“It was my father’s direction that sent me to school...Left to my own mind I would never have considered an education in the balanda world to be of any importance at all. For what meaning, what value, could an education in a foreign tongue, about foreign ways, have?

His thinking, as always, was drawn deeply from the Yolngu world and in this instance he drew on the inspiration of Ganbulabula, our ancestral hero...

He looked up, to the future, through a circle of wild bees that drifted through the leaves of a Stringybark tree. My father took inspiration from our hero and he decided that we must “look up and to the future.”

_Galarrwuy Yunupingu, Chairman of Yothu Yindi Foundation_
The cover artwork: Numbuwar Red Flag Dancers.

This report was compiled by Yothu Yindi Foundation, with assistance from Professor Marcia Langton.


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leaders in society "considered to have a great influence over our environment because of the standards and examples they set".

He has appeared on a number of compilations and recordings as a musician and songwriter including,  Land of the Morning Star: Songs and Music of Arnhem Land:The Tibetan album fundraiser Mantra Mix with Gapu. He arranged a number of traditional songs for Yothu Yindi and provided vocals for the Album Birrkuta "wild honey.

Dhupuma College 1972-1982 A special historical presentation

Dhupuma College was a transitional and residential college for North East Arnhem Land Aborigines. The Northern Territory government closed it suddenly in 1978. Many Yolngu leaders were educated there, and were shocked that it closed. It provided a sound education for many, and no secondary schooling was provided for Yolngu people following its closure. The college was named by Mr. Mungurrawuy Yunupingu, an elder living at Yirrkala. He named the college because it stands in his country. Dhupuma means "looking up and ahead" and is a suitably symbolic name for a place where young people prepare for the future.

This college monogram which appears above comes from sketches by Bruce Manggurra of Numbulwar, a former student of the College. It depicts an Aboriginal man looking up at the bees which have made a sugar bag in a hollow tree.

The circular formation of bees symbolises the sun, whilst the lower circle symbolises a billabong or water-hole. The meaning is that Aboriginal people seek the sweet things and the necessities of life and the students of Dhupuma, if they are to achieve in the wider Australian society, must also seek for the good things and necessities of life through a full and varied educational programme.

The college was situated at the former ELDO (European Launcher Development Organisation) complex approximately eighteen miles south-south-east of Nhulunbuy on the Gove Peninsula. The original complex is being expanded by the addition of further buildings which will enable a total accommodation of two hundred and fifty staff and students.

The college programme was designed to cater for the academic, social, sporting and recreational needs of teenage Aborigines in the transitional period and opportunity is provided for a wide variety of close cultural contacts through this programme. Students from Milingimbi, Elcho Island, Yirrkala Angurugu, Umbakumba and Numbulwar firstly do a residential academic course at Grade 7 level during their first year in residence. They then attend the Nhulunbuy Area School in subsequent years to receive secondary education. Evening programmes at Dhupuma supplement academic skills acquired at day schools.

Mr. Mungurrawuy Yunupingu

Much decision making concerning college policy and programming was in the hands of the students through the College Council, the Sporting and Social Club, and the Tuckshop Committee. Dhupuma is assisting in the preparation of Aboriginal people for the future - wherever and however they choose to spend it. The college provides an opportunity and time for the development and testing of skills, ideals and modes of expression in preparation for adulthood and perhaps, in some cases, for leadership.

Dhupuma College was a transitional and residential college that educated about 250 children and young adults in its prime. It was an exceptional place from which came many of the leaders of east Arnhem land that are well known today.

The proposal is to re-establish Dhupuma College at the Gulkula (or Garma) site approximately 30 kilometres from Nhulunbuy in east Arnhem land.
The Opening Session and welcome to participants

Welcome to participants by Chairman of the Yothu Yindi Foundation, Mr. Galarrwuy Yunupingu, A.M.

GALARRWUY YUNUPINGU: Ladies and Gentleman, welcome. This is the opening of 2010 Garma. Garma 2010, as you see it on your T-shirt. It says, 2010 looking up, and we are all going to look up. We are all going to look up from today onwards, for all our lives. Look up to the future in life. The future in life is so important for everybody, and all that is in you as children who are catching up with the big ones and growing up as men and women. And perhaps you will have your own children and be saying the same thing, to look up to the future and learn. We are at the beginning of the next stage of Garma, the next level ladies and gentlemen, the beginning to Garma. Garma will be nothing but a festivity and celebration to meet each other and enjoy each others company and share which communities we come from, from all around the country and the world. And to experience that we will learn from each other by experience.

