



YES, I CAN!

ABORIGINAL ADULT LITERACY CAMPAIGN

Evaluation report

January 2016–June 2017



First Nations Graphic Design:

Award-winning designer, Brooke Ottley, has family from across Australia: Gunggari from central Queensland, Wuthathi from far north Queensland, Cape York area, and Torres Strait Islander, from Thursday Island. She lives in Darwin.

Photo supplied.

Yes, I Can!

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January 2016–June 2017

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACSF	Australian Core Skills Framework	UNE	University of New England
AECG	Aboriginal Education Consultative Group	UNSW	University of New South Wales
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology	VET	Vocational Education and Training
ARC	Australian Research Council	VFFF	Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation
CPO	Campaign Project Officer	YIC	<i>Yes, I Can!</i>
CWG	Campaign Working Group		
CWP	Community Working Party		
ED	Executive Director		
EOI	Expression of Interest		
FACS	Family and Community Services		
IAS	Indigenous Advancement Strategy		
IPLAC	Institute of Pedagogy for Latin America and the Caribbean (Cuba)		
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council		
LFLF	Literacy for Life Foundation		
MPREC	Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation		
NCC	National Campaign Coordinator		
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education and Training		
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme		
NSW	New South Wales		
NT	Northern Territory		
PM&C	Prime Minister and Cabinet		
RDO	Regional Development Officer		

INTRODUCTION

An estimated 150,000 to 170,000 Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults (equating to 35–40% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, 15 and over) have low or very low English language literacy. Because literacy is such an essential life skill in a modern Australian society, the effects are felt in every aspect of individual, family and community life. Moreover, unless action is taken to address the problem, the situation is set to worsen, as efforts to raise literacy levels through schooling are having minimal results, with less than 50% of Year 9 Indigenous students achieving the minimum benchmark literacy level.

In 2012, the first pilot of a national Campaign to address this issue was introduced in the western New South Wales (NSW) community of Wilcannia. The initial evaluation found that the *Yes, I Can!* (YIC) mass adult literacy campaign model developed by Cuba, which has been

deployed in 30 countries of the Global South, could be adapted successfully in an Aboriginal community context. In 2013, the Literacy for Life Foundation (LFLF), an Aboriginal organisation, was established to continue the work, and the Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign has now been running for 6 years.

This is the fourth Campaign evaluation report, covering the 18 month period between January 2016 and June 2017. It builds on three previous reports. As set out in Table 1 below, the first report covered the initial pilot in Wilcannia, the second its extension in Wilcannia, Bourke and Enngonia until the end of 2014, and the third was a published case study for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) completed in 2016, on the third and fourth intakes in Bourke, and the first intake in Brewarrina. The focus of this report is the four intakes completed since then – namely intakes 2 and 3 in Brewarrina, one intake in Weilmoringle, and the first intake in Walgett.

Table 1. *Yes, I Can!* Campaign Intake Coverage in Evaluation Reports

Intake	Campaign start	Campaign end	Reports	
Wilcannia 1	13/02/12	25/04/12	First evaluation report, 25 October 2012	
Wilcannia 2	14/05/12	31/08/12		
Wilcannia 3	01/07/13	29/08/13	Second evaluation report August 2014	
Bourke 1	16/09/13	03/12/13		
Enngonia	16/09/13	04/12/13		
Bourke 2	25/11/13	06/03/14		
Bourke 3	22/04/14	24/07/14		
Bourke 4	12/01/15	23/04/15		NCVER Study December 2016
Brewarrina 1	07/09/15	10/12/15		
Brewarrina 2	09/05/16	11/08/16	Fourth evaluation October 2017 (This Report)	
Weilmoringle	08/08/16	31/10/16		
Walgett 1	06/02/17	18/05/17		
Brewarrina 3	13/02/17	24/05/17		
Walgett 2	13/06/17	20/09/17		
Boggabilla 1	13/06/17	13/09/17		
Toomelah 1	13/06/17	13/09/17		

According to the Productivity Commission, systematic evaluation work such as this is crucial for the development of effective interventions.¹ The methodology for this evaluation included regular visits by the author as a participant observer to Campaign sites, including taking part in some lessons and activities; interviews and meetings with participants, with local and national staff and with community stakeholders; analysis of basic data from the household literacy survey conducted prior to each Campaign and from Campaign attendance records, which LFLF staff enter in the Campaign database; examination of relevant government policy and program documents and funding agreements; and an ongoing review of relevant Indigenous education and adult literacy research literature. The evaluation also draws on evidence collected through several related research projects, as described later in this report. The aim is to help the Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign leadership and their supporters ensure that the lessons from the experience to date are not lost; and that the Campaign in coming years continues to work more and more effectively towards the Foundation's objective, namely, a 50% improvement in the adult literacy rate across Aboriginal Australia.

OVERVIEW 2012–2017

By mid 2017, YIC lessons had run in six communities in the Murdi Paaki region, and raised the literacy level of 137 adults. See Table 2. In the two smallest communities, Enngonia and Weilmoringle, the Campaign achieved the goal of reducing low adult literacy rates by 50%. In Wilcannia and Bourke, the Campaign fell short of this target, due to lack of funding, while Brewarrina and Walgett are continuing. At the same time, the Campaign extended, in the period covered here, beyond the Murdi Paaki region to the communities

of Boggabilla and Toomelah in the New England North West region; and work was begun to extend into communities in the Top End and Central Australian regions of the Northern Territory (NT).

Table 2. Outcomes by Community, 2012–2017

Community	Adult population	Graduates
Wilcannia	279	23
Bourke	505	51
Enngonia	52	15
Brewarrina	415	33
Weilmoringle	38	6
Walgett	553	9
Total	1842	137

There is still work to be done in western NSW to achieve the principal objective of the Campaign, to significantly reduce the incidence of low literacy among Aboriginal adults in participating communities. That said, the systematic and concentrated work of the Foundation and its community partners in this region has now produced a well-articulated and detailed model which has been thoroughly 'field-tested' for deploying the Campaign in more communities. This is important because such a campaign had never been attempted before in Australia, or in any Indigenous communities in the Global North. The mass campaign model is an innovative approach to teaching adult literacy that is unlike any other methods which have been used in this country.

At the end of this reporting period, the process of upscaling was underway, but as Table 3 shows, the number of graduates each year has remained quite low. This is set to rise in the next 12 months, as the new Campaigns in Toomelah and Boggabilla start to graduate students at the same time as Brewarrina and Walgett.

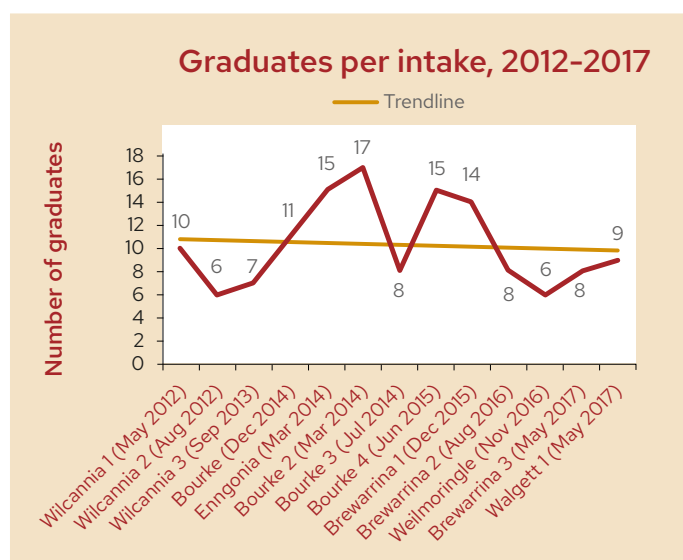
¹ "Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage in a comprehensive way across all measures of wellbeing, from our perspective, will remain elusive unless you have rigorous evaluations of Indigenous policies and programs." Karen Chester, Deputy Chair of Productivity Commission, *Sydney Morning Herald [SMH]*, November 17, 2016. <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/productivity-commission-slams-lack-of-policy-evaluation-as-indigenous-incarceration-soars-20161116-gsqtrp.html>.

Table 3. Graduates by Year

Year	Graduates
31/12/12	16
31/12/13	33
31/12/14	32
31/12/15	22
31/12/16	14
30/06/17	20
Total	137
Average per year	23

One challenge will be to retain the high retention rates achieved so far. As Chart 1 below shows, there is a slight downward trend beginning to appear, which may be an effect of loss of momentum, or of upscaling without the necessary resources within the organisation, both of which will be discussed later in this report.

Chart 1. Graduates by Intake, 2012–2017, with Trendline



As the 2016 NCVER case-study documented, the Campaign is nevertheless achieving much higher rates of participation and retention than have previously been possible in similar communities, using the conventional method in Australia for addressing low adult literacy, namely formal post-school 'Foundation Skills' courses which run through the Vocational Education and Training

(VET) system. In the process, the Campaign has made a significant difference in the lives of the hundreds of individuals who have participated. This includes, not just the people who have joined the classes to build their literacy, but also the community members who have been trained as local Coordinators and Facilitators, the leaders in community who have formed Campaign Working Groups (CWGs) to support the local staff, and the many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the local, regional, state and national Aboriginal organisations, and government and non-government agencies, that have become involved in the Campaign.

At the end of the period covered by this report, a 1-hour documentary film, *In My Own Words*, directed by Aboriginal filmmaker Erica Glynn, screened at the Sydney International Film Festival and on national television, telling the story of the students who joined the second intake in Brewarrina, and of the local Campaign staff who helped them achieve their goals. Coming on top of many years of work by the LFLF leadership to promote the idea of an adult literacy Campaign to Aboriginal communities, to government and non-government agencies, to Ministers and politicians, and to philanthropic and corporate donors, this film creates a unique opportunity, perhaps a once in a lifetime one, to make a national Campaign a reality. Should this eventuate, the lessons learned in this first period will be invaluable in ensuring success. This requires the evaluation to be as forthright in pointing to shortcomings as it is to identifying and applauding success.

OVERVIEW OF THE 2016–2017 CAMPAIGNS

As described in previous reports and publications, the Campaign aims to halve the number of Aboriginal adults in participating communities who have low or very low English language literacy, equivalent to Pre-Level 1 or Level 1 on the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). It operates in three phases, with each new group of participants described as an 'intake'.² In 2016–2017, the Foundation worked on different

phases for seven intakes across five communities – Brewarrina, Weilmoringle, Walgett, Toomelah and Boggabilla – bringing to eight the total number of communities involved since 2012. The roll out timeline is summarised in Table 4, below. This represents the start of a significant scale up because, until 2016, the Campaign had never operated in more than three communities at once, and mostly in only one or two. By June 2017, four more intakes had completed YIC lessons in three locations, and three more were underway.

