

# DESERT KNOWLEDGE CRC

The character of Aboriginal  
training pathways:  
A local perspective

N Rea  
J Messner  
C Gipey

Report  
**34**  
2008



Australian Government  
Land & Water Australia

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DARWIN  
UNIVERSITY**



  
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# Abbreviations/Acronyms

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|            |                                                      |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| ACGC       | Anmatjere Community Government Council               |
| ALA        | Adult Learning Australia                             |
| ANTA       | Australian National Training Authority               |
| CDEP       | Community Development Employment Program             |
| CDU        | Charles Darwin University                            |
| CLC        | Central Land Council                                 |
| CLM course | Certificate I in Conservation and Land Management    |
| CRC        | Cooperative Research Centre                          |
| GPS        | global positioning system                            |
| IAD        | Institute of Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs |
| ICT        | Information and communication technologies           |
| IT         | information technology                               |
| NGO        | non-government organisation                          |
| NRM        | natural resource management                          |
| NT         | Northern Territory                                   |
| RM course  | Certificate I in Resource Management (CDU)           |
| TAFE       | Technical and Further Education                      |
| VET        | vocational education and training                    |
| VETis      | Vocational Education and Training in Schools Program |

# Glossary

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|                          |                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Altyerr</i>           | the dreaming                                                                                         |
| Anmatjere                | spelling used by the Northern Territory Government                                                   |
| Anmatyerr                | spelling used by the IAD Picture Press Dictionary Series (Green et al. 2003)                         |
| Anmatyerr <i>Angkety</i> | database used at the Anmatyerr Library and Knowledge Centre, which uses <i>Ara Irititja</i> software |
| Anmatyerr <i>tyerrty</i> | Anmatyerr people                                                                                     |
| <i>Arnka</i>             | Mount Leichardt                                                                                      |
| <i>kwaty</i>             | water, rain                                                                                          |
| <i>Kwertengwerl</i>      | traditional manager or offsider                                                                      |
| <i>mer</i>               | country, place, home                                                                                 |
| <i>Merekartwey</i>       | traditional owner                                                                                    |
| Ngwarray                 | an Anmatyerr skin name                                                                               |
| Peltharr                 | an Anmatyerr skin name                                                                               |
| Penangk                  | an Anmatyerr skin name                                                                               |
| Pmara Jutunta            | the community also known as 6 Mile                                                                   |
| Pwerrerl                 | an Anmatyerr skin name                                                                               |
| <i>Twerrreng</i>         | sacred object                                                                                        |

## Acknowledgements

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## Executive summary

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This research shows that pathways to Aboriginal education, training and employment do not necessarily start with traineeships, apprenticeships, cadetships or work placements. The option of enrolling and engaging trainee researchers in formal training arrangements was not elected on the basis of our judgement that it would not be viable. This decision was supported by recommendations in reports by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research about essential factors that favour training outcomes. For example, Gelade and Stehlik (2004) found that many Aboriginal adults did not have sufficient proficiency in English language, literacy and numeracy to meet the training requirements of VET courses, and this appears to be a factor in the Anmatyerr region. Although ‘traineeships’ between institutions and service providers can receive extra government support from education and Aboriginal programs, the service providers would not be available to work one-on-one with the Anmatyerr trainee researchers, which was the case with the research team and coordinator.

The pathway discussed here starts locally and endorses and includes the cultural education and training of Elders. The cultural basis to the training is supported by a community-based mentor and Elders as well as a coordinator and various non-Aboriginal institutions. Although perhaps regarded as a ‘preparation phase’, activities acquired locally in culturally safe environments such as listening, observing, committing, attendance, preparing for and participating in field trips, managing money for daily needs, and communicating are fostering essential skills that underpin more formal education and training options. The research concluded that the most appropriate training pathway towards employment/livelihoods is one where training is embedded in practice. These are characteristics of the pathway to the starting line of formal training programs.

We describe this approach as an ‘NGO training package’. We outline key outcomes of training activities and key success indicators that underpin a pathway to more formal training or transition to employment. Important considerations are that training needs to begin from where it needs to, that is, from where it will succeed. In this case it began in a research project. The starting point will vary accordingly and may end by choice or continue as further training or employment. Training needs to be recognised as an evolving process, sometimes leading directly to an intended outcome, but often as multiple activities that are completed or not, that stop and start again, that may change direction, and that lead to known or unknown options. Such a pathway is not an uncommon history for any employee. Training is also, by default, an engagement process between trainer/service provider and trainees/host communities. Rea and Young (2006) provide relevant detail about the requirements for ethical engagement in desert regions. The need for flexible assessment and new ways to evaluate the outcomes of participation by Aboriginal learners has already been recognised (Flamsteed and Golding 2005; Guenther et al. 2005; Miller 2005, Rea and Messner 2008, Young et al. 2005). The key factors for successful training include that they fit into the meaning and purpose of community life, are community directed and relevant to current and future needs (see also Gelade & Stehlik 2004). The importance of links to future planning processes is especially relevant, and the challenge here is to create those opportunities.

‘Certificates and degrees are the new spears and boomerangs,’ said the research team’s cultural supervisor. This philosophy is shared by the Elders who see western and cultural education as critically important for their young people. On a trip to a significant spring, highly respected Elder and Anmatyerr law man Eric Penangk explained to a number of students his vision for future governance and educated youth, a vision for all generations:

*If we put proper way, make that law strong [Anmatyerr law] then we'll be alright. Kwertengwerl and Merekartwey gotta be strong, run the country. Young girl gotta go to school all the time, young men gotta go to school. When older people tell 'em, they gotta listen, gotta go to work. (5 March 2006)*

These words echo Gelade and Stehlik (2004), who describe how people aspire to a 'both ways' model of community capacity that ensures cultural control in the short term and in the long term leads to the development of skilled literate adults who have maintained their Aboriginal law and culture and who can manage change and sustain community development. The activities reported here have provided a number of Anmatyerr tyerrty across the region – and two specific Anmatyerr trainee researchers – with a range of skills relevant to the vision of the senior law man. These skills have been learnt and practised on country and on the job, as part of current issues that directly contribute to delivering real community and project outcomes.

This local study and the local characteristics outlined may not be transferable, given the diversity of Aboriginal communities and cultures in Australia. However, given such diversity, it is helpful to work at and report on a local situation as a change to overarching analyses and reviews. That this case study could usefully inform others is supported by some of the findings being in common with the seven overarching criteria identified by Miller (2004) in his review of training outcomes for Aboriginal learners undertaking VET training. Although Miller emphasises that a single approach to training is impossible because of diversity in Aboriginal communities and cultures, he also counsels that if any of the seven key factors are not observed – irrespective of context, time and place – the likelihood of positive outcomes will be lessened.

# 1. Introduction

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The transition from an education or training program to employment is considered the main pathway to economic independence in Australian society. Whether that employment is in the mainstream economy, the hybrid economy, or community-based livelihoods in cultural contexts, the available pathways assume that the first step is some type of education (i.e. school, vocational, or tertiary). Governments and service providers have created numerous training options and support networks, yet for many reasons Aboriginal Australians are often unable to take advantage of training options, let alone employment – for which a myriad of opportunities designed for Aboriginal people can still remain elusive.

A number of studies have reviewed the effectiveness of training programs in Australia (ANTA 1998, ALA 2004, Gelade & Stehlik 2004, Kral & Falk 2004, Flamsteed & Golding 2005, Helme et al. 2005, Miller 2005) and all refer to similar reasons for the statistics on enrolment, completion and subsequent employment for Aboriginal people in remote communities.

In 2004, Adult Learning Australia (ALA) suggested some general impediments to Aboriginal employment and vocational training outcomes in remote communities. These included a perception that training is for the benefit of one person rather than the entire community. Other impediments were low levels of English literacy and numeracy skills, educational and language disadvantage, a lack of basic skills such as a drivers licence and job search skills, and personal health and social issues (2004, pp. 3–6).

This was, in part, the situation faced by a research project – the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* (Water) Project – which was looking at the steps toward creating appropriate livelihoods for the Anmatyerr language group, and long-term participation of the group in making decisions about water on their traditional lands in central Australia. The project supported two Anmatyerr trainee researchers with the objective of building necessary skills and a knowledge base for future livelihoods. In this report, we examine and interpret how this training unfolded with a view to informing discussion about training frameworks for Aboriginal peoples and why many training opportunities remain under-used. Much of the literature focuses on the actual training programs: their success, variety and outcomes. Our emphasis here is on situations prior to vocational training. The reality for many Aboriginal people living in remote Australia is that schooling, for many reasons, does not result in the majority of people being either job ready or training ready. The people put forward by Elders to work closely on this research project were carefully selected on the basis of being responsible young men and as having great potential. Nevertheless, the available traineeships in central Australia were considered inappropriate in terms of location, backup, cultural context and research needs. In Anmatyerr society, these young men were regarded as ‘training ready’; yet the formal traineeship options available could not guarantee mentoring, logistical support, pastoral care and cultural understanding.

