Chairperson, Alistair Ferguson<sup>2</sup>. Alistair's belief in the local staff and his public commitment to the campaign has contributed substantially to its success, but it takes considerable time and a close involvement to develop sufficient familiarity with the model to guide the local staff. Aboriginal people with both the skills and the local authority to lead a campaign of this kind are already in very high demand, providing leadership in multiple organisations and programs, and this presents a particular challenge for upscaling, as discussed in the final section of the Report.

The Cuban adviser also has an important role in workforce development, training facilitators in the use of Yes I Can, and providing the background and context to the model and the experiences which people have had in other countries. However, the pilots have demonstrated that is essential to have an on-site Australian adviser working alongside the Cuban adviser, to help customise the lessons and the training of local staff to the specific Australian context, including 'mainstream' education systems and employment systems and how the campaign has to interface with them. The local coordinator also has to learn how to be an effective community organiser, and to network with local agencies and partners, which requires a good understanding of the Australian political and cultural context.

The Cuban Technical Adviser had been trained by IPLAC in the Yes I Can method, but had not previously worked in a mass campaign. An experienced teacher of English to adults in her own country, she was strongly committed to her country's international education work, and had worked for three years on the Greenlight program in NZ. This was a home-based distance education DVD course which IPLAC developed with a Maori College, to prepare students to enter

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<sup>2</sup> Alistair is the great grandson of William Ferguson, one of the founders of the modern Aboriginal rights movement in the 1930s (Gibson 2014).

vocational and academic study. She had not previously worked with people with very low literacy, or in isolated and conflicted communities like Wilcannia Bourke and Enngonia. Surprisingly, she had received very little briefing by the previous adviser, who had worked on the pilot in Wilcannia. As a result, she experienced considerable 'culture shock' in her first few months, and was on a very steep learning curve. For example, she struggled to understand the broad dialects of Aboriginal English commonly used by local staff and students in western NSW, and the level of individual and community distress and disorganisation:

*At the very beginning, I arrived in Wilcannia. I stayed in a motel, but not in a room. I stayed in the back of the motel and I was crying for almost a week, because I felt very isolated there... and also there was a great impact of the Aboriginal English. At the beginning I couldn't understand anything*  
(Lucy Nunez, Interview, 18/3/14)

Lucy also had no training or experience in the community development work required during Phase One; nor with how to set up systems for maintaining detailed campaign records, such as we had seen used in Timor-Leste. Despite these problems, she quickly built good rapport with the local staff, who were very positive about her and very grateful for the assistance she gave them, as were the students when the Yes I Can Lessons began. Nevertheless, these issues put additional strain on the resources of the Campaign Coordinator and Senior Technical Adviser, who had to take more responsibility for building the capacity of the local workforce to undertake the preparation work and the Phase One tasks.

In the end, much of the day to day workforce development work was undertaken by the Senior Australian Adviser, Deborah Durnan, who also assisted Lucy to understand and take on some of the other responsibilities of the adviser role. A qualified teacher and experienced popular educator, Deborah has worked in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations for three decades, and for the last two with the Campaign Coordinator. She worked with the National Literacy Campaign Secretariat in Timor Leste in 2006-07, where she was trained in the model by the Cuban mission leaders and a variety of advisers. This combination of Aboriginal community and Timor-Leste experience has helped contextualise the IPLAC model to the local community situation.

Over time, this work resulted in a systematic program of local workforce development, which has ten objectives:

1. To build an understanding of the Literacy Campaign model as a whole, and each of the three phases;
2. To introduce some basic concepts of popular education and adult learning theory and practice;
3. To explore issues relating to Aboriginal English and Standard English and English language literacy;
4. To understand the historical development, program logic and structure of the *Yes I Can*.
5. To introduce the ACSF literacy measurement tool and its purpose;
6. To learn how to undertake the Campaign socialisation through the household survey;

7. To learn how to deliver the *Yes I Can* DVD lessons independently using a 'model lesson plan structure and content;
8. To learn how to gather evidence of student competence as set out in the *Yes I Can* assessment protocols;
9. To undertake the administrative tasks associated with the delivery of the Stage 2.
10. To learn the practice of regular critical reflection and evaluation.

These objectives are achieved through a combination of initial 'pre-service' training and ongoing in-service professional development, as follows:

1. Initial 'pre-service' training in the campaign model and in the method of teaching and learning using the *Yes I Can* lessons on DVD. This ideally takes 3 weeks. Over the same period, the mobilisation and socialisation work is also mapped out, and some training given in what this requires, including how to administer the household survey, and how to record enrolments;
2. Once the *Yes I Can* lessons begin, a structured training session each day, in which the lessons for the following day are viewed, and the advisers help the local staff prepare their lesson plans (Plan Preview Prepare - PPP)
3. Once a week, a reflective practice training session, to evaluate the teaching and learning that has occurred in the lessons taught that week (Action Reflection)
4. At the conclusion of each intake, an intensive staff development workshop, to consolidate and extend the capacity of the local staff as 'popular literacy educators.' These workshops include input from the Coordinator, the Advisers and the Evaluator.
5. In March 2014, we held a 'mini-conference' in Bourke, for staff, students and local stakeholders from all three pilot sites. Each location reported on their experiences of the campaign, and small groups worked on several 'focus questions'. This proved very popular, and an annual gathering like this should be considered when the campaign upscales.

### **Workforce Development for Coordinators**

The Coordinators undertake an additional professional development program, both on and off job, to gain the skills and knowledge to fulfil their duties as a Campaign Coordinator. The process begins with a conversation about individual work goals and priority needs in terms of their duty statement, followed by an informal skills audit and literacy assessment to determine individual's strengths and weaknesses. Identified areas included: community leadership, community governance, meeting facilitation, assertiveness training, peacebuilding, dealing with conflict, community organising skills, supervision skills, time management, planning, team work, report writing, media skills, computing skills, networking skills and public speaking. The National Team worked with the Coordinators over the 12 months of Stage Two to address aspects of each area through on-job and opportunistic training, mentoring, and off-job workshops and meetings. The Coordinators were provided with opportunities to prepare for and participate in a range of activities such media interviews, public speaking, and representing the Campaign at agency meetings. The off job program included:

- post literacy strategy development ( 1 day workshop)
- team work ( 1 day workshop)



- welfare rights ( 2 day workshop)
- advocacy skills ( 1 day workshop)
- introduction to community governance ( 3 day workshop)
- Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly governance consultation ( 3 day workshop)
- Women’s Business and leadership gathering Dubbo ( 3 day workshop)
- Cuba Australia Friendship Group, Sydney Campaign event ( evening)
- ACSF and literacy assessments ( 1 day workshop)

### ***Adviser training***

In addition to the local staff training program, a draft orientation program for new Australian advisers was developed before we recruited the new adviser in January 2014. This took the form of a ‘distance education’ reading program, of the kind which is used in an advanced university undergraduate or postgraduate unit. It was trialled with both the people who took on the adviser role, and has since been used by the Literacy for Life Foundation to in-service people from the Foundation and Brookfield Multiplex. It can now be used for adviser pre-service training in the upscale stage, as outlined in the final section of the Report.

### **Sustainability**

The high ratio of Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal staff in the campaign team is undoubtedly a factor in its success, including in its acceptability and positive reception from the wider community. Importantly, it demonstrated the campaign team’s commitment to invest in the community, providing local employment and training. All 14 local Aboriginal staff were registered JSA/RJCP job-seekers or on other Centrelink benefits before joining the campaign. By the end of Stage Two, most had not only earned important income for themselves and their families, they had developed important skills and useful knowledge for future employment and community benefit.

Currently, only 5 of the 14 local staff are still working on the campaign, all in Bourke and Enngonia. This is because funding ran out in Wilcannia at the conclusion of the PACE-funded third intake, and the CDEP-funded Local Employment Development Project. Three of the seven Wilcannia staff, all male, have obtained other work. One joined the staff of the local Catholic Primary school as an Aboriginal Education Worker, and the other two are with MPREC, one as an employment adviser, the other as a supervisor of structured activity projects run out of the Men’s Shed. Of the three women, one left town, while personal and family crises interrupted the ability of the other two to maintain other work.