Table 4. Campaign Timelines, January 2016–June 2017

Intake	Phase 1: Mobilisation and Socialisation	Phase 2: YIC lessons		Phase 3: Post-literacy		Graduation
	Start	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	
Brewarrina 1	Underway and ongoing	Completed	08/12/15	13/04/16	29/04/16	
Brewarrina 2	Underway and ongoing	09/05/16	12/08/16	15/08/16	02/11/16	16/12/16
Weilmoringle	04/16	08/08/16	31/10/16	08/08/16	30/11/16	16/12/16
Walgett 1	08/16	06/02/17	08/05/17	22/05/17	12/07/17	13/12/17
Brewarrina 3	Underway and ongoing	13/02/17	24/05/17	22/05/17	-----	14/12/17
Boggabilla 1	02/17	13/06/17	-----	-----	-----	15/12/17
Toomelah 1	02/17	13/06/17	-----	-----	-----	-----



Above: Brewarrina intake 2 class

² For a complete description of the three phase model and of the YIC lessons which form Phase 2, see the references listed in the section titled 'Monitoring, Evaluation and Research'.

PARTICIPATION AND RETENTION OUTCOMES 2016–2017

The basic data for the four new intakes completed by 30 June 2017 are set out in Table 5, below.

Table 5. Summary Participation and Retention, 2016–2017

Intake	EOIs	Starters	Withdrawals	YIC completions	Retention (%)
Brewarrina 2	43	18	10	8	44
Weilmoringle	12	7	1	6	86
Walgett 1	52	21	12	9	43
Brewarrina 3	32	17	6	11	65
Total	139	63	29	34	54

The high number of initial Expressions of Interest (EOIs) is an indicator of demand (i.e., the number of people who assess themselves as having literacy problems). This continues the pattern since the Campaign began, with over 60% of adults who are contacted by the Campaign staff indicating they need help with English language literacy. That said, many of these people do not start immediately, and it may take several intakes before all those who need the Campaign actually join it. Second, starters have to be supported to complete, to maintain the high retention rate needed for a successful Campaign. The average retention rate over these four intakes was 10% lower than the average over all intakes in all communities (64%) since 2012. The average number of completions per intake is also slightly down, from 11 to 9. This suggests that, as the Campaign extends into more communities, the capacity to maintain the initial rate of success has been reduced, meaning it may take longer and become more expensive to reach the goal of a 50% reduction in low English literacy.

objective, the more difficult it becomes. This is because successful campaigns require a level of enthusiasm or ‘fervour’, which becomes harder to maintain over longer periods. That said, **retention remains more than five times higher than for comparable VET courses in this region**. The next sections of the report provide more detailed accounts of each of the participating communities.

This is not only a problem because of cost. Overseas experience of mass literacy campaigns suggests that the longer it takes to reach the



Brewarrina students Kurt Waites and Douglas (Koori) Sullivan.

"I had a bit of doubts about coming to the program, and once I seen it was in our own community, our Elders and that, I felt comfortable." – Kurt Waites in 'In My Own Words', Blackfella films.

Photo credit: Justine Kerrigan

BREWARRINA

The town has a population of approximately 1,000 people, of whom more than 60% identified as Aboriginal at the 2011 Census. Located on the banks of the Barwon River, 100 km east of Bourke, and 450 km north west of Dubbo, it is one of 18 Aboriginal communities which make up the Murdi Paaki Region in North Western NSW. The Ngunnahu or fish traps in the river, which are the oldest man-made structure on the planet, attest to the extraordinary civilisation that existed here before colonisation, with evidence that up to 5,000 people would camp along the river for ceremonies. Today, the Aboriginal population includes the Ngemba people on whose traditional lands the town sits, as well as people from surrounding groups, including Muruwari, Yuwaalaraay, Barkindji, and Wangkumara.³ The current diversity of the local population is in part a product of colonial history, as Brewarrina was the site of a major mission station which people were relocated to in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the 1970s and 1980s, the town was a major centre of political activism related to land rights and the establishment of community-controlled services. It was also the site of bitter racial conflict, including a major civil disturbance following the death of a local man in police custody in 1987. The last 30 years have seen a significant decline in economic activity, caused by drought and the collapse of some rural industries. *The 2015 Dropping Off the Edge Report identified Brewarrina as one of NSW's 10 most disadvantaged communities.*

The Foundation began work in Brewarrina in 2015, at the invitation of the Brewarrina Ngemba First Nations Community Working Party (CWP). The Campaign was officially launched in Brewarrina 26 August 2015, with the first intake of participants

completing Phase 2: YIC literacy lessons at the end of that year. The 2015 work was the subject of a previous report (See Table 1 on page 2).

BREWARRINA INTAKE 1 PHASE 3: POST-LITERACY

At the start of 2016, the local Coordinator worked to resume the Campaign with two Facilitators, supported by the Campaign Project Officer (CPO) and the Technical Adviser from Cuba. Phase 3: Post-literacy re-commenced for Intake 1 participants, with 17 people taking part. The enthusiasm of the local staff was expressed by one of the Facilitators who told film-maker Erica Glynn:

I wanna keep on doing it... I'd love to keep doing what I'm doing. It's good to help your people. Especially when you're seeing how far they have come from. They could hardly hold a pen properly and now they are writing sentences and that. It makes you feel so proud, and to know you are a part of it.

By the end of this phase, they had completed an average 62 hours of workshops and other activities. The number of hours varied considerably, from a low of 18 to a high of 105 hours. Activities included workshops on legal studies, first aid, gardening, computing, creative writing, health and nutrition, cultural excursions, and family and local history. Eight students undertook work experience, across four local workplaces. These activities were supported by 15 local organisations and agencies, including the local Aboriginal medical service, the local Land Council, legal aid, and by Remote Indigenous Gardens. In March, a camera crew from NITV visited, and filmed part of the creative writing workshop, resulting in a program on *The Point*, shown 24/03/16.⁴ A successful graduation for Intake 1 was held in the Brewarrina Community Hall 29 April, attended by approximately 100

³ The spellings used in this report for First Nations Peoples and languages are those used by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (<https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/search>), unless the name of a local community organisation uses a different spelling. Variations of spellings exist for many First Nations Peoples and languages.

⁴ The following article discusses the program about the Brewarrina Campaign: <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/the-point/article/read-this-beautiful-short-story-a-ngemba-mans-first-prose-at-56-years-old/5rppwlm7l>.

people, including students, their families, local organisations and supporters, and representatives of donors and sponsors from Sydney.

BREWARRINA INTAKE 2

The start of the second intake in Brewarrina, funded by the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF) was delayed by several weeks to allow the film crew from Blackfella Films to prepare for shooting. Lessons began on 9 May 2016, with seven new students and more as the week progressed. The initial EOI list included 34 people, but of these, only 13 enrolled. The newly appointed Regional Development Officer (RDO) succeeded in attracting a new group of young people, bringing the number to 18 (the benchmark is 20). However, because this group started late, separate classes had to be run to catch them up on missed lessons. Moreover, they all had major problems with the police and courts, and all but one withdrew after a few weeks.

The difficulties were exacerbated by staffing issues. The trained Facilitator from Intake 1 had to leave due to family responsibilities. The CPO decided at the end of May, after 2 weeks of classes, not to accept a 6-month extension of her contract when it expired on 28 June. This required increased on-site support from the LFLF National Campaign Coordinator (NCC), and, eventually, recruitment of a new part-time CPO to help organise Phase 3: Post-literacy.

Intake 2 Phase 2 participation and completion data, set out in Table 6, reveals the consequences of these difficulties. The relatively high number of EOIs failed to result in a high number of graduates, and both the retention rate and the total number of graduates were well down on the 5-year average. The presence of the film crew was no doubt one of the factors, while the staffing difficulties and the re-opening of the enrolments several weeks into the Campaign also played a role, as did continuing difficulties

negotiating job network requirements with Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation (MPREC), and the demands placed on the national staff by the expansion to Weilmoringle and Walgett. A fundamental problem, however, appears to be that preparation work for the April graduation interfered with the Phase 1: Mobilisation and Socialisation work with individuals, households and local agencies, which needs to take priority before each intake. This has now been rectified, with the decision by LFLF to recommend that communities hold only one graduation each year.

Table 6. Brewarrina Intake 2 Participation and Retention

	Male (M)	Female (F)	Total (T)
	M	F	Total
EOIs	20	21	41
Starters	12	6	18
Withdrawals	7	2	9
Graduates	4	4	8
Continuing	1	0	1
Retention (%)	42	67	50

The continuing student from Intake 1 has an intellectual disability, but is highly motivated, and is slowly developing his literacy, as well as his confidence and social skills. He subsequently joined Intake 3, and has now graduated.

Phase 3: Post-literacy began for Intake 2 in August, with the local staff supported by the new CPO, who was unable to be present on-site full-time, but visited on a regular basis, and with support from the NCC, supervised remotely in between her visits. The CPO and the local staff developed an excellent post-literacy program. Participation was high, with students attending on average 80 hours of activities over the 12 week program. Two activities of note were a visit to the Shire Council where students raised a range of issues with the Shire Manager, and a forum with

the two local schools and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), where students suggested ways to improve relationships between the local schools and the community. The meeting with the Shire prompted the Shire Manager to write a letter of support to the Foundation, a copy of which is appended to this report. Among other things, it said:

Unlike other programs that have come before the council, this [the LFLF Campaign] has been one that has seen undeniable changes within our Shire and one that is deserving of great praise. Not only to those who have made the program available, but those individuals who have made the commitment to empower themselves through understanding the value of education.

Throughout the year, the local CWG continued to meet, and the campaign staff and CWG members also reported regularly to the Brewarrina Ngemba First Nations CWP, of which the CWG is a sub-committee. The year ended with a successful graduation, attended by the First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy. Dr Lorina Barker, an Indigenous academic from University of New England (UNE) with strong local family connections, gave the keynote address.

BREWARRINA INTAKE 3

Before Intake 3 lessons could begin, funds had to be secured. An additional payment of \$99,500 was negotiated with Commonwealth Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) staff in Dubbo, released as a variation to the agreements covering the first intake in Brewarrina and the first in Walgett. LFLF topped up this grant with funds from VFFF and other private donors. Phase 2: YIC lessons began in February 2017, and Phase 3: Post-literacy was completed by the end of June 2017.

