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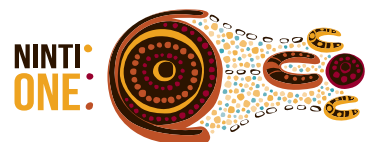
Engagement, focus and hope for the future:

the Port Augusta
Partnerships for Success program

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Eugene Warrior
Frances Wyld
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University of
South Australia



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Peter Buckskin

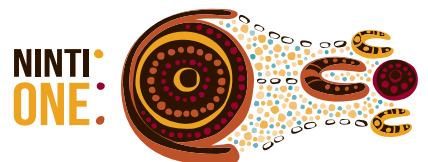
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Abbreviations/Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACEO	Aboriginal Community Education Officer
AEC	Aboriginal Education Coordinator
AET	Aboriginal Education Team
ARR	Apparent Retention Rate
ITAS	Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme
BHP	BHP Billiton Uranium Customer Sector Group
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DECS	Department of Education and Children's Services (SA)
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (federal)
DFEEST	Department of Further Education Employment Science and Technology (SA)
DKCRC	Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre
EC	Enrichment Centre
ETSA	Electricity Trust of South Australia (now privatised)
GPFF	Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program of Literacy and Numeracy test
PASS	Port Augusta Secondary School
PFS	Partnerships for Success
PIRSA	Department of Primary Industries and Resources of South Australia
SA	South Australia
SACE	South Australian Certificate of Education
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UniSA	University of South Australia
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WA	Western Australia

Summary

Introduction and aims

This evaluation of the Partnerships for Success program in Port Augusta was initiated through an agreement between the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre and the Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation, and funded by the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre. Researchers associated with the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research at the University of South Australia conducted the research between January and December 2009. Ethics clearance was obtained from the Human Research Ethics committee at the University of South Australia. The broad aim of this study was to identify the effectiveness of the Partnerships for Success program ('the program') in increasing student educational achievement, secondary school graduation, and transition into further education and employment.

Research methods

The primary methods of data collection were in-depth interviewing and document analysis. This fed into a process of action research, or continuous improvement to practice, where the coordinator of the Partnerships for Success program implemented selected findings as they became available. The 31 interviewees included not-for-profit, industry and government representatives on the Partnerships for Success steering committee; students; parents; staff from the Partnerships for Success program and staff from the associated secondary school. Researchers provided them with transcripts of their interviews with an invitation to change anything that did not represent what they had intended to say. The transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis, through the NVivo qualitative data management software program. The draft report was then circulated among interviewees to seek corroboration of the interpretations reached by the researchers. Researchers then incorporated the feedback into the report where necessary.

Findings

The Partnerships for Success program was found to be faithful to the model trialled and adapted for the Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation. Its characteristics include:

- the criteria for student selection, based on their history of motivation, attendance, and national literacy and numeracy achievement scores in primary school
- the holistic educational offerings, including intensive tutoring in secondary level subjects, fostering study and organisational skills, and leadership training and team building through outdoor education programs and excursions
- the contract committing partners, parents, students and coordinator to the program
- the inclusion of past students as mentors and inspirational speakers in the program.

The program possesses characteristics that past research has shown to contribute to sustainability. These include:

- its combination of funding partners
- high-status, influential representatives on the steering committee
- long-term commitment of the Enrichment Centre ('the centre') coordinator, the Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation and the partners
- clearly articulated goals
- stability of the program's organisational structure

- political support
- access to advice
- community involvement.

The program provides an intrinsic motivation for the students to complete secondary school through its promise of access to further education and training pathways into employment on completion of Year 12.

The program is achieving its aims of improving the students' educational attainment, school attendance, Year 12 and South Australian Certificate of Education completions, and is effectively facilitating student transitions into further education, training and employment. All of the people interviewed perceived this to be the case. Quantitative evidence also indicates superior secondary school attendance, National Assessment Program of Literacy and Numeracy test scores and South Australian Certificate of Education completions by Partnerships for Success students compared to those of other Port Augusta Secondary School Aboriginal students.

Additional perceived benefits: Parents, Aboriginal community members and Aboriginal staff at the secondary school remarked that the program was contributing to the personal development of the students. This was evident in their increased levels of maturity, self-confidence, happiness and optimism for the future. Despite the students having a history of high motivation and attendance, both parents and staff believe that they would not have achieved as much had they not been in the program. The program also achieved its aim of creating a sense of team membership among the students, which was evident in the connectedness between them – some even remarked that they felt like family with one another and that the centre was like another home.

The reasons for the program's success are consistent with the reviewed literature. Foremost among the contributing factors are:

- the strength of the relationships between: the coordinator and family members; the coordinator and students; and the students and tutors
- the coordinator's personal attributes, knowledge and skills, including:
 - communication skills
 - ability to motivate and emotionally support students
 - skill at identifying effective tutors
 - skill in assisting the development of individual student learning plans
 - skill in using outdoor education activities to foster leadership and team building
- the high quality of the tutors, who are:
 - skilled at identifying gaps in the students' knowledge in specific subject areas
 - skilled at assisting students to keep advancing academically until they are able to complete their assignments to the satisfaction of their mainstream teachers
 - very popular with the students, and take genuine interest in their personal and academic development, while also being able to motivate and inspire them
- parent participation, involving an ongoing commitment to encourage their sons and daughters to attend the centre, work hard and keep focused on their aspirations
- the support from the secondary school principal and the school's Aboriginal Education Team, which has provided continuity between school and the program – contributing stability to the program and predictability for the students.

Recommendations

The unanimous view among those interviewed that the program was important and effective; however, several people offered suggestions for strengthening the program. The following recommendations are based upon those suggestions.

Steering committee

1. Include a male and a female Aboriginal Community Education Officer on the steering committee to provide Aboriginal perspectives from the school. Aboriginal Community Education Officers have a privileged view of the students' performance in school which community members may not have. Also, discuss the possibility of including a parent on the committee if one is not currently serving (see page 22).
2. Discuss whether some steering committee members would like to conduct workshops to share relevant ideas and experiences (see page 22).
3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of raising the profile of the Partnerships for Success program within the broader community, and informing the public about the program's goals and achievements. If it is agreed to, devise strategies for this (see page 54).

Centre venue and resources

4. Discuss with the steering and operational committees how to establish additional quiet study areas in the centre. Perhaps the extra room in the cottage that is currently used by another department could become another classroom. Also, discuss if there is a need for more computers (see page 52).
5. Discuss with the steering committee the possibility of purchasing a 22-seater bus and a trailer to replace the use of the Port Augusta Secondary School bus (see page 52).

Funding

6. Negotiate with the Department of Education and Children's Services how the Partnerships for Success program could receive Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme funding directly from the Department of Education and Children's Services (see page 52).
7. If needed, seek extra funding from Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for programs which are focused on parent and community capacity building (see page 19).

Administrative support at the centre

8. Seek funding for the provision of a half-time administrative support person (see page 36 and page 51). That person, in consultation with the coordinator, would:
 - record daily attendance at the centre
 - collect data on students' academic results and enter it into a database
 - follow up on student transitions for three years after the students leave the program
 - enter transition data into the database, where it can be readily updated and retrieved
 - drive the bus.

Student selection and recruitment

9. Include an Aboriginal Community Education Officer on the student selection panel because of their knowledge of how students fare in school (see page 22 and page 34).
10. If relevant, discuss with the steering committee, the Aboriginal Education Team and the selection panel the issue of identification of Aboriginality for the purposes of recruitment for the Partnerships for Success program (see page 46).

Improving attendance and retention

11. Discuss with the appropriate people:
 - whether the contracted levels of attendance at the centre are appropriate, and if not, how to improve attendance (see page 34)
 - the recruitment of a slightly higher number of students into the program to compensate for students dropping out, without sacrificing quality of engagement with each student
 - whether a formal policy of continuous entry into the program could help with maintaining student numbers in the program (see page 35)
 - amending the selection criteria to place more weight on motivation and accept slightly lower National Assessment Program of Literacy and Numeracy test scores
 - extending foundation work with students from Years 5 or 6, and their families, to market the centre and implement transitional arrangements
 - how to recruit and retain more young men
 - how to increase the retention of students in Years 9 and 10
 - how to discourage Year 11 students from leaving the program without an established pathway to training or employment (see page 51).

Academic attainment testing

12. Encourage Enrichment Centre students to undertake the National Assessment Program of Literacy and Numeracy tests in Year 9 (see page 35).
13. Continue giving the students practise in mainstream assessment to demystify the testing process. Provide students with a clear explanation of the value of testing for showing both student and teacher how successful the schooling has been and to provide learning targets for the future (see page 35).
14. Discuss how to achieve more South Australian Certificate of Education completions (see page 51).

Improving communication between the school and the centre

15. Discuss how to enhance two-way communication between the Enrichment Centre tutors and the Enrichment Centre students' mainstream teachers – including informing the mainstream teachers about the Partnerships for Success program and how they might keep the tutors informed about the topics being covered in their school subjects (see page 53 and page 54). This could include distributing a pamphlet to school staff.

Extending Enrichment Centre activities

16. Offer graduates a stipend to pay for new shoes, interview clothing and other resources needed for their course or job (see page 37).
17. In collaboration with industry partners, offer workshops (see page 37) for students to develop their skills in:
 - i. understanding workplace expectations and developing a work ethic
 - ii. completing a job application, and preparing for and conducting oneself in a job interview
 - iii. understanding how to survive financially, physically and emotionally when living independently away from home and family – including finding accommodation, budgeting and nutrition
 - iv. first aid and drivingAlso in collaboration with industry partners, provide students with:
 - i. more opportunities to visit partner workplaces; for example, the rail yards, where they can learn about train safety and the job opportunities there
 - ii. information about scholarships and university courses.
18. Consider offering learning opportunities for family members in using computers (such as Microsoft Word software), developing literacy and numeracy skills and, where appropriate, facilitating connections with TAFE courses (see page 50).

Strategic plan

19. Develop a long-term strategic plan (see page 22) which includes:
 - i. an explicit succession plan for the coordinator (in preparation for his retirement)
 - ii. the long-term direction of the centre – taking into consideration the future demographics of Port Augusta – including the number of students to be recruited, the centre size, the number of tutors needed, and the likely need for more corporate sponsors or continued funding from current sponsors.

Other schools and programs

20. Aboriginal students in schools need a variety of options that accommodate the diversity in their circumstances and backgrounds. Aboriginal Community Education Officers and parents have expressed the desire for Port Augusta Secondary School to set up an aspirations program for the Aboriginal students not participating in the Partnerships for Success program (see page 41).

Support for graduates

21. Inform students of the existence of the Polly Farmer Foundation Alumni Association and invite a member to come and talk to the current students (see page 26).
22. Ask industry and government partners to pledge support for new apprentices and monitor the apprentices' adjustment in their new positions (see page 37).

1. Background to the study

1.1 Introduction

This evaluation project was initiated as part of a funding agreement between the Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation (GPFF) and the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC). The evaluation aims to identify the effectiveness of the Partnerships for Success (PFS) program in Port Augusta, highlighting the strengths of the program and the barriers that it encountered. It also provides recommendations that could make it more effective and inform the development of a policy and program framework for further implementation in other schools. Researchers at the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research were contracted to conduct the evaluation under the management of Professor Peter Buckskin, the Head of the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research.

1.2 The Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation

The Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation, formed in 1995, was inspired by Graham Farmer's vision to increase the options available to those young people who did not have the same life chances as young people in mainstream Australia. The Foundation states as its objectives:

- to provide support to Indigenous youth to achieve their potential
- to enhance the skills and potential of young Indigenous people
- to generate positive aspirations in young Indigenous people
- to assist Indigenous youth to relate to the community in general, particularly to other young Australians.

GPFF n.d.

To achieve these objectives, the foundation has set up 19 after-school support programs (or homework centres) in regional and remote Western Australia (15), Northern Territory (2), Port Augusta in South Australia (SA) and Muswellbrook in New South Wales. Most of the programs are in mining towns. The overall PFS program supports Aboriginal students in their secondary school studies to increase their chances of going on to further education – through university or vocational education and training (VET) programs – or into apprenticeships, traineeships and employment. The students are selected on the basis of their record of attendance and academic achievement in primary school, their interest and potential to complete Year 12 of secondary school education and the support of their parents for their formal education.

The GPFF aims to foster a generation of graduates who, while remaining in their own home towns, are able to become 'educated, focused, capable leaders who are determined that they are going to make a difference' (from interview with partner representative).

All the programs involve partnerships between private industry, and federal and state government departments, which combine to fund the programs. They begin with consultations with the local Aboriginal communities and with the other relevant stakeholders – such as education providers, industry and government departments of education, employment and primary industry (Galloway et al. 2007). Mining companies make up the bulk of partners with GPFF.

Mining companies have long been interested in training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work in their mines in outback Australia. Local people offer a more stable and cost-effective workforce because they tend to stay longer, have their own housing already and are more acclimatised to the social and geographic environment. Flying an itinerant workforce in and out is costly (Neil Jarvis, pers. comm.).

The GPFF realised the potentially symbiotic relationship between the mining industry and the Aboriginal workforce, so they set up partnerships with local agencies in various communities around Western Australia (WA) and, more recently, the Northern Territory and SA (Neil Jarvis, pers. comm.).

There is a common structure to all the programs – a full-time local coordinator, a steering committee of representatives from each of the partner organisations and a system of decision-making for the program (involving one vote for each partner organisation). Students are recruited into the program according to common criteria based around their potential and motivation for school success, and parental support. The student, parent and program coordinator sign a contract, which outlines their respective responsibilities for attendance and participation at school and centre, and participation in the activities of the centre (Galloway et al. 2007).

Each centre is open at least four times per week, providing tutorial assistance, counselling, resources (such as computers), and activities such as leadership training and employment advice. These activities aim to broaden the students' understanding of higher education institutions, workplaces and organisations; foster their personal and cultural development; and support their needs in order that they can achieve their long-term goals (Galloway et al. 2007).

The great burden of reporting requirements placed on Aboriginal programs receiving government funding is well known (Dwyer et al. 2009). Because of this, the GPFF requires coordinators to report quarterly to their steering committee on attendance, enrolment and major activities. They discourage the partners from imposing their own reporting formats on the programs. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) stated that 'Aboriginal projects must be the most over-reported government projects ever' (Neil Jarvis, pers. comm.).

The PFS programs have been trialled, evaluated and amended based on research evidence of effective and sustainable strategies. The CEO of GPFF projects, Neil Jarvis, explained:

The whole purpose of the Foundation is to support programs that cannot be cut off by political change. Our partnerships and funding sources mean that the program can't get dissipated in that way.

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1.3 The socio-economic context of the PFS program

While there has been some improvement in the socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the past few years, they remain more likely than other Australians to experience unemployment and be living in poverty (Productivity Commission 2007). Since the socio-economic status of a student's family is a major predictor of his or her school success and subsequent employment (Marks 2006), this provides a major challenge for Aboriginal students, including those in the PFS program.

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum (Long & North 2009) compiled figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006 Census to provide a profile of the education and employment status of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (aged 15–29 years) in comparison with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians of the same age.

Long and North (2009, pp. 38–62) highlighted the following trends for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in comparison with their non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counterparts. These include substantially lower levels of:

- literacy and numeracy of 15 year olds
- government secondary school attendance (74% vs. 89%)
- school retention to Year 12 (46% vs. 74%)
- Year 12 completions (24% vs. 60%)

- young adults' (20–29 year olds') full-time engagement in study or work (37% vs. 73%)
- 15 to 19 year olds participating in education (54% vs. 76%)
- young people participating in education at school, VET or university
- young people completing their VET or university courses
- post-school educational attainment, including diploma (2% vs. 7%) or university level (2% vs. 15%)
- full-time employment.

Long and North (2009) also found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more likely to:

- have no post-school educational qualifications (77% vs. 57%)
- be unemployed (by three times).

School attendance is a prerequisite for school success. Low attendance rates, along with the factors that contribute to those rates, underlie the lower school performance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Long and North (2009, p. 40) have estimated that the non-attendance rate accumulated across the seven years of primary schooling amounts to more than a year of schooling lost. The loss in secondary school is even greater.

Furthermore, completion of Year 12 provides young people with a greater chance for becoming engaged in fulltime work or study. The likelihood of gaining work or study opportunities increases proportionately with the level of schooling reached (Long & North 2009, p. 26).

These statistics provide a challenge to the PFS program to help to reverse the trend.

1.3.1 The reasons for the statistics

McInerney (1991, p. 155) lists the multitude of reasons underlying the education and employment statistics summarised above:

The comparatively recent introduction of English language, literacy and Western education to Aboriginal peoples; the pedagogic inexperience and cultural unpreparedness of teachers for working effectively in Aboriginal education; lack of continuity of education due to rapid teacher turnover in Aboriginal settings; low and irregular attendance of Aboriginal students; lack of parental understanding of and commitment to formal education; lack of role models in our community and in the media embodying positive education and career pathways for Aboriginal peoples; the downward spiralling cycle of poverty, unemployment, and social disintegration; health problems tied to inadequate housing and economic circumstances; differences in learning styles; cultural resistance; entrenched prejudice impacting on all spheres of life and entrenched institutional racism; low expectations on the part of teachers and policymakers in education and training.

Research provides evidence about how schools, teachers and communities can overcome the barriers summarised by McInerney. The next section will highlight findings of relevance to the PFS program from this research.

1.3.2 Justification for targeting high achievers

Critics of the PFS program have argued that the program targets the highest attendees and academic achievers among their Aboriginal peers, who would do well anyway without the support of the program. However, a study conducted by the Department of Education in WA in the 1990s found that none of the highest achieving Aboriginal Year 7 primary school graduates were retained in school to Year 12, five years later (Neil Jarvis, pers. comm.). This was a major motivation of the establishment of the GPFF. As the current CEO, Neil Jarvis, explained, 'In old fashioned education terms, what the PFS project is doing is supplying what used to be called the hidden curriculum'. A similar concept is that of 'cultural capital', proposed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977). This explains that underlying the relative school success of middle-class students is the cultural knowledge of their parents about how to succeed in

school, how to operate within the system, the language of school, the work ethic required, home-based practices such as bedtime stories and the use of literacy (see also: Veel 1991). Christie's (1985) notion of 'purposeful learning' is also a form of cultural knowledge about school learning that middle-class students bring with them to the classroom. It entails an understanding that school success requires having a learning goal; exerting personal control over learning and identifying; and interpreting and applying feedback to advance learning. Additional resources required for school success these days include owning a computer with relevant software, being connected to the Internet and owning a USB (flash drive).

1.4 What works in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education programs

The federally-funded *What Works* program (McRae et al. 2005) reviewed the published research literature on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and evaluated approximately 80 educational projects ('Strategic Results Projects'). These had specific outcomes-focused educational targets, including literacy and/or numeracy achievement, training programs, increased enrolments, and parent and community participation. The evaluation resulted in 50 case studies of successful projects.