This highlights the difficulties of building a stable local workforce to maintain the campaign and to build on it to undertake other community development activities. There are at least five factors. The first is uncertain and interrupted funding, meaning that even if people stay on for the duration of their casual contracts – which the majority have done – they leave once funding ends. Second, local staff share a lot of the same issues as the participants, including a history of unemployment or underemployment and a lack of work skills, which means even when funding is available, participation can at times be erratic. Third, the chaos of community life, as described in detail in the Stage One Report, disrupts

everyone's ability to maintain their commitment to the campaign. Fourth, when people do gain skills, they can quickly be 'snapped up' by other employers with a more stable funding base. Fifthly, the above factors make the presence of a more stable and qualified on-site Australian adviser, if not constantly, at least on a part time basis, essential to keep things moving, and these positions have proved very difficult to fill during the pilot stage.

One further challenge to implementing the Yes I Can model in Australia is that, unlike in many countries of the Global South, the campaign has to interface with and feed into an existing 'developed world' vocational and adult education system, which has its own well-articulated frameworks for assessment and progression, the Australian Core Skills Framework and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). For this reason, 'quality control' through the continuous assessment process, and rigorous record keeping in individual student attendance and progress is essential, not least because in the pilot phase the model must demonstrate its credibility with stakeholders from this formal system. This flows through into the need for the local workforce to learn about this wider system and its standards.

Initially, we thought that the partnership with MPREC, as a major Aboriginal-controlled NGO, would create a more stable institutional framework for the campaign, and help us to recruit, support and consolidate our staffing. In fact, MPREC itself faces many of the same problems, and because it took over as the RJCP provider for the whole region at the time Stage Two began, it was going through major changes itself, taking on new staff and new responsibilities. Moreover, neither its RJCP role, nor its RTO role, prepared MPREC well to deal with the needs of the campaign to maintain a high level of flexibility and responsiveness to staff and participants. So, while the MPREC Director's and CEO were strong advocates of the campaign, the organisation lacked the capacity or, indeed, the understanding of the model, to deliver on-site support in the manner required in Bourke and Enngonia.

It will also be advisable, as the campaign upscales, to provide local staff with their own pathway into an appropriate Australian qualification for community-based popular education and adult literacy work. In May 2014, a consultant to the project assessed five of the Bourke & Enngonia staff who are still involved with the campaign, as a first step towards assisting them to apply for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) of some elements of competency in appropriate VET training packages. Over time, the campaign aims to build a pathway for local staff to attain a Certificate III, and perhaps go on to complete a higher level qualification in Aboriginal community adult education and/or community development.

## **Impact analysis**

Since the first pilot began in Wilcannia at the end of 2011, 276 people have been contacted through the household survey, 118 have joined a *Yes I Can* class and 81 have completed it. In addition, 15 people have been recruited and trained as local staff, others have participated in the local working groups, and several

hundred have taken part in public campaign activities. While this has been done as a pilot, and is by no means a mass campaign as yet, there is now substantial evidence emerging of the impact such a campaign can have in the communities it reaches.

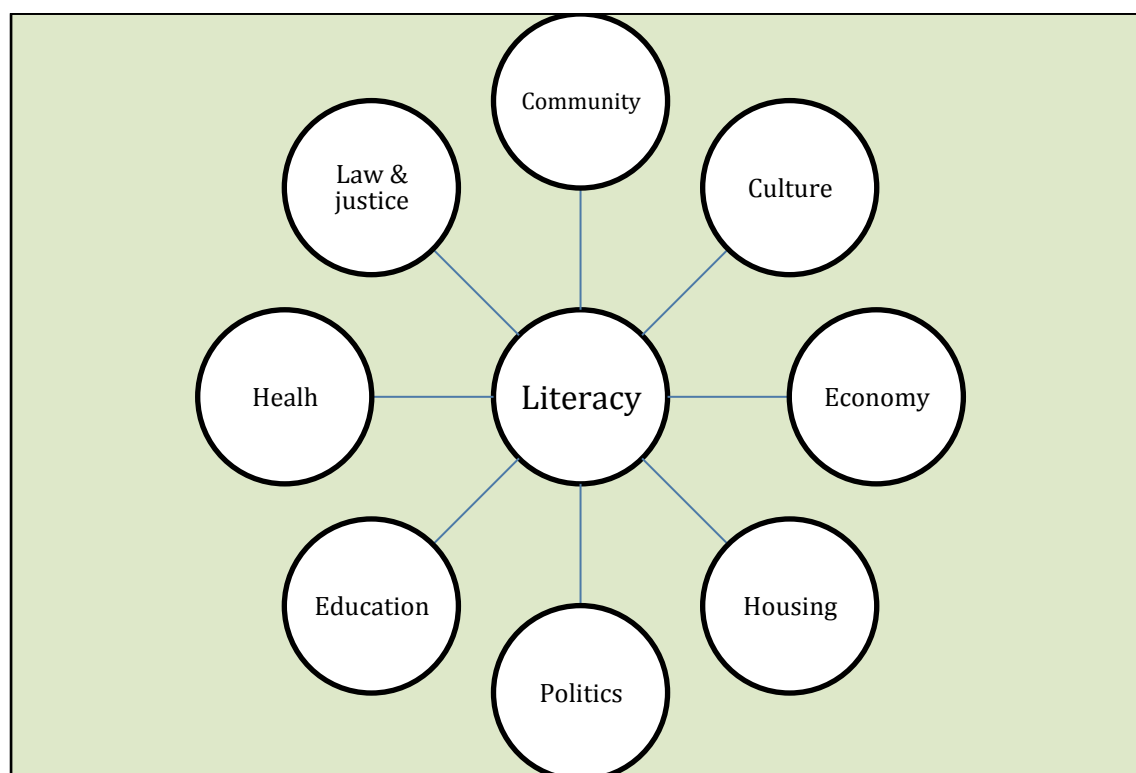
The international experience of mass literacy campaigns demonstrates that, in order for a campaign to lead to significant social change in a community, it has to become supported by a wider movement which has a program for development and social transformation (Arnove and Graff 2008). Existing patterns of educational inequality, whereby some adults are literate whereas others are not, are the result of institutionalised practices in the past, and these continue to have an effect in the present. Acquiring literacy is a first step towards changing existing patterns of inequality in the distribution of power and wealth which to inhibit peoples' efforts to take control of their own development. One advantage of the international character of the Yes I Can model is that it connects people to events beyond their own community and their own country, where they can see what has been achieved in other places. This helps to keep alive the idea of the possibility of a different future.

Under the Commonwealth CDEP program, we undertook research which aimed to develop a better understanding of ways to use Phase Three of the campaign to engage the people mobilised through the Aboriginal adult literacy campaign (participants, staff and local partners) in a longer-term development strategy. The framework which was developed to guide this work identifies eight different 'domains' of development, through which people's positive engagement in social change needs to be supported:

- 1) The economy e.g. employment, income, participation in labour market programs;
- 2) The community e.g. active membership of community organisations, participation in community building events, membership of sporting clubs;
- 3) The formal education system e.g. school participation, parental involvement in children's education, participation in vocational education;
- 4) The wider political system e.g. voter registration, utilisation of political system;
- 5) The housing sector e.g. through better-managed tenancies, involvement in housing association management, housing improvement and building programs;
- 6) Cultural maintenance activities e.g. native title organisation membership, subsistence economic activities, local language maintenance;
- 7) The health system e.g. utilisation of health services, actions against substance abuse;
- 8) The law and justice system e.g. reduced arrest and incarceration, utilisation of legal services.

These domains and indicators were identified from studies of the impact of mass literacy campaigns in other countries (e.g. Sandiford et al. 1995; Burchfield et al. 2002; Oxenham 2009; Maddox 2007), and from recent Australian writing on indicators of Indigenous health and wellbeing (e.g. Prout 2011). The frameworks is illustrated in Diagram 2, below.

**Diagram 2. Framework for understanding the impact of literacy on development**



The key to this model is that each domain interacts, not only with people’s literacy levels, but with each of the other domains. So, for example, while improved literacy can be a pathway to improved engagement with health services, for example in the form of action to deal with substance abuse in the community, this can have a positive impact, not only on health, but also on incarceration levels and employment. The evidence of impact during Stage Two is still being analysed, and this work will continue through a longitudinal study once the resources for this have been secured. Below are some interim results from five of the eight domains, namely housing, education, health, law and justice and community.