This place will be nothing but a Yati, a ground for changes in experience, and most of all, these changes of knowledge. The kids turning up today with their little flags and their T-shirts, symbolizes the beginning to a serious business in education. And when I say serious business in education, enough of Mickey Mouse. Enough of Mickey Mouse teaching to Aboriginal people anywhere in this country. We will make that very, very serious, and force it to the people in Canberra that they will have a uniform legislation in place, that children of the Indigenous race of this country will have serious teaching and education that will reach the standard that all education should be reaching normally. And that’s how serious I’m gonna to be, as long as I live. I’m gonna make sure, that this level of education will be carried out forever, starting from these little ones here. To carry these little ones there has to be a beginning to things. All they have is a preschool, a primary school, a high school. Correction, no high school. Never has been a high school. Yirrkala has been here little bit after the last world war, and it would have been carrying a high school now. And their first role was, guess what, to close an Aboriginal College. How do you figure that out. Was it good or bad? And that college was situated right here where we sit.

We are wearing yellow t-shirts, with the emblems that were created by those students in the eighties and that College, called Dhupuma college. We will revive that. We will bring it to the resurrection so that the children of today will get the same benefit like they did then, before it was closed. We will now create Dhupuma College right now where we sit in the form of a high school, and a boarding school for all East Arnhem-landers, if not all Arnhem-landers, if it not for all Territorians. It will be for all students of the Northern Territory. And they will be coming here and learning. Learning, not Mickey Mouse teaching but a standard of teaching that is the level of teaching normally seen in southern schools and colleges. Like normal Australians would be taught. We will climb to that level now, and do it.

This Garma will be celebrating education, most of it. We will be talking about education, more education and more education. And seriously, I am really, really happy that this is happening now, and this will be happening as long as we live. To make sure that we create the pathway making it possible for every child that sits before us here, that they have opportunities. That they are given a fair go. Isn’t that our favorite saying in Australia – a fair go for the little ones, please. A fair teaching, to a fair standard of schooling, to a fair qualification for what they want to be as young men and women. That’s what we want. That’s what we want for Australia. That’s what we want for Arnhem Land, ladies and gentlemen, enough of Aboriginal people being treated under the thumb of the second world society. No more. No, no, no, no, no. Let’s make some correction here, seriously to make sure our children get a fair go in education and get to the level of education that all Australian kids should be getting. Ladies and gentlemen, I proudly speak here, because this is happening on the soil, that’s not new to education, its been here before, just that it disappeared a little bit, because of lack of understanding from adults and short vision of the politicians. Well, that’s not surprising. They normally have a lot of that. And we want to make sure, there is no short sightedness from any politicians, or any teachers, or any educators, or planners. That there will be a unity, a task force of people, working towards Garma, to make sure that this college gets up off the ground and is standing here so that these little ones will be able to get there, to be educated. I’m gonna stop there because I could speak forever.
The Garma Institute

Galarrwuy Yunupingu

“The Garma institute will be a university type institute whereby outside people will come, outside people will come and stay here overnight, six months, twelve months, a couple of years or longer, in education. It will be this institution that will contain a form of education that will give, to boarders, maybe a further qualification of university students from other states.”

Amongst the plans for the regeneration of Dhupuma College was a similar plan for the establishment of a new facility to be known as the Garma Institute.

Galarrwuy Yunupingu stated that the Garma Institute was the main objective of the Yothu Yindi Foundation and there is a determination to establish the Institute as soon as possible.

The Garma Institute is to be a two-way learning centre for Yolngu and non-Yolngu education and research at a higher, tertiary level with a dual function of enabling external university-style work and research, but also Yolngu learning and research at the highest level.

The Institute is to be a university type institute providing the highest level of quality education to ensure practical and accredited courses are taught allowing students to return to their families with a skill set to help strengthen their community.

“...When they finish here, they go home with their certificate, to Mum and Dad, to wherever their community is, and they will now be a qualified nurse or a qualified doctor, or an operator of some sort.” - Galarrwuy Yunupingu

Galarrwuy stated that the senior elders also wish it to be a Yolngu meeting place where the senior elders of east Arnhem land can meet and make decisions about the future and the Institute would run democratically by the 13 clans of the North East Anhemland.

“It'll no longer be only my people carrying knowledge on our behalf as it is now, when Garma grows, all thirteen clan groups of this North East Arnhem land to come together as a party of people, and there will be a central, meeting place here where elders can sit together and debate the future of what should be in Garma for young men and women and children and adults.” - Galarrwuy Yunupingu

The central place would be an auditorium which would be a showpiece for the future and be available for visitors such as conferences or large meetings, and around these facilities Garma Festival would be conducted, ensuring that Garma was not a week-long thing but a year-round learning place for Yolngu and non-Yolngu.