McRae et al. (2005, p. 16) concluded that the minimum requirements for school success are:

- literacy in standard Australian English, and numeracy
- consistent attendance (which required a 'safe' learning environment)
- consistent engagement¹, including completion of required work – where the work offers a 'realistic and meaningful challenge, and a sense of capacity to rise to that challenge'.

The following principles were derived from these case studies.

1.4.1 Promoting student retention and attainment

Both Australian and overseas research into secondary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student retention and attainment has isolated the following factors as important (Bryk et al. 1993, Day 1994, Duncan 1990, Harari 2001, Kleinfield 1979, Lovegrove 1985, McInerney 1992, Menzies School of Health Research 1999, Russell 1998).

1.4.1.1 School factors:

- good quality of instruction
- presence of Aboriginal support staff
- teachers taking a personal interest in students
- teachers extending their responsibilities beyond the classroom to students
- schools and teachers working to combat racism
- academic projects which reinforce students' Aboriginal identity
- a perception of schooling as working for the common good of the community
- shared spiritual values between school and parents.

1.4.1.2 Student factors:

- wanting to please their parents
- being concerned for their future
- having positive peer influence
- perceiving the school and teachers as supportive of them.

1.4.1.3 Family factors:

- valuing education
- offering academic support with homework.

¹ Engagement in an educational context means involvement with the learning task at hand.

Russell's (1998) in-depth study of factors affecting ten successful Aboriginal students in regional senior secondary schools in SA provided plausible explanations and qualifications of some of the above factors. Because the students she interviewed had to deal with racism in their regional schools, support for their Aboriginal identities and school policy on dealing with racism was particularly important. The effective teachers dealt with student identity crises by including the students' (who volunteered) Aboriginal cultures in the curriculum. Russell identified peer groups as crucial, particularly in the first three years of secondary school, and recommended that the schools allow students who work well together to stay together. She explains (1998, p. 325), 'These are not necessarily close friendship groups or ability groups but groups of Aboriginal students who have positive attitudes toward school and learning. The groups should not be too big, but big enough so that if one or two students do drop out there is still a core left to continue'. Russell's advice regarding the training and development of teachers, and also her advice to teachers, is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

1.4.1.4 Good quality instruction:

McRae et al. (2005, p. 18) found that there are principles common to the effectiveness of the successful Strategic Results Projects. They suggest that effective teaching:

- assumes all learners can and will succeed
- makes its demands clearly known
- includes explanations of the purpose and value of what is being learnt, and efforts to ensure that it has meaning for the students
- provides a series of well-structured steps relevant to the competence and background knowledge of the students
- searches for strategies which students will respond to
- provides a maximum of explicit guidance and modelling
- provides opportunities for practise, and consistent useful feedback
- accommodates variations in pace and pays special attention to the needs of students who don't get it first time
- includes a level of intensity and manageable challenges.

These principles require schools to be flexible in delivery and timing, and to adapt the curriculum and instructional processes to the local environment (McRae et al. 2005).

The principles also encapsulate aspects of the following theories: visible pedagogy (Bernstein 1990, Hudspith 1996), scaffolding (Tharp & Gallimore 1988, Gray 2000, Vygotsky 1978) and purposeful learning (Christie 1985). These theories promote good teaching practices which have been found to be effective with Aboriginal students.

1.4.1.5 Cultural recognition, acknowledgment and support:

According to McRae et al. (2005), an additional dimension to achieving effective learning environments for Aboriginal secondary students involves creating a safe space for them in the school and the classroom. This involves acknowledging and addressing racism, supporting the students' cultural identities and having a strong presence of Aboriginal staff. These elements are consistent with the research summarised above under *School factors*. McRae et al. (2005, p. 168) also found that 'respect for and understanding of Indigenous cultures' contributed to a safe learning environment for Aboriginal students. This required the teacher getting to know the students and their families well, fostering good personal relationships with them and developing respect and trust between them. In addition, inviting parent and community participation into the program will help teachers to gain an understanding of the students' backgrounds and their relationships with their country.

'What makes school safe' is also addressed by the research of Harris (1992), Hudspith (1996), Malin (1998), Ngarritjan-Kessarlis (1994) and Partington (1998).

Overarching issues for achieving all of the above include the need for genuine partnerships between teachers, families and students, which, according to McRae et al. (2005, p. 19) involve:

- quality teaching
- student commitment to fully participate and engage in the program
- family support and encouragement
- identifying meaningful pathways towards further education, training or employment.

1.4.1.6 Case management:

Another important element of successful programs identified by McRae et al. (2005, p. 20) was providing intensive case management of students. This involves:

... dedicated customised support' including home visits and other forms of community liaison; an emphasis on personal contact with consistent follow-up where absence occurred; personal planning and goal setting; some work-related studies and experiences; support with academic work; linkages (actual or electronic) with other Indigenous students in similar situations; and counselling and mediation where problems were occurring.

1.4.2 Out-of-school-hours program review

The GPFF commissioned a scoping study of out-of-school-hours programs for Aboriginal students to inform the Board of their long-term direction and to ensure that they did not duplicate services already offered (Galloway et al. 2007). The study obtained data from literature reviews, government reports and organisational websites. Galloway et al. (2007) highlighted characteristics of effective programs: high expectations, good teacher–student relationships, students wanting to do better in life and parents wanting their children to complete schooling. These had been identified in previously mentioned research. Additional characteristics found by Galloway et al. (2007, p. i) were:

- parents and students gaining cultural knowledge of how schools work and how to work in the school system
- provision of support to achieve goals.

To be truly successful, Galloway et al. (2007, p. i–ii) propose that education programs need to not only build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to improve their educational outcomes, but also develop the capacity of:

- families and communities to support students in their learning
- Indigenous education providers and community members to assume leadership roles
- non-Indigenous education providers, students and communities to demonstrate cross-cultural skills, knowledge and understanding.

Galloway et al. (2007, p. i) also concluded that programs were more likely to be sustainable if they had:

- a strong program design and implementation strategy
- flexibility to be modified to suit the local situation
- a full-time coordinator, external to the school
- a core team of influential senior personnel to manage the program and facilitate change if needed
- ongoing evaluation to continually guide change where needed
- theoretical principles to inform change if needed
- institutional strength through clearly articulated goals, objectives, stability and 'maturity' of organisational structure
- supportive local leadership
- champions for the program who have the power to influence direction
- site networks which promote the program judiciously
- adequate staffing
- accessible expert advice
- political support from government
- community involvement in the operation of the program.

Few of these elements have been identified in the research reviewed earlier, possibly because the elements apply to programs that are autonomous and external to government-funded schools like the PFS programs. However, they correspond closely to the key success factors that Doyle and Hill (2008, p. 64) identified for programs aimed at providing ‘intensive learning support’.

1.5 Evaluation method

The broad aim of the evaluation is to identify how effectively the PFS program increased:

- student educational achievement
- secondary school graduation
- transition to further education and employment.

The specific questions that have guided our analysis to achieve this aim are:

- How does the program operate?
- What have been the outcomes over the past three years?
- What factors have affected students’ success?
- What have been the barriers to success?
- How do the data contribute to research literature explaining relationships between factors that influence student engagement?

The evaluation used interviews and document analysis as primary methods of data collection. The findings from analysis of these were fed into an action research process where the coordinator implemented selected recommendations as needed.

1.5.1 Interviews

Thirty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded with students, parents, partner organisation representatives, secondary school staff and enrichment centre (EC) staff. The interviews were professionally transcribed and sent back to the interviewees for checking and amending. They were then entered into NVivo qualitative data analysis software and analysed using thematic analysis. Table 1.1 indicates the categories of people interviewed. Some people fit in more than one category.

People were interviewed in a private place of their choosing: either in a vacant room at work or at home. Some interviews were conducted over the phone. All interviewees were sent a list of questions, information sheet and consent form a few days before the interview to give them time to consider whether they wanted to participate and to think about the issues to be covered. The interview schedules and other forms are included in Appendix A.

Table 1.1: People interviewed

Students (5)	Family members (6)	Secondary school staff (9)	EC staff (6)	Community members (2)	Partner Representatives(9)
3 females	6 mothers	school principal	coordinator	1 steering committee member	6 industry representatives
2 males	1 aunt (this person is also one of the mothers counted in the row above)	4 Aboriginal Community Education Officers	4 tutors	1 youth worker	3 government department representatives
		1 Aboriginal Education Coordinator	1 assistant		
		3 subject teachers			

People were ultimately selected for interview on the basis that they were available at the time the interviewer was in town or, in the case of the partner representatives, that they represented a range of partner organisations. Although the plan was to interview both male and female students from all Year levels, unfortunately school had finished by the time the interviewer was available and the four students who agreed to participate were all in Year 9. One Year 12 student was also interviewed. However, other family members who were interviewed represented students from all Year levels.

Ongoing informal conversations occurred with the coordinator over the year and notes about these conversations also contributed to the data.

1.5.2 Document analysis

Several documents were analysed for this study. These included:

- EC rolls
- the coordinator's progress reports to steering committee meetings and to DEERWR
- steering committee minutes
- the program contract
- information pamphlets from partner agencies
- websites of partner agencies.

The South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) compiled the following aggregated data on EC students and Port Augusta Secondary School (PASS) Aboriginal students in general:

- school attendance
- National Assessment Program of Literacy and Numeracy test (NAPLAN) results
- South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) completions.

1.5.3 Informal observations

One of the researchers visited the centre on two occasions to observe how the program operated. The researcher took field notes on both occasions and submitted them for analysis.

1.5.4 Research ethics

The study was granted ethics clearance by the University of South Australia's (UniSA's) Human Ethics Committee. Written, informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study on the grounds that their contribution would be anonymous and confidential. The forms are included in Appendices 2–4. Interviewees were sent transcripts of their interviews for amendment if needed. Permission was obtained from the parents of all students under 18 years of age. The researchers also obtained police checks before visiting the centre or interviewing children. All participants were sent a copy of the draft report for checking and will receive the final report.

1.6 The Port Augusta Enrichment Centre

As with the other PFS programs, the broad goal of the Port Augusta program is to assist secondary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students so that they can move into further education, traineeships or employment. The program replicates the PFS centre model seen in other parts of Australia and described above – characterised by its governing structure, partnerships with government and non-government organisations, steering committee, student recruitment process, contract signed by all the partners and the general services it provides. However, the centre coordinator adapts the day-to-day operations in response to immediate local community and school circumstances under the broad guidance of the steering committee.

The local Port Augusta environment influences the functioning of the EC, including its selection of partners. Port Augusta is a major regional service centre with a working age population of 19 746, of whom 3284 identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The town is a tourism hub centrally located between the pristine beaches of the Great Australian Bight, the ‘outback’ north and the Flinders Ranges. Power and mining industry operatives – including Flinders Power, Olympic Dam, and Oxiana Prominent Hill – are in close proximity to the town, from which mining exploration and Defence services are delivered to Roxby Downs and Woomera. Port Augusta is also the major hub for road and rail freight connecting northern and WA with the major population centres of south-eastern Australia (Northern Regional Development Board 2008, p. 11). Retail trade and property development are also expanding in the town, accompanied by a rise in housing prices and a short supply of rental accommodation (Northern Regional Development Board 2008).

These developments in Port Augusta’s economy create many opportunities for employment. Nevertheless, the employment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of working age in the Port Augusta region was 44%, compared with a rate of 68.3% for the general working age population (Australian Government 2009).

While there are a number of employment and education programs in Port Augusta to assist Aboriginal youth who are not in the education system, none focus on ‘high potential’ youth the way the PFS program does.

1.6.1 History of the centre

There have been previous programs at the PASS which focused on the preparation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for work. These were constrained by short-term funding which required them to metamorphose at the end of each year in response to new funding requirements. For this reason, they were impossible to sustain. The current coordinator, Stephen Carter, ran the *Indigenous Schools to Work* project at the PASS, which involved working closely with families and students, getting to know them and helping to connect the students with education to employment pathways. Funding for this project ended in 2002.

In 2004, John Cunningham, the then General Manager of the GPFF promised that the Foundation would develop a program in Port Augusta. The program was slow to get underway because the salary for the coordinator’s position was not competitive and therefore the position did not attract quality applicants. Towards the end of 2006, an acceptable salary was offered to the current centre coordinator, Stephen Carter, who then moved from Adelaide back to Port Augusta to kickstart the program. The program officially began in January 2007, although three students were supported by the coordinator in their Year 12 studies while he was setting up the centre between August and the end of 2006.

1.6.2 Partnerships

As with all GPFF PFS programs, the Port Augusta program comprises a partnership between the not-for-profit, private industry and government services which fund and oversee the centre. In 2009, there were eight private and four government partners in addition to the not-for-profit GPFF. The following table lists the partners and their representatives on the EC steering committee.

Table 1.2: Program partners

Funding partner	Type of organisation	Representative on steering committee
<i>Not-for-profit</i>		
Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation	Benevolent foundation	General Manager of PFS programs
<i>Private</i>		
BHP Billiton Uranium Customer Sector Group	Private mining	SA Manager of the Community Program and Program Director of Aboriginal Affairs
Electricity Trust of South Australia Utilities	Private electricity	Indigenous Project Officer
Flinders Power	Private electricity	Port Augusta Power Plant Manager
Downer EDI	Private rail	Port Augusta Manager
Genessee Wyoming	Private rail	General Manager
Antony Simpson	Individual benefactor	Private citizen
Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre	Consortium of government, universities and private funding	Board member
<i>Government</i>		
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations	Federal government	District Officer Manager
Department of Education and Children's Services	State government	Aboriginal Education Coordinator
Department of Further Education Employment Science and Technology	State government	Regional Manager
Department of Primary Industries and Resources of South Australia	State government	

All of the partners share the GPFF goal of supporting Aboriginal youth to achieve their potential and, as one representative said, 'are keen to see that the money is working and providing something'.

1.6.2.1 Partner profiles²

The GPFF is the principal sponsor of the Port Augusta PFS program, managing and facilitating it. The Foundation organised the establishment of the PFS program, the agreements between the partners and facilitated the implementation of its program model and structure of management. It also manages the money from industry partners through its system of accounts and payments. The CEO of the Foundation generally visits each site once a year, but makes extra visits to individual sites if additional negotiations are required. The General Manager of the PFS programs visits each site three or four times a year. The Foundation regularly keeps in touch with the partners. The CEO explained, 'We're keeping the partnerships together and keeping the partners involved, making sure that each partner gets what they want out of a project – which, in some cases, is just recognition that they're a partner, or, in other cases, it might be contact with the kids so they can talk about job opportunities or something like that'.

The GPFF hosts two conferences each year for all the PFS programs, which provide an important opportunity for sharing ideas between the coordinators of the various programs. The Foundation allows direct access by the coordinators to both the Managing Director of the PFS programs and the CEO.

BHP Billiton Uranium Customer Sector Group (BHP) is the single largest contributor to the Port Augusta program. A part of the company's charter is to support the development of sustainable communities through forming partnerships in the regions where it operates around the world. The company has a strong focus on working with Aboriginal communities and this led to its support of the PFS homework centres in mining towns in WA. The success of these WA centres encouraged BHP to partner with GPFF on the centre in Port Augusta, which not only had strong community support but was also within a three-hour bus ride of BHP's Olympic Dam mine. In the long term, BHP sees the GPFF program as being a potential feeder of workers into the Olympic Dam workforce, where they believe

² The bulk of the information in this section comes from interviews with partner representatives; otherwise, it is referenced with the source.

the workers will be well supported through their Indigenous Participation Program. The manager of the participation program, a representative on the steering committee, is responsible for cultural awareness training of all staff at the site, policy development, recruitment and Aboriginal enterprise development.

Apart from the core financial contribution of BHP to the Port Augusta EC, the company also makes other smaller contributions, such as funding a trip to Adelaide for the students and sponsoring a guest speaker to visit the centre several times a year. Their representatives visit the centre to speak to young people about the need to be competitive in the job market by working hard in education and developing their skills. They also keep them informed about BHP's operations at Olympic Dam, the programs that operate there, the kinds of skill sets needed to work there and any job opportunities available in the near future.

BHP also contributes to the centre's incentive system of rewards. For example, on occasions, the company provides opportunities for students to interact with Aboriginal football players from Port Power (a football team), courtesy of the company's other community partnership programs. Also, in 2007 and 2008, as a reward for hard work, the company sponsored some of the GPFF students to travel to Adelaide to attend a training course, and provided them with tickets to the AFL Indigenous Round football game.

BHP has a long-term commitment to support the education of Aboriginal youth in the hope of increasing the number of Aboriginal workers in their workforce. They also want to be seen by their stakeholders as making an effort.

The DKCRC became a partner of the GPFF program in Port Augusta in October 2008. The DKCRC describes itself as a 'research and brokerage institution that ... focuses [its] research efforts on creating useful outcomes with commercial application for desert people, communities and [their] partners' (DKCRC n.d.). Funding this evaluation is the DKCRC's major contribution to the GPFF program in Port Augusta. The DKCRC aims to identify elements that help to make Aboriginal students successful in their journey through secondary education. Their representative on the centre's steering committee is a member of the DKCRC Board.

Electricity Trust of South Australia (ETSA) Utilities entered into a partnership with the GPFF as a philanthropic gesture of 'putting back into the community'. On becoming CEO of ETSA in 2005, Lew Owens, a Reconciliation Ambassador, established an Indigenous Employment Program within the company. Among the aims of this program are (ETSA Utilities brochure, 2008):

- partnering with the GPFF in their PFS program
- establishing an Indigenous Project Officer position
- targeting Indigenous candidates for apprenticeships and business officer programs within ETSA
- establishing a training facility at Davenport in partnership with the local community council.

ETSA contributes yearly funding towards the running of the EC with 'no strings attached' other than to see the program achieving its aims. Any opportunities for GPFF graduates to gain employment within ETSA are limited. ETSA recruits 50 people from around the state each year for a four-year apprenticeship program, but only one of those positions is located in Port Augusta and none are designated Aboriginal. Winning that single position is highly competitive, as it requires completion of literacy and numeracy aptitude tests, dexterity testing, a medical examination and police clearance. In 2009, a GPFF graduate was the successful Port Augusta candidate – an enormous achievement on the part of the young man. However, the ETSA representative emphasised that they do not intend to hand-pick graduates from the GPFF program for their apprenticeships but will continue to encourage them to apply through normal application procedures. ETSA will, nevertheless, continuously seek opportunities for GPFF students for training, work placement and employment from among their industry stakeholders within the region. ETSA uses the GPFF network of family connections to recruit

participants for its pre-employment training program offered at the new Davenport Training Centre, which as well as addressing literacy and numeracy issues, includes sessions such as 'introduction to the workplace' and 'tool safety'.