The weekly reports of the Campaign Coordinator provide detailed qualitative data on the progress of students through the Campaign, which for reasons of space cannot be included here, but

which is analysed as part of the evaluation. The following is an example:

The highlight for me this week was having a yarn around the table with one of the students who shared with me how she ignored and walked away from an argument with her family member which was very unusual for her to do because this person was one that could never walk away it was always about getting revenge and fighting and hitting back because that is how we always have done it and I can remember one of the positive messages this week was about stop and think about what decisions we make before we say or do anything that we will regret and I really believe that it made a difference in this person’s life.

The positive message, which comes in Lesson 40, appears in this way on the lesson plan:

Positive message (on DVD): “Anger is not good.”
Ask students why anger is not good. What can we do when we feel angry?

The value of embedding learning of this nature in the literacy Campaign model should be obvious in a community where violent interpersonal disputes are a major cause of injury and incarceration.

The basic outcomes statistics for Intake 3 are set out in Table 7, below.

Table 7. Brewarrina Intake 3 Participation and Retention

	M	F	T
EOIs	13	19	32
Starters	7	10	17
Graduates	5	6	11
Retention (%)	71	60	65

This shows that the retention rate for Intake 3 returned to near the overall 5-year average, as did the number of graduates. The reasons for this improvement may include the lack of the presence of the film crew, and the increased experience of the staff, including the CPO, who visited monthly

for one week at a time. The local Coordinator and Facilitator continue to perform their duties very well, although the absence of a full-time, on-site CPO proved difficult on various occasions, especially with the lesson preparation and training. A former Facilitator also continued to assist with the morning pick-up of students and various other tasks when available. The NCC also spent several days on site each month during this intake, maintained regular phone contact, and also revised all the YIC lesson plans – all of which contributed to the staff's capacity to deliver lessons.

An interesting feature of this intake was the presence of two students who had graduated from the previous intake (and who are therefore not counted in these statistics) but who participated regularly in class in order to continue to practise their literacy. It was also very encouraging to see the continuing student from Intakes 1 and 2, who had very low literacy skills when he joined the Campaign, completed the course successfully. Interestingly, there was no on-site Technical Adviser during this intake until mid-May when the Technical Adviser from Cuba arrived in Australia. She was able to assist with the catch-up program, boosting final completion numbers. A graduation is planned following the completion of Brewarrina Intake 4 at the end of the year.

BREWARRINA: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By the end of June, LFLF had secured funding to conduct one further Brewarrina intake. It is therefore useful to review progress since the Campaign began there. If 40% (a conservative estimate) of the Aboriginal adult population has very low literacy, that amounts to approximately 170 people. To halve that figure requires 85 graduates, but to date the Campaign has achieved less than half that number – 33. If the graduate numbers hold up for Intake 4, currently underway,

this will climb to 44 – only a little over half the target number. To get another 40 graduates could take three to four more intakes, and a minimum of at least another 2 years at the current rate of progress (i.e. to the end of 2019). The Campaign began in Brewarrina in early 2015, meaning it will have taken 5 years working in this community to halve the rate of very low adult literacy.



Brewarrina Facilitator Janelle Frail helps student Norman Bloomfield. Photo credit: Justine Kerrigan.

This raises the question as to whether the momentum required for the Campaign to succeed can be sustained over such a long period? The international literature on mass literacy campaigns makes it clear that they must be 'hot', highly planned and coordinated, and driven by local enthusiasm and fervour – something of a "crusade" as Indian scholar H.S. Bhola puts it.⁵ If this cannot be maintained for more than a few years, then the model should be revised as it is extended to new communities with similar demographics, to ensure that the target can be reached in a shorter time frame. At the very least, this means first, ensuring that Phase 1: Mobilisation and Socialisation on the first iteration takes only 3 months, whereas in Brewarrina it took nearly 6 months. Second, the time lag between intakes has to be reduced, and here the problem is the continuity of funding and staffing. Third, it may be necessary, after the first one or two iterations, to run more than one class concurrently, but again

⁵ H.S. Bhola, *Campaigning for Literacy: Eight National Experiences of the Twentieth Century, with a Memorandum to Decision-Makers*, (Paris: UNESCO, 1984).

this requires additional funding for staff and facilities. Fourth, it needs to be recognised that some of the target population may be employed, which may mean running lessons out of working hours and/or on-site in a workplace.

One further factor, which has come through in interviews with some stakeholders, is that there is a perception in the community that LFLF should be doing more to support students once they finish with the Campaign's third phase (Post-literacy). Otherwise, it is said, people who have gained confidence and built their literacy will begin to fall back again, and the success that the Campaign achieved and which was part of motivating the community to support it, will be undermined. This reveals that the campaign model is not fully understood, and that LFLF is being positioned as one more service provider which needs to remain in the community indefinitely; rather than as an initiator of a long-term process of bringing the most disadvantaged members of the community into a new relationship with existing local services and development agencies.

Many of the factors which contribute to attendance problems and withdrawals are inevitable, given the life circumstances of people who have low literacy. However, this is the situation and so ways have to be found to overcome it. The most important factor, apart from resources, is the active support of local Aboriginal leaders and their organisations; and, secondary to that, of other non-government and government agencies which operate in these communities. In Brewarrina, for example, a past history of interpersonal and inter-family conflict between Campaign staff and participants on the one hand, and employees of some local agencies, have been a source of ongoing difficulty, whereas a positive relationship between the Campaign and the local agency staff can mean that participants who are registered job seekers are actively encouraged to join and stay in the Campaign. Managing these relationships to ensure people are all working for the same goal,

i.e. a significant improvement in the rate of literacy in the community, is a complex task. It would be greatly assisted if the funding agencies were aware of the problem, and helped provide some coordination and leadership. The intervention of government may be necessary because there is no single source of Aboriginal authority or leadership that can do this. Different organisations represent different family and language group interests and all are competing for scarce resources. In fact, earlier in the Campaign, LFLF's Executive Director (ED) proposed to PM&C Dubbo that they convene a meeting of agencies they fund and support in Brewarrina, including LFLF and MPREC, to discuss improved coordination. But at the time of writing, this had not yet been actioned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** That LFLF convene a meeting with the Ngemba Brewarrina CWP, to gauge the level of community support for mounting a fifth intake, and to discuss the expectation of the Campaign, that other agencies will take over where the Campaign leaves off;
- 2** That LFLF management and/or Technical Committee discuss options for engaging government as a partner in achieving greater coordination among local agencies to achieve the Campaign targets; and in particular ways to ensure that the Jobactive providers support participants to join and remain in the Campaign.

WEILMORINGLE

Weilmoringle is located 100 km north west of Brewarrina. It is a very small community, with a population of approximately 60 Aboriginal people living in a group of Aboriginal-owned houses on a small village block excised from the surrounding sheep station. A few kilometres from the village is the local primary school, but there are no other facilities. Several of the families in Weilmoringle had relatives who had joined the Campaign in

Enngonia and Brewarrina, which led to requests to run it in their community. Following initial meetings between LFLF's ED and the community, funding was secured from private donors, mainly VFFF and Uniting Care. The Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) and the CWP agreed to be the lead agencies. As in the other Murdi Paaki locations, MPREC became the partner organisation employing the local Campaign staff.

In April, LFLF recruited the previous local Coordinator and Facilitator in the Enngonia Campaign, and now the part time CEO of the Murrawarri LALC in Enngonia – to work part-time organising the Campaign in Weilmoringle. The community has a history of division between the two main families, and LFLF was initially successful in recruiting two young women, one from each family group, to undertake the household literacy survey. They visited 12 households and identified 20 adults, of whom 12 expressed interest in joining the Campaign. A Campaign launch was held in the community on 28 June 2016, organised entirely by local staff. Approximately 40 people attended. A senior woman in the community spoke, along with a graduate from the first intake in Brewarrina, and Jack Beetson, representing the Foundation.



Weilmoringle students

Phase 2: YIC lessons began with seven students, of whom six completed the lessons, because one young man was incarcerated before he could finish. For several months, the Campaign worked well, with support and training provided to two

young local female Facilitators by the more experienced staff member from Enngonia. On several visits to the community, the evaluator was told how the Campaign had brought people together and was healing rifts which had been going on for decades. This ended, however, when a dispute erupted half way through the post-literacy phase. Several meetings were held to resolve it but in the end, LFLF's ED elected to withdraw from the community as the organisation could not guarantee the wellbeing of one of the Facilitators who had become the target of abuse. Nevertheless, six people did complete YIC and most of the post-literacy phase, and some attended the graduation in Brewarrina in December 2016. The basic data from this community is set out below.

Table 8. Weilmoringle Phase 2 Participation and Retention

	M	F	T
Adult population		38	
EOIs	6	6	12
Starters	4	3	7
Withdrawals	1	0	1
Graduates	3	3	6
Retention (%)	75	100	86

The low number of participants and graduates was inevitable, given the very small size of the community. The graduation rate, however, is one of the highest to date.

RECOGNISE WORKSHOPS, BREWARRINA AND WEILMORINGLE

In 2016, LFLF received funding from the non-governmental organisation Recognise to incorporate workshops on the issue of constitutional reform into the post-literacy

program. The Foundation also undertook to run a focus group with Campaign participants to review the Recognise campaign materials for their appropriateness for low literate adults. Successful workshops were held in Brewarrina and Weilmoringle, and a set of materials for use in other communities was developed based on this experience. This included model lesson plans and a Q&A sheet which was developed on the basis of input from the students. A full report – written separately for Recognise – includes quotes and other material produced in the discussion by the students and the Facilitators. An example follows:

With more campaigning and that, with more ads and everything, things like that, this is going to bring our people in and they might want to vote when they see all these ads and campaigns and posters and everything around the place. They might come forward and then ask these questions, ask us these questions, what is the constitution, why do we want to change and all that? These are all the questions they are going to be asking themselves. If we can explain it to them in a simple way, like you are breaking it down here for us, that will make them proud too you know. They'll go and say 'well I will go and vote for this thing'.

Once again, this activity demonstrated the importance of the Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign in developing the capacity of people to be active citizens.