Galarrwuy expressed the desire to form a partnership with government not only in order to provide some funding support but so as to ensure Yolngu people and the Government are working together to fund operational and curriculum focused expenditure.

In addition to this there is a desire to build partnerships with Universities and with philanthropic organizations that have a desire to work with The Garma Institute and build a future base at Dhupuma.

“We want to turn this into a place where the most senior people can get together and practice their tribal practices/belongingness, to share knowledge with others in education. No longer my people only sharing knowledge from our behalf, when it grows it will be all 13 tribe groups of North East Arnhem Land, a meeting place where Elders sit together to debate what should be for young people, children and adults. An Elders Authority, a mini government body right here at Garma. Each group will offer what they can teach in their own groups without other groups interfering.” - Galarrwuy Yunupingu
Sponsor Reflections

"Rio Tinto Alcan is once again very privileged to continue it’s association with the Yothu Yindi Foundation and to have been able to assist in convening the 2010 Garma Festival.

This year’s event brought together many stakeholders from across the nation who are involved in the design, delivery and review of appropriate education and training pathways that are critical to supporting successful Indigenous economic development initiatives, and showcased the vibrant qualities of Yolngu cultural traditions, song, dance and artistic endeavour.

We see the annual Festival event to be an exceptional opportunity to work hand in hand with Yolngu people of North East Arnhem Land to share information, develop better cross cultural awareness understandings, assist in establishing positive community relationships and promote potential partnerships for sustainable economic futures in the Region.

Rio Tinto Alcan extends very best wishes and congratulations to the YYF Chairperson, Board of Directors, staff and the many contributors for the successful conduct of this year’s Festival event and we look forward to the continuing display of good works performed by the Foundation, the celebration of vibrant cultural activity, exchange of valuable knowledge and understandings, and further promotion of appropriate enterprise and academic pursuit for the Yolngu people and communities of North East Arnhem Land. ”

Regards and best wishes
Graham Dewar
Community Relations Specialist

Over the last two years, National Australia Bank has partnered with the Yothu Yindi Foundation to support the Garma Festival. Each year a group of NAB senior executives have attended the internationally significant celebration of Aboriginal culture and traditions, as well as participated in the key forum and cultural programs.

Garma is truly unique. The Festival brings together leaders from government, industry, academia and many distinguished Australians and international guests to celebrate Indigenous culture and discuss political and socio-economic issues. The Key Forum provides a great opportunity to interact with people and organisations who are working at the coal face in Indigenous affairs.

NAB’s partnership with the Traditional Credit Union was discussed in a session as part of the Key Forum’s Economic Development stream. Morgan Hoyes, Business Development Manager for the Traditional Credit Union and Glen Brennan, NAB’s Senior Manager Community Finance and Development spoke candidly about the work of both organisations in building financial literacy and creating access to financial services in remote communities.

It has been a real privilege for NAB executives to attend Garma, spend time on Yolngu country and learn by hearing peoples personal stories. In just a few days, real connections developed and the experience has had a strong and lasting impact. NAB is looking forward to continuing its support for the Garma Festival as an important gathering of people and cultures. Garma provides an environment where you can’t resist sharing learnings, making connections and helping build a positive future for all Australia.

Kind regards,
Vicki Carter
Executive General Manager Business Operations
National Australia Bank
Introduction

When the Garma Key Forum was first envisaged in 1999, the excitement was palpable. There had been few opportunities for Yolngu leaders to discuss matters of national and local importance with other Australian and international leaders. The excitement of Garma has been maintained and in 2010 with the Key Forum focussing on Indigenous Education and Training and the vision of ‘Looking up to the Future’, the energy has continued.

Eleven years after the inception of Garma, the Key Forum 2010 gave participants the opportunity to reflect on the history of the Garma Festival and the achievements of the Key Forum. Along with Yolngu leaders, elders and teachers, a number of important and influential Australians have been part of Garma – from judges, politicians, philosophers, unionists, business people and entertainers – and all have contributed to Garma forums, as have Indigenous leaders and influences from around the world.

In the 2010 Forum, the Yothu Yindi Foundation Chairman, Mr Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM, announced two major initiatives of the Foundation – a permanent home for the Garma Institute; and the re-establishment of the Dhupuma College.