Flinders Power is another financial contributor to the program. Its Augusta Power Stations plant manager sits on the steering committee to provide advice if needed. The plant manager explained how the company is 'always keen to support projects that provide opportunities for kids to get through the school system and into meaningful employment ... it is part of our community relations policy'. He explained that they selected the GPFF program because it 'was pretty focused on getting some good outcomes, and particularly in the region that we work ... so that's typical of a project that we would support in our community'. The company is primarily interested in students successfully completing high school and if any of the graduates choose to take up apprenticeships with the company, that is a bonus. When asked whether the company hoped for some positive publicity from sponsoring the program, the manager replied, 'The project is reasonably silent on the support organisations, and if we wanted to get our name up in lights as doing something beneficial for the community and getting some kudos out of that, I think we'd be looking to spend it other ways'.

Genesee and Wyoming (formerly Australia Rail) became involved with the GPFF as one of the original partners in WA because of the program's focus on advancing the formal education outcomes of Aboriginal youth. The managing director of the company saw the development of a GPFF program in Port Augusta as an opportunity to contribute to the local community, where the company has a large presence with its rail yards and various operations and services. Currently, their contribution is primarily in funding. They have not yet been able to offer direct employment to any of the students, although this remains a long-term goal. In the meantime, more opportunities for employment of Aboriginal youth in Port Augusta may be available through Downer EDI, also a partner in the PFS program. This company provides all of the maintenance and overhaul services to Genesee and Wyoming.

An individual benefactor who provides a substantial yearly financial contribution to the Port Augusta program is Mr Antony Simpson of Adelaide. He also is a member of the steering committee.

The federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has been a financial contributor to the PFS program since it first began. DEEWR became involved for similar reasons to the other partners because of the program's focused approach to supporting the education and employment readiness of Aboriginal youth, and also because it involved established national partnerships. The local regional manager represents DEEWR on the steering committee. A former regional manager explained that the department saw itself more as a funding body than as a partner. The main objective of the DEEWR contribution was to increase educational outcomes for Aboriginal youth, including increasing attendance at school, increasing Year 12 outcomes and improving literacy and numeracy. DEEWR will not fund the EC after 2009 because it now channels its funding to the states through a national partnership agreement around closing the gap in Aboriginal health.

The state Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST) was invited as a government partner of the Port Augusta program. The department's funding covers one third of the coordinator's salary. The DFEEST representative on the steering committee is the regional education manager, who covers the Northern and Yorke regions and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) programs in those regions.

DFEEST contains the TAFE arm, which is the biggest provider of vocational, education and training (VET) within SA. The core business of DFEEST revolves around education, training and in developing accessible education pathways between secondary school and tertiary education. In Port Augusta, TAFE has an Aboriginal Access Centre to support Aboriginal students. Port Augusta TAFE provides pre-vocational training, ongoing apprenticeship training and are keen to support any GPFF students who

wish to take up their courses. Their regional manager sees GPFF students as being of ‘high calibre, high achieving, highly motivated [and with] reasonably clear directions of where they want to go’. He holds the view that both students and TAFE can deliver mutually beneficial outcomes: ‘If we can help the students get to where they want to go, it’s good for TAFE and it’s good for the students’. Nevertheless, DFEEST is equally encouraging of those students wishing to go on to university or into a non-trade related employment.

When asked if DFEEST hoped to gain positive publicity through their association with the GPFF, the regional manager explained that the high-level connections between the GPFF partners were valued and of benefit. He also said, ‘The main aim is about having the students achieve to their maximum potential, but if we do happen to get some bonus publicity out of it, then that’s a good thing as well’.

DECS is a state government partner in the Port Augusta program. The department is responsible for providing and administering public education, pre-school services, child care, family day care and outside-school-hours care throughout the state. DECS also has an Aboriginal Education and Employment Service, and offer traineeships and apprenticeships in Aboriginal Education. DECS funds one third of the PFS centre coordinator’s salary.

The Far North and Aboriginal Lands Regional Office’s Aboriginal Education Coordinator (AEC) is DECS’ representative on the PFS steering committee. Her main responsibility is to coordinate the curriculum and Aboriginal Education teachers in schools around the state. The AEC also works closely with the PASS and the Aboriginal Community Education Officers (ACEOs) on data collection to track Aboriginal enrolments in Years 10 through 12. DECS stores this data in a centrally located database, where it is regularly updated and analysed. The AECs also provide a hub for information distribution throughout DECS – circulating correspondence, announcements about grants, scholarships, traineeships, apprenticeships and other opportunities to relevant staff in schools around the state.

An additional part of the AEC role has been to oversee the administration of the GPFF program, draft the Memorandum of Understanding between GPFF and DECS and obtain funding for the coordinator’s position. The AEC obtained the one-third funding of the centre coordinator’s salary for the 2009–2011 period. She also works with the EC coordinator on ‘succession planning’, which involves targeting students in particular Year levels to enter the GPFF program and stabilise the number of students in the program. This included targeting Year 7 students and having them participate at the EC once a week in term four of 2009.

The Department of Primary Industries and Resources of South Australia (PIRSA) is also a partner with the PFS program. It provides one third of the coordinator’s salary, along with DFEEST and DECS. PIRSA oversees economic development in SA, including ‘the sustainable use of the state’s food, fibre and minerals industries’ (PIRSA 2011). The industries involved are: agriculture and horticulture; fisheries and aquaculture; minerals and petroleum exploration; and soil, landcare and water. They do not have a representative on the steering committee.

1.6.3 Funding

The program received almost \$181 139 from the industry partners and DEEWR for the 2009 calendar year, plus \$100 000 (combined) from DECS, PIRSA and DFEEST. Apart from the coordinator’s salary, tutors’ salaries are the highest expense, followed by camps, trips and excursions. The program consistently operates under budget and has a surplus which, in 2009, was used to pay for tutor salaries in the absence of Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) funding (which in the past had been funded by DEEWR).

Partner contributions are in the form of dollars, except for providing the building free of charge by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (costed at about \$15 000 per annum) and the incidental contributions such as those from BHP (referred to earlier). In addition, PASS loans their bus to the Centre for the two bus runs, four days a week.

The Indigenous Coordination Centre, which is part of the federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, helped with establishment costs for some of the refurbishments of the building that were required in 2006.

Until the end of 2009, the DEEWR funding was part of the Whole of School Intervention Strategy, which aimed at closing the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational outcomes. This funding ceased at the end of 2008 when DEEWR decided to give their funding to the state to be distributed according to state priorities. However, DEEWR continued to fund all the GPFF programs for an extra year to allow them time to negotiate with their respective state and territory governments to provide replacement funding. From 2010, DEEWR will direct its funding to the state government, which will set its own funding priorities through a national partnership agreement. The DEEWR representative believes that the GPFF programs are probably in a better position than most to win new funding in the future because of their industry support, which has involved industry lobbying with the respective governments.

The EC had been guaranteed a further three year's funding for the coordinator's and tutors' salaries by DECS. DFEEST, which also funds one third of the coordinator's salary, reviews its commitment to the PFS program every three years, but is open to negotiation each year.

In 2010, the centre should attract funding from the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) and may also be eligible for DEEWR funding for state projects focusing on parent and community capacity building.

[Recommendation 7]

1.6.4 Contract between parties

The GPFF states that the success of the PFS program is dependent upon strong commitments from the selected students, project coordinator, steering committee and project partners – sealed by the signing of a contract. The signing occurs at a ceremony involving all parties in the second term of the year. The contract requires that students attend; work hard; study for exams; complete their homework; seek help from teachers, tutors or mentors when they need it; attend all the events organised by the program; behave appropriately while at school and the centre; and attend the centre at least twice a week for Years 11 and 12, and once a week for the others. Parents commit to supporting their child in fulfilling the requirements of the program – including providing a space for study at home – as well as attending the centre themselves on occasion for meetings and to keep informed about activities at the centre. The program coordinator commits to:

- working in partnership with students and families, secondary school, ACEOs, teachers and tutors
- pursuing every avenue to support students and their families in achieving their commitments
- offering a quality program
- providing feedback to all the stakeholders on how the program is progressing.

The program sponsors also sign a commitment to provide sufficient 'opportunities, facilities and resources ... that will improve [the students'] chances of succeeding in education, training and/or meaningful employment'. This involves:

- providing a homework centre with computer and Internet access
- tutorial assistance when required
- industry awareness visits for students and families
- work experience, where appropriate
- exposure to role models
- camps with a career and educational focus.

Partnerships for Success 2009

The people interviewed believed that the contract was important and contributed to the success of the project. Involving the parents was important because it kept the centre staff in touch with community issues. Some students appreciated having their parents involved.

One steering committee member said that the contract provided:

some quite strong discipline and rules about how you can only get to go there if you [fulfil certain criteria] and you've got to perform academically and you've got to behave yourself. There've been people who have been in the program and moved out of it because they haven't been able to fulfil the obligations and others have been a little bit wayward and have been brought back in and gone on ... That's one of the incentives for people to go there. It's not just a case of: I'll go when I want to go. There is a commitment that you make to go there, and there is an outcome at the end, and yes it may take some time to get there ... Hopefully that helps in the long term as they move on in their life into careers; if you make a commitment to do something that you actually have to do it.

1.6.5 Management of the centre

The Port Augusta PFS program is managed by the GPFF, which manages and facilitates the steering committee. The EC coordinator is accountable to the steering committee for all the policies, procedures and priorities of the program. However, he is managed by the PASS principal with regard to the technical aspects of his employment contract, including salary, leave and superannuation. The program is not the property of the school, and DECS has just one vote on the steering committee, along with each of the other partners. In the end, all decisions have to be approved by the steering committee.

1.6.5.1 Steering committee

The steering committee manages the program budget as well as overseeing the operation, establishing strategic directions and approving policies and procedures. It consists of representatives from the partner organisations and four community members who 'provide cultural advice and insight into current local community issues that may affect the operation of the program or students and families' (Carter 2007). The committee members act as the point of contact in their organisation for the coordinator and they also report back on the program to their own managers.

The CEO, Neil Jarvis, explained how the funding is managed across all the PFS programs, including the Port Augusta centre:

Because of the nature of our partnerships, all the money that relates to our programs is controlled by the steering committee and is not the responsibility of the school principal or the school accountant. Balance sheets are presented to every meeting and we discuss the budget and its allocation. It's a large budget and sponsors will often pay for extra activities like camps as well.

Apart from budget management, meetings also include reporting on events of the preceding quarter, on students' academic and personal progress, and seek input and recommendations from the group. Input could include ideas on career opportunities, career expos and other relevant events. Generally, the representatives said that they did not want to impose their views on what the program should be doing. However, they do use the meetings to discuss gaps that they see in the program, such as the need for more job readiness among the students and other issues relating to industry that are not covered in the school curriculum. Sometimes, requests for resources for the program are made by the tutors. Usually these are considered by the committee to be reasonable and the resources are provided.

The committee meets four times a year in Port Augusta after the schedule of meeting times is circulated at the start of the year. People try to attend the meetings face-to-face, but when this is not possible they either attend via teleconference or send a proxy. A local representative said that it would be a sign of disrespect for locals not to attend, because some members have to travel long distances, including from interstate.

The meetings are usually held in different venues around town and occasionally at the centre. They have a formal agenda and minutes, and include quarterly coordinator's reports and financial reports. An annual report is tabled at the end of each year documenting transition details of past and current students.

Other communication between the coordinator and partners includes regular newsletters (about six per year) and informal contact via phone, email and incidental visits.

Effectiveness of the steering committee

All the partner representatives interviewed expressed the belief that the steering committee meetings were beneficial, well-organised and usefully structured. One industry representative stated:

I think the model that has been created whereby all the funding partners have the opportunity to participate on the steering committee is really useful ... It provides the funding partners with a formal opportunity to interact with the program ... It also provides the funding partners with quite a good opportunity to hear and learn what other organisations are doing within this field.

Other members stated that they found the meetings open and honest, where people felt comfortable about raising issues or identifying weaknesses if need be. Many reasons were given by the representatives for the value of steering committee meetings. These are summarised below.

The members:

- were of high calibre and had the authority to make decisions on behalf of their organisations
- had access to funding
- were more likely to be listened to when advocating for the program
- had substantial professional experience so their advice was well-grounded
- had 'leverage' and provided impressive role models for other agencies to follow
- were enthusiastic and dedicated to the intent of the program
- trusted the competency of the coordinator because 'the results are there'.

The steering committee:

- operated with trust and transparency, where every partner had the opportunity to speak openly
- fostered a 'positive environment' around a program which was succeeding in promoting the potential of youth
- provided a forum for information sharing that not only benefited the program by keeping them informed of opportunities, but also provided an opportunity for the diverse partners to learn from each other
- provided an opportunity for representatives to attend special program events, such as the graduation dinner.

The meetings:

- were well-organised, informative and interesting
- kept the committee in touch with the daily realities of the program
- provided a personal (though confidential) perspective on the students' successes and challenges.

This helped 'the partners [to] feel more a part of the program rather than [being just a] remote source of funding or in-kind support'.

Suggestions for strengthening the steering committee

When asked for suggestions about ways to strengthen the steering committee operations, many people thought that it did not need improvement.

Several PASS staff who were interviewed recommended that there be at least one, and preferably two, ACEOs on the steering committee. Having a male and a female ACEO would provide Aboriginal perspectives from the school. However, because ACEOs are paid hourly they would need to either take time out from their school-based work or be given extra working time to attend the meetings. A current steering committee member thought it would be beneficial to have an Aboriginal community member and parent representative on the committee, ‘someone who knows the community’.

[Recommendation 1]

One industry representative suggested that the committee could benefit from obtaining more input from the members of the committee, who collectively hold vast experience and knowledge in a range of careers. He thought that workshopping the members on particular topics could produce innovative ideas to vitalise the program.

[Recommendation 2]

Another representative recommended that the steering committee embark upon long-term planning to ensure that the program can be sustained with changing demographics in the region and changing economic circumstances for the partner organisations.

[Recommendation 19]

1.6.5.2 Operational committee

The operational committee manages the educational side of the program, as with all PFS programs. The GPFF CEO, Neil Jarvis, explains:

Operations groups will still make decisions about educational matters, but when an operations group has an idea about a strategic issue, they put a paper together and present it to the steering committee.

Commonwealth of Australia 2011

The committee consists of the program coordinator and the principal, who is the manager of the coordinator.

As the Port Augusta program is considered to be attached to the secondary school, the PASS principal oversees its operations and sits on both the steering and the operational committees.

The coordinator and the principal meet once a week to talk through the day-to-day operational matters of the program. This includes discussion of student progress, case by case; camps and excursions; staffing issues; student transitions between primary and secondary school; and so on. The principal offers assistance to the program wherever possible and visits the centre on occasion to keep in touch with the program in a practical way.

1.6.6 Recruitment of students

The PFS programs seek to recruit Aboriginal students who have the capacity to complete school, but who, in the absence of additional support, are unlikely to do so. In the past, recruitment of the new students has begun with letters sent to parents of all Aboriginal students from Years 8 to 12 early in the year, inviting them to apply for the program. The applications are then scrutinised by a selection panel consisting of two senior community members, the coordinator and the secondary school principal. The coordinator and principal have no decision-making role, only offering advice and recommendations.

Selection is based upon academic performance, attendance, the endorsement of the Aboriginal Education Team (AET) from the PASS and, from 2010, NAPLAN (National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy) results.

Centre staff then visit the families of the selected students to explain the program and invite the students to join. The successful candidates are contracted by parents and the program leader with a statement of mutual responsibilities (discussed earlier in the section) in the contract. Year 8 students usually begin participating at the centre in the second term.

The recruitment process for the 2010 Year 8 cohort is different from the past, with the inclusion of nine Year 7 students from three local primary schools in the program from the fourth term of 2009. The students were selected by their school teachers using similar criteria as those used to select Year 8 students in the past. The Year 7 students attended the centre once a week to participate in team-building exercises and Internet-based literacy and numeracy activities.

New students are also sometimes recruited during the year. For example, in mid-2008, when there was a sudden decline in participants, the centre attempted to recruit more Year 9 males by asking attendees at the time to nominate male friends to do a trial stint at the centre. The ACEOs may also recommend suitable students to be recruited during the year to make up numbers.

The recruitment process is flexible. Some parents spoke of how the coordinator allowed other children to come to the centre on a regular basis even though they were not selected through the formal process. For example, on occasions, a selected student will only attend if his close friend who has not been selected can also attend, or a parent will approach the coordinator and specifically request that his or her child can attend. If these 'non-selected' students are seen as motivated, then they will be allowed to attend in the future.

On one occasion, a selected student declined to enrol, despite wanting to attend, because he believed that he was receiving sufficient help and had the necessary resources from home. He was reported as saying, 'I'd like to leave my space there for someone else who really needs that support and who's not getting it from home'.

PASS staff generally considered that the recruitment process has been transparent and meticulous, with no favouritism shown. However, one staff member suggested that sometimes they don't get it right. She questioned why, in 2008, only one out of seven Year 12 students received their SACE 'with all that support'. She speculated that the reasons are likely to be 'personal pressures and other things going on in their social lives' and suggested that 'some of the kids that were in the program that did drop off, I wouldn't have picked them. I don't think they were suited to that program'. For this reason, she recommended that an ACEO be on the selection panel. As well as knowing the community, ACEOs also know how particular students fare in the formal education setting better than some community members who are not involved with the school.

[Recommendation 9]

1.6.7 Centre staff

The centre is staffed by the coordinator, 12 tutors and also, for the first half of 2008, a young youth worker/assistant, who acted as a mentor and role model to the students.

The coordinator was described by the CEO of the GPPF as 'the mentor, manager, coordinator, parent of the program' who maintains the program as 'a home away from home ... Stephen's the key embodiment of us. He's there every day talking to their family. He's talking to every teacher they've got, of every subject. He writes an educational plan for every student. That's how we know what to tutor them in.'

Most tutors are experienced and practicing teachers. Some are retired teachers. They are selected by the coordinator after he has consulted with the both the students and the AET at PASS. The coordinator explained that 'they are selected on the basis of their enthusiasm and ability to encourage and support the students and are willing to go the extra 'yard'. They also understand and accept that the young people are undergoing very significant hormonal and emotional changes and accept these facts'.

The tutors are employed through the Department of Education and Community Services (DECS) as hourly paid workers. They work between two and four hours per week, depending on which students need help. The staff student ratio of the centre is 1:3 for standard tutoring and 1:1 for specialist tutoring, particularly for the Year 12 students.

The coordinator described how important the selection of the tutors is:

All the teachers who provide tutoring to students are encouraged and supported to establish meaningful working relationships with the students. The critical aims of the tutors is not only providing pedagogy but engaging, mentoring and inspiring students to achieve high results in their studies and consolidate and explore their future options for further education or meaningful employment. Popularity, confidence and trust of the tutors is essential in ensuring the frequency of use by students. An unpopular tutor who fails to effectively engage with students is avoided by students and subsequently no longer required at the HWC [homework centre]. The tutors selected and used by the HWC are valuable in ensuring students receive comprehensive assistance in general knowledge, literacy and numeracy and specialist subject areas.