The alternative training program devised is what we describe as a ‘non-government organisation (NGO) training model’ – a model that describes the pathway into training options. Although factors concerning the success or otherwise of training programs have been widely investigated, we felt it was important to emphasise the ‘pre-training’ situation and the need for approaches that support people in reaching the ‘starting line’. Although research projects differ from daily community projects (e.g. fencing, teaching, monitoring), we developed our research hand in hand with meaningful community activities. This way, informal training took place as part of on-ground activities within the context of achieving research objectives. Some formal training was included at

the same time, but the whole ‘NGO approach’, being embedded in practice, developed a character of its own. It illustrates the pathways that can lead Aboriginal people to being ready to take advantage of the many training options available. Our aim is to highlight key success indicators that describe the character of this pathway so that others can learn from this local experience.

## 2. Ti Tree and the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* (Water) Project

In the Ti Tree region<sup>1</sup> of the Northern Territory (NT), Anmatyerr *tyerrty* (Anmatyerr people) outnumber non-Aboriginal people by approximately 10:1 (~2000:200). Decisions about country, and especially water, being made by other parties should involve Aboriginal landowners and custodians who live across their traditional lands. Anmatyerr *tyerrty* are proud of the strong continuation of Anmatyerr law that governs their roles and responsibilities in managing their *mer* (country). They see other land uses as coexisting with or ‘sitting on top of’ the landscape. For matters that affect country, Anmatyerr *tyerrty* wish to be consulted in appropriate ways and to have their views and laws understood and respected. This objective is supported by the intent and guidance of many international and national policy and legal instruments and is an overarching objective of the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* (Water) Project – the multidisciplinary research collaboration between the Anmatyerr community, external university researchers, government, and the regional representative body, the Central Land Council (CLC). Specific aims of this project include natural resource management (NRM) governance arrangements, methodologies to convey cultural values of water, the establishment of Aboriginal people’s rights to water, the construction of sustainable livelihoods, and skills development to support the above (Rea and the Anmatyerr Water Project Team 2008).

## 3. Skills development and Anmatyerr livelihoods

The objectives of culturally-based livelihoods in water resource management are achievable when there is an appropriate skills base. Skills learnt in Anmatyerr society are dictated by skin relationships, age and gender. Education and training in Anmatyerr Law and culture is taken very seriously and has provided a strong foundation for young people. However, where resource use is contested, or where impacts need managing and/or opportunities exist for better outcomes, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people need skills to work in the inter-cultural realm of different knowledge systems, cultures and laws. Good inter-cultural capacity, defined in Rea and Messner 2008, can highlight the common ground, which otherwise might be overlooked.

The skills development component of the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project initially focused on the broader Anmatyerr community so as not to privilege some at the expense of others and to enable the external researchers and the community to become acquainted. During 2005, support for training was spread throughout the region through delivery of components of the Waterwatch Kit – an educational program that introduces freshwater ecology and management and which is part of the NT education curriculum. Up to two bush trips in each of four terms and in each of two schools were held with up to 25 people on each trip, comprising mainly high school students, and some teachers and extended family. A broad cross-section of the community in terms of age, skin and gender was represented. These trips involved visiting *kwaty* sites, sampling for fauna, taking simple biophysical measurements and discussing the sites from cultural perspectives. There were many occasions during these trips when the older generation taught the younger generation about the country and the law. The activities built awareness, trust and understanding of issues, and invigorated interest in protecting *kwaty* and *kwaty*-dependent resources. This initial collaboration

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<sup>1</sup> The region is centred around the township of Ti-Tree, approximately 200 kilometres north of Alice Springs on the Stuart Highway. It covers an area of approximately 4,000 square kilometres

with the schools was an invaluable, if not essential, grounding to the ongoing research project as it allowed for the building of trust between external researchers and the community and the identification of appropriate people to take on more formal research roles. The Project cultural supervisors and the 18 traditional owners who constituted the Anmatjere Community Government Council (ACGC) reiterated that training and funds for Aboriginal researchers should be for the young men and women in their communities. The involvement of Elders should, with a few exceptions, be voluntary and provide the important role of supervision and approvals. Several young men were put forward to work more closely on the project during 2005, with two being eventually selected as Anmatyerr trainee researchers and employed on a casual part-time basis by Charles Darwin University (CDU) during 2006 and 2007.

## 4. Training description and objectives

The skills development program for Anmatyerr trainee researchers consisted of research experience embedded in practice and training programs that were managed by the research team as opposed to a service provider. Below, we discuss the key outcomes of three training activities – resource management training, multimedia training and interpreter training – in terms of the characteristics or indicators of successful skills development that can underpin future formal traineeships and employment. The objective of acquiring new skills was to help provide the foundation for livelihoods:

- in water resource management
- in community-based research
- as young leaders and ambassadors for country in decision-making processes
- as interpreters and mediators between Elders and external researchers and government
- as strong role models for other Anmatyerr *tyerrytj*.



*Figure 1: Anmatyerr trainee researchers receiving the digital media kit for multimedia training*

### 4.1 Resource management training

The Certificate I in Resource Management (RM) was an NT course developed by CDU that provides skills that empower Aboriginal people to manage their own lands under contemporary pressures while using their local knowledge and following their customary responsibilities. The Certificate I in Conservation and Land Management (CLM) is a nationally accredited training package that has a broader emphasis on Aboriginal and other land management and the needs of remote areas. The CLM course sets out competencies rather than curricula, recognises prior learning and is delivered in whatever way the registered training organisation proposes. The RM course was only delivered in the NT to Aboriginal people on their homelands, whereas the CLM course is delivered across Australia by a number of service providers to any interested individuals or groups. In the NT, both courses are mainly taken by emerging or existing Aboriginal ranger groups.

The RM course, delivered by a trainer from CDU's School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems, was completed by 15 students from Ti Tree School. The CLM course had 12 students from Laramba School and was delivered by a trainer from CDU's School of Science and Primary Industry. In total, 27 Anmatyerr people have enrolled in these courses: four school teachers, 21 mature-age students and the two Anmatyerr trainee researchers.

The prospectus for the RM course (Course code 70099NT; nominal duration 805 hours; CDU) describes this course as follows:

*The need for this course has arisen out of the training needs identified by the evolving Aboriginal ranger movement across north Australia. Aboriginal Rangers are involved in a complex management scenario where they find themselves needing to be a bridge between two different cultures and their respective strategies for managing, land, sea and other natural and cultural resources ... The Certificate I in Resource Management addresses the need for the development of practical skills that enables students to participate effectively in the workplace ... practical skills include the use of 4WD vehicles, use of firearms, feral plant and animal control, site protection and burning practices. These skills are supported by the development of the student's literacy and numeracy skills, together with an introduction to some of the broader issues relating to resource management in a cross cultural context ... On completion of the course, students will be able to demonstrate:*

- *record keeping which supports the knowledge of appropriate human resources in relation to the management of land and sea country*
- *organisational skills in weed management; control burning; quarantine activities; occupational health and safety; communications and other skills*
- *record keeping supporting knowledge of the purpose and interrelationship between local organisations, the economy and the management of land and water.*

The objective of delivering the RM course was: 1) training of Anmatyerr trainee researchers as land and water managers through the Anmatyerr Kwaty Project, and 2) training of a large group of students and teachers from Ti Tree School. Many of these people have worked directly or indirectly with the Anmatyerr Kwaty Project. The trainer visited Ti Tree on eight occasions for week-long study blocks. The course can be incorporated into a school program as part of the Vocational Education and Training in School Program (VETis) so the trainer needs to negotiate times with the Ti Tree School principal and teachers. The training arrangement between CDU and Ti Tree School evolved from the Anmatyerr Kwaty Project taking students from the Language and Culture class on school trips to water places throughout 2005 (approximately eight times per year at both Ti Tree and Laramba Schools) which enabled the research team and the broader Anmatyerr community to build relationships. Modules of the NT Education Kit Waterwatch Program were delivered to give the school students an understanding of how non-Aboriginal people describe and value water places. Time was also provided for the students to discuss cultural values and to compare different knowledges sets. Principles of reciprocity and working together were thus established from the outset.