In his explanation of the Garma Institute to Minister for Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin, Mr Yunupingu explained:

The senior elders also wish it to be a Yolngu meeting place where the senior elders of east Arnhem Land can meet and make decisions about the future. The Garma Institute would be therefore established as a cultural heartland that is a central repository of our knowledge, understanding, our spirituality and beliefs, where they can be made public and open.

The central place would be an auditorium which would be a showpiece for the future and be available for visitors such as conferences or large meetings.

Around these facilities and places we would hold the annual Garma Festival ensuring that Garma was not a week-long thing but a year-round learning place for Yolngu and non-Yolngu.

Our proposal to government is that we will make the capital investment in this project where the funding is not available under normal government funding streams. We will invest our knowledge and our culture in these structures when they are complete.

We would like to form a partnership with government so that government can contribute where it can to the capital works but, more importantly, work with us to fund operational and curriculum focused expenditure.

With government we would like to build partnerships with Universities and with philanthropic organizations that have a desire to work with us and build a future base at Dhupuma.

In response to this announcement the Minister replied with a contribution of 2 million dollars in a first round of funding to support the establishment of the Garma Institute.

The Keynote Speaker at the Garma Key Forum was Professor Janice Reid, Vice Chancellor of University of Western Sydney, whose association with Yolngu people goes back to the 1970s when she was a young medical anthropologist. Her ground-breaking book, Sorcerers and Healing Spirits published in 1983, shows how indigenous medical systems change under Western influence and how people respond to alien medical treatments as opposed to traditional systems of healing. It explores these issues for Yirrkala, the Aboriginal community of Yolngu people where Garma participants were able to visit the school, the Buku Larrngay Museum and Arts Centre during the festival.

The Garma Maths session presented by Dhalalu Stubbs and Banbapuy, Rarriwuy and Leon White was a fascinating exposition of the bicultural approach to teaching mathematics undertaken at the Yirrkala Community Education Centre. By using the conceptual basis of kinship and relatedness concepts in Yolngu culture, the similarity in thinking about how things are related between gurrutu and maths enables children to catch on to the idea of number, addition and so on.

In the Teaching on Country session, Dhängal Gurrwiwi, a Yolngu educator and consultant, of the Birritjimi community in east Arnhem Land, Yinjya Guyula, Yolŋu Studies lecturer, and John Greatorex, Yolŋu Studies coordinator both of the School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Charles Darwin University showed how by using video-conferencing and innovative teaching methods that connect remote Indigenous knowledge authorities with tertiary students in urban spaces across the globe.

Aboriginal education needs have been historically starved of funding and resources, as the Dhupuma College case demonstrates so clearly.

These sessions are only a few of the highlights of the Indigenous Education and Training Stream. There were many others, and these are described in the detailed report that follows. What the speakers in this stream demonstrated over and over again is that education and training are regarded by everyone concerned—community leader, teacher,
parent, concerned citizen—as the most pressing problems facing the Aboriginal communities. The failure to educate
generations of Aboriginal children has resulted in a disaster. There are some positive signs, however, and Wukun
Wanambi, Rob Lane and the Mulka Project artists were able to show their successes with digital media and explain
their project that brings elders, young people, modern technology and training together in a heady mix.

They explained that the Mulka Project is a collaborative process involving Yolngu people and media and digital
technology experts, “listening and following”. By listening to elders and working with the support of the community,
ideas are generated through a series of conversations, Rob Lane explained. “Our job is to follow the tide or the flow of
the community. We are a community news organisation to some extent, we don’t initiate the project, we facilitate the
project”. Young and old work together to pass knowledge from generation to generation.

A vision for Yolngu enterprises, job creation, and how outstanding young people are taking up these challenges was
presented in the Indigenous Economic Development stream. The highlights of this stream were the Yolngu forestry project,
timber harvesting, house construction and furniture making enterprises as well as other house building projects. “It’s not
just about the product it is about the jobs and the skills and the meaning that comes from it, that is hard to put a value
on it,” said Bob Smith of the Tasmanian forestry industry who collaborates with the Gumatj Forestry Project. Other
collaborators include Michael O’Connor of the CFMEU and Bob Gordon of Forestry Tasmania.

The real value of what is going on is the pride and the joy and the action that these men seem to be taking in their
daily working lives. And that was communicated to me as the most important thing, and I think that is really inspiring”.

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This table was constructed by men from east Arnhem Land (Russell Gurruwiwi, Claytom Yunupingu, Tony Yunupingu
& Nathan Black) under the direction of Melbourne furniture designer Damien Wright. The build time was seven days
and the table was constructed in the Gumatj studio at ski beach.

The timber used is gadayka (or stringybark) which is milled at Dhaniya by the Gumatj mill team led by Shane
Yunupingu and Mark Blackwell.