WALGETT

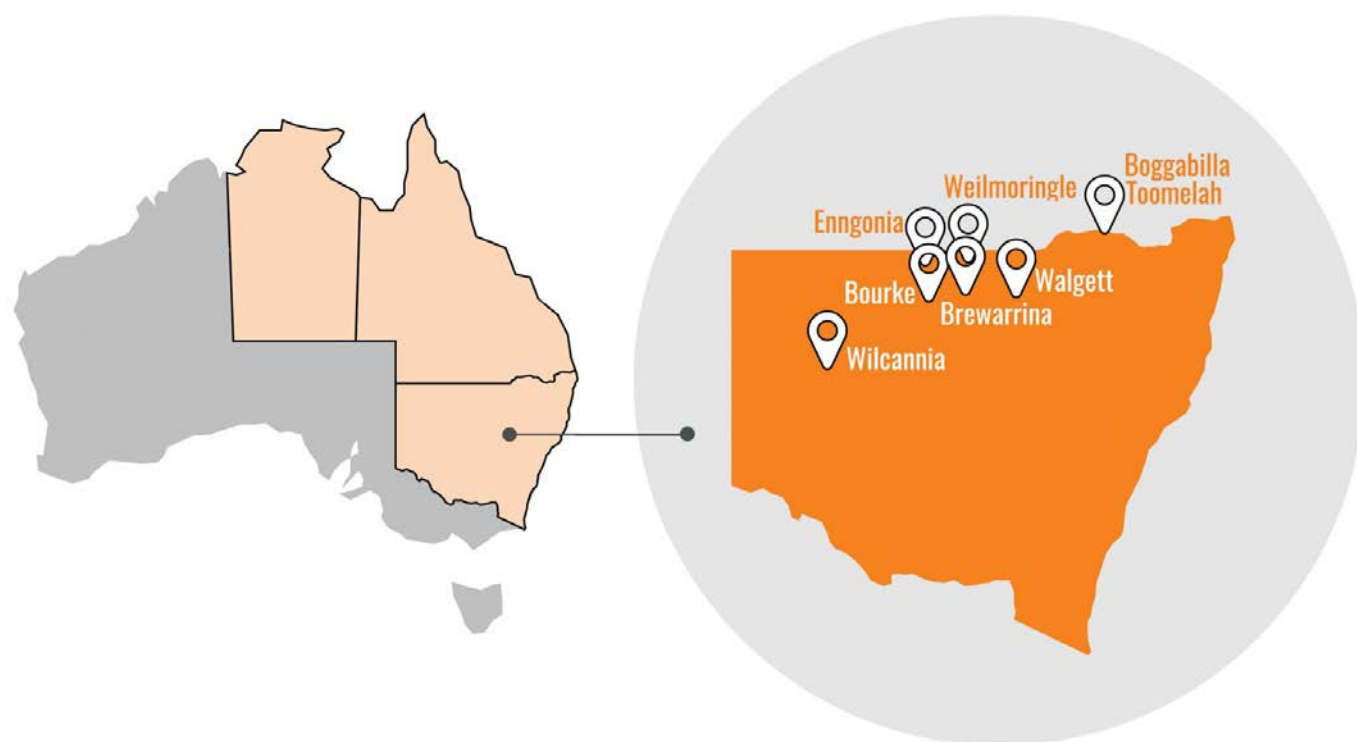
The town of Walgett lies 135 km directly east of Brewarrina, on the Barwon River, in the lands of the Kamilaroi people. The population at the 2011 census was 1,600 people, of whom 850 (50%) were Aboriginal people. There are 236 Aboriginal households, a proportion of which are located outside the main town boundaries, in two distinct Aboriginal 'villages', Gingie and Namoi, which were originally established as reserves in the days of the

Aboriginal Protection Board. Walgett town is the service centre for major agricultural holdings in the district, and, unlike Brewarrina, is well-served with shops and services, and has more employment opportunities. The town has a proud record of activism in the NSW Aboriginal rights movement, and has several strong Aboriginal organisations. It has a K-12 Central School, operating from two locations, and a Catholic School, from which Aboriginal people were excluded as late as the 1950s and 1960s. In the words of George Fernando, who was Chairperson of the Gamilarai CWP, the Aboriginal people of Walgett aspire to be "a harmonious, peaceful, creative, healthy and constructive community which will lead the way as a model around the country".⁶

LFLF's 2015–2017 funding agreement under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) of the Commonwealth Department of PM&C allowed for one YIC intake in Walgett, Jack Beetson having commenced work with local Aboriginal leaders and organisations before that agreement was signed in July 2015. He continued this work in the first half of 2016 and in July, the Foundation appointed a CPO in Walgett. This evaluation report covers the period of 12 months, from the appointment of the new CPO to the end of the first YIC intake in May 2017 and the beginning of the second YIC intake in June 2017.

After 1 week of training in Sydney, The CPO moved to Brewarrina to continue training and begin work in Walgett. With the help of Anne Dennis, the elected zone representative on the NSW Land Council for this area and the Vice President of the NSW AECG, a meeting was convened of interested organisations on 18 August to form a CWG, and the following day the Walgett Inter-Agency group endorsed the Campaign. A house was rented in Walgett and the CPO moved there in September. LFLF's ED negotiated with MPREC to lease a classroom and office on their site in

⁶ Fernando, George, *Working Together to Close the Gap in Walgett: Remote Service Delivery Local Implementation Plan* (Walgett, Commonwealth of Australia, 2010), 2, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/walgett_lip.pdf. Brewarrina



Above: A map of the Campaign locations

Walgett. Stephen Rutley, the Local Land Council Chairperson, who also works for the Shire, took on a leading role, including assisting with selection of local staff. The National Campaign Coordinator ran household literacy survey training on site at the end of September, and four survey workers were subsequently employed. Following a recruitment process, two local Facilitators were appointed, and the initial Phase 1: Mobilisation and Socialisation Campaign work culminated in a public launch, in Gray Park on 15th December 2016. Despite rain, over 80 people attended, with a strong presence from local Aboriginal organisations and government agencies. A local Kamilaroi Elder, Aunty Gladys Walford, did the welcome to Country, and there were speeches from Ted Fields, Chair of Narran Lakes Management Committee, Rosslyn McGregor, the Senior Leader of Community Engagement at the Walgett Community College and the newly appointed local Campaign Coordinator. The launch was attended by the First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy who also spoke, along with Dr. Lorina Barker and LFLF ED, Jack Beetson.

The NCC worked on-site to undertake 10 days' training for the Walgett Coordinator and Facilitators in the second half of January. Phase 2: YIC lessons for the first intake opened on 6 February. At the cut-off point, at the end of Week 3, there were 21 confirmed starters. This intake ended on 18 May, with nine students successfully completing YIC. Two other students completed all lessons but were assessed as needing further tuition as they were still unable to complete a sentence or paragraph without assistance. Although the plan had been for the new Technical Adviser from Cuba to be on site before the start of lessons, she was unable to secure her visa until 4th April, eventually arriving in Walgett at the beginning of May, a few weeks before the end of YIC.

Table 9. Walgett YIC Intake 1 Participation and Retention

Adult population	553
Households	236
Individuals Surveyed	88
Expressions of interest	52
Starters	21
Graduates	9
Retention (%)	43

Post-literacy classes began the following week, and were due to be completed by mid-July. Meanwhile, additional surveys were undertaken for a second intake, funding for which had been secured through an agreement with NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). By the end of May, there were 32 EOIs, and Intake 2 began on 13 June, in the last fortnight covered in this reporting period. As at the end of June, 19 students had joined the class. Also at the end of June, the Walgett CPO resigned, having decided not to accept renewal of her contract to the end of the year.

The high rate of attrition in this first Walgett intake requires explanation. Retention has only dropped below 45% on two other occasions. One was the third intake in Wilcannia, which occurred after the national staff had moved to Bourke and when the support systems for local staff were not well established. The other time was the second Brewarrina intake, which took place during this same reporting period, suggesting that at least some of the issues affecting Walgett were attributable to the Campaign organisation overall, not just local circumstances.

Discussions with local staff, members of the national team and some of the local Aboriginal leaders have identified a number of local factors

contributing to the poorer-than-expected outcomes from this first intake, as follows:

- » Phase 1: Mobilisation and Socialisation activities stretched over a period of 6 months, from the initial community meetings in August until YIC lessons began in February, and this may have led to some loss of momentum;
- » the initial survey work fell well short of the target number of 50% of households, and so fewer people learned about the Campaign before it began;
- » some people whose literacy level was too high for them to maintain interest in the YIC lessons were enrolled;
- » a higher proportion of initial EOIs and starters than in other places were job seekers, of whom several found casual work and at least one other left to join an accredited VET course;
- » there was some misunderstanding between the LFLF staff and the local job-active provider, and several students who were 'breached' for non-attendance decided not to continue;
- » as in every other community, illness, death and court appearances interrupted the progress of several students, and at least one moved town;
- » Walgett, as a bigger town with more facilities and larger service agencies, offers more activities which compete for participants' attention than the communities in which LFLF had run Campaigns previously;
- » two key leaders who had initially advocated for the Campaign proved too busy to play an ongoing role, and there was less active support from local organisations once the lessons began, as demonstrated in attendance at the local CWG meetings;
- » the size of the town, and the division into fairly distinct communities, may have meant that the local staff were not as well-connected to all the various families and locations where the need for the campaign was highest;

- » this was the first site in which a new CPO was given more autonomy and less direction and on-site support from the national leadership, and the expected support from the RDO did not eventuate;
- » the delayed arrival of the Technical Adviser from Cuba was also a factor since it required the NCC and the CPO to provide more support to the local staff in terms of training, lesson preparation, administration and monitoring of student progress through the YIC lessons.

These local-level challenges were occurring at the same time as LFLF was involved in an increasing number of activities, in other communities and on other fronts. During Phase 1: Socialisation and Mobilisation in Walgett, LFLF was also running the Campaign in Brewarrina where the documentary film was being made, and negotiating with NSW FACS and the communities to begin Campaigns in Boggabilla and Toomelah. When Phase 2: YIC lessons began, Phase 1: Mobilisation and Socialisation was starting in Toomelah and Boggabilla, requiring national staff and the organisation to be devoting time to setting up, training and initial community mobilisation. Over the whole 12 months, the ED was also undertaking a more active program of advocacy and lobbying to secure funding for a significant upscale, and so was less able to spend time in the community. The RDO position, which had been intended to help fill this gap, did not work out. Negotiations also began in this period to take the Campaign into the NT, and, in the first half of 2017, LFLF was undergoing a significant restructuring process, following the departure of the Contracts Manager.



Walgett graduation. Photo credit: Hugh Rutherford.