Figure 2: Laramba School student checks for macro-invertebrates at 20 Mile waterhole on Anmatyerr country

The success of this diffuse training throughout 2005 led to both Ti Tree and Laramba Schools requesting that the training program continue in 2006. Although the research project and the VETis program are separate activities, members of the research team continued to take part in most training sessions for reasons of continuity, commitment, and the ‘working together’ and training objectives of the project. The training helps to develop the skills of the Anmatyerr trainee researchers and the outside researchers and generally contributes to the overall research objective of creating Anmatyerr livelihoods in land and water management.

At Laramba School, contact with the research team continues, but to a lesser extent than at Ti Tree because the Anmatyerr trainee researchers come from the Ti Tree region. The Waterwatch activities at Laramba School and the resource management program have focused on more general land and water management activities. While young Laramba students have been motivated and productive in sampling, reporting and identifying aquatic organisms, there has been less emphasis on participation of extended family and sharing of cultural knowledge.

The presence of the older Anmatyerr trainee researchers in the RM course has resulted in their new skills being transferred to other students through their established roles as facilitators and interpreters. The training involves going out ‘on country’, visiting sites of importance to Anmatyerr people, always with appropriate Elders who convey to the younger generations stories and songs associated with places. The Anmatyerr trainee researchers have studied mapping and GPS, animal and plant harvesting, protecting and maintaining sites of cultural and natural significance, understanding legal and NRM processes, and the relationships between local organisations and governments in the management of land and water. The RM course is able to recognise many culturally inherent skills that the students already have.



Figure 3: Laramba School students taking fauna samples at 20 Mile waterhole on Anmatyerr country in 2005

## 4.2 Multimedia training

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are a precondition for multimedia training. A digital media kit comprising an iBook G4, with features such as iMovie, iPhoto, iTunes and iView MediaPro, a 500-gigabyte hard drive and a hard-cover carry case, was supplied to the Anmatyerr trainee researchers by Inter-Networking Communities, a collaboration among CDU staff and remote Aboriginal communities concerning the use of ICT (<http://www.cdu.edu.au/centres/inc/>). The objective of providing the kit was to give the trainee researchers control and autonomy over the information recorded i.e. how it is stored, accessed, managed and disseminated. Prior to having the kit, the trainees used the Anmatyerr *Angkety* database (using *Ara Irititja* software), which is central to the Anmatyerr digital archive being facilitated by the NT Library.

The kit has enabled both Anmatyerr trainee researchers to undertake multimedia training as part of an informal agreement between the NT Library, CDU and a work placement with the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project. Where courses allow for recognition of prior learning and current competencies,

such arrangements are an informal pathway to gaining vocational education and training (VET) qualifications. For example, the multimedia skills the trainees acquire during their work placement can be accredited as competencies towards the Certificate II in Multimedia (CDU, Alice Springs) when the trainees choose to formally enrol.

*This informal pathway is an important feature of the industry training package. For the first time, a person who demonstrates the required competencies can receive formal recognition for their existing skills and knowledge, without being required to enrol in a course of study. The training package encourages people with work experience to undertake assessment for which they can receive a national qualification. Individuals can receive credit for competencies in related employment fields. Often the two pathways will merge. A person with some of the competencies required for a qualification may undertake an initial assessment to identify their prior learning and current competencies and follow that assessment with vocational education and training before receiving a national qualification. Alternatively, a student may enter an education and training program without an initial assessment but, as a component of the training, regularly undergo assessment. (ANTA 2004a)*

The Certificate II in Multimedia is designed to support people working in the multimedia industry as assistants who perform duties such as capturing and manipulating images, assisting with animation, and producing and updating a web page. Students must complete two core units and seven elective units. The objectives of the course are to:

- demonstrate basic operational knowledge in a moderate range of areas
- apply a defined range of skills
- apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems
- perform a range of tasks within a limited range of options.

Table 1: Units of the Certificate II in Multimedia (CDU, Alice Springs)

|                       |                                                                                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Core Units</b>     | CUFGEN01A Develop and Apply Industry Knowledge                                  |
|                       | CUFSAF01A Follow health, safety and security procedures                         |
| <b>Elective Units</b> | ICPMM63BA Access and use the internet                                           |
|                       | CUSRAD01A Collect and organise information                                      |
|                       | CUFMEM14A Create, manipulate and incorporate 2D graphics                        |
|                       | ICPMM11BA Identify components of Multi-Media                                    |
|                       | ICPMM41CA Incorporate text into multi media presentations                       |
|                       | CUFMEM13A Incorporate, design and edit digital video                            |
|                       | ICPMM44CA Incorporate audio into multi media presentations                      |
|                       | ICAITU005B Operate computer hardware                                            |
|                       | ICAITU006B Operate computing packages                                           |
|                       | CUFPOP01A Prepare and Participate in an electronic media activity               |
|                       | CUFIMA01A Produce and manipulate digital images                                 |
|                       | CUFCAM01A set up and operate a basic video camera                               |
|                       | CUFMEM12A Update WebPages, use authoring tool to create an interactive sequence |
|                       | CULMS413A Use information technology.                                           |



Figure 4: A trainee researcher films Elders telling stories about their country

The Anmatyerr trainee researchers spent approximately five days per month with their coordinator, recording footage of country and people talking about country, and practising inter-cultural dialogue as part of the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project. They also spent 1–2 days per month working with the multimedia trainer in the Anmatyerr Learning and Knowledge Centre and another one day per month working from the multimedia trainer’s office at the Strehlow Research Centre on activities related to the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project. The trainees have the option of enrolling formally in the Certificate II in Multimedia after this informal pre-training. The multimedia products they have produced would be assessed and recognised as prior learning for this accredited course.

On the Certificate II in Multimedia, one of the Anmatyerr trainee researchers reported:

*[The multimedia trainer] has been teaching us how to use a database, make PowerPoints, how to use the computers the proper way ... We were travelling around with Teddy Pwerrerl and Maxi [senior Kwertengwerl for Mt Leichardt] making them videos about the country and the water and managing that country.*

The other trainee said he got most satisfaction out of ‘showing movies and DVDs [made by the team] to the old people and the owners of country.’



Figure 5: Anmatyerr researchers used borrowed equipment and then requested their own multimedia equipment so that they could have autonomy over recordings

### 4.3 Interpreter training

The Diploma of Interpreting is a flexible delivery course run by the Institute of Aboriginal Development (IAD) in Alice Springs. The diploma has some workplace content with the trainee’s coordinator and the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project. The IAD trainer organises and gives in-class lectures and group discussions, and uses role plays and field trips (for example, to the court house and health centre). Students may complete the units of competency in their own time. The diploma is designed to support people as accredited interpreters with skills necessary to work in industries such as media, legal, social/educational, native title, and cultural and natural resource management. Students learn how to:

- interpret dialogues
- take into account different cultures, behaviours and communication patterns

- communicate effectively in both English and Anmatyerr
- manage personal business affairs
- develop personally.

The Anmatyerr trainee researchers spent about one week every six weeks in Alice Springs, during which time they were at IAD for about three days per week working with the IAD trainer. At that rate, graduation would be in 2–3 years, which is the average completion time for students in this course. Sometimes they were in the classroom on their own. At other times they worked alongside other students, depending on who attended on the day. Although this training began well, the course is on hold due to the previous trainer leaving and no replacement yet being found.



*Figure 6: Interpreting in the field by a trainee researcher*

## 5. Major training outcomes and success indicators

Training opportunities for Aboriginal people exist locally (e.g. via the Alice Springs Indigenous Education and Employment Taskforce) and nationally (via the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, <http://www.dewr.gov.au/>) and are underpinned by policies that aim for greater Aboriginal participation and employment, economic independence and equal opportunity. Yet, some Aboriginal people have goals that differ from the economic motives and ‘mainstream’ jobs held by non-Aboriginal Australians. The jobs that Aboriginal Australians often aspire to, especially people living on their traditional lands, relate to country. Cultural responsibilities, and management of new inter-cultural issues (e.g. surveillance of development impacts; environmental monitoring; control of weeds, feral animals, and dust; natural and cultural resource based tourism; and other land uses) feature strongly in the type of work sought by Aboriginal owners and managers of country. Understanding of the needs of Aboriginal people in employment and training has shifted attention more toward socio-cultural objectives, such as health and wellbeing, than economic objectives. Creating Aboriginal sustainable livelihoods is a global activity and in Australia the focus is on the links between such livelihoods, health and wellbeing (e.g. Kral & Falk 2004; Garnett and Sithole 2007).