The trees that are harvested are chosen by the senior Gumatj elders and the tree is considered to have gifted the
use of its timber to the clan and its members.

The furniture studio is still in the establishment stage but select pieces will be on display at the Garma festival
and will be for sale in 2011.
Summary of Garma Key Forum achievements

The Yothu Yindi Foundation Board members, staff and volunteers are justifiably proud of the achievements of the Garma Key Forum. Everyone has agreed that the best achievement of the Garma Key Forum was the increased Yolngu involvement in presenting and chairing at the Plenary session.

The Key Forum offered the best opportunity to announce the YYF goals of establishing a new Dhupuma College as a school with excellent standards in the education of Yolngu children and others and which is proposed to have a residential college.

The Key Forum also offered the best opportunity to announce the Yothu Yindi Foundation’s original vision of establishing the Garma Institute.

The Yothu Yindi Foundation-Charles Darwin University partnership

The Charles Darwin University remains a key partner of the Festival, and this year Barney Glover, Vice Chancellor and Steve Larkin, Pro Vice Chancellor, Indigenous Leadership, spoke on the education challenges they face and how they are delivering university and vocational courses to the people of northern Australia. John Ah Kit, the Territory’s first Aboriginal parliamentary minister and leading Indigenous political identity, has been appointed to a leadership role at the University. He is Chair of the Indigenous Advisory Committee to the Vice Chancellor of the Charles Darwin University. Mr Ah Kit served as Minister for Community Development, Housing, Local Government, Sport and Recreation, Regional Development and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Indigenous Affairs.

Mr Ah Kit said during the plenary session:

“I think the themes that have been had and the workshops have been excellent over the last four days. I think it is exciting times ahead in terms of Indigenous educational needs especially in the territory”.

Indigenous education is one of the five pillars informing the CDU direction, which will not be a committee to rubber stamp a preset agenda. Through the CDU a strategic way of putting together the Vice Chancellors Indigenous advisory committee has been devised.

A $32 million joint venture between CDU and BIEP (Batchelor Indigenous Education Program) to ensure not only that Batchelor survives but that it has better outcomes and works much more comfortably with CDU.

Batchelor has been outstanding in the qualifications that people in the Northern Territory and other states have achieved.
“CDU is a strong supporter of Garma and as a key partner with the Yothu Yindi foundation to bring the Garma Key Forum to the people and facilitate these very significant discussions. So from the Charles Darwin University perspective Garma has, once again been successful, we will continue to work closely with Garma in years to come and continue to strengthen the partnership that we have.”

The Garma Statement

Over three days of Garma 2010 there was much discussion surrounding the issues faced in creating improved outcomes in education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

This discussion broached many topics surrounding education with speakers addressing both the foundations from which success in education stems, such as community, family and cultural strength, and also where the path of education should lead, from training and employment to ultimately economic ownership and empowerment.

From this, a dialogue was opened regarding the re-establishment of Dhupuma College which stood on the Garma festival site for ten years until its closure in 1982. The need for ‘Two Way learning’ and the importance of educating children within the community was discussed by many and this focus on cultural identity is viewed as a necessary foundation to assist young people in establishing success in education and employment.

From this conversation regarding identity, the Yothu Yindi Chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu declared that the time has come for constitutional recognition for the Indigenous people of Australia, a theme agreed upon and discussed by many speakers through the following days.

During the plenary session led by a panel of experts and leaders, Associate Professor Jane Freemantle of the School of Population Health at the University of Melbourne summed up the key themes and prominent feelings of the gathering in a summary of the presentations and conversations.

There was unanimous agreement that success in education is a crucial and fundamental component for achieving success in every dimension of life including health, employment, environment, economy and technology, and critical to reducing the inequalities that are currently experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Closing this gap can be achieved through encouraging students to ‘orbit’ between community education and mainstream education, whether these ‘orbits’ are small, large or virtual. There are some very good examples from Cape York Institute from the higher education programs. Young people must be equipped to operate in two worlds, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world and mainstream. Such experience will equip them to achieve academic excellence in both worlds.

Striving for excellence has been a key theme inherent in the majority of presentations at Garma 2010.

Discussion on ‘two way learning’ between mainstream and Western learning, and the appreciation and acknowledgment of Yolngu (specifically) and Aboriginal knowledge (generally) occurred in all sessions. The importance, too, of all people ‘learning together’ was emphasised.

There was a strong statement that the era of ‘consultation’ was over and must be replaced by ‘negotiation’. This was a repeated theme in a number of presentations.