Two recommendations from previous evaluations, which might have prevented some of these problems, were not able to be implemented. The first, to appoint an Aboriginal RDO to assist the ED and local CPO with mobilising Aboriginal community support, was tried, but the person selected proved unsuitable and the funds (from VFFF) had to be re-allocated to other activities. The second recommendation – to appoint a part-time logistics support person to reduce this aspect of the workloads of the NCC and CPO, especially during the set-up period – was delayed pending completion of the restructure.

The second intake, which is now underway, will determine whether these problems have been overcome sufficiently to improve the rate and number of completions. NSW FACS has agreed to fund a third intake if it is needed, but if the problems continue, this may have to be abandoned. The main concern will be to ensure that there is an increased commitment from the local Aboriginal leadership to actively support the participants and staff. It is also a priority to find a permanent replacement for the Walgett CPO whose job is currently being filled on a temporary basis, and only until December 2017.

BOGGABILLA AND TOOMELAH

Following an interview Jack Beetson gave on ABC's *Away* program in March 2016, he was contacted by the NSW Department of FACS, which was responsible for the roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Department was looking for ways to deal with the barriers to this process in Aboriginal communities, due to very low levels of adult literacy. Subsequent negotiations led to NSW FACS agreeing to provide the Foundation with an initial grant of \$1 million through an approved third party provider, the New England Sector Support Team. The funding agreement, signed on 6 October 2016, specified that the LFLF would initiate a new Campaign in the communities of Boggabilla and Toomelah, and complete three intakes there over 18 months. In addition, funds would pay for a second intake in Walgett once the first intake funded by PM&C IAS was completed.

Boggabilla is a small town located 10 km south of the Queensland border town of Goondiwindi, on the Macintyre River, in the far north of NSW. Toomelah is an Aboriginal community, located a further 13 km further south east along the same river. A community profile prepared for Aboriginal Affairs NSW, combining data from both places from the 2011 census, identified 123 Aboriginal households in the two communities and a combined Aboriginal population of 600, of whom 360 are aged 16 and over. Using the conservative estimate of 40% with low literacy, this gives a figure of 145 low literate adults. To halve this figure requires the Campaign to achieve over 70 new graduates across the two locations.

In September 2016, LFLF's ED, Jack Beetson, began the work of "Preparing the Ground", engaging with local Aboriginal community groups and pre-planning for the forthcoming Campaign. Many local organisations and services expressed

an interest, including: Drugarm Goondiwindi; Centacare New England; Boggabilla Central School and Toomelah Public School; Toomelah Lands Council; Queensland Indigenous Legal Service; Queensland Indigenous Health Service; Hunter New England Health; and the local office of PM&C. With the support of Carl McGrady from the Toomelah LALC, an interim local CWG was established, and a local Aboriginal woman was selected as the CPO.

The CPO initially came to Coffs Harbour for 3 days' training at the end of January with the NCC, assisted by myself and another Technical Committee member. She then travelled to Walgett for further training in February, including a workshop with an ACSF consultant, Philippa McLean, and local staff from Walgett and Brewarrina. The NCC ran a further training session on-site in Boggabilla with her and the group she had recruited to do the household literacy surveys. However, before any real progress had been made, the CPO resigned to take another job, requiring the ED and NCC to take urgent action to prevent the Campaign from faltering. They appointed another of the original applicants, who started work on 22nd March, moving to Goondiwindi the following week.

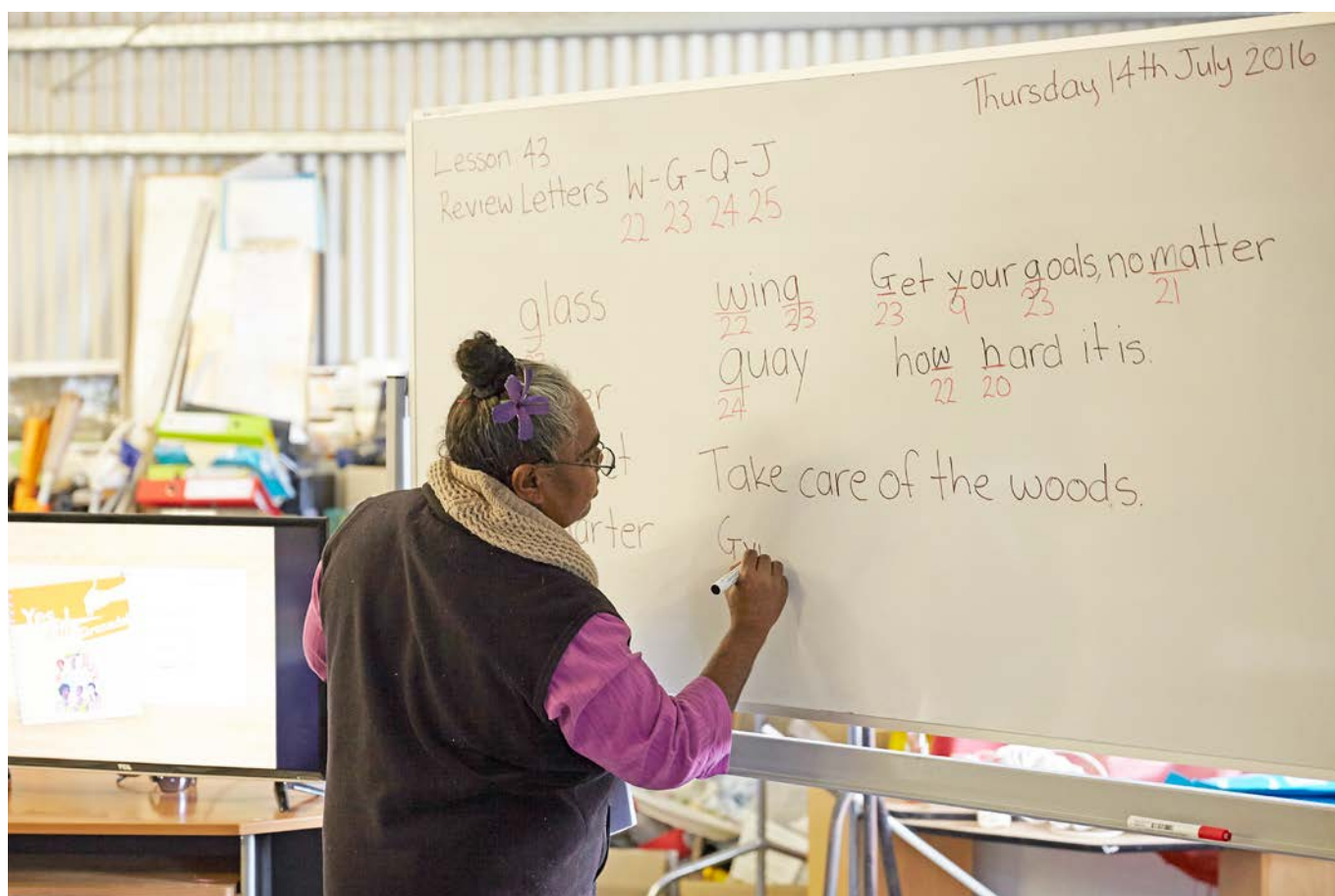
In the first week of April, the NCC was back on site, to run another round of survey worker training and to provide on-job training for the new CPO. By May 2017, 60 households had been reached, by four teams, each with two local survey workers. While this was 20 short of the original target, it was sufficient to ascertain there was a high enough level of interest and need for the Campaign to proceed. More work was done socialising the Campaign with local agencies and organisations, and negotiations succeeded in obtaining an office and classroom space on the Boggabilla TAFE campus, and a classroom space in Toomelah School. This was a new experience for LFLF as previously all classes had deliberately been located outside the formal education complex. The

decision was taken, on local advice, not to combine the two communities into one intake, but to run separate classes in Boggabilla and Toomelah. This meant four Facilitators had to be recruited, but only one local Campaign Coordinator to work with the CPO.

The initial Phase 1: Mobilisation and Socialisation work ended with an official Campaign launch held in Toomelah on 12 May. Special guests included Grace Gordon from the Ngemba Brewarrina CWP and Western TAFE; Mr Jim Longley, Deputy Secretary, Aging Disability and Homecare (the funding body); and Jorge Enrique Trujillo, First Secretary from the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba. A contingent of Campaign staff from Walgett, including the Technical Adviser from Cuba, also attended. In late May, the NCC returned to Boggabilla and Toomelah to deliver

2 weeks of YIC training to the local team. The Campaign Coordinator from Enngonia, continuing her new role as a trainer and mentor, also travelled across to deliver another week's training. Once again, this was without the benefit of the newly-appointed Technical Adviser because his visa application had not been processed fast enough for him to arrive in time from Cuba. The Technical Adviser eventually arrived in Sydney on 29 June, before moving to Goondiwindi where he is now working on site with the local team.

Phase 2 lessons opened in both locations on 13 June, 2 weeks short of the end of the period covered by this report. In these first 2 weeks, numbers in Toomelah were low, with only 14 enrolled and 11 students attending. In Boggabilla, initial enrolments were much higher, at 35, but only a third of this number were attending regularly.



Above: Brewarrina Coordinator Mary Waites. Photo credit: Erica Glynn.

This ends the site-specific evaluation of the Campaign in each of the communities where it ran between January 2016 and June 2017. The next section of the report will deal with issues impacting on the overall Campaign and its progress, and on the Foundation itself.

GOVERNANCE

The Literacy for Life Foundation, the organisation driving the Campaign at a national level, is an Aboriginal organisation and an accredited charity, registered as a company and governed by a Board of Directors. The Chairperson of the Board, Donna Ah Chee, is the CEO of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in Alice Springs. Jack Beetson is the ED, and the third Aboriginal Board member is Pat Anderson, the Chairperson of the Lowitja Institute. There are two non-Aboriginal Directors, representing the Foundation's major corporate sponsor, Multiplex. They are Don Aroney, who is Multiplex Executive Director of Operations, and the Foundation's Company Secretary, and John Flecker, Multiplex Managing Director. In the period of this evaluation, the Board met on a number of occasions. In addition to Board meetings, the ED convenes a management group which meets monthly, and there is a Technical Committee which advises the ED and Board. The organisational restructure which was underway at the end of the period covered by this evaluation will be discussed in the next report.