### **Literacy & housing**

As a result of negotiations with the NSW Aboriginal Housing office (NSW AHO), housing issues were to be integrated into the campaign. This is specified in clause 1.3 of UNE’s funding contract signed jointly with the AHO and WELL, requiring us to:

Work... in partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Housing office to identify the links between improved literacy and increased tenancy and housing management capacity

The evidence we have collected demonstrates clearly that poor housing and low literacy are inextricably linked, each one interacting with and reinforcing the other. Sub-standard and overcrowded housing affects the ability of children and young people to do homework and study for school; and makes it hard for occupants in a house to keep books and writing materials safe and secure. Power for heating and lighting is often not on, adding another layer of difficulty to

maintaining any kind of literate practice. From the other direction, good literacy, numeracy and communication skills are essential for maintaining a secure and comfortable tenancy, including getting landlords to action requests for repairs and maintenance, understanding and responding to written correspondence from landlords and utilities providers, managing household budgets to cover housing costs, and making applications for new public housing.

We asked staff from AHO and the two main housing providers, Mid Lachlan and Murdi Paaki Housing to identify the specific housing provider for the houses in which participants are living, according to the survey data. Over time, this will enable us to match housing indicator data against literacy campaign participation, to measure any improvements, e.g. in reduction of rent arrears, improved maintenance, increased participation in housing association activities. Furthermore, it assists local campaign staff know to advise participants when they raise issues about their housing in class discussion, as regularly happens, and to encourage them to take part in community meetings with the appropriate provider. Housing tenure and management in Aboriginal communities is quite complex, in that rental housing is owned by several different government and non-government agencies, while property management is in the hands of several other different agencies. So, in class, we also seek to explain how this works, so people know where to go with their issues. This is also part of the training of facilitators and coordinators, so they can become more effective advocates for their students. The relationship with AHO as a partner also made possible several workshops in the post-literacy phase on aspects of tenancy management and household budgeting. In September there is a month of post-literacy activities planned around the housing theme. Participants also took part in a workshop with a consultant to develop a comic on housing issues, which will be produced in November 2014. In turn, this will become a resource to be used in developing literacy.

A further aspect to the housing connection is the employment opportunities in the housing sector, in a range of occupations including building trades and housing support services. At present, the literacy campaign participants do not see themselves as able to apply for jobs in this sector, but over time it will be possible for some people to build pathways through work experience placements and accredited VET courses so they can gain work in this sector. During Stage Two, the Campaign Coordinator worked with local agencies and Brookfield Multiplex on a joint government-housing industry plan to increase the number of jobs in this sector for local Aboriginal people.

### **Formal Education and Training**

One of the aims of a literacy campaign is to re-engage adults in the community with the formal education system. The main evidence that this is occurring includes

- Participants becoming more involved in the education of children in the family and community
- Participants enrolling in formal courses, including VET courses
- Education providers taking an interest in the campaign, and engaging with the participants

- Participants continuing on their own personal self-directed learning paths

One further indication is when staff commit to an ongoing role as a community educator, and decide to improve their skills and qualifications for this work, as discussed above under Workforce Development.

### **Engagement with schools**

One of the most significant effects of the campaign to date has been seen in Enngonia, where the campaign staff and students are now actively involved with the local public school in a variety of ways. The desire to help children with their school work has turned out to be one of the strongest motivations people identify for joining the campaign. This theme emerges constantly in the Yes I Can class, which encourages discussion of this through positive messages in several of the 64 lessons. In post-literacy, work began with a discussion of reading to children, which led in Enngonia to the School Principal taking part in post-literacy workshop where this was the topic. We also used a resource on this issue from the Early Childhood Association, a DVD where Aboriginal parents talked about reading to their children. As a result of this workshop, the discussion has continued and some participants have begun writing their own simple stories to read to their children and grandchildren. Work has also begun to encourage participants to join the School Council and take part in the meetings they hold at the School. Enngonia is a small school, with only 15 students, plus pre-schoolers; and its enrolment is 86% Aboriginal. In the year we ran Yes I Can (2013), attendance rose to 91%. In March 2014, the School Principal, Ms Melissa Harrison said in an interview:

*More parents are talking to me about school and asking for their kids to be given homework. Our preschoolers are using the library more, too. It's been a great thing for the community: it's given the adults who did miss out on their schooling a chance to catch up and have a way to relate to their children. I went along (to a literacy class) and did a talk on story books. Later I had some parents come along to school and borrow books, which I thought was lovely.*

She then wrote the following letter attesting to the positive effect of the campaign:

*I am writing to express my support for the Adult Literacy Program that has been running in Enngonia. I have seen the benefits of this program for my students, as well as the parents. More parents have requested homework for their student, which is being consistently completed. There has also been an improvement of communication between the school and parents. The school is being consistently notified when students are going to be absent, or reasons are given for absences. The biggest improvement seen this year has been in students reading. Generally over a holiday period students slip back in reading levels. This year we have seen students maintaining their reading levels over holiday periods or they have only slipped back one level. These are all huge improvements for our school and the community of Enngonia and I would like to attribute some of these improvements to the Adult Literacy Program.*

The experience in Enngonia replicates the good relationship with the Central school that was built in Wilcannia, where the Principal was on the Working

Group and provided in-kind support in Stage One; and this has continued into Stage Two. As the principal herself said in an interview:

*We have a very positive relationship with the parents and community members that have been involved with the project. There is a pride within the School that we are actually in partnership with this project.*

In Bourke, however, the process of building a partnership with the three schools has been slower, but there have been several positive meetings between the campaign team and the Principal of the High School, and the Senior Aboriginal Education Worker, a local Aboriginal man, is an active member of the Working Group.

The new Commonwealth Government Remote School Attendance program provides an opportunity to expand partnerships like this between the adult literacy campaign and the schools in the communities where it is running. At present, the RAS is confined to three NSW locations, Wilcannia, Bogabilla and Walgett, but other NSW communities are expected to come online in the near future. Opportunities to partner with School communities may also arise through the NSW Governments Connected Communities program.

Using attendance data and NAPLAN test results published on the My School website, it should be possible over time to provide quantitative data to complement the qualitative data provided through interviews. Table 10 below shows the attendance rates for the government schools in the pilot communities since 2011, the year before the campaign commenced in Wilcannia.

**Table 10. School attendance in campaign locations 2011-2012**

	Annual School Attendance rate %		
	2011	2012	2013
Enngonia PS	87	82	91
Bourke PS	90	91	92
Bourke HS	80	76	75
Wilcannia CS	64	62	64

Source: My School website

The basic hypothesis is that attendance and outcomes from school will improve in future years, as will parental involvement with the schools, as an increasing proportion of adults in a community improve their literacy, re-engage with education and begin to build a more literate culture in the community.

In addition to the direct benefit to the children's school attendance and outcomes, the increased engagement of literacy campaign participants with the school system is open up pathways into employment. In Wilcannia, a literacy campaign graduate is now working in the School as a library assistant, and several Bourke and Enngonia participants are enrolling in a child care certificate course in TAFE. The Aboriginal Education Officer at Bourke High School has offered work experience there as part of post literacy, in the hope that other campaign graduates will apply to be Education Support Workers.

### ***Engagement with VET and post-school education***

In Wilcannia, 5 graduates from the first two intakes completed units of competency towards a Certificate 3 in Hospitality. However, none completed the full qualification. Since the start of the first intakes in Bourke and Enngonia, there has been strong interest among participants in undertaking formal VET courses. As at July 2013, we had identified VET pathways for 26 Yes I Can graduates, as set out below in Table 11.

**Table 11. Enrolments and/or expressions on interest in VET courses**

<b>Course</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>
Cert 3 Children's services		3	3
Cert in Hairdressing		2	2
Cert in Shearing	1		1
Cert 2 in Construction	1		1
Cert in Land Management	1	1	2
Cert in Mechanics	2	1	3
Hygiene certificate	3	4	7
Barista certificate	3	4	7
	11	15	26

Three other graduates, two men and one woman, also asked for help to enrol in OTEN to complete their Year 10-12 education, but as yet we have not been able to assist with this.

### ***Education providers engagement with the campaign***

Our major partner is MPREC which has an RTO in its business structure, Australian Integrated Training. Over time, the RTO staff have begun to engage with the campaign e.g. attending the launches. However, the relationship is not as close as it could be, and on several occasions the RTO has run courses without approaching the campaign staff or students to encourage them to participate. Western TAFE, the public RTO for Bourke and Enngonia, has also engaged in various ways, including taking part in Working Group meetings. It has also offered the use of their facilities, but the cost have been prohibitive.

### ***Ongoing self-directed education***

In Bourke and Enngonia, the partnership with the Community Technology Centre Association has meant that there are now computer labs in each facility, the Gundabooka CDEP Building in Bourke and the Land Council Office in Enngonia. The CTCA has also set up computers in the Mens Shed in the Land Council grounds in Wilcannia. These facilities now make it possible for campaign graduates who have completed the post-literacy phase to continue learning at their own pace, dropping in to undertake activities which build their literacy. The three centres established by the literacy campaign have thus begun to operate as informal community-owned and managed learning centres.