To this end, educational programs must equip today’s and tomorrow’s students with the ability to negotiate; equipping students with the skills of negotiation and leadership is one of the fundamental aims of the higher education program at the Cape York Institute.

The importance of engaging with communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders to gain support of educational programs was critical to the success and sustainability of educational programs. Young people must be encouraged to take advantage of learning opportunities and supported by communities to complete their education.

Aboriginal education must be grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander epistemology in all areas of education and the example of the opportunities for further development of Indigenous epistemology was cited in the development of meaningful relationships with national film and sound archives and other information documenting agencies.

The importance of supporting remote media broadcasting and continuing the 40 years of investment in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media was emphasised, as was the continuation of remote needs being met through the rollout of the digital signal in 2013.

In determining epistemological methods, it is important to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, knowledge and culture is augmented and supported in all areas of education and training.
There were a series of presentations that highlighted the critical area of the intergenerational transfer of knowledge and the importance of keeping this knowledge intact for prosperity through the development and implementation of protective mediums and archival environments.

The meeting also supported the introduction of a human rights framework within the school curriculum and beyond, noting that from an early age children should be aware of their ‘human rights’.

A program that described training on country in literacy and numeracy had been presented in previous years. This year the presentation described conservation and land management compliance and equipment training. The importance of developing and using technology not only to deliver education and training to remote locations, but also for remote locations to be able to transform their knowledge back into locations in the mainstream and urban areas was described. The importance of this work is that it provides a template from which other programs can be adapted and introduced to address the paucity of education and training programs within many rural/remote environments. It also encourages a two way interaction between rural and urban and thus the opportunity to gain enhanced knowledge and understanding from diverse community groups, understand their unique/generic challenges and consider the various responses and approaches to addressing these issues.

Yirrkala is recognized nationally and internationally for the pedagogy and delivery of the education programs that equip Yolngu children. An example of this has been seen in the ‘Garma Maths’ programs run at Yirrkala School. This program is based on a holistic approach to Yolngu systems of relationships between people and land. They begin with using the systems the children learn from birth and use these to move into the development of western mathematical concepts.

There were a number of examples of initiatives that represented best practice in supporting academic pathways through primary school, into secondary school, on to the University and into post-graduate studies. The retention of students within these pathways is critical to closing the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage. Achieving academic success is also vital in providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models in senior academic positions.

The results of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) show the importance of early childhood development in ensuring good school educational outcomes. The AEDI shows that school readiness is directly related to school attendance and positive educational outcomes.

This highlights the importance of homeland communities where the oldest continuing culture in the world is enabled. This ancient culture must be conserved and protected.

The meeting acknowledged that the national Curriculum does not reflect a strong indigenous component and Garma outcomes and examples must be translated into the national Curriculum in clouding such examples of ‘Garma Maths’ programs, the infrastructure to support two-way learning, and the provision of and support for specific academic pathways to enable retention from primary school to post graduate studies.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people state quite clearly that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to participate in decisions that impact/affect/involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Education and training are crucial to securing a positive future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Thus decisions that relate to initiatives and activities in these areas must include significant negotiation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The sharing of success stories, celebrating achievement and role models, ensuring that opportunities are created to enable choice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will mean that educational achievement and excellence is not just a possibility, but a probability for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

It is vital that elders and communities have high expectations of students so that they in turn have insight into their activities and high aspirations of themselves.
The Circle of Learning: Educating for Life

The Keynote Speaker: Professor Janice Reid, Vice Chancellor of University of Western Sydney

Our special guest this year was Prof Janice Reid, Vice Chancellor of University of Western Sydney, whose association with Yolngu people goes back to the 1970s when she was a young medical anthropologist. Her ground-breaking book, Sorcerers and Healing Spirits published in 1983, shows how indigenous medical systems change under Western influence and how people respond to alien medical treatments as opposed to traditional systems of healing. It explores these issues for Yirrkala, the Aboriginal community of Yolngu people where Garma participants visit the school, the Buku Larrngay Museum and Arts Centre during the festival.

“When I arrived in eastern Arnhem Land in 1974 it was a time of far-reaching change. Some of the changes were for the good, but most were not. Federal and Territory politics, mining interests and legal conflicts had created a maze which Yolngu, government, the mission and the mining industry were all trying to find their way through. They all had different interests and opinions about what mattered, different hopes and fears about the future, and different ideas about who had the right to make the important decisions.