Employment happens when people are ‘job ready’ and this is usually the result of some form of training. Even with the provision of livelihoods through government investment, the uptake is dependent on people having gained basic skills along the pathway from unemployment to employment with a livelihood. For non-Aboriginal Australians, this process often progresses from primary school to high school, then to TAFE, vocational and technical education, or university. The current pathways available to Aboriginal people in remote areas may be implicated in the continued under-utilisation of Aboriginal people’s training options, as well as significantly below average employment and health. Everybody has their own pathway and many are circuitous and unpredictable, involving individuals, chance and opportunity. An understanding of the ‘lead-in’ process to a pathway and the unique characteristics would assist in improving training uptake and

outcomes. We describe below the major training outcomes and success indicators from the skills development component of the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project. In our conclusion, we then consider the design and content of culturally aware pathways into formal training and employment options for Aboriginal people. Our case study occurred at the same time as research that led to Rea and Young (2006). The separate studies provide insight and recommendations from desert Australia about strategies and indicators for successful collaborative activities.

## 5.1 Major training outcomes

### 5.1.1 Communication for inter-cultural and intra-cultural awareness

Multimedia is well known as an empowering avenue for expression, especially in contexts where there are language and cultural barriers. The Anmatyerr trainee researchers' new multimedia skills support them in developing methodologies to convey cultural values in approved and effective ways. The trainees have become proficient with digital stills and digital video cameras, downloading and managing data on their iBook. They have learnt how to design and edit PowerPoint slides and digital movies, including replaying videos they have shot and cutting small sound bites and film clips for PowerPoint presentations and incorporating text into multimedia presentations. The programs they most commonly use when training are iMovies and PowerPoint. Audio recording directly onto the iBook using the computer's microphone is also very popular and both young men are increasingly adept at recording their own voices, saving the audio files and inserting them into presentations. Similarly they are increasingly aware of how to edit short movies, add text, audio, photos and the like from other files on the computer. For instance, one of the trainees recorded and uploaded the Anmatyerr voice that notifies people using the Anmatyerr *Angkety* database that they are about to access protected information, and both trainees have recorded the project's cultural supervisor speaking in Anmatyerr and inserted or annotated this into PowerPoint presentations to give them the advantage of communicating to both English-speaking and Anmatyerr-speaking audiences.

The use of multimedia has had the wider effect of demonstrating to the Anmatyerr community the power of this medium as a communication tool. The Anmatyerr trainee researchers have used their new information technology skills to prepare for and participate in inter-cultural communication activities. They presented their first PowerPoint slideshow, entitled 'Cultural Values of *Kwaty* and *Anmatyerr* participation in Natural Resource Management', to water scientists, government, NGOs and environmental groups (12 July 2005). They also produced a two-minute digital movie and a PowerPoint slideshow featuring both audio and video that was shown at the Water Education Network National Conference (19 April 2006), at an ICT presentation in Darwin (30 May 2006), at the IUG Conference in Brisbane (5 July 2006) and the Groundwater–Surface Water Conference in Alice Springs (8 September 2006). Through this participation, the men have recognised the political value of the tools. With Anmatyerr voice-overs and English subtitles, the presentations are empowering the trainees and the Anmatyerr culture. They are preparing further presentations, DVDs and videos as part of the reporting process for cultural values of water for the forthcoming amended Ti Tree Water Resources Strategy. The political value of the communications is another outcome, with Anmatyerr tyerrty recognising the impact of the trainees' work. The acquired skills are making a positive difference to the trainees' relationships with others, including increased respect from their peers and Elders.

The outcomes of using multimedia and web-based technologies relevant to the Anmatyerr experience include:

- being able to communicate rich images of landscapes, environmental issues and local places
- being able to develop, interpret and select their own content
- the flexibility of the medium, in that additional material can be added and content changed relatively easily
- the potential to reach and engage geographically disparate audiences through locally made DVD presentations that are available on the Internet.

The immediacy of the technology has immense appeal. Videos can be played on the spot and photos downloaded and viewed as soon as they have been taken. Images can be taken home to families and communities the same day. The senior Anmatyerr men have recognised the immediacy and impact of downloading data from day trips onto the iBook and being able to look at it the same evening on country around the campfire. The knowledge that the photos could be taken to other senior men whose ill health prevents them from making trips, or to other relatives with rights and interest in country, was commented on and encouraged by senior men.

Although the iBook and the material produced are frequently shown to family and friends, the three key ‘owners’ of the multimedia kit – the two trainee researchers and their cultural supervisor appear to be the only Anmatyerr people using it. The relatively restricted use of the computer indicates the high regard in which it is held and the desire to protect cultural information and manage it with respect. No women appear to have used the equipment and only one woman has been seen viewing material on the iBook, as compared with more than a hundred men.



*Figure 7: Anmatyerr trainee researchers discuss photos of country taken on a field trip, illustrating the immediacy of the technology*

The Anmatyerr trainee researchers have also developed their communication skills through the Diploma of Interpreting. One of their key interpretation roles is to act as mediators when talking to Elders and external researchers about cultural values of water and pathways to participation in water management and governance. The trainees interpret and communicate the words of Elders to researchers and vice versa, and have performed as excellent interpreters for the research team in the communities of Wilora, Ti Tree, Pmara Jutunta, Willowra, Nturiya and Alyuen, and on country at Allungra swamp, 20 Mile Creek, Ngwurla, Lookara and Yanninge rock holes. Their contribution in facilitating discussions with old people has been vital to the Anmatyerr voice being recognised in this research project. The role these young and relatively inexperienced men have played as interpreters will increase with more on-ground research opportunities and training.

The trainees are also being placed in many situations where they can listen and observe English conversation and behaviour, thereby putting into practice what they are learning with the diploma (e.g. workshops, conferences, project meetings, Water Advisory Committee meetings). From their video recordings of Elders, they have also interpreted and translated Anmatyerr language into English and inserted the required subtitles.

### 5.1.2 Inter-generational education

The Anmatyerr trainee researchers have used the iBook in the Anmatyerr community on many occasions, usually to show family and respected Elders or older brothers the numerous historical photos and the more recent project photos. The equipment and the multimedia products have facilitated communication between generations of (almost exclusively) Anmatyerr men and enabled them to engage with the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project with a common purpose of finding ways to ‘protect country’ (pers. comm. Teddy Pwerrerl 4 December 2005). The research team has taken the iBook on all field trips on Anmatyerr country.

The important role of multimedia products in inter-generational education was demonstrated on a trip to *Arnka* (Mount Leichhardt) in October 2005. Water researchers, trainers, three generations of *Merekartwey* and *Kwertengwerl* (landowners and managers) and younger initiated Anmatyerr men visited important *Altyerr* (dreaming) sites to discuss cultural and natural resource management of water and to learn multimedia in the field. All of the Anmatyerr men were there principally because this was important ancestral country with strong law and many powerful *Altyerr* stories. Throughout the day, the group travelled from site to site taking digital photos and making video and audio recordings. Between stops, the Anmatyerr trainee researchers, with the multimedia trainer’s assistance, downloaded this material onto their iBook. That evening, the group settled into a campsite under the imposing 1170 metre *Arnka*. While the senior men huddled around the computer, the more junior fellows gathered behind them and, with the cultural supervisor operating the mouse, the old men were shown previously downloaded information from the Anmatyerr *Angkety* database plus the photos that had been taken that day. The realisation that this was a useful tool for conveying meaning and story both on site and when they got back to their communities was palpable, as was the confidence of the Anmatyerr trainee researchers and the cultural supervisor in demonstrating their new skills. The group viewed the day’s photos, other recent records and old historical photos until the computer’s batteries went flat, and the men kept on talking into the night about the past, the strength of their ancestors and the challenges of the future.

Bringing these people together for discussions on country and with the support of computer technologies strengthened their kinship and ties to *mer* (country). It is also one of many inspiring trips that have motivated the community-based and external researchers to continue working on developing new governance arrangements between Anmatyerr law and Australian law.



Figure 8: Anmatyerr men, water researchers, and trainers use multimedia to discuss water issues and law at Arnka (Mt Leichhardt)



Figure 9: The RM training included students and Elders, women and men

While there are 'free' sites and open knowledge for intergenerational education, it is necessary to respect restricted laws and stories taught by men or women to their own gender, and to provide space, time and resources for this necessary component of culturally based training.

Senior Anmatyerr law man and Elder Eric Penangk has always reiterated the need for recognition of Anmatyerr law in land management. He has promoted a vision for ongoing leadership based on education and maintenance of culture. His view of the importance of education has been fundamental in facilitating training components, especially the culturally supervised trips for the RM course. The training approach we report includes the training that occurs between Anmatyerr Elders and youth. Much of the training involved Elders such as Eric Penangk in their teaching or educating role e.g. cultural supervision and direction from strong family members and senior *Merekartwey* and *Kwertengwerl*. Whether it was using multimedia technologies to record interviews on cultural values of water, interpreting for Elders, or learning about resource management on country, the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project facilitated and provided resources to enable senior Elders to always be present. The endorsement of cultural education is perhaps the strongest driving force behind the traineeships. The inter-generational transmission of knowledge is evident and contributes to the strong sense of community support and respect, creating an environment in which the Anmatyerr trainee researchers strive to achieve their best in culturally appropriate ways.