### *Library visits: Building a culture of literacy*

The following extract from one of the Bourke Coordinators regular reports captures the way a visit to the Shire library helps to build a culture in which literacy and especially reading is valued:

*Another fantastic day dusted, we went to the Public Library the librarian gave an introduction She explained each section of the library and how to find what you needed she was great, after that we followed her back to the counter she helped Lori, Regina, Janelle, Robert & Keisha become members, should of seen Roberts face when she gave him his library card haha he was that happy. Some are already members. There were 2 students who never had any Identification but that's all sorted, the 10 students that attended today agreed to having the trip to the Library once a fortnight all sorted, they will bring some ID's on the next visit. I told the students to take a look around maybe they'd like to borrow a book on Local History since it's an activity on our program Just to give them an idea, some liked the idea they browsed around for an Hour a few borrowed some books it was fun.*

### **Literacy & health**

The relationship between literacy and health is complex and multidimensional. Continued poor health in Aboriginal communities has a major impact on school attendance, not just because children miss school when they are sick, but because family illness and death is also highly disruptive of young peoples education. Gray (1991) estimated that 30% of Aboriginal young people aged 15-19 had already lost at least one parent, which he pointed out, was extremely disruptive of their education, and their emotional and economic security:

Right through the teenage years, parental death and preceeding parental illness is a constant accompaniment to the process of growing up Aboriginal (Gray 1991, p.373).

While mortality rates have improved since this study, many adults who now have very low literacy lived through this period. Deaths in the families with whom we work occur every month and there are constant bouts of illness. The campaign has to take account of this high rate of morbidity and mortality, with flexible program arrangements, opportunities for people to catch up if they miss classes, and support for people who are affected by these events.

The relationship also works the other way, in that people with little education and low literacy find it more difficult to maintain good health for themselves and their families, for a variety of reasons. One is poverty, since low literacy and poor education makes it more difficult to obtain and retain work, and even to maintain the poverty line income paid by centrelink. With less money, people are less able to purchase and prepare good food, and are less able to maintain their houses and pay their rent and utility bills. This creates less healthy environments, lowers resilience, and increases the risk of disease. Low literacy also affects peoples capacity to interact effectively with the health system when they are sick, in terms of understanding and following health professionals directions. Most importantly, low literacy is an aspect of powerlessness, the inability to change the circumstances in which one is in; and this powerlessness, this lack of control,

is a major factor in generating the stress which undermines peoples immune systems, making them more susceptible to disease (Bell et al 2007). On the other hand, a major UK study found that learning affected health by increasing people's resilience, through "self-esteem, self-efficacy, personal trust, empathy, feelings of connectedness, supportive relationships and broader outlooks." These match the benefits which participants and local staff have identified as coming from the campaign.

Dealing with people in these circumstances every day, the staff are required to help people make use of the opportunities the campaign provides to understand the reasons why the community's health is poor, and what actions they can take to change things, utilising the knowledge and skills they are acquiring. This begins in the Yes I Can classes, when some of the positive messages lead to class discussions about health and health risks. From these discussions, it has been possible to develop activities in the post-literacy phase which directly address health issues in ways that also build literacy and general knowledge. The following post-literacy activities help to do this:

- Cooking classes, which have recently included the Aboriginal Health Service nutritionist
- Undertaking the basic hygiene certificate which is required for work in catering industry
- Visits to the local health service, for eye tests
- Participation in meetings and discussions of health issues, including with members of the local Drug & Alcohol Working Group
- Work experience with health providers
- A basic first aid course

These activities are done with our campaign partners and sponsors, including BAHS, Medicare Local, and Australian Integrated Training.

### **Literacy, law & justice**

National, state and regional level statistics demonstrate the very high rates of contact which Indigenous adults experience with the criminal justice system. For example, at 30 June 2013, there were 8,430 prisoners who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This represented over one quarter (27%) of the total prisoner population. The largest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners (21%) was in the 25 to 29 year age group. NSW had the highest number of Aboriginal prisoners, 2300 (ABS 2013). Over 90% of Aboriginal adult prisoners nationally are male. The rate of incarceration is over 15 times higher than it is for non-Indigenous Australians, and the rate is rising annually, having risen by 52% in the last decade (AIHW 2011, p.29). Aboriginal men increased from 12% of the NSW inmate population in 1996 to over 20% in 2008, while Aboriginal women increased from 17% to 30% over the same time period (Indig et al 2010). Over 20% of people in prison are not convicted, they are being held while on remand.

Our experience to date tells us the rate of incarceration is even more pronounced among Aboriginal people with low levels of literacy. This is borne out by earlier studies which have found a 60% rate of functional illiteracy in the general prison population (Cited Baldrey 2009), and by other studies demonstrating the inverse

correlation between education levels and imprisonment. We can therefore safely assume the rate of illiteracy is even higher among Aboriginal prisoners than 60%. This is not to say that low levels of literacy are a cause of incarceration, but it does mean that people with low literacy are highly likely to be imprisoned at some time in their life. Moreover, low literacy is clearly involved as a contributing factor, as, for example, when people are repeatedly arrested and eventually jailed for unlicensed driving, because they do not believe they can pass the written component of the drivers license test. As the campaign upscales in coming years, it should therefore be possible to demonstrate that raising people's literacy level makes a significant contribution to reducing the rate of incarceration.

Imprisonment however is only part of the story, as even when people are not being imprisoned, they are caught up in the criminal justice system on a regular basis, as alleged offenders, as victims, as witnesses, and as people on bail or probation. This is an aspect of the life of the people we work with which has to be dealt with. Ultimately, our goal is to reduce peoples negative experiences with the justice system, because these are a major cause of the problems they face in their lives. It is a barrier to their continued education, and to their ability to gain and retain employment (Hunter & Daly 2012). It is also an aspect of reducing the stresses that lead to ill health, and improving the level of peace and order in the community. In the long run, this will have major benefits not only for the individuals, families and communities concerned, but for the wider society, freeing up tax revenues for more socially useful purposes.

We already have evidence from several sources indicating that the campaign is having a positive impact in this area. On several occasions now, campaign participants who have been up before the courts have been released back into the community, rather than given a custodial sentence, because magistrates have been convinced that continuing with the campaign will be of more benefit to them. At the same time, we have lost some students as a result of custodial sentences for offences and breaches of probation and parole conditions. One indication of the success we have had has come from the Darling River Area Commander of the NSW Police, who wrote the following in a letter to the Literacy for Life Foundation Board after attending the March 2014 graduation:

*Since the commencement of this program in Bourke I have observed tremendous outcomes among some of our most vulnerable community members in Bourke and Enngonia. In particular, many of those graduates who spoke and read so well at Friday's graduation ceremony, have demonstrated recognisable personal growth in confidence and self-worth since becoming involved in this adult literacy program.*

*Aside from the obvious improved reading and writing skills, many of those involved in the program have demonstrated a transition from involvement in criminal activity toward positive activities such as championing social justice issues of behalf of other less literate community members.*

*.... Two of your graduates are now supporting local Police by attending and providing input into our regular Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee meetings in Bourke. (Superintendent Greg Moore, Darling River Local Area Commander, NSW Police Force, 26 March 2014)*

In the last month of the WELL/AHO contract, Commander Moore began discussions with the Bourke and Enngonia campaign coordinators about involving them and the literacy campaign participants in a cross-cultural education program for new police coming to town. Developments like this demonstrate that the campaign has a huge potential to improve the relationship between the community and the local law and justice system. Over time, this should also result in safer communities, where individuals are less likely to suffer from violence, substance abuse, child abuse and neglect and in which social and emotional wellbeing are prized. This is because improved literacy, improved school retention rates, increases in meaningful employment, strong parenting abilities and the reduction of crime are all components of a safe community (Day et al 2013).

### **Literacy and community**

The main issue we have identified in relation to the 'community' domain is that low levels of literacy in the adult population are a major barrier to effective participation as active citizens in the governance of local communities and their organisations. At one level this is about community members feeling confident to contribute to discussion and decisions around community issues such as housing, service provision, jobs, children's schooling and birthing facilities. At a higher level it is about actively contributing to the running of one's own organisations as members.