This wasn’t just any remote part of Australia and Yirrkala wasn’t just any town. By 1974 it had already come to stand for several things: the courage of people without money or influence to stand up to international mining interests; their determination to confront a Government that wasn’t listening and didn’t recognise their rights; and their decision to take their struggles to the courts. The men and women elders of the community then living had all been born and grown up before missionaries arrived in 1935. They were known and are remembered today for their wisdom, dignity and fighting spirit. They were determined to defend and preserve their traditions and languages. Their patient explanation of these to visitors and supporters never waned.

In the decades since that time visitors from all over this country and overseas have continued to be drawn to North-East Arnhem Land. The numbers of people who come to Garma are just one example. Yirrkala was and still is a magnet for people from all over Australia and beyond – politicians, bureaucrats, academics, dignitaries, cultural tourists and students. The music of Yothu Yindi took the world by storm. The bark paintings are held in major museums and galleries and sold through dealers in cities such as Sydney, London and New York (to name a few). The art of the region has been adapted for great civic projects like the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris where Gulumbu Yunupingu’s mural is there for all to see. And then there is the music of Gurrumul Yunupingu which also now has an international following, not to mention the Chooky Dancers from Galiwin’ku on YouTube. These and many other accomplishments all speak to the magnetism of Yolngu culture.

Many outsiders, like me, have come here over the decades and some have stayed. Just like foreigners who fall in love with the rich cultures of Europe, or with the spirituality and traditions of Asia, they find their own lives enriched by Yolngu history and culture. Others have come feeling they can help to change things for the better. In every case we are welcomed with a generosity of spirit, and if we stay are adopted into a mosaic of family relationships which we do our best to learn, usually with about the understanding of a 5 year old!

When I was invited to speak today the request from Galarrwuy and Gulumbu Yunupingu asked me to talk about the history of the Yolngu. I thought, which history? The last 50 years? Or the last 200 years? Or perhaps the last 50,000 years? And whose history? The Yolngu nation’s? The scientists’ who write about the discovery and settlement of this continent in antiquity by intrepid Aboriginal explorers from south-east Asia? The missionaries who came and established coastal villages in the last century? The lawyers, churches and anthropologists, some of whom threw themselves behind Yolngu efforts? The documents generated by governments, with their shifting policies, that have come and gone? History through women’s eyes or through men’s eyes? Secret or public knowledge?

I thought about the great journey of the Djangka’wu sisters who landed during the Dreamtime at Yalangbara down the coast. As they travelled through the land they gave form to people and places, and are celebrated in the poetry, song and dance of the Yolngu families and clans of the Dhuwa moiety. And about the journey of Barama, who emerged to travel from Gangan, and other Yirritja creator beings. But my knowledge is superficial and here, in the heart of Yolngu country, creation epics are best told by their owners.

After I turned all these possibilities over in my head I decided I could only talk about what I learned and was taught when I lived here and what is written and recorded in books, artworks and films. And there is a lot, spread through university libraries and government archives in Australia and across the world.

So let me say a few words about the relatively recent history of this region, based on what is remembered or written. I know that this leaves out a lot and only starts a few hundred years ago, not tens of thousands of years ago when the human history of this land really began.

Although it’s quite possible that Chinese, Indian or Dutch seafarers made their way to these shores many centuries ago, we do know that from at least the 1600s large fleets of boats from what is now Indonesia (Macassar in the Sulawesi) came to collect trepang or seablugs to dry and sell. They camped for a season and then sailed home on
favorable winds laden down with their harvest. No doubt there were conflicts and tensions, but they were not colonisers. They were traders and brought metal tools, cloth, tobacco, alcohol and other trade goods. Some Yolngu actually sailed back with them to Macassar. Their campsites, bits of pottery and the tamarind trees they planted pepper the coast of Arnhem Land. Trade Malay words like 'rupiah' and 'Balanda' were incorporated into the Yolngu languages.

So before Captain Cook landed at Botany Bay this was quite a cosmopolitan part of the world. Indeed when Mathew Flinders circumnavigated Australia and landed just down the coast from here in 1803, he met a fleet of Macassan boats at anchor and chatted to the captain of the fleet who told him that about 60 praus were operating along the coast. Of course, compared with the Indigenous history of ownership of the continent these visitors were all latecomers.

But by the early 1900s (1907) the government of the day effectively put a stop to these voyages and the era of co-existence ended. However Japanese and European pearlers and trepangers began illegally fishing the waters. A few European adventurers had also started to move into the area looking for land and hoping to make their fortunes. By all accounts, at least some were rapacious and violent. Things came to a head in 1932 when several predatory Japanese were speared at Caledon Bay. This was followed by a fatal attack on a police party sent out to arrest the perpetrators and on a couple of drifters who came along the coast by boat. Of the four men who were eventually captured, tried and goaled in Darwin, one, Dhakiyarr, when released in 1934 after an uproar about their sentences, was never seen again. He is still believed by many to have received summary justice. In 2003 in a widely televised ceremony at the High Court in Darwin he was remembered, honored and symbolically brought home.