CAMPAIGN WORKFORCE

As the Campaign has expanded, so too has the size of its workforce, which has grown substantially since 2012. During 2016–2017, 33 people were employed at different times on the Campaign, all part-time, as set out below. 58% of the workforce was Aboriginal, including LFLF's ED, the RDO, and 17 staff employed on the local Campaign teams in Brewarrina, Weilmoringle, Walgett and Boggabilla/Toomelah. The local staff was 77% Aboriginal, which is a significant achievement. Two thirds (67%) of the workforce was female, including 74% of the Aboriginal staff.

Two of the national staff were Cuban nationals, appointed as Honorary Visiting Academics at UNE to assist with the Campaign, but their supervision and support is largely the responsibility of LFLF, working with the evaluator, who is employed by UNE. All other members of the national team were employed as consultants, while all local staff were employed through MPREC. Several Multiplex employees, who are not counted in the table above, also provided in-kind support to the Campaign, including the Chief Financial Officer, a finance clerk and an administrative staff member. From time to time, other Multiplex staff also gave their time, for computer support and with communications and media. Multiplex staff are managed by LFLF Director, Don Aroney.

Table 10. LFLF Workforce Data, January 2015–June 2016

	Aboriginal			Non-Aboriginal			Overall		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
National	1	1	2	6	3	9	7	4	11
Brewarrina	2	2	4	0	2	2	2	4	6
Weilmoringle	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	3	3
Walgett	1	4	5	0	2	2	1	6	7
Boggabilla/ Toomelah	1	4	5	0	1	1	1	5	6
Totals	5	14	19	6	8	14	11	22	33

The different reporting lines that this arrangement entails make the management and coordination of the workforce quite complex. The ED is responsible to the Board, and the national staff to him. But while the local staff are accountable to the NCC and through her to the ED, their employer is actually MPREC, which processes their pay claims once she has approved them. On a day-to-day basis, the Community Coordinator supervises the local Facilitators, supported by the CPO. All expenditure is approved by the NCC or the ED, but claims are made and expenditure acquitted via the Multiplex administration and accounting staff. The Multiplex CFO supervises the preparation of accounts to go to the ED and the Board.

At the national level, the second Aboriginal position, the RDO, was only in place for a few months. The third non-Aboriginal position, the Partnership Manager, only began in the second half of 2016. Three CPOs resigned during 2016–2017. The Brewarrina and Walgett CPOs decided not to renew their contracts after 12 months, while the first person appointed in Toomelah/Boggabilla resigned after only 1 month in the job. At the end of the period covered in this report, the Foundation was in the process of being restructured, and recruitment had begun for two

new positions – an Operations Manager and a new National Campaign Manager, with the current National Campaign Coordinator to transfer to a new position of Capacity Development Manager.

THE FUTURE FOR CPOS

As mentioned on the previous page, the concentration of resources at the base, in community, made the management of the organisation, and the training of the community-based staff, a major challenge. Experience since 2012 shows that it takes at least two iterations of the three-phase Campaign cycle for local staff, including the on-site CPOs (called on-site Advisers in some previous reports), to become sufficiently familiar and confident with the Campaign model to implement it more independently, without close supervision and support from the national team.

The high attrition rate of CPOs since 2012 raises serious concerns. The model only succeeds to the extent that the Campaign is driven by local community members, but community control of a Campaign does not emerge spontaneously and fully-formed. The work of building local Aboriginal organisation and leadership places quite contradictory demands on all sides, but particularly on the CPOs. Clear protocols and



During 2016–2017, 33 people were employed at different times on the Campaign. ... 58% of the workforce was Aboriginal, including LFLF's ED, the RDO, and 17 staff employed on the local Campaign teams in Brewarrina, Weilmoringle, Walgett and Boggabilla/Toomelah. The local staff was 77% Aboriginal, which is a significant achievement. Two thirds (67%) of the workforce was female, including 74% of the Aboriginal staff.

procedures need to be in place and followed to guide local staff who, in many cases, have very little experience of structured workplaces, let alone of organised social movements, of which the Campaign is an example. The clear and predictable structure is crucial, because this makes it possible for local Aboriginal staff who have had minimal formal education to take control; and because that in turn is what makes the model succeed. However, when a non-Aboriginal CPO is asked to 'enforce' these protocols and procedures, there are potential opportunities for contradictions and misunderstandings. In these circumstances, building and maintaining strong and respectful relationships are crucial, but this takes time. As the Campaign rolls out, and more on-site CPOs are deployed to support the local staff and leadership to run the Campaign, this problem will need to be addressed explicitly, in CPO recruitment, orientation and training.

The solution will not be easy to find. The kind of experience and skill in relationship-building that allows both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community workers and educators to navigate these problems cannot be gained other than by doing the work; and people who have done the work for a sufficient number of years can usually demand much higher salaries than LFLF can offer. Moreover, if the Campaign expands as planned into 5–10 more communities, the number of CPOs to be trained and supported through at least one, if not two, iterations could quickly become unmanageable, even if they are recruited at the same time, and undertake a significant period of intensive pre-service training before having to take up their full responsibility on site. The Institute of Pedagogy for Latin America and the Caribbean (IPLAC) uses this pre-service training model in Cuba, to develop its international adviser workforce. The difficulty in Australia is how to fund such pre-service training, since almost all funding for staff has to be spent on delivery.

If less experienced CPOs continue to be hired, the solution may include longer periods of in-service training; and some job redesign, to reduce the logistical and administrative work burden, especially in the first 12 months after a Campaign starts. The latter would be assisted by the appointment of a part-time support officer in that period, as mentioned in previous evaluations, responsible for: organising onsite logistics; ordering equipment, furniture and other supplies; vehicle management; organising staff and consultants, HR paperwork, movement and travel; IT services; and other routine administrative tasks. A further element of the solution is to ensure that the Technical Adviser from Cuba comes on site at the right time, rather than several weeks or even months into the Campaign, as happened in the period under review.

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH CUBA

In the period covered by this report, some progress was made in formalising the agreement between LFLF and the Cuban Ministry of Education, which is responsible for the coordination and management of the country's overseas literacy 'missions.' The other party in Cuba which has an interest in this is IPLAC, within the Enrique José Varona Pedagogical University in Havana. IPLAC was the centre which originally developed YIC, and is responsible for training Cuban educators who wish to be considered for this international work. In Australia, LFLF deals directly with the Ambassador for the Republic of Cuba, who represents their government in these matters, and who has always taken an active interest in the progress of the Campaign since it began in 2012.

The Technical Advisers from Cuba play an important role in training and supporting the local staff to deliver the YIC lessons, and in the monitoring and evaluation of the students'

progress through the lessons. Their participation has been a mandatory requirement under the licensing arrangements negotiated through the Cuban Ambassador with the Cuban Ministry of Education, originally with UNE and more recently with LFLF. Their presence is also an important factor in the level of interest which the Campaign generates, both from the participants but also from the wider community; and they are a crucial resource in the way the Campaign helps to broaden the horizons of the people involved, especially their understanding of the global nature of the problem of low literacy, and the role of international solidarity in overcoming it. In 2016, the special role of the Cubans in the Campaign in Australia was for the first time recognised by UNESCO in its annual review of efforts to combat illiteracy.

However, the participation of the Technical Advisers from Cuba poses a particular challenge for the Campaign workforce. Since 2012, the Advisers have come to Australia under an arrangement with UNE which appoints them as Visiting Academics. This qualifies them to apply for a visa to work on the Campaign in Australia, not as paid employees, but supported by a living allowance and the provision of accommodation and travel. The costs of this arrangement are borne by LFLF. On each of the five occasions when the Advisers have applied to come to Australia, the visa application and approval process has been complicated and protracted, and the arrival of the Adviser delayed as a consequence – typically well beyond the date on which their work is scheduled to begin. This has occurred despite the combined efforts of UNE staff, LFLF staff, the Cuban Ambassador in Australia, officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra, and the staff of the Ministry of Education in Cuba.

The new Operations Manager should be tasked with streamlining this process. The first step is to secure the 3-year exclusive license agreement

for deploying YIC in Aboriginal communities in Australia, which has been under consideration for at least 2 years, but which is still not finalised. The other priority is for LFLF to obtain registration as an approved visa sponsor, reducing the need to involve UNE. There will also need to be better forward planning so that the Ministry of Education in Cuba completes the adviser selection process earlier, and a longer lead time is allowed for the process of applying for the visa to be completed.

The third issue to be resolved relates to the YIC materials. The original master copies of English version YIC DVDs were originally made in Cuba for the campaign in the Caribbean island of Grenada in 2007, over 10 years ago. As each new site joins the Campaign, duplicate copies have had to be reproduced in Cuba, and sound quality has been lost with each new version. As the need for more and more sets of DVDs develops, LFLF will soon need to plan with Cuba the production of a new English-language version of the lessons, and secure the funds for this to occur. LFLF should also seek the support of the Ambassador to negotiate an agreement with the relevant Cuban agency to reprint the workbook in Australia, to obviate the need for buying and shipping a new quantity each year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3** LFLF to finalise a 3 year exclusive license with the Cuban government for the delivery of YIC in Australia, including the right to copy the YIC printed materials
- 4** LFLF to begin work with the Cuban Ambassador and the Cuban government to secure the necessary funds to produce a new English-language version of the YIC lesson DVDs.

ABORIGINAL LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL WILL

In the international literature on mass literacy campaigns, political leadership and political will are seen as the most important ingredients for success, together with adequate financial and human resources. In the context of national campaigns, this has usually meant that the national government needs to drive the campaign. However, the situation in Australia, as in other settler societies, is more complex, since in most communities the government is unlikely, given past history, to enjoy sufficient authority and support to achieve the commitment required by the Indigenous community and its leaders. This is illustrated by experience in the health sector, where almost all the recent improvements in Aboriginal population health have been achieved only through strong leadership from

the Aboriginal-controlled primary health care leadership, and where the government resources and works in partnership with this leadership. Building from this understanding, the previous evaluation report underlined the need to develop a broader and deeper political leadership for the Campaign within the Aboriginal community. To this end, as discussed previously, funding was secured from VFFF for an Aboriginal RDO to work with the LFLF's ED to build such a leadership in western NSW. In the event, the person recruited was unable to perform this role successfully, and resigned. In the absence of any other suitable candidates the funding had to be redeployed to other purposes.