Carter 2008

It is apparent that the coordinator has been successful in finding the 'right' tutors for the program. For example, an ACEO stated:

I think Steve's done a good job with identifying who works well with students and who's got good strengths and who's got the right skills and knowledge to teach and ... be interactive with Aboriginal kids.

One of the tutors summarised their role:

Basically to help the kids do their work and the kids there want to be there and they are pretty keen on working. So actually we have taken on the role of ... making sure those kids achieve what they want to achieve in life, to make sure that they reach their goal. If they want to get into uni or they want to get into a trade, we are there to help them.

Another tutor described how she approached the work:

Basically, a lot of it is encouragement. You can't actually do the work for them ... You spend a lot of time just sitting with them encouraging them, guiding them through an assessment piece and talking them through it. With the student doing a psychology paper, she recorded our conversation where we tossed around the ideas of the questions she was having to answer. I was pulling from her all the information she already had, getting her to think it through and to verbalise it and then she took that home and used it as a basis to help her with her assignment work.

The tutors demonstrate a good understanding of effective pedagogy:

I also do other things like read their work, critique it, correct it for them, hand it back to them, go through it with them to show them where I think it could be improved. I might sit there and teach them how to use dictionaries in a better way, work with them on the Internet with Google Earth, for example, if they're doing SOSE [Studies of Society and Environment]. It depends what the kids need to have done and it very much depends on where they're at in their studies ... You have to actually assess on a daily basis when you turn up where they're at, what they need to achieve, what they don't understand.

In addition to assessing what the student knows and starting there, the tutors also apply the learning to the student's everyday life. As one tutor explained:

A lot of it is relating what the kids are learning on paper to what they're experiencing in real life and making it relevant because so often you can't understand what, say, Pythagoras's theory has got to do with working out how to become a car mechanic. And so it's that tie in there, it's the greater breadth.

If the students do not have set work to do, the teachers have educational activities that are 'designed at a level so that it's actually challenging the kids'. For example:

If they have no set work to do you try and find other things to help improve their knowledge. We might play general question games with them sometimes, just for fun, just to give them a break. We might use this list of 20 questions that we've got cards for that are generally educationally-based but encourage the kids to have a bit more fun. We might do some spelling bees ... They've also got work books there that they can always refer back to and get on with the core subjects ... Steve set all that up, which is good.

I basically put them onto interactive work like maths interactive programs or Internet maths programs and science programs; so they get interested because it's an interactive program. They learn what they need to learn and they're interested.

The tutors usually work in specialised areas, although they need more generalised skills for teaching students in Years 8 through 10.

The tutors clearly work beyond their two or four hours of contracted time with the centre, encouraging and supporting the students outside of the centre's hours. An example of this:

I am in email contact with one Year 12 student only because she needs the extra support. She's free to email me her assignments and I will correct them for her and give comments on them and email them back to her if I'm not available during the week to work with her, or if she's on a deadline and it's not going to be a night when someone is going to be tutoring and she's able to email me. We set that up through Steve and her parents. Her parents were aware of it.

Clearly, the tutors are very enthusiastic about working in the centre, despite working considerably extended hours two days a week:

Being the teacher at school and being a tutor at Polly Farmer, it's a different level of relationship. In some ways it's more relaxed, in other ways more respectful, because they accept you as being important to them and part of their group and they often tell you things that surprise you, but you just accept that and live with the confidences ... so it's different from being a teacher in a school classroom. It's so nice to be able to work one-on-one with kids and not have 20-something kids there that you're struggling to work with. It's so enjoyable and these kids do need it.

They also do not assume that they will be invited back to work in the centre the following year. They stated that it depended upon what the coordinator and the students decided.

1.6.7.1 Mentors

Apart from the coordinator and tutors, most of whom assume mentoring roles, two Aboriginal mentors were also employed to work with the program. A female youth worker, who was related to many of the students and was an active member of the local community, was employed at the centre as an administration officer for six months before moving to Adelaide for study. However, in the second half of 2009 she returned to work at the centre as a tutor. She saw herself as a role model and mentor, particularly for the girls, often acting as a liaison between the male coordinator and the female students. Many of the people interviewed saw her role as being crucial, not only because it provided a female counterpart to the coordinator, but also helped to take some of the work burden. The coordinator stated that this youth worker has been a valuable inclusion on the EC staff, because:

She's got an ability to work with all the kids, no matter which family, which group they belong to ... She has the confidence of a lot of our students ... and it's a good tag team relationship because she and I share information all the time, especially with what's going on in the community and how that affects the kids.

The other mentor is a former student who now has a trade apprenticeship and is employed by the centre for one afternoon a week to act as a role model for the Year 10 and 11 boys. A Year 12 student described the student tutor:

He went through Polly Farmer ... and then went through TAFE technical college and this year came back and worked with one of the students who wanted to go to tech college as well. They were both interested in cars and they'd talk about that. Basically, it was a student keeping another student on task. It was easier to keep him on task and make the connection. If the student couldn't understand something the tutor would make it to do with cars so he'd understand it. I think this kind of connection, modification makes it more understandable. It was cool seeing an ex-student come and be there and help that one stay on task. You don't see that all the time. You also get updated whether he went head over heels on his bike. It kept Polly Farmer updated on what he was up to. It's cool to keep in touch with us.

The centre encourages past program students to continue to play a role at the centre. Two other students visited the centre in 2009 to offer career advice based upon their experiences, one in a nursing cadetship and the other as a Foundation Studies student at the University of Adelaide.

[Recommendation 21]

1.6.8 The role of secondary school staff

The secondary school principal, the ACEOs and the AEC work in close partnership with the centre coordinator and the students. As stated earlier, the principal and coordinator place a high priority on their weekly meetings, which keep them both in touch with the latest outcomes at the school and the centre.

The five ACEOs are paid hourly for 25–35 hours per week at the secondary school. Their role in the school is to provide all the Aboriginal students with social, emotional and academic support, with the broad aim of maximising student attendance, retention and attainment at the school. The ACEOs are also responsible for ensuring that the Aboriginal secondary school students who study at the nearby TAFE college, including some of the PFS students, arrive safely, on time and that both staff and students are satisfied with the arrangement.

Judging from the information that the ACEOs have about the EC, it appears they maintain close contact with the centre, and with the PFS students and their families. They also participate in the special events at the centre such as the barbeques, family nights and graduation ceremonies.

One ACEO acts as the liaison officer with the EC. This involves keeping records of the PFS students, and acting as a mentor and counsellor for them. He monitors their attendance, school attainment, and aspects of their home life which might impact on their school life. He acts as a confidante for them and counsels them on anything about friendships, relationships or family issues that are concerning them. He said that when they are 'down', he tries to 'build on what they've got to look forward to'. He communicates regularly with both their classroom teachers and the centre coordinator so they can all share information for the case management of the students. He keeps in contact with the families and reports back to the coordinator on issues that may impact on the student's attendance at the centre, such as sport or part-time work. He attends the centre excursions and camps, providing extra supervision.

Another of the ACEOs explained how the PFS students know that they can approach any of the ACEOs at any time if needed. She gave the example of an occasion when a few of the Year 11 girls came to her stating that they were feeling overwhelmed with the expectations of the centre. She encouraged them to go and talk with the coordinator, which they did, and they came away very relieved and grateful that they talked with him. If needed, she would also counsel them to take advantage of the opportunities which are being offered to them. If she noticed any of the students 'falling by the wayside' she would admonish them with, 'You've got the support [from the centre], and you've got to pull your socks up and put the effort in as well'.

Another of the ACEOs is responsible for career counselling of the PASS students. She would visit the centre to talk to individual students about their interests, plans for the future and pathways they intended to travel to get there. She raises their awareness of relevant courses and programs, and where these don't exist, she organises for the school to offer relevant short courses. She advises the students on which subjects are needed for particular courses, and which traineeships or apprenticeships are needed for particular careers.

The AEC at PASS, as well as being a classroom teacher of two subjects, supervises the five ACEOs and acts as an Aboriginal Education Teacher (AET) who is responsible for improving school policy and teaching practice with regard to Aboriginal students. Her primary role as AEC is to improve the educational outcomes of the Aboriginal students, which includes providing professional and moral support to the ACEOs, doing their performance management plans, managing the team budget and running regular team meetings which include the EC coordinator. She is expecting that, over the next year, once the school is operating on the one campus, the school will develop a whole-of-school vision for Aboriginal Education which involves everybody, not just the current AET. She describes her role with regard to the centre as 'informal support', which involves meeting regularly with the EC coordinator to talk about the students or professional issues. She has accompanied the centre students on some of their camps and excursions, particularly trips that relate to career information or where female chaperones are needed. She found these valuable for getting to know the students better. She also 'pops in' to the centre quite often to drop off resources or to catch up with the coordinator about school matters.

1.6.9 Operation of the centre

The EC is located in an old stone cottage, two kilometres from the secondary school. It contains three classrooms, the coordinator's office, a kitchen, bathroom facilities and a small yard. The smallest of the classrooms is reserved for Year 12 students and contains a large desk, single computer and a door, allowing for quiet and privacy for students' concentrated study. There are several computers situated on desks on the perimeter of the two larger classrooms – one of which has a large table in its centre for students to sit for discussion or work not involving computers. The computers provide access to a greater number of Internet sites than are available in the school.

Currently, an extra room is used by another department, but may be available for the centre as its enrolments increase.

Normally, the centre is open for eight hours a week: on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons from 3.15 pm to 5.30 pm, and on Tuesdays from 7 pm to 9 pm. Sometimes a session is organised for Saturday morning from 9 am to noon, to accommodate Year 12 students who are completing assignments or preparing for examinations. Years 8 and 9 usually attend on Monday and/or Wednesday afternoons. Year 11s and 12s usually have exclusive access on Tuesday evenings but can also attend on any of the other afternoons. Tuesdays are also available to the younger students if sport or other activities clash with their usual time slots.

The school bus, driven by centre staff, picks the students up from PASS and delivers them to the centre at about 3.15 pm, where they have 15 minutes to relax; get something to eat in the kitchen; and check their emails, Facebook and online chats. They then settle down to 60 minutes working with the tutors on their studies. At 4.30 pm they have another 15 minute break for a snack and social catch-up. Then there is a final 45 minutes of work with tutors. The bus delivers them home after the program.

The coordinator spends \$150 a week on food and drink for the students, which they can prepare and eat in the kitchen. The kitchen offers a comfortable place to sit around the table and eat and yarn with fellow students and staff. There is a refrigerator, microwave oven, electric kettle, sink and cupboards.

During work time, the tutors work closely with the students on homework activities, preparation for tests, or other carefully selected activities that are tailored to the needs of the particular student. The staff-student ratio is usually about 1:3 for Years 8 to 10, but Year 12s and students needing particular intensive support are provided individual tutoring.

In addition to this, the coordinator keeps students informed about work experience, cadetships, apprenticeships, and VET courses when opportunities arise. Students make decisions about the directions they wish to pursue.

1.6.9.1 Out-of-the-classroom activities

An important aim of the program is to bring the students, who often come from different social groups and cultural backgrounds, together as a team. One of the ways to do this is to take them out of the school and classroom environment on outdoor education activities, camps and excursions. These also provide a more holistic educational experience for developing life skills, leadership training and giving students exposure to different ideas and approaches to life and study. Such activities over the past year included:

- two-day orientation camp for Years 8 and 9 in the Flinders Ranges, aimed at developing leadership skills and team work as well as offering education and career pathways work
- week-long excursion to Adelaide for Years 10 to 12, aimed at familiarising students with using public transport, visiting local businesses, and undertaking team-building exercises
- the One and All Youth Development Voyage. Seven days sailing from Port Augusta to Port Adelaide. All students receive SACE accreditation for this.
- Career Expo excursion to Adelaide for Years 9–11
- family nights in the hills, with students camping over, and the new students getting to meet older students and participate in cultural activities.

The coordinator invites parents to participate in weekend activities with the students. The aim is to ‘develop and maintain links and experiences with older Aboriginal males in the community’ with a view to assisting students to understand their potential community leadership roles in the future. (Carter 2008).

A Year 12 student, when asked to describe one of her most memorable moments in the program, told this story:

We all enjoyed the One and All, and when we first hit one of the docks we were all happy to get out and have a swim ... which was really memorable. And climbing one of the sails, we were offered to climb up and over to the other side of the boat through the rigging. I only made it halfway, until we had to go out at an angle, and this was an achievement for me because I’m scared of heights. When I came down to the bottom, I sat down on the deck shaking ’cause I’m very scared of heights. Everyone was saying, ‘Good job you made it that far!’ There was no let down, no one disappointed because I only got so far. [In other situations] some people would get ‘paid out’ for that kind of thing, ‘You only got that far, ha, ha!’ But I took the opportunity to do something that I wouldn’t get an opportunity to do again.

Both of the other experiences she recounted as being of particular significance to her were ‘team-building’ activities, where she was challenged physically to the point of frustration but refused to give up and completed the task.

In the final term of 2009, on Friday afternoons, the coordinator took three young men (who a tutor had said ‘can’t sit still for two seconds’) on adventure activities which included bike riding and rock climbing. He used these activities to try and help them to understand what is required to be successful in life. He explained:

You can relate their own life pathways with mountain biking. [For example], sure it's hard riding that bike up the hill, but the good part is the coming down, the speeding down the hill. So you put that in to the context, ... over the next five to ten years of your life, is getting through school, which is going to be hard work, getting through an apprenticeship, getting through your additional training so that you can have the benefits of the money, the position, the cars, all of those things that come with success. So that's the downhill riding ... Through school is the uphill bit ... It's lots of fun for us to go out and enjoy ourselves, but we are trying to get them to relate it back into an experiential context.

1.6.9.2 The system of incentives and rewards

The program offers a subtle system of motivation and rewards to the students, initially as an enticement into the program, and then to stay in the program to the end of Year 12.

The first of the incentives is a shared understanding that the program is set up for students who have ability and drive. The coordinator explained:

There's little doubt that the perception within the other programs in Western Australia is that we are exclusive, we are elitist. And it is an issue that I do push with the students. I do make sure that they understand that they are part of this program because they are the best of the best and that they are the future leaders within this community. It's something that I'm trying to make them feel a sense of pride in.

Another big incentive for the students, according to the GPPF CEO, is that 'the kids realise that Stephen is there for them'. They love coming to the centre because they feel like they belong there and that they have a 'second family' there.

Once they have settled into the centre, there are other rewards. Because they are regularly doing their homework and improving their skills and their grades, they get positive feedback from their teachers and this fosters more self-confidence. As the CEO stated, 'It's that old adage, nothing breeds success like success. And once you start winning, you like winning'.

The promise of paid employment and apprenticeships is also a key motivator for the young people. The regular visits by graduates who are either employed and earning an income, in apprenticeships or at university is a constant reminder to current students of the long-term rewards.

There are other, more immediate rewards for 'good behaviour'. For example, on one occasion BHP offered students a trip to Adelaide to participate in a corporate training course through the Port Adelaide Football Club and a ticket to the special AFL Indigenous Round football game. This was recognition for their dedication to their studies, by regular attendance and getting their assignments in on time. Occasionally, students who have achieved a significant accomplishment might be rewarded with a gift voucher.

The excursions and outdoor activities also appear to act as incentives to keep students engaged with the program. All of the students interviewed mentioned this aspect of the program as being memorable.

The end of year graduation ceremony with family and friends is used to acknowledge the hard work done over the year, including recognising the most diligent attendees.

Staff and partner representatives stated that the students find certain everyday aspects of the program rewarding, including the food breaks, the occasional barbeque dinner, access to social networking sites on the computer or spending time in the kitchen yarnning. The interviewees believe that these contribute to students' enjoyment of the program. One of the tutors reminisced:

Some of the best times I can remember have been held in the kitchen where four or five tutors and six or seven kids are just sitting around talking and learning to trust each other and throw an idea in, and then they're looking to see other adults' perspectives.

1.6.9.3 Community participation

The centre–community partnership involves parents signing the contract and agreeing to support their children fulfilling their commitments to the program. The coordinator described the parents' contributions to the centre:

They really do participate by encouraging their children ... They see the absolute value in what we're doing and are incredibly supportive in that way, certainly meeting their obligations under the contract. They also support the program within the community by talking very positively about how the program is helping their son or daughter. That means a lot within the Aboriginal community. The program has a very strong reputation within the community because of their positive talk.

In return, the coordinator keeps the families informed of educational matters, working with them to support those students who begin to waver with their commitment, and directing students with particular needs to the relevant local services. The coordinator also keeps parents up to date with changes in the education system, such as the new SACE, and about scholarships, apprenticeships and university entrance procedures.

1.6.9.4 Removing students from the program

The coordinator explained how they had to remove some students from the program when they became disengaged and stopped coming to the centre, despite the coordinator talking with the parents and encouraging the students to attend. The process that the centre follows is that after five weeks of a student not attending, a letter is sent inviting the parent to come in and sit down with the coordinator to negotiate re-entry of the student into the program. Students are provided with counselling if needed and families are assisted by staff, community members connected with the program and the AET. In 2009, this process was followed with three young men, two of whom re-entered the program. The coordinator describes what happened with the third young man:

In his particular case we'd worked extremely closely with the family and extremely closely with him and his teacher as well. He had some behavioural problems and later we set him up with a different contract which was basically saying, if you were in the workforce, this is how you would be treated, and we expect you to behave the same way ... You have had a good record of working, and we expect you to behave in the same way. And we gave him the three warnings, the normal disciplinary process within work ... And, with all of these kids, there are social reasons around why there are problems, and in this particular case, ... a young man actually died this week, and he was friendly with this young man who was going through the process of dying, and I think that's upset him so much that he is unable to deal with the process of what's been happening ... In normal circumstances we would give him assistance through counselling with [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services], but he was not a young man who was going to be prepared to accept that sort of help. Subsequently we parted our ways. He still has some major issues to deal with, that process of grieving and to understand why it's happened and how to deal with it.

2. Educational and employment outcomes

Among the aims of the GPFF is providing support for youth to achieve their potential, and to enhance their skills so that they can embark upon an established pathway of education or apprenticeship training, ultimately to their employment of choice. As stated, research indicates that a person's likelihood of gaining employment increases proportionately with the level of education reached, preferably with Year 12 as a minimum. Also, a person's chances of achieving Year 12 improve proportionately with their school attendance. Thus, secondary school attendance, retention and academic attainment, EC enrolments, and EC student transitions to training or employment are useful indicators of the program's success.

2.1 Enrolments

Since its beginnings in August 2006, the EC has inducted 57 students (excluding the Year 7 cohort) into the program. Enrolments at the centre have ranged from just three – when the program first began in August 2006 – and peaking at 32 in 2008. Numbers have fluctuated each year as students entered and left the program. During 2009, the numbers oscillated between 25 and 30, with a core group of 26 until term four, when nine Year 7s were recruited.