The Campaign has begun to change the level of participation in a few small ways. For example, as part of the MLALC renewal process, the students most of whom are members of the MLALC, have spent time in post literacy learning to read and understand the Rules and practice meeting procedures. Meanwhile in Bourke students are participating in an ongoing dialogue with the Maranguka founding leadership about the purpose and membership of this new Organisation. Similarly students participated in a Justice Reinvestment consultation recently with some speaking up about what they perceived to be the underpinning issues to be addressed in Bourke.

It is a fact of life in today's world that literacy is essential to community and organizations' business. Citizens are constantly being asked by government, Land Councils and other agencies to respond to a complex array of policy documents, reports, funding guidelines and compliance correspondence. With so few people in each community with the level of critical literacy required to understand this level of text an enormous responsibility falls on those few leaders who do have the ability to work with such texts, and no clear way to ensure they remain accountable. The number of Aboriginal organisations under administration at any one time is one indicator of this problem.

The campaign pilot set out to address this problem, through bringing the organisations in as campaign partners and supporters in Phase One, and encouraging them to become directly involved in offering activities in Phase Three. In Phase One, by joining the Working Group and signing up as sponsors and supporters, community organisations acknowledge that low levels of

literacy are a problem for them, something that they commit to addressing. So, a health service joins the Working Group, rather than saying that this is an education problem, and therefore not their legitimate business; likewise, a legal service or a land council. The campaign needs as many organisations and agencies as possible to engage in this way to succeed. This also improves the chances of people with literacy needs being referred to the campaign, especially as Aboriginal staff and Directors of those organisations learn about it and see its purpose and how it can assist their families and communities, and make their work more effective. This is what socialization means, it is a process where more and more people learn about the campaign and understand what it is seeking to do, and how it relates to their own and their community's aspirations and needs.

A measure of the success of this pilot stage, therefore, is the number of agencies and organisations involved with the Campaign, and the depth of their engagement. As one example, in Wilcannia where the campaign office was located in the offices of the Local Aboriginal Land Council some literacy campaign participants signed-up as members of the Land Council, where previously they had not joined. This meant they could vote for the Directors at the AGM, and at the October 2013 AGM, many of the campaign participants attended for the first time; and a campaign graduate was elected to the Board. Similarly, the Murrawarri LALCs close involvement with the campaign in Enngonia, being the main local lead agency and providing the classroom space, has helped increase the involvement of literacy campaign participants in Land Council business, and effectively turned the land Council building into a community learning centre to which people continue to come each day to use the computers and take part in other activities, several months after the 'official' end of the post literacy phase of the campaign.

## **Upscaling the Campaign**

This final section of the Report outlines five elements identified through the evaluation which will need to be in place for upscaling (or 'generalisation', as our Cuban partners call it) to succeed. These are:

- National, regional and local Aboriginal leadership and coordination
- A secure and stable funding base, with strong government support;
- A long term agreement with the Cuban partners;
- A coherent workforce development strategy for local staff, advisers and Literacy for Life Foundation personnel
- A longitudinal study to demonstrate impact over time and to build a stronger evidence base for refining and improving the model for the Aboriginal Australian context

### **National regional and local Aboriginal leadership**

The WELL/AHO contract required us to develop an understanding of "the determinants of successful region-wide deployment" and to increase "the commitment of Aboriginal people and their organisations across the region to the development of a literate culture for all."

The evaluation demonstrates that Aboriginal leadership at every level is essential for the campaign to succeed. To date, national leadership has been provided chiefly by the Campaign Coordinator, Jack Beetson, with support from the National Steering Committee originally established through support of the Lowitja Institute. This level of Aboriginal control 'at the top' has been sufficient to win the support of local Aboriginal leaders in the three communities of the pilot, and this in turn has made it possible to recruit and train effective and appropriate Aboriginal staff as local facilitators and coordinators, and to get local Aboriginal organisations to support the campaign, including through the local Working Groups. However, there is as yet no 'middle-level' Aboriginal leadership, which means the national leaders have to do the work of building the local support, ensuring that the Cuban and Australian advisers work in appropriate ways, and mentoring the local Aboriginal staff. As the campaign upscales, it will become less possible for the national Aboriginal leadership to play this role, especially the campaign Coordinator, across multiple communities. Already, in Stage Two, the distance to Wilcannia, and the need to work across the region, stretched the limited resources available to maintain this level of Aboriginal direction and control. This is a problem which the Literacy for Life Foundation Board will need to consider prior to upscaling. In Timor-Leste, for example, the national Literacy Campaign Commission established 'lower-level' commissions at district and sub-district level. Currently, there are a significant number of Aboriginal organisations with some experience of the model, including the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly; MPREC; the NSW Aboriginal Land Council network in the region; several Aboriginal Community Working Parties (whose chairpersons sit on the Regional Assembly); several Aboriginal Medical Services; and some local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (AECGs). This is perhaps a base on which a more regional model could be developed. This may require an active 'socialisation' program to deepen the understanding of Aboriginal leaders about the model, to discuss ways it might contribute to the development agendas of their communities and organisations, and to identify the specific involvement from them that a successful campaign will entail.

The political will to drive a mass literacy campaign does not arise spontaneously, or simply from discussion. The pilot demonstrates that the best way to develop this political will is via an active involvement in the campaign, through which its impact in community can be directly experienced. The ideal way to do this is through structural arrangements which incorporate more Aboriginal people in an advisory role in the day-to-day running of the campaign in their region.

### **A stable funding base**

During the two pilot stages, the campaign was dependent on a complex mix of short-term funding from a variety of sources with different reporting requirements, different outcomes and different timelines. Upscaling demands a more stable and streamlined funding model. Without this, the coordination management and reporting responsibilities become unsustainable. The minimum requirement should be three years guaranteed funding. This will also facilitate workforce recruitment and development.

The establishment of the Literacy for Life Foundation and the level of Commonwealth and NSW Government funding demonstrate the support that the pilots have generated within government, in the private sector, and from some key national Aboriginal leaders and their organisations. That said, the political will within government to upscale to a full campaign is still not evident. The problem is not so much at the policy level, because the campaign model is consistent with the National Foundation Skills Strategy (2012), which is Australia's current national policy framework for raising adult literacy and numeracy, signed by the Commonwealth and all State and Territory governments. The campaign also meets the objectives of the national Indigenous policy framework, Closing the Gap.

However, the mass adult literacy campaign model does not fit easily within the guidelines of current funding programs designed to achieve those policy objectives. The WELL Strategic Projects program, which was the source of core funding from the Commonwealth Department of Industry for both the pilot stages, was terminated following the last Commonwealth Budget. At present, the principal Commonwealth program for raising adult literacy and numeracy levels, is the Skills for Employment and Education (SEE) program within the Commonwealth Department of Industry. It has a budget of \$152.5 million in 2014-15; and provides for up to 800 hours of Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) training for registered job seekers through a network of SEE providers. However, the SEE providers are chosen by tender, and are all VET institutions, i.e. TAFEs and private RTOS, which only offer formal accredited LLN courses, based on an entirely different model. Moreover, a good proportion of Aboriginal adults with low literacy are not registered job seekers, and so are not eligible to do these courses under SEE funding. The Report of the Forrest Review, Creating Parity (Australia. Commonwealth 2014), identified the Australian Workforce Productivity Agency's (AWPA) National Workforce Development Fund as an alternative employer-led model, which could be used to raise Aboriginal adult literacy levels within a coordinated and targeted strategy to close the Aboriginal employment gap. This agency, however, was also de-funded in the 2014 budget. Similarly, there are no state-government funding programs specifically directed to raising literacy levels in the Aboriginal population.

The second aspect of this problem is that the provision of funding is only one aspect of the role of government in a mass literacy campaign. While it may not be feasible in Australia to expect government to play the kind of national coordination role it did in Timor-Leste, it is nevertheless crucial that all levels of government, Local, State and Commonwealth, are engaged in providing active support to the campaign. In the pilot stages, we have begun the process of securing support from the government agencies operating in the communities we are working, but much more is needed. In particular, work needs to be done to convince more agencies, both government and non-government, to prioritise working with the campaign to increase their engagement with, and support for, adults who have low literacy. In Bourke and Enngonia, NSW Police, the Aboriginal Housing Office and Aboriginal Affairs are now doing this. In Wilcannia, there was strong support and some coordination provided from the Remote Service Delivery Coordinator's office. But many agencies remain unaware of the

extent to which low literacy is a barrier to so many Aboriginal people's effective participation in their programs. A successful campaign will only be possible when every agency understands that raising the literacy level in the adult population is a priority for them, as much as it is for the people concerned. As the campaign slogan developed by the Wilcannia working group says, "Literacy is everyone's business."