With this sense of community/family support, the trainees feel the weight of expectation and the pressures that come with being singled out as future leaders, while at the same time they feel self-worth and pride. Being able to communicate cultural values to western audiences on behalf of the Elders is recognised as an important task and, indeed, a livelihood, because it takes pressure away from senior people already inundated with community issues and other concerns involving outsiders.

### 5.1.3 Personal achievement

Helme et al. (2005) have considered the VET experience of current and former Koori students in Victoria to identify ways to improve qualification and employment outcomes. They found that the outcome of TAFE study most often mentioned was an increase in self-confidence. Across all levels and courses, Koorie students felt that participation in their course had contributed to a sense of achievement, feeling less shy, being more able to communicate with others and more confident in their ability to learn (2005, p. 40).

The worth of the iBook and the training activities in terms of increasing the Anmatyerr trainee researchers' confidence and self-esteem cannot be overestimated. Although several days a month spent at the Anmatyerr Learning and Knowledge Centre producing multimedia may sound minimal, it is significant to find 2–3 Anmatyerr men, and sometimes their friends, working there for this length of time. The media kit itself also seems to have changed the habits and awareness of the trainee researchers and is possibly filling in parts of their day. Both of them have mentioned that they enjoy working on the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project and using the digital media kit because it breaks the 'boredom' cycle.

Providing the Anmatyerr trainee researchers with their own IT equipment has been central to its uptake and the delivery of project outcomes. Making it more relevant and desirable to engage with these technologies enriches their multimedia experience. Having the digital media kit has led to some noticeable development in the skills and interests of the trainees. They frequently use Apple GarageBand, iTunes and play various games on the iBook. Combining their skills and knowledge, they can now record and overlay songs, which has been useful for interpreting and voice-overs.

The trainees have also used the iBook as a research tool on their own terms without the influence of others. To learn Anmatyerr songs recorded in iMovie, they have played them over and over. They have listened to the recorded stories told by respected Elder Eric Penangk so that they can do their own 'detective work' when researching at the Strehlow Centre. In one recording, Eric Penangk mentions that many *Tywerreng* (sacred objects) had been removed from certain places. Noting the names of these places, the trainees visited the Strehlow Centre with the view to uncovering the whereabouts of these sacred objects. While they did not find what they were looking for, they did discover that the anthropologist Ted Strehlow had made a trip to Anmatyerr country in 1968 and had recorded songs with old men. The trainees therefore played a central part in repatriating these songs on CD-ROM to senior men in the Anmatyerr community who owned the rights to this material.

The social skills and confidence of the research trainees and the school students is increasing with every trip on country and from listening to English in inter-cultural situations. Students are becoming increasingly involved in activities, volunteering their assistance and taking lead roles. In particular, the Anmatyerr trainee researchers have taken on mentor roles with the remaining high-school students (15–21 years of age) during trips run as part of the RM course. Gaining employment with the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project, the trainees have put their new skills to use and furthered their own training/teaching skills. This has also supported the esteem in which they are held in the Anmatyerr group as they develop as leaders within their own system of laws and within the wider region.

In general, the outcomes of the training and research activities are an increase in the skills and self-esteem of the Anmatyerr trainee researchers, the cultural supervisor and other community participants (students and Elders). This is apparent in the inter-cultural realm where Anmatyerr people are speaking up more often and taking a lead role in presentations. Effective communication has spin-offs in terms of socialising and enjoying new situations. Students at the local schools are more engaged and staff have reported improved attendance as a result of the land and water management training (RM and CLM courses).

#### 5.1.4 Inter-cultural interaction

Multimedia training is highly respected because the Elders understand its utility as a communication tool. The immediacy of multimedia and digital technologies and their ability to convey information about Anmatyerr law, special water places and people's values and aspirations is a key factor of this training that is empowering the Anmatyerr trainee researchers; they can see and hear that they are doing useful work that can be accessed by a wide audience and make a difference.

The training also increases contact with, and understanding of, other land managers, and government and non-government agencies. The multimedia training course involves working with first aid and 4WD trainers, and with managers and researchers from Greening Australia NT and the Parks and Wildlife Service of the NT. These interactions increase inter-cultural understanding and inter-cultural capacity, and help to foster individual and community/agency relationships. One

fencing project is in partnership with a station manager and other water-related activities will forge relationships with the regional Water Advisory Committee, government and non-government water and environmental managers, and the regional water utility.



Figure 10: The RM trainer with Anmatyerr men

While the Elders want to see the trainees become fluent in the workings of western knowledge systems, they want the training to be hand-in-hand with the teaching of their own knowledge. The Diploma of Interpreting helps realise this potential and equips trainees to understand and communicate both value systems. It was explained to an Elder that the trainees would start an interpreter course in Alice Springs which would enable them to understand the whitefella natural resource management language so that, in time, they could play an interpreter role for Anmatyerr people. ‘Yes, that’s what I’m looking at,’ replied the Elder.

During a conversation on a trip to a significant rock hole (3 November 2005), the importance of inter-cultural understanding was discussed. The Anmatyerr trainee researchers did not speak up during this conversation as this would have been culturally inappropriate in the presence of the Elders. Two well respected pastors from the Finke River Mission, who are both fluent Arrnte speakers (Anmatyerr is an Arandic language) and who have lived and worked in central Australia for many years, are still highly regarded in the Anmatyerr region. Referring to these men, the Elder spokesman for the site explained to the research team and trainers the importance of language in inter-cultural work:

*People like Garry Stoll and Paul Albrecht, they were well known, them two... that’s the sort of people we need to help us out, to talk about what we’re talking about now [research questions about water]. They can speak language. I think that’s really important.*

*You can speak language alright, you can talk, but understanding, that’s the main one.*

The VET trainer agreed when he said to the Anmatyerr men:

*If you get people who understand that [whitefella] language, they can interpret it properly. These young fellas, when they went to that wetlands meeting in town ... they were listening, watching the way whitefellas make decisions in those meetings, learning the language and how they operate.*

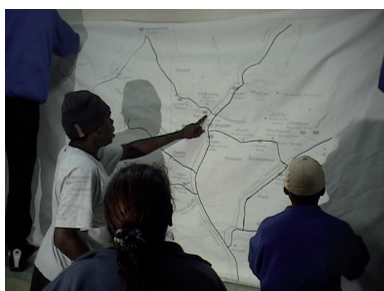


Figure 11: One of the trainee researchers leads an exercise in mapping country

When asked what they have been learning, the Anmatyerr trainee researchers made similar comments:

*Learning to speak English and explain it [English ideas] in language.*

*Barry (the trainer) has been teaching us to speak proper English and turn it into language... to help those people who don't speak in English.*

Such skills are clearly invaluable for personal reasons and community and project objectives. Language interpretation is the only way different language groups can convey to each other their values and aspirations and also receive and understand that information.

The Diploma in Interpreting and the Certificate I in Resource Management demonstrate good practice in training as they recognise the inherent skills Anmatyerr people have as language speakers, and managers of *mer* and *kwaty*. However, the cultural supervisor continues to reiterate that the trainees are also learning both important western skills and cultural knowledge. Equal weight is given to acquisition of cultural knowledge (knowing the country, its water places, songs, *Merekartwey*, *Kwertengwerl*) and western knowledge such as NRM issues and multimedia technology. This seems to be a key factor underlying the trainees' high motivation; that is, research, training and issues-based projects increases their understanding of their own cultural knowledge as well as that of others.

#### 5.1.5 Relationships: individual, community, research team, organisations

The building and sustaining of relationships, including personal, community-researcher and community-organisation relationships, are key factors underpinning success of this training program. Inter-cultural relationships with other land managers, individuals and agencies help people to better understand other perspectives and knowledge systems. Partnerships between local parties who share a common goal can be seen as best practice. Case work and multidisciplinary and Indigenist research (Rigney 1999a, 1999b), where the role of outside researchers is to help people articulate and convey their wishes, are demonstrated here as critical features of successful inter-cultural team relationships.

