

Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

Primary SDG	3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING
Broad theme	Improve health, education and life pathways
Research	Provide community-led evidence-based solutions to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in Walgett
Impact region	Walgett, NSW
Faculty	Arts & Social Sciences
School/Institute	Arts & Social Sciences
Academics	Professor Eileen Baldry, Dr Ruth McCausland, Peta MacGillivray
Project partners	IGD – seed funding of \$100,000
	Philanthropist funding - \$550,000 for 12 months
Related SDGs	4: Quality Education
	10: Reduced Inequalities
	11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Elevator pitch

With the local Dharriwaa Elders Group leading the way, UNSW will support systemic change in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in Walgett over the next ten years through a range of community-focussed initiatives.

The Challenge: Walgett's Aboriginal population is caught in a vicious cycle

Walgett is one of the most disadvantaged towns in Australia. It is a remote town in far north-west NSW with a population of 2,300, 70% of whom are Aboriginal. According to recent analysis, Walgett's Aboriginal people experience high rates of poverty, overcrowded housing, poor physical and mental health, high rates of disability, low employment participation, and poor educational outcomes. Forty police are stationed in the town.

There is a lack of support and funding for the complex needs of Aboriginal people in Walgett. Past government responses have been short-sighted and too often delivered by non-Indigenous and non-local organisations. Since the withdrawal of Commonwealth funding for many Aboriginal community based programs in 2014, there is very little Aboriginal-specific funding going to Walgett. Yet Walgett has great leaders and community-controlled organisations, including the Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG) and the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service. Community members have a vision for a 'well Walgett' and are ready to lead change.

UNSW's solution: Partner with local Elders to create systematic change

UNSW has been engaged with the community of Walgett and the DEG since 2006 on a range of projects. These include the building of a community studio, the study of Aboriginal involvement in policy making, and a study around mental health and cognitive disabilities in the town's criminal justice system. Impressed by UNSW's ethical research and commitment, the DEG invited UNSW to work with them to address poor educational outcomes and high incarceration rates of Aboriginal people in the town. As a result, the UNSW and DEG formed the Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership. This partnership aims to create solutions to improve the health, wellbeing and life pathways of locals over the next ten years. The DEG is the leader of Yuwaya Ngarra-li and the key to its success.

The 'Building phase' of the partnership targets young people in the criminal justice system. A forum will be held in Walgett in March 2018 involving representatives from the local community and UNSW experts. The aim of the forum is to develop responses to the criminalisation of young Aboriginal people, and a plan to improve young people's long-term wellbeing. The partnership is looking to deliver a microfactory (from UNSW's Smart Centre) to DEG so they can recycle glass into marketable products such as tiles, create training and employment, and further generate revenue. Governance models for land and water use in the region will also be developed (involving academics from UNSW's Global Water Institute) with the aim of providing training and employment for Aboriginal people.

The Impact: Improve health, wellbeing and life pathways of Aboriginal people

In the first three years of the partnership, the 'Building Phase', the model will be trialed and evaluated. In the long term, the partnership aims to give the Aboriginal community greater control and capacity; increase the number of Aboriginal young people in education, training and employment; improve the health and wellbeing among Aboriginal people; improve the sustainability of energy, water, land and natural resource management; and redirect government funding in the town towards holistic, community-led, sustainable initiatives.

Researchers

Professor Eileen Baldry is a Professor of Criminology at UNSW where she has been an academic since 1993. She also holds the position of Academic Chair, UNSW Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Board and is the current Deputy Chair of the Disability Council NSW. Her research and publications focus on social justice matters and include mental health and cognitive disability in the criminal justice system.

Dr Ruth McCausland is Research and Evaluation Director for Yuwaya Ngarra-li. She has a PhD in Criminology and a Masters in International Social Development. Her research focuses on the criminalisation of Aboriginal peoples, women and people with disability, and the cost-benefit of alternatives to incarceration. She is committed to enabling community-led solutions in research partnerships and practice.

Peta MacGillivray is an Aboriginal lawyer and the Project Manager for Yuwaya Ngarra-li. Peta first worked with the Dharriwaa Elders Group as a researcher on the UNSW ARC Linkage Project *Indigenous Australian's with Mental Health Disorders and Cognitive Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System*. Peta is completing her LLM in the Faculty of Law, UNSW.

Ben Falkenmire 16.02.18