### **Partnership with IPLAC**

The Literacy for Life Foundation is currently negotiating with the Ministry of Education, Republic of Cuba and the Institute of Pedagogy for Latin America and the Caribbean (IPLAC) for a 3 year exclusive licence agreement for use of the *Yo Si Puedo* (Yes I Can) adult literacy model. The Foundation is seeking to secure this agreement to allow the "generalisation" or expansion of the Campaign across multiple sites or communities from late 2014.

This move to secure a longer term agreement represents a significant investment by the Foundation and should assist both parties to overcome some of the problems encountered with building a sustainable Campaign workforce. To this end, IPLAC will need to send a highly experienced Campaign advisor on a short term basis to work with the Australian National Campaign team to elaborate a strategy for upscaling and collaborate to develop and deliver an intensive pre-deployment training program for both the Australian and Cuban advisers. Both the Cuban and the Australian on-site advisers should work together to coordinate and support up to 3 communities at any one time for up to a 12 month period in each site with support from the National Campaign team.

The proposed agreement needs to include provision for the IPLAC expert advisor along with the Australian National Campaign team to jointly monitor and review the implementation of the Campaign and its use of Yes I Can across the various sites. This would involve 2 additional visits annually to Australia for up 8 weeks at any one time.

The adviser training program would include the Aboriginal Australian context, cultural awareness training, and the implementation of the Yes I Can model across a range of different sites. In particular there should be a focus on Facilitator and Coordinator training and records management and analysis.

### **Workforce development strategy**

The local workforce development required for a region-wide or national roll-out will require a combination of on-site Cuban and Australian advisers, with a minimum of one team of two for each group of two or three sites (depending on the distance and travel time between sites). This will allow the on-site workforce development strategy for local Aboriginal staff which was developed in the pilot to be integrated into the campaign (and the funding) in all new communities which join. In addition, pre-service training of the on-site IPLAC and Australian advisers, and all the relevant Literacy for Life Foundation personnel will need to occur *before Phase One begins* in any new communities. A short term professional development strategy for this could be developed utilising this Report and the Stage One evaluation. If Cuba is able to provide its advisers, and if



their preparation and orientation can be accomplished more systematically, the main challenge, as we have seen from the pilot, will be recruiting and retaining suitable on-site Australian advisers. These will need to be people with the qualifications and experience to undertake effective popular education and development work in highly demanding circumstances, under Aboriginal direction. In the longer term, if the campaign is to be up-scaled nationally, consideration should be given to developing and offering university-accredited units of study, at postgraduate level, in the history, theory and practice of the mass campaign model and its contextualisation to Aboriginal Australia. These could be inserted within existing postgraduate programs in adult education and community development, thereby generating a larger pool of potential advisers from which to recruit.

### **Longitudinal study**

The community surveys and campaign participation records have generated the 'baseline' data to begin a longitudinal study of the impact of the campaign on the people involved and on their communities. As the campaign upscales, it will be possible to keep adding new communities to this database, which, over time, makes possible a much more rigorous demonstration of the value of the campaign model. As can be seen from this report, it is already possible to use the quantitative and qualitative data which the two pilots have generated to deepen our understanding of the role which literacy plays in development; and of the barriers which low literacy puts in its way. Analysis of this data along the way has also allowed us to identify issues and problems, and to make improvements to the model, and this should continue with any upscale.

According to a literature review from the National Centre for Vocational Education research (NCVER), "no studies have attempted to directly estimate the benefits of improved literacy and the impact of poor literacy on Aboriginal populations in Australia' (Hartley & Horne 2006, p.23). This makes it all the more important that the literacy campaign be used to build a more solid evidence base for the need to address this problem. To this end, an application was made for Australian Research Council Linkage funds to support such a study, with the Literacy for Life Foundation as a collaborating organisation with the University of New England. While the application was rated highly by assessors, it was not funded in this round. The Foundation may therefore wish to seek alternative sources of funding, perhaps working with the Lowitja Institute and its partner universities. As stated in the ARC application (Boughton et al 2013):

*Evidence from this longitudinal study will build knowledge, in Australia and internationally, about the links between literacy levels and levels of health and wellbeing in Indigenous communities, thus aligning the project with the national Strategic Research Priority 'to build resilient communities and achieve a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease, or infirmity, for all Australians in whichever part of Australia they live', and specifically to 'identify ways to improve access, utilisation and engagement with health, education and social services in partnership with urban, rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities'. Importantly, the results will guide Aboriginal leaders, governments and private donors as they decide whether to continue to*

*support the mass campaign approach, including whether to upscale the approach to a national level.*

One further option which could be considered is to seek private donor support for a doctoral or post-doctoral scholarship for an Aboriginal educator to undertake this work.

## **Conclusion**

Submission of this Evaluation report marks the end of the WELL/AHO funding contract with the University of New England, and the end of a longer research relationship with the WELL Strategic Projects program which began when the Wilcannia pilot was funded towards the end of 2011. As described above, there remains a small amount of funding from the Community Development Fund under the Remote Jobs and Communities Program to finalise post-literacy work in the two pilot sites from Stage Two.

The two pilot projects have demonstrated that a mass literacy campaign, adapting the Cuban Yes I Can model to the circumstances of Aboriginal communities, has the potential to make a significant improvement in the levels of literacy within the Aboriginal adult population, and, in this way, to help individuals and communities achieve improvements in a range of other important areas, including their children's education, their health, and their relationships with the law and justice system. The pilots also demonstrate that the key to success is the level of Aboriginal control over the campaign, from the national level down to the local level, and in the day to day work of the campaign including the actual literacy lessons.

Perhaps most importantly, the pilots have created within the three communities a group of perhaps two hundred people, the participants, the local staff and their families, and the people from the organisations that supported them, who have discovered that it is possible to build a new community solidarity around dealing with the literacy issue. In doing so, they have joined millions before them from across the Global South who have made a similar discovery over the last six decades.

Literacy is the basis on which all other human rights can be won and defended. No valid reason can anymore be given for a wealthy country like Australia denying that right to its First Peoples.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Evaluation methodology

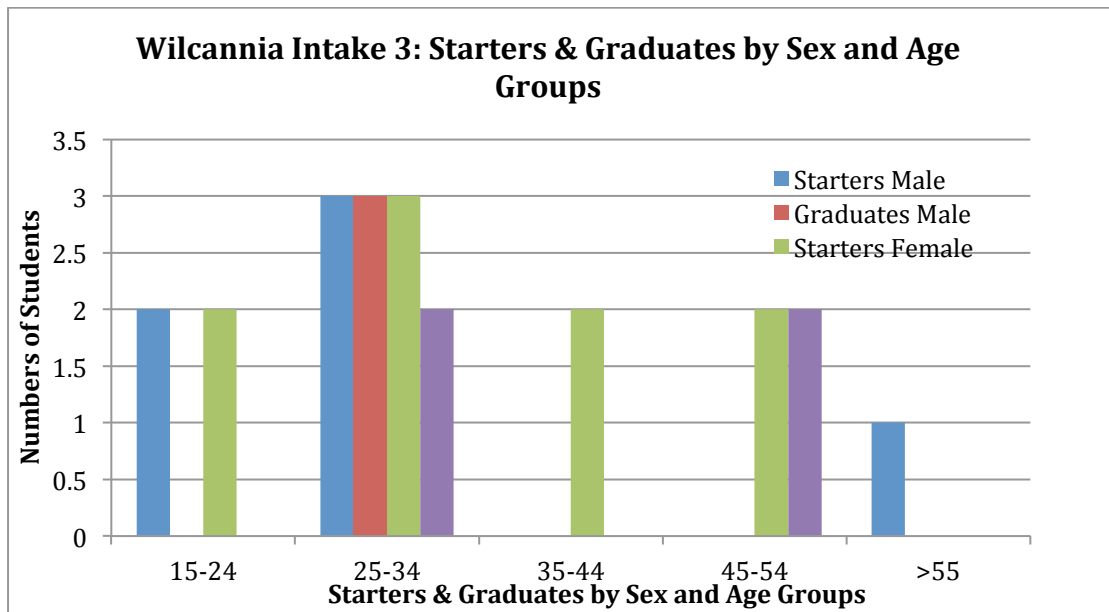
As with Stage One, the evaluation was conducted using the methodology of participatory action research (PAR). Qualitative data was collected through interviews with staff and students, and a simple student survey administered by local staff in Bourke and Enngonia. In all, this produced 35 individual evaluations, eighteen from students and seventeen from staff and other stakeholders. This data was supplemented from fieldnotes of participant observation in classes, workshops, campaign meetings and other activities e.g. graduations. Documentary evidence of student progress and outcomes was obtained from student workbooks, and from formal assessments which were done by accredited assessors using the Australian Core Skills framework. Further evidence of the progress of the campaign came from regular written reports from the Cuban and Australian advisers, and from the Campaign Coordinator. Workshops and meetings with campaign staff and partners also provide an opportunity to feed back findings from the evaluation at different points, as a way of deepening the analysis and giving ownership of the evaluation to the people driving the campaign.