Table 2.1: Students in the EC 2007–2009

Cohort	Female	Male	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Total
2006	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
2007	16	15	6	4	10	9	2	31
2008	21	11	7	8	4	6	7	32
2009	19	7	4*	6*	7*	6*	3	26**
TOTAL	59	33	17	18	21	21	15	

* As at 27 May 2009

** Excluding Year 7 intake of nine students in term 4 of 2009

In 2009, 14 per cent of Aboriginal students at *PASS* participated in the EC, down from 17 per cent in the previous year (DECS 2010).

As Table 2.1 shows, over the centre's three years of operation, the number of female students has far exceeded the number of males. The centre attempted to rectify this imbalance in early 2009 by inviting the male students to bring along a friend for a term to sample the program offerings. In addition, the AET and EC tutors approached promising contenders to invite them to attend. Ultimately, this strategy failed to increase the numbers in the longer term.

The strategy of engaging Year 7 students in the program, begun in 2009, is a new effort to help recruit more long-term participants in the program. Year 7 students come just one day per week and work on literacy and numeracy online games, in addition to team-building activities, to familiarise themselves with each other and other members of the program.

2.2 Retention

Fifty-seven students have been inducted into the PFS program since August 2006. To calculate retention, the five Year 8 students who began in 2009 and the five Year 12 students (who were only in the program in Year 12) were excluded. Of the 47 students entering the program, 29 (62%) stayed on for longer than a year and 22 (47%) were retained for two or more years. This is the *actual* retention rate, because individuals were traced across the years, unlike the Apparent Retention Rates (ARRs) – used by departments of education – which are calculated on absolute numbers, rather than tracking the same

individual from one year to the next. Retention rates at the EC were limited because the program has only been running for three years at the time of this evaluation. Table 2.2 presents the retention rates, separating junior and senior secondary school groups.

Table 2.2: Actual retention rates of EC students in the program

Cohort		No. beginning the year *	No. retained more than 1 year	% retained more than 1 year	No. retained 2 years or more	% retained 2 years or more
2007	Yr 8–9	10	4	40%	5	50%
	Yr 10–12	21	10	48%	4	19%
2008	Yr 8–9	16	14	88%	10	63%
	Yr 10–12	15	7	47%	5	33%

* Excluding students who attended on less than two occasions. Some students are counted in both 2007 and 2008.

Over the three years, 19 students (33% of those contracted) left the program before reaching Year 12. The reasons for withdrawal varied considerably, including behavioural issues, being distracted by peers, competing sporting interests, unstable family life and moving away from Port Augusta. One student who eventually left the program did not have family support or a stable base, but moved from house to house, sleeping in different people's lounge rooms. The outside pressure on male students in particular was seen as an impediment to their recruitment and retention in the program. A staff member explained:

The peer group pressure that's upon young men is pretty enormous, and there's a culture of 'it's cool to be dumb'. The cool kids are the dumb kids, and each one of these young men has got the same academic ability as the young women who are currently excelling.

A tutor described how some of the boys were initially very embarrassed to be seen to be associated with the program by their peers:

Two years ago, ... some Year 8 and 9s would get in the bus and they'd all be doing a shame job, hiding, didn't want to be seen. One child actually sat on the floor for a couple of trips. Then over the next few weeks we noticed him starting to sit up and now I've got to tell them to keep their arms back in the van and stop yelling out at the others. So they're proud that they're coming, it's a non-issue now.

One of the tutors predicted that the reluctance to participate by some students would decrease as the program earned more credibility over time among the students' peer groups.

Retention rates for Aboriginal students at PASS and in SA generally have improved since 2005, as can be seen in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: ARRs for Aboriginal students in government schools

		2005	2008	2009
Years 8–9	PASS	82.5%	131.4%	117.9%
	DECS	87.5%	95.0%	93.6%
Years 10–12	PASS	17.1%	35.8%	30.9%
	DECS	43.9%	59.6%	62.3%

Data supplied by DECS 2010

ARRs are calculated on the overall number of Aboriginal students enrolling from one year to the next. The fact that ARRs at PASS are over 100 per cent indicates that there has been an increase in Aboriginal student enrolments over the past two years.

All of those interviewed stated that the program coordinator put intensive effort into retaining students through individualised tutoring, counselling and selecting ‘popular’ tutors. Nevertheless, some students dropped out. One of the tutors commented, ‘At times, it’s just really frustrating because they’ve all got the potential and you just want them to succeed but, it’s like that with any class, you know what their potential is but it doesn’t mean they’ll all choose to take opportunities and use them’.

2.3 Attendance

One partner representative reported that, based on occasional visits to the centre, student attendance appeared to be poor. Students are contracted to attend at least one day a week for Years 8 and 9, and two days a week for the senior students. Table 2.4 summarises attendance figures, based on the percentage of contracted time that students attended the centre. For example: in a ten week term, if a Year 8 student attends ten times, their attendance is at 100 per cent, whereas if a Year 11 student attends ten times, their attendance rate would be 50 per cent.

Table 2.4: Mean attendance at the EC 2007–2009

Year	2007	2008	2009
Mean	39%	58%	53%

Data from EC records

The attendance records for 2009 may not be accurate. For example, the best attendee among the Year 12 students was marked on the roll as not attending any days in term 4, whereas she is known to have attended many times, and often on Saturdays for those final weeks of her Year 12 studies. The coordinator admitted that his primary focus is always on the students and parents, and on occasion he may forget to mark the roll. This has led to a recommendation that the coordinator have administrative support for record keeping.

Table 2.5 shows that when these rates are broken down by Year level, still as percentages of contracted time, Years 10 and 11 have the lowest attendance.

Table 2.5: Average EC attendance by Year level

Year	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
2007	54%	46%	56%	43%	24%
2008	74%	66%	36%	41%	68%
2009	53%	51%	27%	48%	57%
Average	60%	54%	40%	44%	50%

Data from EC records

In 2007, attendance was lower because many of the students only attended when they had homework to do. This resulted in the centre changing its name to the ‘enrichment centre’ and the responsibility of students to attend as per their ‘contract’ was reinforced (Carter 2007). The coordinator stated that the popularity of the tutors with the students also impacted upon attendance, such that on the nights when ‘popular’ tutors were present, the attendance was higher. Since then, at the end of each year, the coordinator consults with the students to determine the selection of tutors for the following year (Carter 2007).

Some students achieve or surpass 100 per cent of their contracted attendance and in 2008, three students achieved this. One of these students maintained an average of 92 per cent of contracted time over the three years she attended. She was the best attendee.

The data indicate that average attendance at each Year level at the centre has ranged between 40 and 60 per cent over the three years. However, when compared with their government secondary school peers, EC students' attendance at secondary school is superior both on a statewide basis and also when compared with PASS data. See Table 2.6 below.

Table 2.6: Aboriginal secondary school attendance

	2005	2007*	2008	2009
PASS	69%	71%	70%	67%
Statewide (government schools)	81%	82%	81%	78%
EC students	-	93%	86%	83%

DECS 2010. DECS calculates school attendance on term 2 averages to ensure consistency from year to year.

As with some other educational programs which aim to engage Aboriginal students in formal schooling, assertive follow-up is required to keep them attending (Malin & Maidment 2005). The coordinator described his work with one of the senior students at the centre:

[He is] coming out of his shell. He's also pretty focused. In the household that he lives, there might be three other boys the same age as him, who won't get up in the morning and go to school. But [he] will get up. If he hasn't got a ride he will text me. I will actually go and pick him up and get him to school.

Despite less than optimal attendance rates at the centre, it is apparent that poor attendees are among those who have achieved successful employment or training outcomes, so perhaps actual numbers of days attending at the centre is not central to student achievement for all students. In fact, one student who attended very frequently achieved less well academically than peers who attended less frequently. It is possible that students, particularly in Years 11 and 12, understand the level of attendance that is of most benefit to them. It is a recommendation of this study that attendance data be scrutinised and discussed with tutors and steering committee members to determine if a drive for better attendance is needed.

[Recommendation 11]

2.3.1 Possible issues for discussion by steering committee

In 2008, the coordinator of the EC stated a 'need to work much closer with families and the school to improve the attendance, and reinforce with families the necessity to ensure their commitments to have their child attend or notify the school of the reason for absence ... In reflection, a greater emphasis should be placed on closer monitoring of absentee data for the whole group, and not just the Years 10, 11 and 12' (Carter 2008).

[Recommendation 11]

Several of the ACEOs interviewed stated that they thought that the recruitment process was not ideal for attracting those students with the greatest potential to stay committed to the program, despite the intensive support that the program offers them. It was their belief that some of the students recruited recently had 'too many other things going on in their lives' to be able to put a focused effort into the GPFF program. The ACEOs believe that the selection panel should include an ACEO.

[Recommendation 9]

Among suggestions proposed by PASS staff were:

- recruit a higher number of students into the program
- amend the selection process by using a points system for identifying eligibility for the program, to include students with lower NAPLAN scores but other qualities such as commitment and drive
- begin foundation work with students and their families from Years 5 and 6 to market the centre, and put in place transitional arrangements similar to what was implemented with Year 7s in 2009

- have a continuous entry policy so that when a student dropped out, they could immediately be replaced. If a student does not fit all the criteria, perhaps they could come in on a trial basis for a term to see how they fare.

[Recommendation 11]

2.4 Academic achievement

The only data currently available on EC student academic achievement are the NAPLAN test results for Year 9 and SACE completions.

With regard to the NAPLAN tests: in 2009, all of the Year 9 students at the EC, except one who was absent on the day of testing, were at or above the minimum national standards in reading. Fewer than half the Year 9 EC students achieved this in 2008. The latter result is surprising considering that students are selected for the program on the basis of their being above national norms in literacy and numeracy. See Table 2.7.

Table 2.7: NAPLAN Year 9 reading results for Aboriginal students

% at or above the national minimum standard	2008	2009
PASS	54%	64%
SA	63%	68%
EC students	43%	100%

DECS 2010. One EC student was absent in 2009.

Numeracy results for 2008 indicate that three quarters of the students tested achieved at or above national norms, far exceeding the level of Aboriginal students at the local secondary school. Unfortunately, all the students missed the test for 2009. See Table 2.8.

[Recommendation 12]

Partington (2004) found that students benefit from being trained in mainstream assessment practise, as this can help dissipate some of the fear of tests that some students experience. At least one of the tutors offered students such practise in 2009. Hopefully, this could be continued in future, along with clear explanations of the value of testing for showing both student and teacher how successful the schooling has been, and to provide learning targets for the future.

[Recommendation 13]

Table 2.8: NAPLAN Year 9 numeracy results for Aboriginal students

% at or above the national minimum standard	2008	2009
PASS	56%	74%
SA	69%	76%
EC students	75%	N/A

DECS 2010. Three EC students were absent in 2008 and six in 2009.

The NAPLAN results (in Table 2.8) indicate that Aboriginal secondary school students in Port Augusta generally achieved less well in both numeracy and literacy than their statewide counterparts.

With regard to the SA Certificate of Education (SACE): in 2005, before the centre was established, no *PASS* Aboriginal students completed the certificate. In 2007 and 2008, one EC student completed the certificate each year and two succeeded in 2009. As can be seen from Table 2.9, 67 per cent of SACE completions at *PASS* are EC students.

Table 2.9: SACE completions of Aboriginal students

	2005	2007	2008	2009
PASS (including EC students)	0	1	2	3
EC students	-	1	1	2
SA	81	141	133	165

DECS 2010

In 2009, the one SACE student not part of the PFS program had declined an invitation to participate because he was confident that he could achieve well without their support. The coordinator and the EC staff expressed disappointment at only one SACE completion in 2008 despite considerable effort on everyone's part. In 2009, the success of two of the three Year 12 students, in this regard, was considered a real achievement.

The EC coordinator is planning to set up a database of academic results for centre students in 2010.

[Recommendation 8]

2.5 Employment opportunities

The partnerships with DFEEST and DECS facilitate smooth pathways for EC students between secondary school and further education and training. Much of the work of the program is centred around preparing the students for life after school, in education, training and employment. The students at the centre were often engaged in discussions about pre-vocational courses, apprenticeship training opportunities and other possible training pathways leading to specific careers. Some of the Year 11 and 12 students accumulated points towards SACE through TAFE courses. In 2009, a Year 11 student completed all the requirements of her SACE in this way, one year earlier than is usual. Several young men took a pre-vocational course in mining – some acquired mining work when they left school. Another student received help to prepare an application for an apprenticeship with ETSA and won the only vacancy in Port Augusta for that year.

A steering committee member explained how the PFS program expands the students' horizons beyond Port Augusta and their everyday lives. It provides ready access to industry representatives who can act as role models and talk to the students about their own work lives. The gist of their stories usually is, 'Well, I started off as a labourer and now I'm CEO' or 'I've had these pathways. This is the study I needed to do. We've got these types of employment options, with a range of educational achievement to get into those options'.

The school-based apprenticeship program offers PFS students the opportunity to undertake work experience in particular vocations to find out what they are suited to. One young woman gained sufficient confidence in the PFS program to win an apprenticeship at a bank. However, after doing her work experience in the bank, she decided that it wasn't what she wanted. An ACEO explained, 'It was a really good opportunity for her to find that out now while she's still young instead of working hard in that career direction and then realising that she didn't like it'. The student has decided to return to the centre in 2010 to undertake Year 12 studies, with the aim of achieving a good SACE score to get into a Law degree at university.

In these ways, the PFS program assists students to find out what they really want to do, and then direct them to the most efficient way of achieving the necessary qualifications and preparation. Staff at the EC do not believe that achieving SACE and a high enough score to enter university is the gold standard for everyone. One tutor explained that 'if my goals are to become a decent mechanic, I need to focus on those subjects that are going to get me to that level ... rather than this one size fits all academic trail.'

On occasion, the coordinator will go with a student to talk with an employer. He guided the young woman who had the bank traineeship to go through the correct procedure to terminate her traineeship, as explained below:

I won't talk for them, but I will be there with them. And in this particular case this young woman actually went to the bank manager, tendered her resignation, so to speak, told her the reasons why, and the bank is quite appreciative and understands what she's trying to do.

In addition, the centre provides a variety of opportunities for students to learn about the world of work and to be prepared for attending university. For example, they invited Kanat Wano and Mind Matters to present their workshop 'Feeling Deadly not Shame' to students, families and friends, and included a barbeque tea cooked by Year 9 students.

In 2010, two university-based activities are being planned:

- a 'live in' university experience at the UniSA, at Whyalla
- a 'first generation' orientation program for students from Years 9–12 who are interested in attending university, at the University of Adelaide.

The coordinator also encourages the students to get casual jobs to experience the world of work. In 2009 some of the students worked part time at McDonalds and at Woolworths. Partington (2004, p. 6) explained that in the Western Australian PFS programs, students are encouraged to take up part-time work to 'eliminate the attraction of leaving school to take up jobs or go onto CDEP [Community Development Employment Projects] work'.

In addition to all of the activities that the program has been pursuing in assisting the students transfer successfully into employment, the industry partners interviewed proposed several ideas for increasing the students' employment readiness even further, including a stipend for appropriate clothing. Some believe that the students need more realistic expectations of the work world, and more focused skills and knowledge to make the move from the protected world of school. Recommendations 16 and 17 are based upon their suggestions.

[Recommendations 16 and 17]

One of those interviewed proposed that partner organisations who employ PFS program graduates continue to monitor and support them in the early stages of their new positions.

[Recommendation 22]

2.5.1 Transitions

As stated earlier, one of the key aspirational outcomes for students in the EC is a successful transition into further education, apprenticeships, traineeships or employment. In addition to providing the many opportunities described above, the coordinator considers it part of his role to track the students for up to three years after they have left school and the program. In the three years of the program's operations there have been many transitions. These are summarised in Table 2.10.

Table 2.10: First transitions 2006–2009

Year	Finished Year 12	SACE	Left without Year 12	VET or pre-voc	University or bridging	Apprenticeship, traineeship, cadetship	Direct to employment	Unknown/unemployed in 2009
2006	3	0			1	1	1	1
2007	2	1	1	1		2		
2008	6	1	3	4	1	3	1	2
2009	3	2	1	1	1	2		
TOTAL	14	4	5	6	3	8	2	3

Since 2006, 14 students have completed Year 12 and moved on to some form of education, apprenticeship, traineeship or employment. Of the four who achieved SACE, one is now an apprentice with Downer EDI, one is enrolled in a cadetship in nursing, one has been offered a place in the Bachelor of Arts in Archaeology at Adelaide University and another is commencing studies in a Bachelor of Arts in Aboriginal Studies at Adelaide University, via Open Access (Distance Learning). See Table 2.11.

Table 2.11: Destinations for students achieving SACE

Left school	Sex	SACE	Interim	2010
2007	M	Y	Three year apprenticeship	Apprentice Fitter, EDI Rail yards
2008	F	Y		Cadetship in nursing
2009	F	Y	Deferred for a year	Offered place in Bachelor of Arts in Archaeology, Adelaide University
2009	F	Y		Beginning a Bachelor of Arts in Aboriginal Studies, Adelaide University, through open access

Nine students left the program after completing Year 12 but without achieving SACE. Nevertheless, three of these graduates are currently employed and three are in apprenticeships. Two graduates are studying at university, one in her second year of a Bachelor of Psychology at Adelaide University. The final student, who missed out on SACE by one point, is enrolled in the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music at the Adelaide University. In his spare time, he works as a stand-up comedian and recently won third place at the Adelaide Fringe festival's 'Nunga Funny' competition. See Table 2.12.

Table 2.12: Destinations of students completing Year 12 without SACE

Left school	Sex	Year 12	Interim	January 2010
2006	F	Y	Cadetship in nursing	Employed at regional hospital as an enrolled nurse
2006	F	Y	Foundation course at Adelaide University	Studying Psychology at Adelaide University
2007	F	Y	Two-year traineeship	Employed by ANZ Bank
2008	F	Y	Direct to employment	Centrelink Rural Call Centre
2008	F	Y	Traineeship	Traineeship, SA govt → permanency
2008	M	Y	Prevocational trade course	Apprentice boilermaker, Moonta
2008	M	Y	Four-year apprenticeship	Apprentice line worker, ETSA
2008	M	Y	Foundation course, Adelaide University	Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music and part-time stand-up comedian
2009	F	Y	Pre-vocational electrical trade course	Aiming for ETSA apprenticeship in 2011

The five students who left without finishing Year 12 have all completed pre-vocational training programs; one subsequently undertook a boilermaker apprenticeship at Prominent Hill Mine, another obtained casual employment at the same mine, and two were still seeking employment (see Table 2.13).