This experience has shown that the job of building and consolidating Aboriginal leadership at a regional level requires people with specific qualities, experience and competence. Ideally, they already enjoy a certain amount of authority, and are sufficiently skilled and experienced to work with all of the various communities – and



Above: Enngonia Coordinator Tannia Edwards and Brewarrina Coordinator Mary Waites.

the different groups within communities – in a way which overcomes conflicts and differences which have built up over many decades, and which are constantly exacerbated by the fragmented and often divisive policies of different levels and sectors of government. One clear reason why the Campaign has succeeded to the extent it has is the enormous experience, skill and respect which the LFLF ED brings to this work. In the absence of anyone with comparable experience and skills prepared to work on the Campaign, resources need to be spent finding and recruiting one or more younger Aboriginal leaders who the ED can train into this role. But this will require that some of the time now spent by the ED on other work is devoted to developing these new leaders. Given the role the ED plays in lobbying and advocating with government and private donors for resources for the Campaign to expand, the Board may need to consider how to relieve him of some of this work.

Another strategy to build the political will and political leadership of the Campaign is to recruit higher-level leaders to form ‘peak-body’ type committees across a region, or a state/territory. Alternatively, existing peak bodies could be asked to take on this role, such as the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, or the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the NT. The current situation is that, while significant regional, state and national Aboriginal leaders have expressed strong support for the Campaign, this has not translated into additional leadership resources being deployed in the ways in which it really matters, namely in active participation in the work of campaigning at a local level; or in the work of convincing federal and state governments and private donors to increase the Campaigns’ resources. At the heart of this problem is insufficient understanding among the majority of Aboriginal leaders of just how important it is to raise the level of literacy in the adult population, if communities are going to have the capacity to

solve the many problems that they face, across all sectors.

Even in the health sector, where the role of adult literacy – and especially the literacy of young women – is known to be a major factor in population health improvements, and where two LFLF Board members have highly respected positions, almost no active advocacy work is being conducted on this issue. In the education sector, where perhaps it would be expected that such work would originate, the main Aboriginal leaders predominantly focus on improving outcomes in schools and in the formal post-school sectors of vocational and higher education. This is reflected in national and state Indigenous education policies, which do not include specific goals for adult literacy improvements. This is despite the fact that, as far back as 1988, the Aboriginal Education Taskforce recommended that the government “develop and implement a national Aboriginal literacy strategy aimed to significantly increase the opportunities available to Aboriginal adults to improve their literacy skills and general educational standards”.

The ED is already engaged in a strategy to turn this situation around, beginning with members of the National Indigenous Advisory Council and Aboriginal members of the Federal Parliament. At the same time, he continues to work with his networks of Aboriginal leaders in NSW and beyond to help them to see the value of the Campaign, and to get behind it. Once again, the resources at his disposal to do this are far from plentiful.

One of the most important sources of greater Aboriginal leadership for the Campaign lies in the continued development of the LFLF’s own Aboriginal workforce, and of the participants themselves. In 2016–2017, a local staff member who joined the Campaign in 2013 as a Community Coordinator and Facilitator, led the organisation of a new community Campaign, taking on a role training new Aboriginal staff in Weilmoringle,

Walgett, Boggabilla and Toomelah while also undertaking the part time job of CEO of her local land council and her role as a newly appointed member of the Board of MPREC. While her leadership activities are outstanding, many other local LFLF staff, and some new graduates, have also begun taking much greater responsibility and leadership roles in their communities, a message which is conveyed strongly by the documentary, *In My Own Words*. The management and Board of LFLF could look to some of these people to see what roles they can be offered in an expanded Campaign, and what support and training they will need to be able to do so. This could be a part of the brief of the new Capacity Development Manager position which was foreshadowed in planning discussions in the last 12 months.

FUNDING

There is a chicken-and-egg quality to the leadership plus resources equation for Campaign success. Developing Aboriginal leaders and Aboriginal leadership structures requires additional resources. But convincing government and private donors to provide those resources requires more robust and broad-based Aboriginal leadership. Clearly, the Foundation has had significant success in attracting funding since the first grant of \$260,000 from the Commonwealth came to UNE in 2011 to pilot the Campaign in Wilcannia. In 2016–2017, funding deployed on Campaigns and LFLF's operations came from the following main sources:

- » The Children and Schooling Program, and the Jobs, Lands and Economy Program of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Indigenous Advancement Strategy (PM&C IAS);
- » Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF);
- » NSW Department of Family and Community Services (NSW FACS);
- » Multiplex, which continued to provide funding for key LFLF positions and in-kind for administration and finance support.

Additional funding was also provided through: Uniting Care for the Weilmoringle Campaign; Recognise; The Funding Network; Kinetic and various private donors. The Campaign also attracted significant research funding which was provided to UNE by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) and the Australian Research Council (ARC).

In 2016–2017, the ED and Partnership Manager developed a major pre-budget submission to the Prime Minister, outlining the requirements for a 5-year roll out of the Campaign into a minimum of 12 new communities. This was presented to the PM by the ED in a face-to-face meeting on 14 December 2016. The Foundation had also made a presentation to officials of PM&C and invitees of other Departments in Canberra at a seminar organised by the PM&C Evaluation Branch. However, while the Campaign received very favourable attention in the PM's *Annual Close the Gap Report* to parliament in February 2017, it was not one of the projects funded in the PM's 1967 Referendum 50th Anniversary Indigenous Education Package announced in May; nor were any specific funds earmarked for the Campaign in the 2017–18 Federal Budget.

A submission to the Aboriginal Benefit Account in the NT for funds to begin a Campaign in the Top End was unsuccessful, while another submission, to PM&C, for funding for two communities in Central Australia is still under consideration. Meanwhile, funding to continue the Campaign in NSW for another 2 years has now been secured, with an offer from NSW FACS in May 2017 of an additional \$1.25 million for this work.

The problem is that almost all the funding which LFLF receives, apart from the research funds, is tied to Campaign delivery, that is, achieving outcomes in specific communities; and almost none can be set aside for LFLF to embark on the organisational development needed to

create the infrastructure for a successful national Campaign. In Timor-Leste's national campaign, for example, the national government deployed its own resources and staff to provide much of the infrastructure, even on some occasions using the armed forces to assist with transport and logistics. In India, while the lead organisation for the initial campaigns in the state of Kerala was a non-governmental organisation – the People's Science Movement – the Kerala state government also deployed its resources, and, when the campaign went national, it was led by a national commission, established and resourced by the Indian Government. When compared with these examples, the Foundation's success so far in mobilising 15 intakes in eight communities across the remote west and north west of NSW, with no full-time staff and very little of its own organisational capacity, is remarkable. It is also an indication of the degree of community support on which the Campaign has been able to draw. However, the declining rate of retention and the falling average number of graduates per intake, as documented in this report, is an indication that this way of operating is not sustainable. This is why the submission to the Prime Minister called for a significant injection of funding in addition to that which is needed to cover the on-site costs of additional intakes in existing communities, not to mention extending the Campaign to new communities.

Private donors continued to play a central role in supporting the Campaign in the period covered by this report. Multiplex continued its contribution towards the salaries of key positions, and provides accounting, auditing and administration services pro-bono. VFFF funding was crucial for Brewarrina's second intake and the Aboriginal RDO position; and they also approved the reallocation of funds for the RDO position, to provide more support for Weilmoringle, Walgett and Brewarrina Intake 3. The grant from Uniting Care, though much smaller, made it possible to take on the

Weilmoringle Campaign. Just as important, was the donation by Kinetic Superannuation of vehicles in mid-2016, enabling the Campaign to operate in three sites at once. It has now become obvious that with two intakes running in Boggabilla and Toomelah, one in Walgett and another in Brewarrina, each site needs its own minibus for student pick-ups and post-literacy activities. When pick-up is done in a twin cab or in staff vehicles, that makes it a much slower process. This problem will need to be addressed in the next period of expansion.

RECOMMENDATION

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LFLF to include provision of a Campaign minibus in each site as a necessary cost of delivery.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING ISSUES

The cost of the Campaign remained an issue for some of the funding agencies in the period of this report, with the feedback from PM&C's Canberra office in particular being that the Campaign was too expensive. In January 2016, the Foundation decided to set the delivery cost for three intakes delivered over 18 months at \$600,000. This was based on an estimate of \$300,000 to prepare the ground and complete all three Campaign phases for the first intake, followed by \$150,000 for the next two. In the expectation of 15 graduates per intake, the per graduate cost quoted was \$13,300. However, because the average number of graduates has not reached this, the notional cost per graduate on these figures has risen to \$18,000. The real cost to funding bodies has kept down, through private donations and in-kind support and because savings have been found in every intake to date. *It should also be noted that LFLF's much higher retention rate means its cost per graduate remains considerably less than per graduate costs*

of VET courses for Aboriginal participants with minimal literacy.

That said, the real cost per graduate for delivery in a specific site is being understated because, as the Campaign grows, and in fact in order to grow, the Foundation's own infrastructure needs to expand. In 2016–2017, this continued to be subsidised by Multiplex and by smaller individual donations. The problem here is that the cost per graduate is unlikely to fall in the absence of significant upscaling which may then deliver some economies of scale. But, in the period when this growth occurs, the required infrastructure growth will drive up the cost per graduate, making it less attractive to funders. The Board has a number of options for dealing with this dilemma. First, it can seek separate funding from one or more donors for the increased organisational development costs which are required to upscale. Second, it can increase the cost of delivery per site and per intake, allowing more to be clawed back for organisational development. The third option, which is to continue to expand into more sites, without increasing the cost per site or securing additional development funds, is not really an option because it will almost certainly lead to an internal crisis, as the different locations and the 'centre' struggle to manage a bigger and bigger workload without the necessary financial and human resources to support this.

LFLF's dependence on the financial staff and systems of Multiplex for financial management and reporting adds another layer of complexity to this problem. Undoubtedly the pro-bono contribution that this entails is a substantial cost-saving to the Foundation. On the other hand, Multiplex's financial staff already have their own busy workloads, and little time to adapt their systems for recording and reporting income and expenses to the realities of servicing a part-time and often inexperienced workforce and its essential suppliers in remote locations. The complex reporting requirements of multiple government agencies and programs also creates additional pressure on these

arrangements. Various options for dealing with this issue were being discussed at the conclusion of this evaluation period.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

This evaluation period saw a major lift in coverage of the Foundation and the Campaign by the media, largely as a result of the new Partnership Manager's work with the ED. Throughout this period, LFLF made strategic use of media, both to promote the Campaign nationally, and to build support at a local level in the participating communities. This began with significant national coverage of LFLF arising out of the ED's receipt of an inaugural Cuban award in Canberra in February 2016, and culminated with the launch of the documentary *In My Own Words* in June 2017. The impact of the media work was significant. The interview that the ED did on ABC Away in March 2016 was the stimulus for NSW FACS to seek a partnership with LFLF, and this has now become the major funding source for the Campaigns in Toomelah, Boggabilla and Walgett. The ED's extended interview on ABC's Conversations program led directly to an individual private donation of \$30,000, as well as many smaller donations.