**Table 11. Sources of interview & survey data**

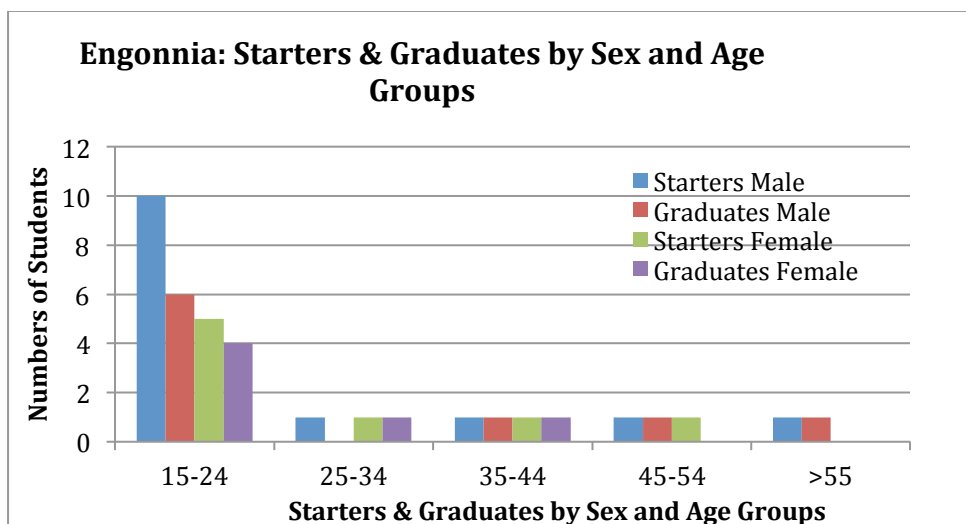
Informants	M	F	T
A	12	14	26
NA	3	6	9
Total	15	20	35
Students	9	9	18
Staff etc	6	11	17

Quantitative data was gained through the household surveys, enrolment forms and the attendance database, as well as from publicly available community statistics e.g. the 2011 Census. As a post literacy activity in Wilcannia, we also undertook interview training & interviews, in which the local staff and students interviewed four graduates of from earlier intakes in the campaign who had found work.

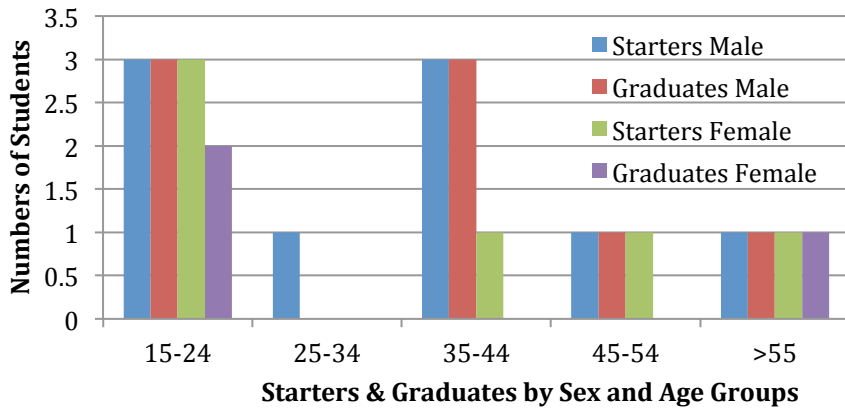
## Appendix 2. Graphs showing outcomes by location, sex & age



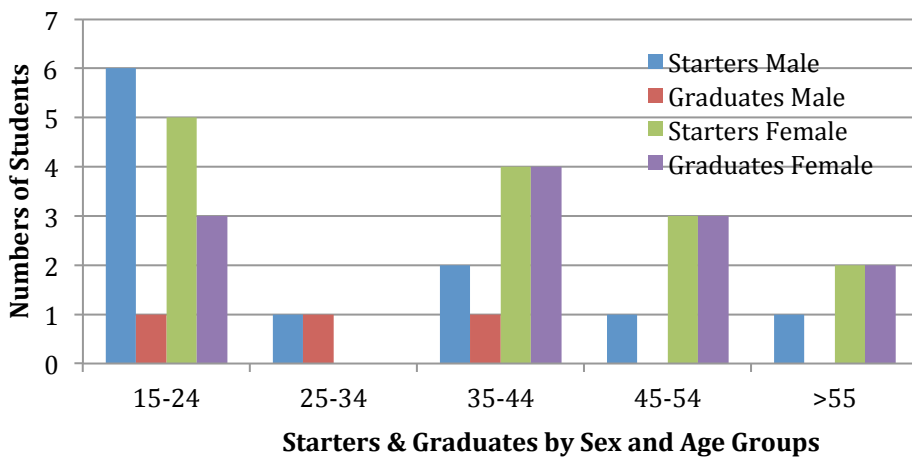
A continuing problem in Wilcannia, noted in the Stage One report, has been the lack of graduations among the youngest age cohort. The difficulties in Wilcannia have been harder to resolve in Stage Two because we have been unable to provide consistent on-site adviser support, due to the distance from our main sites, Bourke and Enngonia, and the difficulty of retaining local staff once they have been trained.