##### *Community-research team relationships*

The Anmatyerr trainee researchers worked as part of Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) crews for most of the year, averaging 20 hours per week. In two weeks of each month, they worked an additional 20 paid hours per week on the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project, and this included the training activities. Flexibility on behalf of the ACGC and a transparent working relationship has helped to form the employment/training process by supporting this opportunity for the young men. It also means they are still on a relative par with friends and family, keeping the CDEP employment for half the time and working afternoons for an extra two weeks per month – a situation that provides opportunity without too much privilege that may be counterproductive in a small community.

Motivation levels are high because of the mutual respect for cultural and western knowledge systems and the joint design of the project by the Anmatyerr community and the research team. As one Elder says, 'We should be working together; that's what we want to see'. This principle is constantly reiterated by Anmatyerr *tyerrytj* in numerous contexts. The success of any ethical and cooperative research venture with Aboriginal people relies on strongly supported fieldwork and the building of relationships between all parties. It is through joint fieldwork and relationships that this

project has developed collaboratively. The on-ground nature of the work is critical to the formation of relationships, which can be translated into positive project outcomes as the project stakeholders mutually work and learn in context.

From November 2004 until now, the project team has consistently discussed the community's aspirations for their trainees. The ACGC and the community made it clear that they wanted their young people to be involved in training and livelihoods. This is how the Waterwatch program began at the school. The community then put forward the names of two men in their early twenties who were then recruited as Anmatyerr trainee researchers. These young men are linked by kinship and friendship but come from two distinctly different family groups in a 'political' sense. Once they were selected, informal meetings were held in two of the main communities with the trainees' senior family members to discuss what was expected of them as Anmatyerr trainee researchers, what was expected of the project researchers and how the team would work together. The transparent relationship with the ACGC, including both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members, has facilitated a healthy relationship and negotiation process.



Figure 12: From left to right, the coordinator, trainee researchers, the multimedia trainer and the cultural supervisor

### *Personal relationships*

When discussing current training and future options, the Anmatyerr trainee researchers always referred to people rather than course names. This may indicate the importance of knowing and trusting people as a pre-requisite for good training outcomes, as opposed to particular curriculums or training providers.

This need for consistent and trusted personnel is supported by Gelade and Stehlik (2004) whose research into the impact of differing contextual settings (urban, regional and remote) on Aboriginal learners in vocational education and training found that the influence of individuals delivering the training was a crucial factor. Inconsistency in personnel was found to be a major reason for training programs being discontinued in remote locations, even those that had run successfully in the past (2004, p. 49).

The research team provided the Anmatyerr trainee researchers with a supportive and familiar setting when undertaking training activities away from home (i.e in Alice Springs). They often stayed with the coordinator and were supported by friends and colleagues who they had met through their involvement in NRM issues. The usual government solution to training blocks is to supply young people with money for food and a motel, which can leave people feeling alienated and lonely. The Anmatyerr *Kwaty Project* team, colleagues from partner agencies and the cultural supervisor made sure that the trainees' time in Alice Springs was active, enjoyable and nurtured. This was an expression of reciprocity based on the way outside researchers were treated on Anmatyerr country – putting the 'working together' philosophy into practice.

Personal engagement between key agencies and community individuals is essential in small towns. The fly-in/fly-out arrangements of foreign providers are well known to be ineffective in terms

of student completion and subsequent use of skills. The support from the Ti Tree and Laramba Schools for the Waterwatch training in 2005 and the RM and CLM courses in 2006 have been critical for the success of these programs. School staff report these courses as providing useful skills delivered in a cultural context that adds value to the school curriculum and objective of finding long-term desirable livelihoods for the students. Other support has come from community Elders, local pastoralists, the ACGC and the NT Government.

### *External relationships*

We have mentioned the important support of coordinators and mentors above. Agency and institutional support is also important and has been received through the project partners as support with finances (DKCRC), communication (DKCRC, CDU corporate video), bore water monitoring (Water Resources Section of the NT Government), fencing and community water grant applications (Greening Australia NT), permits and traditional owner identity (CLC), VETis commitment (Ti Tree and Laramba School principals), multimedia software and training (NT Library), and invitations to workshops and conferences (Land & Water Australia, Desert Knowledge CRC, Lake Eyre Basin committees, NT Government). These external relationships are mainly forged by individuals, although once a relationship is mature, the risks of losing key individuals can be negligible. Individual commitments during the formative stages are critical, leading to good relationships that have a lasting legacy. The key point is that inter-agency relationships and community-agency relationships have a life of their own, with reputations lasting and benefiting future participants and activities.

### 5.1.6 Health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing are inextricably linked to Aboriginal Law and Culture and relationships with country (Kral & Falk 2004). Anmatyerr participation and livelihoods in managing country, especially water, is aimed at long-term improvements to the health and wellbeing of country and kin. The Anmatyerr trainee researchers have reported that they enjoyed working and training on country and on culturally relevant issues. Community pride in the trainees' ability and in the profile of the strong Anmatyerr culture is apparent. Health and wellbeing are also an outcome of having authority and control over recording, storing and accessing knowledge. Senior Elders now have increased respect for the trainees who have control over recording and managing knowledge and they admire the young people stepping up to the challenges of communicating between skin groups, speaking publicly and participating in workshops. People in neighbouring Aboriginal regions have heard about the 'fellas' and the work they are doing on the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project and want to know more and have similar opportunities. The financial support of the CDEP top up salary to the trainees assists individuals and families, but it would be difficult to measure what health outcomes arise from the additional money. The neighbouring Alyawarr people regard health as the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community (Kral & Falk 2004). The outcomes and success indicators outlined in this report also relate to this definition of health.

## 5.2 Major success indicators

### 5.2.1 Mentoring

A key factor in the continuing work and participation of the Anmatyerr trainee researchers is the mentoring role of the main cultural supervisor who constantly reiterates both the honour and the responsibilities that come with their selection as trainees and their future leadership roles. He

makes sure that these two young men get to Alice Springs for their six-weekly training blocks at IAD. Coming from the same community and being well regarded there, his role and authority has been instrumental in the trainees' consistent participation and increasing confidence and capability.

Before the 2005 CLC Ranger Conference at Ross River, the cultural supervisor talked to the Anmatyerr trainee researchers about the importance of their new position:

*I need you fellas to go to this conference and start to take an interest...when I'm talking about water I need you fellas there to back me up. (19 April 2005)*

Later, at a sacred water place, he noted:

*I came here 14 years ago – first young fella to come here and listen to the old people, listen to what they say and learn off them. Same as these three guys here as well [pointing to the Anmatyerr trainee researchers and his own son]. I spoke to them earlier. This is the main secret place. (18 May 2006)*

This quote illustrates how the research project has set up a framework with cultural supervision and mentoring as fundamental elements that allow for Anmatyerr people to teach their young people.

The cultural supervisor, other community Elders and the ACGC were involved in choosing the training programs and influenced some of the content through specific modules and activities that respond to identified needs and research priorities. They also identified other courses offering new skills that they see as beneficial. As in the neighbouring Sandover Region, the process of mentoring or teaching the law is fundamental to the authority structure of the Elders and is the consistent cohesive element that binds the society together and determines each person's responsibilities (Kral & Falk 2004).

### 5.2.2 Authority and ownership

Miller, in his discussion of seven key factors that lead to positive training outcomes for Aboriginal Australians, argues that there is 'unequivocal evidence that the single most important factor in achieving positive outcomes is Aboriginal community ownership and involvement in the training from start to finish' (2005, p. 8). He suggests that training will have greater success when there is greater community control and authority of the program.

The multimedia tools were highly respected because they were recognised as a means by which Aboriginal people could speak directly to governments about land and water management, through the medium of video and audio recordings taken on their country, while not necessarily having to confront these issues in non-Aboriginal forums and formats. Control and ownership of equipment and recordings and management of knowledge is a key success factor in a skills development program. Interviews with Elders with particular rights and responsibilities have been recorded, filmed, edited and built into PowerPoint slideshows at the Anmatyerr Library and Knowledge Centre using the trainees' own computer. The assistance of the multimedia trainer has been instrumental in the Anmatyerr trainees' successful uptake of these technologies and to their increasing independence and ability to develop communication products. Owning and controlling computer and camera equipment is fundamental to management of sacred knowledge, the security of which may not be fully trusted when agencies or people other than the owners and managers of that knowledge are involved.



Figure 13: A trainee researcher downloads photos to the iBook in the field

The training in recording voice and video; collating, storing and managing the data; and selecting, manipulating and producing presentations in parallel with text reports has empowered Anmatyerr tyerry. Likewise, the participation of an increasing number of local Aboriginal people, casually or voluntarily, including formal cultural supervision and advice, has affirmed the ‘frontline’ voice of the Anmatyerr people in the project outcomes.