Table 2.13: Destinations of students who did not finish Year 12

Left school	Sex	Year 12	Interim	January 2010
2007	M	N	Prevocational trade course	Apprentice boilermaker, Prominent Hill Mine
2008	M	N	Prevocational course	Casual employment, Prominent Hill Mine
2008	M	N	Prevocational course	Seeking employment
2008	M	N	Prevocational course	Seeking employment
2009	F	N	Prevocational course	Seeking traineeship in a bank

The destination of one of the Year 12 graduates of 2006 is currently not known.

2.5.2 Summary

It is the view of the centre management that in 2009, the centre has been running under capacity – particularly for male students, despite a concerted effort to recruit more Year 9 males into the program. For this reason, the centre introduced a Year 7 program, inducting students from the final Year of three local primary schools into the centre.

The ACEOs who were interviewed stated that they believed that the recruitment criteria were too narrow, and that ACEOs should be included on the selection panel to advise on student applicants. They believe that there are other students who would be more suitable, but who are not in the program because of less competitive NAPLAN scores.

Attendance by EC students in the secondary school program is superior to that of mainstream Aboriginal students. However, attendance at the centre is not optimal. Perhaps, because the centre is still achieving good transition outcomes, attendance at the centre is not a reliable indicator of success. This needs to be discussed and considered.

The absence of academic achievement data for EC students, apart from the NAPLAN and SACE results, is regrettable. However, SACE completions indicate that there is a gradual improvement in outcomes.

The EC has been highly successful in facilitating students' transitions into further education, training and employment. As is to be expected, those students who leave before completing Year 12 have been the least successful in this regard, although one has won an apprenticeship.

Of those who completed Year 12, there does not appear to be a huge difference in education, apprenticeship or employment outcomes between those who successfully completed SACE and those who did not.

3. Factors affecting the program's success

The success of its students is intrinsic to the success of the PFS program. Although it is difficult to establish from the documented data whether the students in the Port Augusta program achieved different outcomes in their education, training and employment than they would have done without the program, quantitative evidence does point to a small positive effect. However, people's perceptions are unequivocal that the program is succeeding and has fostered significant changes and opportunities in the students' lives.

3.1 Evidence of success

As shown in the previous chapter, the data indicate that between 2006 and 2009, the following outcomes occurred for PFS students:

- successful transitions into further education, training or employment for 14 of the 15 students who completed Year 12
- successful transitions into apprenticeships, training or employment for six of the ten students who left school without Year 12
- a higher rate of secondary school attendance than for Aboriginal students in government secondary schools nationally, statewide, and at PASS
- four students completed SACE, compared with three non-EC PASS Aboriginal students (one of the whom had turned down an invitation to join the program, leaving his space for a more 'needy' candidate).

The 2006 ABS census results (cited in Long & North 2009, p. 8) demonstrate the importance of completion of Year 12 for any students. For example, among 15–19 year olds with Year 11 as their highest level of education, only 35 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 61 per cent of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are engaged in study or work. From this, it can be surmised that the EC centre has been relatively successful in helping early leavers (i.e. six of ten) to find training and employment pathways.

All 31 people interviewed for this study stated that they believe that the program is effective and has already had tangible outcomes. However, there were some suggestions for strengthening the program, which will be covered towards the end of this chapter. The PASS principal described it as 'a very focused means of supporting an identified group of Aboriginal students and that has led to some good stories for individual kids'.

The perception among those interviewed is that the EC is a resounding success. This evidence is outlined below, with reference to the research literature discussed in Chapter 1.

3.1.1 Students' and parents' perceptions of benefit

Parents, ACEOs and students who were interviewed all stated that the students liked the program and enjoyed attending. The benefits that students said they received included:

- receiving help with school work
- improving their grades
- meeting new people and making new friends
- improving their time management
- becoming better organised
- feeling hope for the future
- finding out what careers and pathways they wanted to pursue
- gaining confidence
- having the opportunity to go on excursions and camps.

The students expressed a commitment to the program in their interviews. Parents and community members were equally supportive of the program for similar reasons to the students. One community member stated:

From the information I have unofficially gathered from the community, I have found that this program is growing quite a good reputation. Although it is only designed for high school students, some parents believe a program like this will also be a great help for Year 7 students within the community. That program would assist those students to prepare for high school and help build that relationship with teachers before going on to high school.

In fact, some parents stated that they would like the mainstream secondary school to offer similar support services to the PFS program to Aboriginal students. They commented that many mainstream teachers do not build on what Aboriginal children already know, nor acknowledge the skills that the students bring from home.

[Recommendation 20]

Other benefits of the PFS program that the parents reported are peppered throughout this chapter.

PFS-achieved characteristics identified as important by the research literature

Students and parents being concerned for the future; perceiving program and teachers to be supportive of them; and stating a commitment to the program.

Teachers making demands clearly known, includes explanations of the purpose, value, relevance of learning; and providing tangible incentives and goals.

(Day 1994, Galloway et al. 2007, Harari 2001, McRae et al. 2005, Partington et al. 2009, Russell 1998)

3.1.2 Observable changes in the students

Parents reported positive changes in their children's maturity, confidence, motivation, direction, behaviour and leadership ability:

[It's changed] how they see themselves and it just gets [my daughter] thinking whereas she hasn't before ... And it really opens their eyes to [the fact that] this is their life that they're talking about ... And my daughter still wouldn't know what she wanted to do if she hadn't been going there.

Some parents have found that their child's happiness with the centre is reflected in more positive attitudes at home. One mother said her daughter has 'really come out of her shell' since attending the centre. Another parent said:

I think [my son's] personal development has improved a lot, making him a stronger person in himself, in presenting himself and where he's going and getting him on a track to focusing on what he wants to be doing in the future.

A tutor remarked, 'Well, we had a young fellow last year, couldn't get a word out of him – this year now you can't shut him up'.

A community member observed, 'I notice a few males from last year have actually excelled this year, not only within the academics, going through TAFE and stuff like that, but leadership outside as well'.

An ACEO who is also a parent explained that the students develop resilience through the program because they are continually being reminded to think about what their goals are, what they want in life and what they need to do to get there.

PFS-achieved characteristics identified as important by the research literature

Family support and encouragement, valuing education. (Day 1994, Harari 2001, McRae et al. 2005, Russell 1998)

Program searches for strategies to which students will respond. (Day 1994, Harari 2001, Russell 1998)

3.1.3 A sense of connectedness among the students

When asked about what they liked about the program, all of the students interviewed said that they made new friends there and that it was a welcoming place. A senior ACEO observed, 'The students feel like it's something that they belong to. They feel like they're a part of an elite group and they have ownership of the homework centre'.

The program generated a sense of connectedness among the students, many of whom would not normally have associated with one another. The coordinator explained:

[The program] is successful because as teams, [the students] do tend to look after each other at school. They may not mix with one another, but they know where everyone is, someone's sick, and they know the reason why ... And if it's of any concern, they will then share that information with me ... And that allows me then to go to the family and talk to the family and make sure that they're okay. So I think that our idea of pulling in together as a Polly Farmer Foundation group of kids as a team has been very successful.

A senior student summed up her experience with the homework centre:

I loved it, having somewhere to go other than home to do my homework. You actually get to know a lot more people. I've gotten to know younger kids in younger years. I wouldn't have done that if I was just coming home to do my homework. You sort of have a secondary family with it. You go on trips, team building and you get to know everyone that bit better. I'd say it's like a family. You trust everyone. We all seem closer. You can go and ask this person for help and you can tell this person that you won't be there today for family reasons. It's like you're all close and you're all friends. We're all aware of where everyone's going with school.

PFS-achieved characteristics identified as important by the research literature

Peer support, positive peer influence. (Day 1994, Russell 1998)

3.1.4 Outside interest in the program

Several of the parents and ACEOs commented that they have often been asked by parents of students outside the program about how they might get their child enrolled in the program. This is probably due to the informal community networks, as PFS parents tell other parents about the program. A number of community members, apart from parents, had stated that they wished that they had had access to such a program when they were young.

It was clear that people saw the program as contributing to the community's future. One community member observed, 'I've seen a few [students] grow into bright, young future leaders that will be very beneficial for the community soon'.

3.2 Key success factors

This study has identified particular factors as being responsible for the program's success. They are included here because of the relative number of times that they were raised in the interviews. The most prevalent issues raised were:

- the influence of the coordinator
- the whole PFS model
- the quality of tutors
- parent involvement and support
- support from the school principal and secondary school staff.

3.2.1 The influence of the coordinator

According to those interviewed, the quality of the coordinator is fundamental to the success of the Port Augusta PFS program. All of the people interviewed held the current coordinator in very high esteem. Not only was he perceived to possess excellent communication skills and an impressive ability to engage with all the stakeholders of the program – including students, parents, school staff, steering committee members and community – but he also extended his involvement way beyond the bounds of his job description. Everybody believes that he is the right person for the role. One of the steering committee members summed up the coordinator's influence on the success of the total program by talking about the relationships that he nurtured:

The real guts of the whole program boils down to the relationships between the tutors, the coordinators and the students and their parents. If that's positive, the students will keep coming and keep delivering, and if it's negative, they'll vote with their feet.

Family members commented on how well the coordinator kept them in touch with what was happening at the centre and how their child was going in the program. Parents described how he counselled and encouraged students. One explained:

There's been times when [my son] said he doesn't feel like going [to the centre] but he goes and Steve pulls him aside and has a few words with him and [my son] comes back home and he's in a good mood.

A student said, 'I can't imagine anyone else succeeding with us like Steve. He was able to get me organised'.

The ACEOs described him as 'approachable', 'knowledgeable' about culture, 'with a passion for helping the kids', '[able to] build those students up' and 'is very empowering'. He consults with them about the different cultural backgrounds of the students and also about when it is appropriate to combine boys and girls for activities. They said:

When he comes into the schoolyard ... students go up to him, talk to him straight away. If they didn't really respect him, they'd be running around the corner ... They know him, have a good yarn with him. When he gets inside and gets behind them he tries and push them forward.

I just introduce Steve to the new parents and – I don't know what you call it, but it's just him – maybe his personality – you can see the parents are calm with him, so it's natural ... and he doesn't try to put himself up here and you're down here, ... and treats you as an individual.

I'd go and tell Steve [recent news about a student], and he would have already found that out, so like he's on the ball.

The partner representatives were equally as positive. Steering committee members reported:

We're really pleased with how Stephen manages the program. He seems to have a really positive and proactive case management approach with the students and their families. He seems to operate as more than a manager of the Enrichment Centre. He ... works very closely with the students themselves on an individual basis and then he will liaise very closely with their families, and that's terrific to see for us, quite reassuring as a funding partner, you get a sense over a period of time there will be success within this program.

The feedback around his personal effort is very, very positive and from [our company's] perspective, it is very reassuring. I know that he has a contractual arrangement with the Department of Education. I know the company would be really pleased to see his role continued, and as I said I think he goes well above and beyond his job description.

He really works on the basis of not just classroom lessons as well. He really works very hard to provide camps, excursions, guest speakers and all the other extracurricular activities that would make up a holistic learning experience in anyone, no matter their culture background.

Stephen's very good at talking with the children, basic counselling stuff, getting the parents involved ... And he's so good at following up with non attendance, non achievement in their subjects at school and talking to the teachers and trying to negotiate on behalf of the kids, or getting the children if they're articulate enough to negotiate their extensions or whatever's required. So he's good at facilitating that communication.

People described how they had visited the centre at short notice, with officials from their organisations, and despite him having to deal with crises at the time, he was able to welcome them, show them around and include them in conversations with the students. He was also commended for his easy accessibility to colleagues, his affinity and fairness with the students tempered by his high expectations of them, and his ability to select tutors who work well with the students and who have the right skills and knowledge.

PFS-achieved characteristics identified by the research literature:

Coordinator influence: taking a personal interest in students, extending their responsibilities to students beyond the classroom; demonstrating cross-cultural skills, knowledge and understanding; succeeding in identifying meaningful pathways to education and jobs. (Partington et al. 2009, Galloway et al. 2007, McRae et al. 2005, Partington 2004, Russell 1998, Bryk et al. 1993, Kleinfield 1979)

3.2.2 The whole PFS model

Everybody who was interviewed thought that the PFS program was a good model. The following components were raised as important:

- the partnerships and industry support
- the contract
- the highly motivated students
- clear aims and objectives
- the centre and its resources, including tutorial and emotional support
- the incentives of further education and employment
- the team building and personal development.

One government representative on the steering committee summed up the importance of the model itself to the success of the program:

I really can't see of a way of improving it, and I think that comes back to the organisation themselves, Polly Farmer. They really developed the model early and then refined it, and that's what they're using. So, this wasn't a pilot it was one step in a long line of similar projects, and they had already developed a model that worked.

The mothers reported that the program helped their children in a number of ways with their school work, their personal development, doing things that they normally would not do and working out what they wanted to do with their lives.

An industry representative stated, 'I think it's pretty critical that the private business sponsorship and guidance is there, because it does help to guide the program in terms of what's needed at the other end – to have someone that can fit into the working environment.'

The model has several components which are critical to its success.

3.2.2.1 Partnerships, industry support and the steering committee

The partnerships contributed enormously to the program, ensuring that there were sufficient funding and resources for the program to meet its needs. The variety of funding sources meant the program had resilience, so that it was not dependent upon the vagaries of funding priorities of the current state and federal governments, or threatened by – for instance – the global financial crisis. The variety of partners brought many perspectives to the running of the program and to the corporate knowledge accessible for students. The high status of the steering committee representatives within their respective organisations provided an authority to their decisions and to their lobbying efforts on behalf of the program. The mixture of government, private enterprise and not-for-profit partners allowed for sharing of ideas, which is uncommon in most educational settings.

3.2.2.2 Contract

Those interviewed believe that the contract is an important ingredient of the PFS model. It makes explicit from the very beginning of the student's candidacy what the long-term aims of the program are, and the student's and the family's commitments. It lists the concrete behaviours required for school success, which some students and families may not have been aware of prior to their enrolment in the program. The contract also makes explicit the responsibilities of the coordinator and the partners, putting everyone on an equal footing.

3.2.2.3 Student selection

Students were selected for the centre on the grounds that they demonstrated potential and motivation, as a steering committee member explained:

They're working with the group of young people who might be at risk for some various reasons, personal reasons, family reasons, or whatever, but they have the potential. And they have to be willing to commit to the project, both themselves and their families. And they have the potential then, to succeed and go on to be models and leaders within their community.

Steering committee members and EC staff characterised the students as 'very impressive young people' and 'high calibre ..., high achieving, highly motivated students who have a reasonably clear direction, ideally, of where they want to go'; they're a lovely mixed bunch, a really great mixed bunch of kids'; 'academically in tune, they are vibrant,... it's always quite rowdy, in a good way. They are always interested in discussing what they're doing in the way of work. It's just a very focused group of young women in particular'. And a Year 12 graduate was described as 'articulate and a role model in herself for completing her schoolwork on time and appropriate behaviours that schools love'.

However, the tutors explain that some of the students take a while to settle in. Some never settle and ultimately leave the program. During times when these students attend, they can be disruptive, talking too much instead of working. Eventually, some of them settle down, mature and begin to see the purpose of the program and its relevance to their future. Others, who don't achieve this understanding, are eventually asked to leave.

A few of the people interviewed stated that occasionally people outside the program ask why such a program was set up for students who already are advantaged, many of them coming from stable homes with parents who are employed in skilled or professional positions; or who have a history of good attendance and academic achievement in primary school.

In addition, some would argue, as this mainstream teacher did:

It annoys me that this sort of care and educational quality [isn't] provided by the government for every Aboriginal student ... I just think it's your right to have quality education ... because my focus ... has to be on all [Aboriginal] students improving in the school whereas Steve can focus [solely] on those students who have applied [for Polly Farmer].

Nevertheless, as a secondary school teacher observed, the students in the PFS program are not necessarily top achievers in mainstream classes. She explained:

I've often heard Stephen using this expression 'exceptional young men and women', [but] just because they're exceptional young men and women doesn't necessarily equate to high educational outcomes. But that doesn't matter, they've got to get a pathway, [which] is more important.

The selection of students for the PFS program who have achieved well in primary school and who are highly motivated can be justified. The parents, ACEOs and community members who were interviewed explained of themselves: despite having achieved well in primary school and having the motivation to succeed, when it came to high school – where they did not get sufficient support – they did not want to stay on. They believe that they would possibly have achieved much more had they had access to such a program.

The PFS students come from diverse backgrounds. The parents interviewed explained that they were not able to provide a place at home that was conducive to school study such as was available at the centre, including computers, Internet access, a quiet space, or tutorial support for secondary level subjects. A staff member also observed, 'Some of our kids are motivated enough to make use of this place. Sometimes they have to move heaven and earth to get here, but it's really wonderful to see them doing that and going on'.

A secondary school teacher contemplated this issue of 'advantaging the already advantaged':

They are probably doing better and engaging more than if they weren't in the program and that's in the absence of much else in the school. I imagine in another school where there's high expectations, quality teaching, good resources, a culture of success, rewards, inclusivity, reconciliation, all those kind of things, maybe [the centre] wouldn't make that much difference. But it probably still would, it'd be that little bit each that helps kids get a pathway somewhere.

Someone also raised the contentious issue of identity and whether all the students at the centre are indeed Aboriginal. The education department simply asks family members to tick 'a box' if they are Aboriginal, and all those who tick that box are invited to submit an application to the centre.

[Recommendation 10]

3.2.2.4 Clear aims and strategies

The PFS model provides clear aims and objectives, and strategies for achieving them that set parameters around the development of the centre. As the industry representative observed above, the model was tried and true. It had been established as effective in various sites in WA. It was soundly based on research. Its aims were shared by both the private industries seeking more locally based skilled workers and by Aboriginal communities wanting access to education and employment opportunities for their people. The parameters provided ‘regularity’ in the students’ lives in a way they might not have experienced otherwise.

3.2.2.5 The centre and its resources

The parents expressed appreciation at the centre’s structure of student support, its convenient opening hours, ready access via the school bus, the availability of tutors specialising in particular subject areas, and the extracurricular activities fostering team building and personal development. As explained earlier, parents reported that their children do not have access to computers, the Internet, desks and tutorial support with school work at home. One parent said:

My daughter shows me the assignment and I don’t understand it and she’s like, “Mum, you should know!” And I say, “I don’t know that. You need to ask your teacher at the homework centre.” There’s that little bit of help ... and she’s got brothers and sisters. There’s no way she could study at home.

A community member remarked:

Another thing I had admired about the program was that Steve told the kids that the centre was like their home. Of course they treat it like home, eating whatever was in the fridge or freezer, taking their shoes off, relaxing, but still they treat the centre and each other in a respectable manner.

The PFS model stipulates the minimum resources and facilities that are needed in the centre and then the steering committee accommodates the supply of extras that are found to be needed along the way.