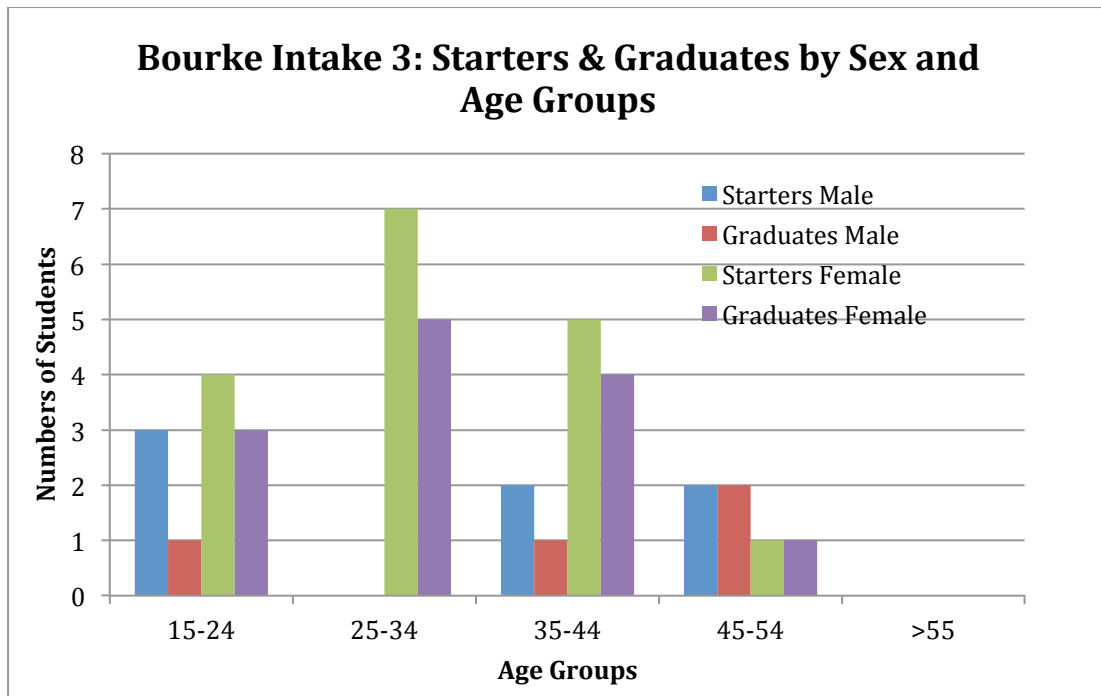


**Bourke Intake 1: Starters & Graduates by Sex and Age Groups**

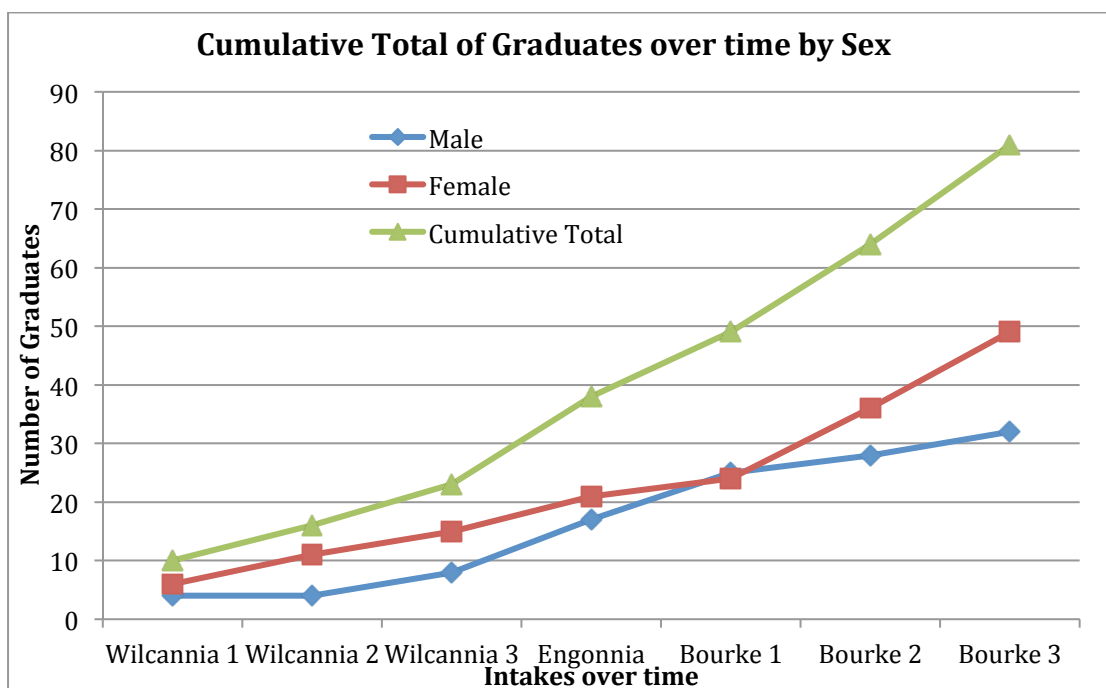


**Bourke Intake 2: Starters & Graduates by Sex and Age Groups**





### Overall Outcomes of Pilot Stages



The aim of a campaign is to achieve a significant rise in the literacy level of the population as a whole, at community, region and ultimately national level. While a pilot is not a campaign, it is still possible to see, from the above graph, that a trend is emerging, in which a growing number of people, at this stage more women than men, have completed the basic Yes I Can lessons. This is the first stage of a longer process, of which the campaign is the first step to building a stronger culture of literacy and learning in these communities.

### **Appendix 3. Selected interview extracts**

#### **Staff:**

"You have to build trust and respect before you can do anything with our people. The Cuban program has done that..."

"The best things about "Yes I Can" – to start with it's all about our own people... our own people doing it - doing it for themselves. Our own people delivering the lessons..."

"I see our "Yes I Can" program - I seen it, what it's done – it's done amazing things. It's brought families back together... . It's bringing our community back together. It's making us become one again"

"We have women who have never been to the hairdresser in their lives. Men too frightened to walk into a butcher shop because they don't know what to ask for.."

"They are afraid to go straight into TAFE. They find it puts them under pressure. Yes I Can is a stepping stone for them to go on to TAFE to learn job skills or go back to school...."

"It's changed people's lives dramatically, because some of them don't drink no more. We've got young fellows that've moved on to go into the mining courses. We've got the young girls talking about what they want to do." Lillian

"It was about the trust. It was all about trusting people. You know what I mean. Like at one stage they knew they could trust me and Rick. I think that's when everything fell into place...."

"When I see 'em cringing or when I see a look on their faces that I know they need help, but they won't put their hand up or ask for it. So, I think it's just all about if you know who you're dealing with; what their problems are and what their problems were, and how to deal with it without making a big fuss about it as well, you know what I mean. Because they're low key people, and they like to be quiet." Fiona

"I think the place is important where you're holding it.... It was like it was their home here. They felt more at home...."

"The best thing is that you have your own people running it. And I think that is really important because we help them have a better understanding of what the (DVD actor) teacher is teaching. So, we break that down..."

"Yes, really shy they are. When they are in the class it's different. So we get a lot of laughter as well as learning. And a lot of laughter. A lot of smiles. They can just tell us what they want. Sing out. They just feel like they are at home" Mary



**Students:**

"I didn't do it to be a smart Alec – I did it to be there for my grandchildren when they need me and to try to understand the work they are doing at school. I've had my granddaughter in Year 6 come home to me and say, 'Nan, can you help me with my homework?' When I looked at it I said, 'You've got to be kidding, I've never seen anything like that in my life....'

"My reading and writing is better but I don't think I'm going to stop now. I want to learn a bit more, because there's a lot to learn out there." June

"It was a lovely class with lovely teachers. The teachers have a lot of patience and they wait until we've finished. And there are catch-up classes so no one gets left behind. ...It wasn't like school where we had to sit down for a long time with no breaks. At Yes I Can they give us a break if we need a break. It just feels like family around them....

"Most of us can read and write a lot better now. We've gone through the classes together and the community is working together better. People are talking to each other more and it's helping them to stay out of trouble better" William

"If I can improve my reading and writing a bit more I'll go back to TAFE to do some construction courses. I had chances to do a lot of courses before, but I didn't try them because I couldn't write properly or read...

"I got a little fella now. I want to help him learn as he grows up. Sammy likes books; he likes writing and drawing. Sometimes he'll come to me with a book and want me to read it to him." Samuel

"The magistrate gave me a chance. She could see I was trying. I would have gone straight to jail otherwise." Hogan

#### **Appendix 4. Dissemination of results**

UNE undertook to disseminate the results via ongoing reports to regular meetings of the NAALCC, and to local and national stakeholders including funders. This is the third and final of these reports.

##### **Media coverage**

We also undertook to prepare media releases to inform local and national audiences of the project. This was done and resulted in extensive coverage at local and national level. These can now be accessed at <http://www.lflf.org.au/>

##### **Conference presentations and journal articles**

The adult literacy and numeracy field was further informed on the project via a series of Conference presentations, journal articles and book chapters on the campaign, some of which are still awaiting publication. They are listed below:

Boughton, B. (Under review). Beyond the 'new literacy studies'. Popular education and mass adult literacy campaigns. In K. Yasukawa & S. Black (Eds.), *Local practices, global contexts*.

Boughton, B., & Durnan, D. (2014). Cuba's 'Yes I Can' Mass Adult Literacy Campaign Model in Timor-Leste and Aboriginal Australia. A Comparative Study. *International Review of Education*. Online first.

Boughton, B., & Deborah Durnan. (2013). *Cuba's 'Yes I Can' Mass Adult Literacy Campaign Model In Timor-Leste And Aboriginal Australia. A Comparative Study*. Paper presented at the World Congress of Comparative Education Societies, Buenos Aires, Argentina, June 2013, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Boughton, B., Chee, D. A., Beetson, J., Durnan, D., & Leblanch, J. C. (2013). An Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign in Australia using Yes I Can. *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, 21(1), pp.5-32.

Boughton, B. (2013). *Popular education and communities of practice*. Paper presented at the Tasmania Council of Adult Literacy Seminar, Hobart, May 22nd 2013.

Boughton, B. (2013). *Adult literacy and transformational learning*. Paper presented at the Skills Tasmania Conference, Hobart, 20-21 May 2013.

Boughton, B. (2013). *Mass Literacy Campaigns: A Pedagogy of Hope. Keynote Address*. Paper presented at the VALBEC Conference Melbourne May 17th 2013. Literacies in a Diverse World.

Boughton, B. (2013). What can the Cuban School of Adult Literacy offer in Aboriginal Australia? A Pilot Study in a Remote Aboriginal Community. In C. Kawalilak & J. Groen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 32nd Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education, Victoria B.C. Canada June 3-5, 2013*.

Beetson, J., Ah Chee, D., Boughton, B., & Leblanch, J. C. (2013). *An Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign in Australia using Yes I Can*. Paper presented at the Pedagogy 2013 Conference, Havana Cuba, 4-8 February 2013.