The trainees’ participation in and control over recordings has been central to the trust and involvement now being shown by other Aboriginal Elders. Senior *Merekartwey* and *Kwertengwerl* have been impressed that their own people have been on hand to record discussions and photograph sites. The role of the cultural supervisor and approvals from the ACGC, together with the participation of young people on equal terms, has provided a strong foundation for ongoing training activities. Anmatyerr people are confident they have authority over the information and knowledge being recorded and discussed, and have a strong voice in the direction of the project within their stated philosophy of ‘working together’.

The trainees have become respected and capable facilitators in ‘opening up’ the country through computer technologies. Most importantly, this process has the consent of Elders. Recognition of the trainees’ role, integrity and performance is increasing among the research team and the Pmara Jutunta and Ti Tree communities. Senior Anmatyerr men representing other tracts of country have approached the cultural supervisor and the external researchers and asked to view the secular photos of Anmatyerr country and historical photos stored on the iBook. The research team has also been invited by some of these senior men and women to travel to their country to discuss water and resource management in a uniquely Anmatyerr context and to record more photos of and information about their homelands. The research, equipment and training have brought the young Anmatyerr trainee researchers into frequent contact with Elders, not just in their home communities, but across the region and in a spirit of mutual respect.

Interpretation is also a role with significant responsibilities and one in which only capable people are trusted. The Anmatyerr trainee researchers are gaining recognition in the communities where they have been working. Senior *Merekartwey* and *Kwertengwerl* are happy to work with language speakers from their own group so that their views are well translated. This recognition places the interpreters and the Elders conveying the views and wishes in positions of authority. This authority and control is an indicator of successful skills development.

### 5.2.3 Flexible and locally-based training

The flexibility of training activities was also noted as a relevant indicator of ongoing participation and outcomes. Multimedia training began through recognised arrangements between trainers, service providers and the trainees, where employment in the form of workplace training could be formally recognised later. This meant the trainees could start learning new skills without having to

formally enrol in the Certificate I and II in Multimedia at CDU – something they would not have been ready for given the Alice Springs location and other expectations. The multimedia training took place as workplace training within the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project and had a cultural setting and focus at the Ti Tree Library and Knowledge Centre. This informal pathway into VET qualifications is relatively easy to set up where the goodwill exists between an external trainer or employee and the service provider. It supports the trainees in moving towards urban-based training programs by providing confidence and skills from a culturally secure and interesting setting. Enrolling directly into the CDU course would likely have had different results from entering the course via this flexible pathway.

This flexibility was of critical importance, allowing the Anmatyerr trainee researchers to gain skills at their own pace, in their home town and on a one-to-one basis with the same trainer. The multimedia trainer's brief with the NT Library can be summarised in the following:

*Key components of the Learning and Knowledge Centre model are flexibility to meet individual community needs and sustainability to ensure that services (and associated equipment) are reliable and fully supported in an ongoing way. The Our Story database is a key element of the Learning and Knowledge Centre Program. It enables communities to organise, store and make accessible, digitised material related to their cultural heritage. The Learning and Knowledge Centre Program is helping to build local capability.*

Source: [http://www.dbcde.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/40895/Northern Territory\\_Library.pdf](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/40895/Northern_Territory_Library.pdf)

The importance of competency-based training in the RM and CLM courses is relevant to note. The value of this approach over more formal assessment of nationally accredited training programs was highlighted in one of the 'Reframing the Future' studies (<http://www.reframingthefuture.net>) about Indigenous arts (ANTA 2004b). The report recommended a review of the approach to training assessment and found, as we did, that whether training is nationally accredited or not was not a primary concern for people. Indeed, requirements associated with nationally accredited courses can be a deterrent when people's needs are local in nature.

The context in which the multimedia training is occurring is clearly important, that is, local training in a familiar environment, by trusted people, about relevant issues. Flamsteed and Golding explore the 'implications for learning through and from Aboriginal enterprises' (2005, p. 7). They suggest that for learning to be most effective it must be customised to the context, linked to learning, and developed in parallel to real work. They also argue that business training programs should take into account that learners will often have limited previous business experience, possibly low English literacy and numeracy skills, and, particularly in remote areas, may speak English as a second language (p. 79). These recommendations resonate with our findings and can be summarised as an overarching requirement for flexibility – flexibility to account for specific issues, not exclusive to, but common in remote and Aboriginal training contexts.

Flexibility is also a key characteristic of the Diploma in Interpreting, with the 5-day study blocks in Alice Springs chosen by the students, and the students taking as long as they need to complete the course. On average, most students take three years or more to complete this. This indicates that most students leverage the inherent positive characteristics of the flexibility to their advantage.



Figure 14: Laramba School students working with their Waterwatch collections and field books

A major characteristic underlying many of the positive outcomes of the resource management training is the local focus. *In situ* training is culturally relevant and safe, and, importantly, includes the older generation that provides context and opportunities for inter-generational education and respect. Community-based VET training requires very few resources from the community, with organisational costs and resources accounted for externally.



Figure 15: Anmatyerr women from Ti Tree and Pmara Jutunta who undertook resource management training

The two regional schools (Laramba and Ti Tree) reported that the participation in CLM and RM training encouraged students to attend school. Ongoing school support for the VETis program is evidence that there are positive outcomes. Ti Tree School uses attendance as an incentive for students to gain approval to participate in extra-curricular activities. School attendance and participation in these activities help to break the boredom cycle that young people can experience in communities where there are resource constraints and minimal employment options. The language and culture teachers are also supportive because the training reinforces their lessons in a non-classroom setting. Bush trips for the training modules enhance learning because of this local context.

#### 5.2.4 Diversity of training options

The diversity of training options within the ‘training package’ delivered collaboratively by the research team appears to be an important factor for maintaining interest and reaching goals. Within 18 months, the Anmatyerr trainee researchers achieved numerous technical and research skills (in the fields of multimedia, land and water management, interpreting and presentation). A training package that focuses on more than one skill provides greater scope for people to learn about their strengths and interests. Any livelihood requires a suite of skills and the parallel training reported here is complementary and can be used simultaneously during research activities.

In addition to flexibility and local training, a feature of the skills development program was the way training was embedded in practice. For example, the interpreting studied at IAD in Alice Springs was practised during research activities with the Anmatyerr Kwaty Project, thereby enhancing the training and making the experience and learning more effective. Each activity directly adds value to another activity. The combination of lesson work with hands-on participatory

work accelerates skills development. The more practised and effective their interpreting, the more interpreting takes place and the greater the communication and positive outcomes. The combination of study and the practical focus of the multimedia, resource management and interpreting courses as part of skills development appears to accelerate learning and research outcomes.

As additional informal training underway as part of the research, the Anmatyerr trainee researchers took part in bio-regional flora and fauna surveys on Anmatyerr country with NT Parks and Wildlife in September 2006. Other skills such as fencing and water and ecological monitoring were built into a collaborative project with the traditional owners and managers of a significant rock hole, the pastoral manager of the Land Trust, and Greening Australia. Training in bore water monitoring and a field trial of monitoring community and government observation bores has also begun. In addition to water quality sampling and basic analysis, these skills are being developed with the view to demonstrating the potential of Anmatyerr livelihoods in regional surface and groundwater monitoring. Proficiency in these skills can also be incorporated into the RM and CLM courses through relevant modules that cover those competencies.

### 5.2.5 Meaningful work on country

For training to meet the aspirations and needs of Aboriginal Australians, it must be appropriate to Aboriginal contexts (Miller 2005, p. 8, 25). This means that local identities, cultures and histories should be reaffirmed and that the structures, environment and content of the training be negotiated between students, communities and educators. In rural and remote areas, Miller (2005) reported that it is essential that training relates to community development goals and integrates activities deemed relevant by Elders and the local Aboriginal council.

Miller's recommendations resonate with our experience. With the exception of intensive training in Alice Springs which occurs for one week in six, all the training was on the traditional lands of the trainees and in the context of the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project. Rather than having to invent hypothetical issues to achieve a certain qualification, the young men work in context on real issues for Anmatyerr *tyerry*; for example, helping to convey Anmatyerr cultural values of water to the government and wider NRM audience. Similarly, the RM course takes place on country and incorporates useful activities identified by the community.

The collaborative fencing/rock hole project is a case in point. On discussion with *Merekartwey* and *Kwertengwerl* for this area, their desire to fence and protect this culturally important waterhole from feral animals and cattle became apparent. Since the waterhole is on the local Land Trust, it meant bringing together Greening Australia, the ACGC and the station manager to apply for a Community Water Grant. With the successful application, the parties are setting up an alternative watering point for cattle while fencing the waterhole. So, a project that is important to Anmatyerr Elders and supported by the station manager will be realised through the engagement of young people who in turn receive accreditation for the skills they acquire in the process. As Nathaniel Dixon says, 'It's good for us working on country, like same as we work in Alice Springs [for the Diploma of Interpreting]. From there we come out here to make videos. Video all them waters'. Outdoors work tied to meaningful jobs is providing practical training.