3.2.2.6 The incentive of future education and employment

All of the students indicated that they knew someone who had ‘done well’ after graduating from the EC and moving on to further education, apprenticeships or employment. This knowledge of those who had gone before them is tangible evidence of the possibilities created by the program.

It is therefore not surprising that every student and parent interviewed mentioned the opening up of future opportunities as a potential outcome of participation in the centre. The Year 9 students stated that it was too early for them to know which specific pathway they hoped to take into the future. However, ‘a job’, ‘a trade’, ‘a career’, ‘go to university’ were all specified as hoped-for outcomes of the program. One Year 9 student said he wanted ‘a good job, [but I’m] not fussed what kind of job’. The Year 12 student interviewed is aiming to become a lawyer, although she intends to reach her goal in a series of small steps. She clearly has a good understanding of the process required for accessing her preferred degree course.

The parents had similar aspirations for their children, stating that they expected that the program would help keep their children in school; help further their education; and give them access to employment or a career that they enjoyed, providing a foundation for a positive future.

3.2.2.7 The emphasis on team building and personal development activities

As explained earlier, students and parents alike valued the holistic focus of the centre and the exciting and challenging activities provided for personal development and team building. A community member also noticed:

I've seen friendships being built with kids that usually would not give each other the time of day outside the program. Whilst at the program, there is no social status issue, which is great for self esteem with some of these students.

The obvious connectedness between the students – which is deliberately fostered by the PFS program – not only functions to motivate current students to follow in the footsteps of former students, but also motivates former students to want to give something back in return. A recent graduate remarked:

I feel indebted to [the PFS program]. I want to give something back. Like, I can't physically give them anything, but I think me achieving because of the program will give them the satisfaction. One day, I want to give them "Yes, I am a lawyer". If I became a lawyer I can say it was because of the help I received from Polly Farmer. Even when I'm out of the Polly Farmer program, I'll still go back to them.

This appears to be a trend in other PFS programs, and has led to the establishment of an Alumni Association which is supported financially by the GPFF (GPFF CEO, Jervis N. 2009. pers. comm.).

PFS-achieved characteristics identified by the research literature:

Program model: assumes all students can and will succeed; presence of Aboriginal staff; strong program design and implementation strategy; flexibility to adapt to local conditions; accessible expert advice; clearly articulated goals and stability and maturity of organisational structure; core team of influential senior personnel to manage and facilitate change if needed; champions for program who have power to influence direction. (Bryk et al. 1993, Galloway et al. 2007, Kleinfield 1979, Partington 2004, Partington et al. 2009)

3.2.3 Quality of the tutors and instruction

Students' relationships with the tutors are essential to their motivation to attend. One parent said that the fact that some of the tutors are also the students' mainstream subject teachers has a mutual benefit in them getting to know one another. She explained:

It's been working pretty well ... He's developed a good relationship with the coordinator and developed good relationships with those teachers who are doing the tutoring, and I think that's also helped him with his schoolwork as well. Those teachers have seen him in a different way to how he is in the classroom and how he is at Polly, and I think vice versa. That's helped him to see his teachers in a different way as well, out of the classroom environment. So I think that's good both ways.

The tutors were respected by both parents and students. Students explained that the tutors 'sat down with you and helped you', and they agreed that the tutors were helpful, friendly, approachable, flexible and 'pushed' the right amount. Parents were pleased that some of the tutors were also their children's teachers in the secondary school. One student stated that he had a better relationship with his teacher now, since she's been working with him in the centre.

A Year 12 student said of her tutor:

This year I've made a friend of my tutor. It's not very often that you could do that, that you'd get close to a tutor. I could send her a text message saying, "I need help, I'm stuck". In Year 12, it certainly helped me.

This same student explained why she has chosen to work mostly with this particular tutor:

I preferred [my tutor] because I got along with her. She understood how I worked. She'd seen me the year before but this year she got to work with me and I got to know her a bit better, like, we became friends and she'd tell me, "Get off your ringer and do this!" and it helped because I can be a really stubborn person and I procrastinate a lot ... I went with [her] and she was like an all rounder for me, which was cool.

As the students mature and gain more confidence, they tend to approach particular tutors who they know will be the best people to work with them on a particular assignment.

In addition to being able to form good relationships with the students, good quality tutors were also able to tailor their instruction specifically to each student's needs and explain in a clear and easily understandable way:

I match up my instruction with their level and what they're doing, and some of the students – I teach them as well in school, so I know what they're doing.

The tutors closely monitored the students' academic progress and behaviour, and were more aware of student needs than would occur in a regular classroom because of the low teacher/student ratio. The parents believe that this close case management kept students who might otherwise drop out on track with their studies. One parent explained:

I think ... the tutors are able to easily identify if the child is getting a bit behind in their work. There is that link directly with the teachers and the Polly which means then they are able to tailor [the tutoring to] meet some of those shortfalls. I think the fact that there is that relationship happening, it makes a lot of things happen easier.

One parent explained how the centre staff helped her son with his maths:

This year, [my son] got behind with some of his maths, so as a result of him being in Polly, we actually wrote to the school teacher who was a tutor at the PF [GPFF] program, so [the tutor/teacher] worked in with Stephen and they came up with a program with his maths. I think because he was already in Polly ... he was already in that structure, it was really easy and straightforward to make that happen.

A Year 12 student explained how her tutor assisted her with her work:

[My tutor] helped me with a lot of the assignments. [She] went through and helped me analyse exactly what [the teachers] really wanted. But with my psychology I had one assignment where I had no idea what [the secondary school teacher] wanted. I'd hand up what I thought he wanted and he'd put on the bottom "Why?". I was stressing out about it. [My tutor and I] sat down with my mp3 player and we recorded each question and my explanations to it. That actually got my assignment done. [My tutor] helped me organise my brain, where my knowledge was, I could pull it out and put it together. She helped me with many assignments where I was not sure what was wanted.

PFS-achieved characteristics identified by the research literature:

Quality of tutors: Good quality instruction; take a personal interest in students; demonstrate cross-cultural skills, knowledge and understanding; respect and trust between tutors and students. (Bryk et al. 1993, Galloway et al. 2007, Kleinfield 1979, McRae et al. 2005, Partington 2004, Partington et al. 2009, Russell 1998)

Quality of instruction: makes demands clear; includes explanations of purpose and value of topic; provides well-structured steps; tailor made content, pace of instruction, intensity and level to individual student; explicit guidance and modelling; consistent, useful feedback. (Bernstein 1990, Christie 1985, Gray 2000, Hudspith 1996, McRae et al. 2005, Tharp & Gallimore 1988, Vygotsky 1978)

3.2.4 Parent involvement and support

Parents reported that the communication between the program and the families is very good, and they appreciated receiving information from the coordinator about education programs and processes, such as the SACE, and about relevant opportunities. A parent said:

Because [my son] was in the program, that information about scholarships came from Polly. I probably wouldn't have got the [information] without being with Polly. It's been good that we're able to access that information. Polly plays that middle-person role.

The parents were invited to barbeques, camps and family nights, and the coordinator kept them in touch with the activities of the centre and also with their own child's progress. They were very satisfied with their level of participation in the centre's operations.

An ACEO suggested that perhaps the EC offer workshops or tutoring for parents in skills such as using Microsoft Word, developing their literacy and numeracy skills, or facilitating engagement with TAFE courses. This sort of support would assist the parents to help their children more with their school work.

[Recommendation 18]

PFS-achieved characteristics identified by the research literature:

Family members: support and encouragement; valuing education; not being able to offer academic support with homework so instead offers encouragement to student to attend centre.

Parent and community: participation and fostering good personal relationships.

Centre staff: acquiring understanding of students' backgrounds and relationship with country.

(Bryk et al. 1993, Galloway et al. 2007, Kleinfield 1979, McRae et al. 2005, Partington 2004, Partington et al. 2009, Russell 1998)

3.2.5 Support from school principal and staff

The program has flourished under the enthusiastic support of the new secondary school principal. He explained how he first came to be aware of the program, several months before he started working in Port Augusta:

When I first came here ... into the school just to meet some people as you do ... and I didn't know anything about Polly Farmer at that stage, [the EC coordinator] invited me to come to the centre when it was operating on a Thursday. I had been working in the school that day and I went down to the centre and walked in and there would have been 10, 12 students working with tutors, teachers from the school, really polite, friendly kids [who] didn't know me from a bar of soap. When I came in, Steve said "This is Mr. Billows. He's the new principal for next year". Then the kids immediately engaged with me and just had a chat and were showing me what they were doing and it just really struck me. The kids were all totally engaged with what they were doing and really interested in showing me what they were working on. Often Aboriginal kids are very shy [when you first meet them.] ... Stephen was talking to one young man who ETSA were looking at taking on as trainee in the following year and he was weighing up whether he should do that or should pursue something else. I got caught up in that conversation with him and Steve ... I was only there for 30 minutes but as I left it just struck me, I've never seen that sort of level of engagement and positive feeling in a program like that and it just stayed with me through this year ... I've seen good programs but it just struck me as this is something that's clearly working. It's not on a big scale and these kids that they were working with were very impressive young people. I thought – these are impressive young people that need to be supported ... You want to certainly support those things that are working well and change things that maybe aren't and broaden the impact on those things that are working well.

Observations and conversations in the secondary school revealed that there is some resistance to dedicated Aboriginal programs among some mainstream staff. Nevertheless, there is unqualified support from all the ACEOs, the AET and the teachers who work in the centre as tutors, in addition to the principal. The willingness of these specialist staff and the principal to work together, sharing information and pursuing a common purpose is essential to the success of the program and the morale of EC staff and students.

3.3 Factors limiting success

The following issues were raised which could be seen to be limiting the success of the program at least to some extent:

- huge demand on coordinator's time
- pool of students
- lack of recurrent funding for tutors' salaries
- limitations of venue and supply of computers
- insufficient dedicated resources for transport.

3.3.1 Huge demand on coordinator's time

Everyone believed that the current coordinator was performing his duties splendidly and with amazing energy, but some people thought that he needed an additional person to bear some of the work burden. An Aboriginal youth worker was hired for six months to provide him with support, but there has not been sufficient funding for that position since then.

[Recommendation 8]

3.3.2 Pool of students

Some people recommended that the program induct more students because the numbers in 2009 were below those of the previous year. Some of the ACEOs talked about current school students who were not in the program because of their NAPLAN scores, but who they believe have the right motivation and work ethic to be successful in the program. An ACEO remarked:

I just feel a bit disheartened for the students that are really good kids who are here every day – but they may not have the academic high level ... I think that if Polly Farmer did have the resources and finances for more tutors, then they'd be able to support these kids and keep them on track with their learning and their career goals.

The coordinator highlighted the importance of motivation to a student's success. He said:

Our capacity is limited in the number of kids that we can take on, and I don't think that we are going to erode our standards in what we're looking for, just to have numbers here. That's why the numbers are low this year ... We want the other kids to aspire to be in this program.

He anticipates that, over time, more children and their families will aspire to be in the program. However, he believes that the program still must consider the students' academic potential. For example:

We have, from time to time, taken on some students who wouldn't necessarily get into the program based on their abilities, and in one particular case, where we were working with a young man who in Year 9 had maths standards of Year 3 and 4. And we're really not set up to deal with those young people ... They generally don't survive in this environment because there's a whole range of other kids ... succeeding, and if they are struggling with some of the very basics in maths, there's a fair bit of shame associated with that.

Current challenges for the program are:

- recruiting more male students
- retaining Year 9 and 10 students in the program
- discouraging students from leaving the program in Year 11 without an established training or employment pathway [Recommendation 11]
- achieving more SACE completions. [Recommendation 14]

3.3.3 Lack of recurrent funding for tutors' salaries

According to the coordinator, the only factor that potentially may limit the program in future is the lack of secure funding for the tutors' salaries. The industry partners are reluctant to contribute the bulk of tutors' salaries, as they believe that it is the responsibility of governments and departments of education through the ITAS. In WA, PFS programs apply directly to the education department for ITAS funding, which covers all the tutor salaries. SA currently does not have such an arrangement with DECS. The coordinator described the current situation:

We are having to go through a fairly lengthy process of negotiation through the school to gain about \$30 000 that we spend on tutoring each year because we are not recognised as an entity [by DECS] for what we do. I think we've got to get to the same stage as in WA. In SA we have a long, convoluted trail for this money and then we have some bureaucratic constrictions that make it difficult for us to access the funding. I don't think it limits the success of the program, but it might in the future and it requires a lot of negotiation and running around [and] it does create financial strain ... It gets us bogged down by bureaucratic process rather than being focused on the program.

The situation for the EC is that PASS has to apply for the ITAS funding from the DECS and, in turn, the coordinator must negotiate with PASS to try and obtain a fair proportion of this funding. These negotiations were still under way at the time of writing this report. However, the CEO of the GPFF has confirmed with DECS' central office that sufficient funding dedicated to the PFS program tutor salaries will be available in 2010.

[Recommendation 6]

3.3.4 Limitations of venue and computers

Some of those interviewed stated that the EC facility was quickly running out of space and that at times it was a bit crowded and noisy. A couple of students and tutors said that, particularly on Monday nights, they found it hard to find a quiet space to concentrate. An ACEO recommended that corrals be set up on the desks to provide students with some privacy. Two parents suggested a larger building with more rooms would be beneficial, to allow for quiet study and privacy for students needing to confide in someone – although, as explained earlier, there is an extra room in the cottage which is currently used by another department. Perhaps it is now time to use that as a classroom.

Several students said they needed more computers because sometimes they had to share computers.

[Recommendation 4]

3.3.5 Insufficient dedicated resources for transport

Others recommended that the centre have its own 22-seater bus, because sometimes the bus that they borrow from the school is not available and it is also not big enough. A student said that some of the senior students chose not to go to the centre when the bus was too full. She said, 'The older kids don't want to be squished in with the younger kids'. In addition, when there were too many students for the bus, the younger students had to leave the centre earlier than they normally would do, because the tutors had to do two bus runs.

In addition, a trailer to attach to the bus would be beneficial to carry equipment for the camps.

[Recommendation 5]

3.3.6 When the communication between the school and centre wasn't strong

Good communication between the school and the centre is essential to the efficacy of the program.

In the earlier days, the connections between the secondary school and the EC were not as strong as they are now, and there were blockages impeding communication. An ACEO explained how this resulted in the disadvantaging of a Year 12 student when the Year 12 coordinator was not sufficiently informed about the available pathways between school and TAFE.

On another occasion, a parent mentioned that when her child has been away on PFS camps, the school has rung her to ask why her daughter was not at school.

The teachers also remarked that they would benefit from knowing what the students were covering in their subjects in mainstream classrooms, to inform their tutoring of the students.

Partington et al. (2009, p. 39) described how one of the coordinators of a PFS program in WA informed the secondary school subject teachers of all the 'Polly Farmer' students about the program by giving them each a brochure describing the program (printed by the Department of Education). The coordinator maintained regular two-way communication with the teachers regarding the progress and behaviour of each student. A summary of this information is included on the students' regular reports.

[Recommendation 15]

3.4 Sustainability

When asked what he thought the best aspect of the PFS program was, the coordinator said:

I think the absolute best thing about the program is that it is sustainable. All the programs in WA are ... all still working courtesy of the support through private industry. The first project started in 1997 and it's still running. There's a long-term strategy allowed to be put in place because it is sustainable. If you're only doing a year-by-year program depending on funding, I think Aboriginal people have seen those sorts of things happen too many times. [With the PFS], there's a long-term commitment, first by the coordinator, and secondly by the program, that gives it good strength and sustainability

The CEO of the GPFF explained:

The fact that there are all these private parties working in partnership with the government means that you are less subject to political whim or fashion, because people will know [if a party withdraws from the commitment] that this will become a public issue and the private parties – and we're talking about BHP or ETSA – are prepared to make representations and try and influence people. Also the private parties provide money that tops up the other money so that [the coordinator] can spend more money than is given by the government. The private money is really important for enhancing the project and adding that extra dimension that makes it quite exciting for the kids, because without that money you couldn't do those sorts of things [such as camps, excursions, sailing on the One-and-All]. The private money also provides top-up for some of the tutoring. Because apart from [the coordinator] as the mentor, manager, coordinator– parent of the program ..., the other key variable that all the research says are the tutors. The better the tutoring, the more targeted the tutoring, the more the kids are engaged with the tutors, and obviously the more successful we're going to be.

The CEO added:

We're the glue that keeps the partnership together and the partnership is the strength of the project. Partnership of not-for-profit, private enterprise and government that in the end makes things so powerful, because when all those people sit in a room together with a common cause, you have access to future job potential in terms of apprenticeships or traineeships or whatever, because those partner companies feel committed to the students and the program, and that's definitely the case with ETSA and BHP and people like that. The government departments know that they're getting an enriched program that they don't have to fund completely themselves. So therefore for them, there's significant leverage because they can be party to a program that they would never be able to afford themselves.

If they did run it completely themselves and then every other school in the state said, 'If they've got it then I want it. You have to pay for it', obviously there wouldn't be enough money.

As indicated in chapter one, Galloway et al. (2007) found certain characteristics contributed to the sustainability of the programs they investigated. All these characteristics are shared with the Port Augusta PFS program including:

- the carefully explained and evaluated model, with its program design and implementation strategy
- clearly articulated goals and the stability of its organisational structure
- initial political support from the Australian Democrats and a former Labor party minister who lobbied to get it off the ground
- the Department of Premier and Cabinet supplying the cottage rent-free
- the senior executives on the steering committee providing the influence to facilitate change
- access to expert advice
- a full-time coordinator who is external to the school
- program flexibility to suit immediate local conditions
- community involvement
- supportive local leadership
- a network of PFS program families who promote the program in the local community
- theoretical principles which are intrinsic to the model, based upon established research, which inform the program and which should inform change for the future
- a coordinator who is committed to using evaluation findings to provide guidance for future change.

The one condition proposed by Galloway et al. (2007) which is possibly not being fully met is the need for adequate staffing. As indicated earlier, some parents and staff members worry that the coordinator has too much to do and would benefit from administrative support so that he can devote all his energy to the students, families and tutors.

Other conditions which possibly contribute to the sustainability of the program are:

- the level of student satisfaction with the program: this would impact upon student engagement, and in turn, their family's engagement. Some students who have graduated from the program have expressed their desire to maintain a connection with the program. This provides a supply of potential mentors and role models for the students.
- the yearly surplus that the program has maintained: this is necessary in case of withdrawals of major partners and until replacement partners can be found. The surplus helped to tide the centre over after the recent withdrawal of DEEWR, with its ITAS funding.
- communication between the secondary school and the program: if school teachers are aware of the program's objectives and outcomes they may be more likely to promote it within their networks (Partington 2004, p. 6). [Recommendation 15]
- raising the program's profile with the broader community: perhaps, as suggested by several interviewees, it is now time for the program to raise its profile a bit more, particularly as it has tangible results. One of the parents made a similar suggestion:

I think just general promotion of the program [would be beneficial] because there isn't a lot and unless you're in there participating, you may not necessarily know about it. I think in that way, if there was more of a presence ... people could actually see that there is a group of Aboriginal kids who are being supported [by the program, including parents] who were serious about their child's education.