A further advantage which LFLF has gained from the high profile national coverage it has received on SBS Insight, Conversations, and Radio National, and in particular from the Sydney Film Festival launch of *In My Own Words*, is that these are now being used in ongoing communication and advocacy.

Another significant example of this was the work that went into providing LFLF material including photos for the Prime Minister's Close the Gap Report to Parliament. The recognition this achieves is important for building awareness of the Campaign among government officials and politicians. This too is an important aspect of a literacy campaign, to build support, not only in

the participating communities, but also within the agencies that determine policy and resource allocation.

The launch of the documentary in two screenings at the Sydney Film Festival in June – one of which was sold out – was also a major media event in itself, as well as generating further print, radio, TV and social media coverage.

The release of the film made the development of an improved website a priority, both to inform people looking for more information, and to channel potential private donors. This work was completed at the end of the evaluation period. This now creates a new resource requirement, since the more people visit the website, including people who wish to make donations, but also people who want further information, then the more the servicing of this demand becomes a strain on LFLF's limited staff. Within the organisation, there are also other needs in relation to the website, since as well as presenting a public face to supporters and donors, it has also been used as an information and education resource to assist the capacity development of Campaign staff and local leaders. A plan for the ongoing development of the website to fulfill both these needs could be a matter for the Technical Committee to consider.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

In May 2017, the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announced a major initiative to improve evaluations of Aboriginal programs. This followed on from previous reports including from the Productivity Commission which drew attention to the need for more rigorous evaluations in this area. LFLF had already been in discussions with the Evaluation Branch in PM&C's

Indigenous Programs Canberra office, and the ED, the evaluator and the Brewarrina Community Coordinator presented at a workshop organised by the branch

in December 2016. It is clear that the ongoing, rigorous evaluation of the LFLF Campaign, using the participatory evaluation model since 2012, will be an important factor in securing continued government support.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

A major achievement in this period has been the development of a new database for the Campaign, based on the Communicare system which is used in the majority of Aboriginal community-controlled health services in Australia. This work was done, largely pro-bono, by Planhealth's Dr Ben Bartlett, who is the Convenor of LFLF's Technical Committee, and who has been supporting the Campaign since it began. Dr Bartlett negotiated with Communicare, a company wholly owned by Telstra and based in Perth, to develop a version of the database which allows for detailed weekly monitoring of participant attendance in YIC lessons and post-literacy activities, while also compiling data collected through the household literacy surveys. In the future this database will also play a role in the longitudinal impact study. Apart from the data from Wilcannia, which is still to be entered manually, all data collected in communities to date and previously held in Excel spreadsheets has now been transferred across onto this new platform, and includes survey, EOI and Campaign attendance data on over 500 adults across seven communities. In the next reporting period, the Communicare system will be able to produce more detailed analysis, for example, on incidence and reasons for non-attendance, which should assist with the evaluation and monitoring process.

A further development in this area was the offer of pro-bono assistance from Microsoft, who have undertaken over the next reporting period

to develop a 'data-visualisation' application for LFLF, using their Power B program; and a new application to allow electronic collection of data during the household and ARC Impact study surveys.

AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL LINKAGE PROGRAM GRANT

In July 2016, UNE secured a \$440,000 ARC funding to undertake a 3-year longitudinal study (2016–2019) of the impact of the Campaign on the social determinants of health in partnership with LFLF, the Lowitja Institute and the University of New South Wales (UNSW). LFLF is making a substantial contribution to this study, both in-kind and in cash, and has three co-investigators in the research team, Jack Beetson and Pat Anderson from the Board, and Ben Bartlett from the Technical Committee. The academic investigators include Bob Boughton, the evaluator and author of this report, Professor Richard Taylor, an epidemiologist from UNSW, Associate Professor Toni Schofield, a health sociologist, and Dr Lorina Barker. UNE has appointed Dr Frances Williamson as a part-time Research Associate, and Ms Chris Lloyd as Research Administration Assistant to assist the team. As at June 2017, initial ethics approval had been obtained and the study had begun with a retrospective survey of participants in Wilcannia, Bourke and Enngonia; and with in-depth interviews with Campaign staff and other stakeholders on the Campaigns governance and organisation.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY

UNE academics also completed data collection & analysis for an AIC-funded study on the impact of the Campaign in Bourke and Enngonia on the relationship between these communities and the law and justice system, with a final report submitted in May 2017. Publication following peer

review is expected in early 2018. While the detailed results are embargoed by the AIC until this review process is completed, the draft report indicates that:

the 'Yes, I Can!' campaign is positively enhancing interactions with the criminal justice system in three particular areas; helping to alleviate illegal driving practices; minimising contact with the law for failure to respond to official documentation; and improved interactions with law enforcement officials.

Once the report is published, it will provide additional evidence to government and other stakeholders of the impact of the Campaign in this area.

PHD RESEARCH PROJECT

Ruth Ratcliffe, a UNE PhD student, continued her research on the Campaign in this period, working mainly in the communities of Wilcannia and Brewarrina, where she is investigating the impact which the Campaign is having on relations between the community and the school system. Completion of her thesis is expected in July 2018.

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Publishing and presenting analyses of the Campaign in academic journals and at academic and professional Conferences is both a way to subject the findings of the evaluation research to peer-review, and also to build wider awareness of and support for the Campaign in the academic and professional adult literacy and Aboriginal education community. The following examples of this work were a product of this evaluation period:

- » Durnan, D., Edwards, T., & Boughton, B. (2016). *Literacy: Everyone's Right, Everyone's Business. Literacy for Life & the Cuban 'Yes, I Can!' adult literacy campaign in Western NSW*. Paper presented at the Indigenous Leaders Conference, Charles Darwin University, November 2016.

- » Boughton, B. (2016). *Can non-formal community-controlled adult literacy education help to overcome barriers to successful VET completions in Aboriginal communities? Evidence from the YES, I CAN! adult literacy campaign in western NSW*. Paper presented at the ACDEVEG Conference UTS 7–8 December 2016.
- » Lia Weitzel (2016), *The Cuban 'Yes, I Can' adult literacy campaign in Aboriginal Australia: An alternative to commodified education*. University of Sydney Master of Arts (Research) Thesis, submitted June 2016.
- » Boughton, B. (2016). *Popular education and mass adult literacy campaigns. Beyond the 'new literacy studies'*. In K. Yasukawa & S. Black (Eds.), *Beyond economic interests. Critical perspectives in adult literacy & numeracy in a globalised world* (pp. 149–164). Rotterdam: Sense.
- » Boughton, B. (2016). *Radical international adult education. A pedagogy of solidarity*. In R. Mizzi, T. Rocco & S. Shore (Eds.), *Disrupting Adult and Community Education. Teaching, Learning and Working in the Periphery* (pp. 257–273). New York: SUNY Press.
- » Beetson, J., Frail, J., & Bartlett, B. (2016). *Adult literacy campaign in Aboriginal communities in western NSW. Research Project. A Critical Social Determinants Approach*. Paper presented at the Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference November 2016.
<https://vimeo.com/192578371>
- » Beetson, J., Boughton, B., & Waites, M. (2016). *Closing the Adult Literacy Gap. Literacy for Life Foundation's 'Yes, I Can!' Campaign in western NSW*. PMC Evaluation Branch Seminar. Canberra December 7th 2016.
- » Williamson, F., & Boughton, B. (2017). *Case study 3: Yes, I Can Adult Literacy Campaign*. In J. Guenther et al (Eds.), *Case studies of training advantage for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island learners* (pp. 17–23). Leabrook SA: NCVER. Retrieved from https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/510131/Case-studies-enhancing-training-advantage-supporting-document.pdf.
- » Boughton, B., Beetson, J., Waites, M., & Durnan, D. (2017). *South-South Development Cooperation: Cuba's Yes, I Can! adult literacy campaign model in Timor-Leste and Aboriginal Australia*. In R. Toumu'a & M. a. 'Otunuku (Eds.), *Education for What? Revisited. Proceedings of the Vaka Pasifiki Education Conference 2016* (pp. 105–113). Honiara, The Solomon Islands: Institute of Education, The University of the South Pacific.
- » Boughton, B., & Beetson, J. (2017). *To lift literacy levels among Indigenous children, their parents' literacy skills must be improved first* The Conversation, (June 9, 2017). <https://theconversation.com/to-lift-literacy-levels-among-indigenous-children-their-parents-literacy-skills-must-be-improved-first-78827>
- » Wise, J., Harris, B., Nickson, R., Boughton, B., & Beetson, J. (Forthcoming). *Reducing crime and incarceration rates in Aboriginal communities through the 'Yes, I Can!' adult literacy campaign*. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice. (Research Bulletin of the Australian Institute of Criminology).

Literacy for Life Foundation
Brewarrina staff member,
Norman Coffey.
Photo credit: Adam Sharman.



CONCLUSION

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In the January 2016– June 2017, LFLF proved its capacity to extend the adult literacy Campaign across several communities, beginning the process of upscaling. Four more intakes of adults with low or very low English literacy were recruited, of which 34 completed the YIC lessons and post literacy phase; and three more cohorts were on their way. The expansion put strain on the organisation, highlighting the need for organisational development to underpin further growth. The recruitment and training of local Aboriginal staff to lead the Campaign continues to be a major success, while securing a more stable workforce of professionally-trained CPOs to support the local staff remains the biggest challenge. The establishment of a stable 3-year funding base, as highlighted in previous reports, is still to be achieved, and without this, expansion will continue to be problematic, and may undermine the participation and retention outcomes achieved

up until now. The Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign has achieved substantial recognition at a national level, as the only initiative underway in Australia promising significant improvement in the overall rate of literacy among Aboriginal adults. Recognition is also growing among Aboriginal community leaders, officials and politicians, that the low rate of literacy in the adult population is a major barrier to the achievement of many of the Close the Gap targets. To maintain the momentum of the Campaign in the next 12 months, **LFLF's biggest challenge will be to strike the right balance between its four competing priorities, which this analysis has highlighted: continuing with more intakes in the existing sites; developing new Campaigns in new communities, and in other states; building its internal organisation and workforce; and applying resources to its leadership building, lobbying, advocacy and fundraising work.**

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