Figure 16: Trainee researchers assist with a Parks and Wildlife biosurvey

Other examples include meeting the requirements of the chainsaw skills module of the RM course by using a chainsaw to collect firewood and remove dangerous trees around houses. Similarly, activities such as cleaning out debris from a waterhole and using firearms to control feral animals are all regarded as ‘real work’ – work that is useful and appreciated by the wider community. This locally-focused training strengthens cultural knowledge and ties to country, especially with the presence of Elders. The training on country has also resulted in other unplanned cultural activities happening spontaneously, for example, spotting and hunting animals such as perentie, sand goannas, kangaroo and echidna, and collecting medicinal plants. People have observed the health of the country and the availability of bush tucker, and considered whether to burn. After training trips, people have often gone out to hunt and harvest, knowing that the conditions are right.

While travelling around their country during the research and training, the trainees are observing all the time and identifying issues that may otherwise have gone unnoticed. For example, some of the management issues that have been noted include broken fences, dead animals in water holes, degraded tracks, locked gates and evidence of tourist visitation. This has inspired people to take action and greater responsibility with requests for financial support, consultation with pastoral landowners, and appreciation that this training could lead to Aboriginal ranger roles and paid employment. Training for managing country is not available through the local CDEP program, nor has there been a ranger group or resource centre. The training program outlined here has provided the basis for future livelihoods in cultural and natural resource management. One activity was travelling to northern Australia to learn from other Aboriginal ranger groups. As with the Djelk Ranger Program operating in Arnhem Land as a branch of the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, the strength of meaningful work through the ranger program is that it draws on knowledge and skills that are already present in the community while harnessing customary law and local socio-cultural standards (Cochrane 2005, p. 19). Cochrane suggests that part of the appeal of the Djelk Ranger Program is its perceived relevance to the community because it combines ranger, life and traditional skills, takes place on traditional lands and develops pride in traditional culture (pp. 2–3). The rangers develop inter-cultural skills in the area of contemporary resource assessment and management skills, literacy and numeracy skills, and a combination of traditional and scientific ecological knowledge in a ‘two-way learning environment’ (p. 5).

Real work on country is an indicator of a successful training program because the meaningful work is supportive of cultural practice and contextualised in people’s daily lives and cultural responsibilities for country. Working in context involves visiting areas of Anmatyerr country with old people where inter-generational education and learning can occur. Indeed, it may only occur in these grounded situations where the *Merekartwey* and *Kwertengwerl* for these places are able to speak with authority. The cultural context in which training occurs allows for correct approvals, with recognised Anmatyerr *tyerrty*, on country, and with cultural direction and authority. Working on real issues with senior people and visiting sacred and significant places, sometimes for the

first time, reinforces the cultural knowledge and laws already learnt. Meaningful work on country also helps to maintain people's motivation. Interpreting is one such activity that is necessary for resource discussions and decision making with other parties.

### 5.2.6 Community Development Employment Program

One indicator that emerged as being central to the successful training pathway is the role of CDEP and the Anmatjere Community Government Council, who have supported the trainees' work with the Water Project. CDEP, in this region at least, offers little training with a 'country' or 'law and culture' component. Approval for the trainees and others working on CDEP to work with the researchers as part of their CDEP has been fundamental to the success of this 'NGO' training approach. While CDEP supports people from 8 am till noon, the trainees are paid for the second half of the day by research funds, which allows the Aboriginal training funds to go further. This financial top-up, while significant, is not excessive, and does not set those involved apart from their peers. There has been significant interest from other young people to 'join' the project, and, to our knowledge, there has been no animosity toward those who have been given the privilege by Elders to work closely with the external researchers. Training that is locally based and embedded in existing CDEP options also keeps costs to a minimum. Research funds also support administration and coordination. However, as research objectives are to identify and recommend ideas and solutions, the training costs are producing not only outcomes for those involved but delivering products for improved management of cultural and environmental issues.

### 5.2.7 Training embedded in research

A major contributing factor towards the increase in the skills of the trainees and their future options is the way the training has been embedded in a research project. Research outcomes need not be restricted to the initial aims of an objective methodology. There can be real advantages, in some cases, for embedding research philosophy into project work. The Indigenist Research Methodology (Rigney 1999a, 1999b), which was followed throughout the Anmatyerr *Kwaty* Project, ensures the Aboriginal voice is privileged. People can actively work toward agreed community goals, while at the same time receiving training, not only for those work situations, but in research skills such as identifying and being able to table new ideas, evaluating change, reflecting on what worked and what did not, and effective communication.

Although training for training's sake and held in isolation from real opportunities can have benefits such as increasing confidence, literacy and social interactions, the goal for training as a transition to employment requires a more comprehensive approach with commitment from prospective employers, Elder approvals and community strategic planning. Gelade and Stehlik (2004) also recommend a wider definition of 'outcomes' than simple measures of employment outcomes for Aboriginal VET students. For example, health outcomes could be a different end point that deserves recognition. Our approach of incorporating training into meaningful projects such as a research study is not only 'learning by doing', it is adding value by increasing the outcomes and legacy from the project. People trained throughout a research activity have played a major part in the solutions and are well placed to carry through recommendations and to obtain employment in these areas.

## 6. Future training

Fledgling relationships are being established with governments, councils, research institutions and community groups with the aim of developing robust partnerships between the local community and those agencies whose core business is managing land and water in central Australia (e.g.

NT Government departments, Power and Water Authority, Greening Australia, Central Land Council). The objective is to materialise the research outcomes into culturally-based employment opportunities with regional agencies. The transition from research work to project work is designed to ensure a lasting legacy and tangible outcomes in the region.

Work placements are being investigated for ongoing training of the Anmatyerr trainee researchers and other young people as they develop new skills and interests. Work placements, while temporary, introduce people to different types of employment, so that people are informed by their choices and have greater control over their future.

The training courses and activities outlined in this report have been running for two years. When the Anmatyerr trainee researchers were asked what further training they might like, they mentioned continued bore water monitoring for the NT Government. Measuring bore levels and taking water samples for analysis is costly when done by staff from Alice Springs or Darwin and, as a result, the NT Government is always looking at the cost-effectiveness of regional monitoring and record keeping. Employing local people reduces transport and accommodation costs and provides on-ground surveillance. As Anmatyerr *tyerry* in the Ti Tree region gain these basic skills, there is an immediate employment opportunity that could be negotiated between industry, government and local communities. Monitoring water quality, height and flow, and ecological and cultural features and impacts is an essential component of a water resource plan and the forthcoming updated Ti Tree Water Resource Strategy provides the opportunity to trial new arrangements.

The resource management training provides a good grounding in land and water management skills and, importantly, recognises existing knowledge and experience. The program was designed for Aboriginal ranger groups managing homelands, and Anmatyerr people are considering the sorts of Anmatyerr organisations concerning land and water management they would like to develop. Computers and software can bring together researchers, agencies, and Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal communities. They can facilitate inter-cultural awareness and understanding and progress Anmatyerr involvement in decisions about land and water on their lands. Interpreting skills increase and allow for good communication, which is essential for groups to share their values and needs. Both men and women cultural supervisors have conveyed their wish for more non-Aboriginal people to learn the Anmatyerr language. One male Elder commented in relation to two non-Aboriginal people who became fluent Anmatyerr speakers, ‘... the sort of people we need to help us out, to talk about what we’re talking about now [water management]. They can speak language. I think that’s really important.’ (3 November 2005) To understand language is to better understand culture and the intricacies, nuances and world view of others. This Anmatyerr desire for other people to learn the local language could be part of the reciprocity protocols of Anmatyerr culture, or an expectation that their goodwill will be matched.

With regard to further training, the Anmatyerr trainee researchers also referred to the Aboriginal Leadership Program, a 10-day intensive course run by the Australian Government in Canberra. The cultural supervisor has requested support for the trainees to do this course when he himself becomes a mentor on the program. Other options are available on the internet, such as elementary water resource management modules that include the basic principles of surface and groundwater geology, hydrology and ecology, and Integrated Water Resource Management. Ecological flora and fauna surveys are also set to increase with joint trips with NT Parks and Wildlife and with additional funding to determine the environmental and cultural water requirements of surface water systems in the Ti Tree Water Control District. Training options that could also be discussed are project management skills, including administration, managing budgets and reporting.

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