It was emphasised that any publicity should describe the program, its aims and strategies, parent participation, and not just concentrate on excursions and camps. Possible outlets for this information are the existing communication networks and processes used by PASS and also through DECS' district office. Several people suggested that the local paper would also be a good medium.

[Recommendation 3]

3.5 Summary

There is clear evidence that the Port Augusta PFS program is operating successfully and has all the ingredients for sustainability. All 31 people interviewed were of that view, and the education and employment outcomes of students who have participated in the centre indicate positive trends – confirming people’s trust in the centre and how it is operating. The general view is that the program has made a difference to these students’ lives, and that without the program they would not have had the same number of Year 12 and SACE completions nor the successful transitions to education and jobs.

Furthermore, the characteristics of the program, its coordinator and its tutors are consistent with what the research literature has found to be effective.

The final chapter will provide conclusions and recommendations arising from this study.

4. Conclusion

The 2006 census indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary aged young people have lower attendance, retention, Year 12 completion rates and literacy and numeracy attainment than other Australians. Without Year 12, it is not surprising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth also have lower rates of participation in education, training and employment. Consequently, there is an urgent need for programs such as the PFS. PFS encourages students to commit themselves to attending school and working hard to achieve well – supported by their families, a program rich in rewards, excellent teachers and the promise of jobs in the future. The PFS program is ‘tried and true’, having been pioneered and evaluated over 12 years in different sites around WA.

This evaluation of the Port Augusta PFS program was initiated through an agreement between the DKCRC and the GPPF. It was conducted by researchers associated with the David Unaipon College of Education and Research at the UniSA, using primarily in-depth interviewing and document analysis. Students and their parents from the PFS program were interviewed, along with the coordinator, tutors, industry representatives, community members, staff from the PASS and the CEO of the GPPF.

The evaluation concluded that the Port Augusta program was faithful to the PFS model in every aspect, and this contributed to its sustainability. The students were selected because they demonstrated high potential and motivation to succeed in completing secondary school.

As shown in the previous chapter, the data indicate that between 2006 and 2009, the following outcomes occurred for PFS students:

- successful transitions (14) into further education, training or employment for students who completed Year 12
- successful transitions (six) into apprenticeships, training or employment for students who left school without Year 12
- a higher rate of secondary school attendance than for Aboriginal students elsewhere in SA
- more SACE completions than among PASS Aboriginal students not in the program.

Despite the students coming mostly from stable homes with employed parents, the people interviewed believe that the students were unlikely to achieve such positive educational and employment outcomes without support from the program. All the parents stated that they did not have a suitable environment at home to provide sufficient support for their children to study. Many of those interviewed thought it would be beneficial if the program could be extended to include more children and a broader reach from Years 5 through 7 in primary school, as well as recruiting more young men. However, some people warned that it was important not to sacrifice quality of support for quantity of students, because the strong personal relationships between the coordinator and tutors with students and families were essential to its success and required intensive engagement. The study found that the most important contributors to the success of the program, apart from the PFS model, have been the personal qualities and commitment of the coordinator, the high quality of the tutors, the strong commitments of both students and their families, and the positive personal relationships among them all.

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Appendix 1: Ideas for training and development of teachers

Implications for schools and individual students working with Aboriginal students.

Excerpt from DJ Russell, *Aboriginal Students Can Succeed: Factors in influencing the retention, attainment and identity of ten successful Aboriginal students at senior secondary school*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of New England, February 1998, pages 325–326. Available from http://www.pipalya.com/rlt/ascs/toc_/pt05.htm

Implications of the findings for schools and individual teachers

The importance of a supportive group of students

As this study has demonstrated, many Aboriginal students, particularly in their junior secondary years, benefit from having a support group of other Aboriginal students to help them to stay at school and to achieve. This presents a challenge for schools - to recognise early in their junior secondary schooling those Aboriginal students who work well together and then to keep them together as much as possible and for as long as possible. These are not necessarily close friendship groups or ability groups but groups of Aboriginal students who have positive attitudes towards school and learning. The groups should not be too big but big enough so that if one or two students do drop out there is still a core left to continue.

The right teachers for Aboriginal students

If, as the data suggest, the quality of teaching is more important for the unexpected and possible stayers than for the expected stayers then, wherever possible, Aboriginal students should be taught by the best junior secondary teachers in the school. This will maximise their chances for succeeding and staying at school.

Training and development for teachers

Given that teacher relationships with Aboriginal students appear to be so crucial to the students' retention and attainment, all schools need to continually inservice staff on how to:

- Be accepting, tolerant and understanding of Aboriginal students' 'difference'.
- Be sensitive to cultural issues relating to Aboriginal students.
- Recognise the subtleties of covert racism.
- Deal with racism in the classroom and in the school yard.
- Support students to use existing school structures to deal with racism themselves.
- Recognise that identity crises which Aboriginal students may experience during adolescence are likely to be more complex than those which non-Aboriginal students may experience.
- Use the curriculum to make Aboriginal students feel included.
- Ensure Aboriginal students participate in classroom learning activities.
- Build positive working relationships with Aboriginal students.

Advice to teachers of Aboriginal students

In addition to acquiring the skills listed above, concerned teachers of Aboriginal students can assist them to stay at school and to succeed by behaving in the following ways:

- Have high but realistic expectations of Aboriginal students and supporting them to achieve these.
- Utilise small group activities where the students can interact with each other. This can strengthen the group and facilitate both collaborative and competitive learning.
- Facilitate and support Aboriginal students' desires to work with other Aboriginal students by allowing them to work alongside their Aboriginal peers when group work is not appropriate.
- Provide assistance, reassurance and encouragement to the group and to individual Aboriginal students without them having to ask for it.
- Encourage students to make cultural input or look at topics from alternative perspectives.
- Recognise and foster any special potential and/or goal orientation of individual Aboriginal students or groups of students.
- Consult students about incorporating Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum.
- Facilitate Aboriginal students' opportunities to learn about Aboriginal issues.
- Utilise a career focus that includes specific opportunities for Aboriginal people. Aboriginal students need to be shown that there are real opportunities for them, both in the mainstream and in specific roles where their Aboriginality is important, especially in their local communities. Otherwise Aboriginal students will look no further than "the relationship between their social and cultural status and their [expected] potential for success after leaving school".[57]
- Make full use of the school and/or district AEWs and AERTs in planning units of work and in curriculum activities.
- Actively support Aboriginal students' participation in any special activities organised by AEWs and/or AERTs.
- Volunteer to work in the school's Homework Centre and/or make yourself available for additional assistance outside normal class time.
- Utilise a variety of teaching / learning strategies.
- Make positive contact with the students' parents early in the school year.
- Facilitate the moves of enthusiastic Aboriginal students to resist negative influences from their peers.
- Take an interest in the students as individuals.

Appendix 2: Information sheet, consent form and question guide for partners



University of
South Australia

PARTNERS INFORMATION SHEET

Study of the implementation of the Graham (Polly) Farmer Program, Port Augusta

Many organisations help to fund the Port Augusta Enrichment Centre. They want to support the centre because they hope that it will be able to support Aboriginal school students to do well at school and then move onto further study, apprenticeships or jobs in any areas they are interested in.

The funding organisations are interested in answering the following questions. Does the Centre help Aboriginal students to

- feel welcome and supported and confident about doing well
- do well in their school studies
- go on to study at university or TAFE or get an apprenticeship or employment

In order to find answers, we will be evaluating the Centre. This will involve a researcher interviewing you and other Partner representatives about

- your organisation's objectives regarding the GPFF project
- whether you believe those objectives are being met
- your ideas about the project's strengths and suggestions for improvement

During the study we will keep you informed about how the study is progressing and when the study is finished, you will be provided with the final report.

You do not have to participate in this study. You can choose to cease being part of the project at any time without any negative consequences.

Research participants will not be able to be identified in the report and all personal records will remain confidential. All the interview transcripts and records will remain secure in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years at the University of SA and then be destroyed.

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Telephone, 8302 3118; Email vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au.

Other contact people are:

Professor Peter Buckskin, phone 830 29148 email: Peter.Buckskin@unisa.edu.au

Dr Merridy Malin, phone 8273 7217 email: merridy.malin@ahcsa.org.au



University of
South Australia

Consent Form - Partners
Study of the implementation of the Graham (Polly) Farmer
Program, Port Augusta

I give permission for Merridy Malin to interview me about the GPFF project. I also give consent for the interview to be tape recorded. I understand that

- The interview will be transcribed and the transcript presented to me to check for accuracy
- My confidentiality will be maintained at all times
- The tape will be kept secure in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years after the research and then destroyed.

The project has been explained to me by Merridy Malin and I understand why this study is being conducted.

I also understand that I can change my mind and stop the researchers from using information that I have provided.

Signed:

Date:

PFS Project Questions for Partner Representatives

Introduction to Merridy Malin,

- the nature of the evaluation - who initiated it, funded it, is conducting it, and will receive the report at the end
 - the interview - confidentiality and informed consent,
 - the transcription of the interview
 - what happens to the transcript
1. Why has BHP/ETSA entered into a partnership with the PFF Project in Port Augusta
 2. What does the partnership involve: aims and objectives
 3. What does BHP/ETSA contribute to the project
 4. What benefits, if any, does BHP/ETSA hope to gain from the partnership
 5. From BHP/ETSA 's perspective, how do you think the Enrichment Centre is going now
 - a. what seems to be working well: Achievement against objectives
 - b. are there any improvements that you can see are needed
 - c. have there been any tangible outcomes so far for BHP/ETSA
 6. From BHP/ETSA 's perspective, how do you think the partnership is going:
 - a. what seems to be working well
 - b. are there any improvements that you can see are needed
 7. Is there anything else you would like to add

Length of interview – between 30 and 45 minutes

Other possible issues to consider

- Financial – budget related
- Reporting
- Communication between reps and their respective organisations
- Student visits to BHP/ETSA sites
- Partner visits to Centre
- Employment by BHP/ETSA
- Training/Apprenticeships
- Further Education
- Leadership skills
- Raising organisational profiles
- Achievement of organisational objectives
- Sustainability
- Resources

Appendix 3: Information sheet, consent form and question guide for parents and students



University of
South Australia

PARENT/STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET

Study of the implementation of the Graham (Polly) Farmer Program, Port Augusta

Many organisations help to fund the Port Augusta Enrichment Centre. They want to support the centre because they hope that it will be able to support Aboriginal school students to do well at school and then move onto further study, apprenticeships or jobs in any areas they are interested in.

The funding organisations are interested in answering the following questions. Does the Enrichment Centre help Aboriginal students to

- feel welcome and supported and confident about doing well
- do well in their school studies
- go on to study at university or TAFE or get an apprenticeship

In order to find answers, we want to evaluate the Centre. We are hoping that you will be able to help us in our evaluation. This will involve a researcher

- talking to you about what you think about the Centre
- talking to your child about their experiences at the Centre
- looking at the attendance records & subject results of the students at the centre

We are not looking to see how well your particular child is doing, we are interested in a summary of **all** the results of **all** the children, so your child will not be singled out for attention. We want to make sure that the centre is helping all the children.

We would also like know if there are other things you would like the Centre to do.

You do not have to participate in this study. You can say NO if you do not feel comfortable with any part of the study. You can choose to stop being a part of the study at any time. If you say NO, it will not affect you or your child's work at the centre in any way.

During the study we will talk to you about what we are finding out and together we will look for better ways to help to make your children strong. No research participants will be able to be identified and all personal records will remain confidential. All the interview transcripts and records will remain secure in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years at the University of SA and then be destroyed.

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CRICOS Provider Number
00121B

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Telephone, 8302 3118; Email vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au.

Other contact people are:

Aboriginal Community Education Manager - Glennis Warrior, phone 0411 659 152
Researchers - Eugene Warrior, phone 0418853061 or
Sharon Meagher, phone 0427000139
Professor Peter Buckskin, phone 830 29148
email: Peter.Buckskin@unisa.edu.au



University of
South Australia

Consent Form (Parent)
Study of the implementation of the Graham (Polly) Farmer
Program, Port Augusta

I.....(parent's name)..... give permission for(the researcher's name) to talk to me about what I think about the Enrichment Centre. I also give consent for the interview to be tape recorded. I understand that

- The interview will be transcribed and the transcript presented to me to check for accuracy
- My confidentiality will be maintained at all times
- The tape will be kept secure in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years after the research and then destroyed.

I give permission for(the researcher) to use education records which are kept at the Centre and the Port Augusta Secondary School in order to know if the Centre is working well.

I understand that I can change my mind and stop ...(the researcher)... from using my records.

This has been explained to me by(staff member's name)..... and I understand why this study is being done.

Signed_____

Date_____



University of
South Australia

Consent Form (Student)
Study of the implementation of the Graham (Polly) Farmer
Program, Port Augusta

I give permission for(the researcher's name). to talk to me about what I think about the Enrichment Centre. I also give consent for the interview to be tape recorded. I understand that

- The interview will be transcribed and the transcript presented to me to check for accuracy
- My confidentiality will be maintained at all times
- The tape will be kept secure in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years after the research and then destroyed.

I give permission for(the researcher) to use education records which are kept at the Centre and the Port Augusta Secondary School in order to know if the Centre is working well.

I understand that I can change my mind and stop ...(the researcher)... from using my records.

This has been explained to me by(Teacher's or parent's name) and I understand why this study is being done.

Signed:

Date:

Interview questions / topics for students and parents

Students who are attending or who have graduated from the centre:

- Is the Enrichment Centre a good program for you? In what ways?
- Would you explain any things about the program that you think could be done better?
- Does the Centre help you with your school work? In what ways?
- What are you hoping for your future because of your attendance at the Centre?
- Do you know of others who have gained jobs or educational opportunities because they attended the Centre?
- What do you think about that?
- Are the tutors helpful in assisting you with your school work?
- What qualities make up a good tutor?
- What do you think about the excursions and camps?
- What do your friends think about the program?
- What do the other kids at your school think about the program?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Students who have left the Centre before finishing

- Was the Enrichment Centre a good program for you? In what ways?
- What things about the Centre were not so good?
- Why did you leave the Centre? (If relevant) - Have you ever thought of going back?
- Is there anything that would have changed your mind about leaving?
- Did the Centre help you with your school work?
- Does the Centre help people in their lives?
- Do you know of anybody who has got a job or apprenticeship from attending the Centre?
- Were the tutors helpful in assisting you with your school work?
- What qualities make up a good tutor?
- What did your friends think about the program?
- What did the other kids at your school think about the program?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Parents:

- Is the Enrichment Centre a good program for your child? In what ways?
- What benefits are you hoping that your child will receive from attending the Centre?
- What aspects of the program are working well?
- What aspects of the program could be done better?
- Does your child enjoy attending the Centre?
- Have you noticed any changes from your child attending: - e.g. at school, at home, regarding work ethic, thinking about the future?
- Have there been other benefits regarding the Centre?
- Have there been problems associated with the program?
- Have you participated at the Centre? If so, in what ways?
- Do other parents know about the Centre? What are they saying?
- Do you assist in promoting the Centre with other parents?
- Are there other things that the Centre could do to contribute to the broader Aboriginal community?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 4: Information sheet, consent form and question guide for staff



University of
South Australia

STAFF INFORMATION SHEET **Study of the implementation of the Graham (Polly) Farmer** **Program, Port Augusta**

Many organisations help to fund the Port Augusta Enrichment Centre. They want to support the centre because they hope that it will be able to support Aboriginal school students to do well at school and then move onto further study, apprenticeships or jobs in any areas they are interested in.

The funding organisations are interested in answering the following questions. Does the Centre help Aboriginal students to

- feel welcome and supported and confident about doing well
- do well in their school studies
- go on to study at university or TAFE or get an apprenticeship

In order to find answers, we will be evaluating the Centre. This will involve a researcher

- interviewing you about your feelings about the Centre
- conducting general observations around the Centre
- consulting student education records to determine long term effects of Centre
- asking you to keep a professional journal recording documenting plans, daily events and reflections regarding the program

During the study we will keep you informed about how the study is progressing.

You do not have to participate in this study. You can say NO if you do not feel comfortable with any part of the study. You can choose to stop being part of the project at any time. If you say NO, it will not affect your employment status in any way.

No research participants will be able to be identified and all personal records will remain confidential. All the interview transcripts and records will remain secure in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years at the University of SA and then be destroyed.

Should child abuse be disclosed during the research, the researcher will immediately notify the Child Abuse Report Line on 131 478.

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Telephone, 8302 3118; Email vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au.

Other contact people are:

Aboriginal Community Education Manager - Glennis Warrior, phone 0411 659 152

Researchers - Eugene Warrior, phone 0418853061 or Sharon Meagher, phone 0427000139

Professor Peter Buckskin, phone 830 29148 email: Peter.Buckskin@unisa.edu.au

Should child abuse be disclosed during the research, the researcher will immediately notify the Child Abuse Report Line on 131 478.



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Consent Form (Staff)
Study of the implementation of the Graham (Polly) Farmer
Program, Port Augusta

I give permission for Merridy Malin to interview me about the GPFF project. I also give consent for the interview to be audio recorded. I understand that

- The interview will be transcribed and the transcript presented to me to check for accuracy
- My confidentiality will be maintained at all times
- The tape will be kept secure in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years after the research and then destroyed.

The project has been explained to me by Merridy Malin and I understand why this study is being conducted.

I also understand that I can change my mind and stop the researchers from using information that I have provided.

Signed:

Date:

Should child abuse be disclosed during the research, the researcher will immediately notify the Child Abuse Report Line on 131 478.

PFF Project Questions for Staff

Introduction to Merridy Malin,

- the nature of the evaluation - who initiated it, funded it, is conducting it, and will receive the report at the end
- the interview - confidentiality and informed consent,
- the transcription of the interview
- what happens to the transcript

1. Your role in your workplace
2. What has been your involvement with the Enrichment Centre?
3. From your point of view, what are the benefits of the Enrichment Centre?
4. From your point of view, what are the disadvantages of the Enrichment Centre?
5. Do you know many students who are attending?
6. Has it made a difference to those children and if so, in what ways?
7. Do you think that the Centre will be able to achieve its goals of supporting Aboriginal students to obtain employment, apprenticeships and/or further educational opportunities? In what ways?
8. What could the Centre do better and how?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Length of interview – between 30 and 45 minutes

Other possible issues to consider

- Financial – budget related
- Reporting
- Communication between reps and their respective organisations
- Leadership skills
- Sustainability
- Resources

Should child abuse be disclosed during the research, the researcher will immediately notify the Child Abuse Report Line on 131 478.

DKCRC Partners