All this was in the context of defensive Yolngu attacks on intruders and trespassers, and raids and murders by white frontiersmen probably starting in the late 1800s. These included a massacre, probably in the 1920s, at Gangan - not far to the southwest of here. The leader of the Dhalwangu clan Birrikiti Gumana described it in detail to me and others in the 70s. They were not good times. The spirit of reciprocity between Macassans and Yolngu was replaced by a state of hostility between the Indigenous landowners and opportunistic invaders.

Some called for a punitive expedition to kill the Yolngu perpetrators, but other voices prevailed, and in 1935 the Methodist church was allowed to set up a small settlement at Yirrkala. In addition to Galiwin’ku (or Elcho Island) and Milingimbi they were meant to encourage settlement, to provide rudimentary schooling, health care, cultivation of crops and animals and Christian teaching.

Through the War years many left their ancestral lands and settled at Yirrkala. They continued their traditions but incorporated the new ideas and practical knowledge that the new-comers brought, as they had with the Macassans.

Yirrkala was meant to be what one missionary called a “sanctuary”. But in this quiet corner of the globe geologists found in the early 1950s that bauxite blanketed the landscape. As the prospect of a mine, port and mining town loomed, the community became very worried. Under the threat of permanent excision of nearly 400 square kilometers of Gumatj and Rirratjingu land for the mine the leaders wrote a bark petition and sent it to the Australian Parliament. The 1963 petition is a very important historic document and is on permanent display in the central court in Parliament House in Canberra. Everyone should go and see it. It was written in English and Gumatj. It read in part:

The Humble Petition of the Undersigned aboriginal people of Yirrkala ... respectfully showeth:

That nearly 500 people... are residents of the land excised from the Aboriginal Reserve in Arnhem Land....That the procedures ...and the fate of the people on it ... were kept secret from them....That the land in question has been hunting and food gathering land for the Yirrkala tribes from time immemorial (and) we were all born here.

That places sacred to the Yirrkala people... are in the excised land...That the people ... fear that the fate that has overtaken the Larrakeah tribe will overtake them (and)

They humbly pray that no arrangements will be entered into ...which will destroy the livelihood and independence of the Yirrkala people....

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray God to help you and us.

This masterful action, grounded in Yolngu law and diplomacy, had very little traction in Canberra, so the people decided to take their fight to the courts. The 1971 Yirrkala land rights case that followed is described in legal textbooks and taught to university law students under its title, *Milirrpum and Others v. Nabalco and the Commonwealth of Australia*. The plaintiffs clearly impressed the judge with the detail and depth of their evidence for land ownership passed through hundreds of generations. It was integral to the religious and economic lives of the people and described in Yolngu stories, songs and dances. However under British-Australian common law about property, the Judge said he could not find in their favor.

This rejection of Yolngu tenure was a devastating decision for all who had fought so hard. But it was not the end. The case became central to the 1972 Woodward Royal Commission into land rights in the Northern Territory that was commissioned in by the Whitlam government in 1972 (and reported in 1974), the development of the Northern
**Territory Land Rights Act** of 1976, to subsequent successful land claims all over Australia and, of course, the overturning of the concept of *terra nullius* in the Mabo case in 1992.

At about this time in the early ’70s with the election in 1972 of the reforming and sympathetic Whitlam government and thus the end to the policy of assimilation, families started to move back to their homelands. The “outstation movement” as it became known, was described to me then by Dr Gawirrin Gumana AO as “going home”. In spirit they had never really left, but wanted to reclaim and take care of their land and also to get away from some of the problems in town, like alcohol and violence. It must have been galling for the elders to see the impact of the pub in Nhulunbuy on young and not-so-young drinkers when they had protested about a take-away license being granted to the Walkabout when it was being built. They knew what it would bring.

In the years since, of course, the Yolngu nation has become even more prominent with its famous singers and public figures, two Australians of the Year (Galarrwuy and Mandawuy Yunupingu), several of its leaders decorated with Australian and university honors, and others known as cultural ambassadors throughout the world.

There were, of course, and remain the tragedies of suicides, sickness, alcoholism, and people dying at a much younger age than most other Australians. My own education here was actually all about illness, healing and the causes of deaths and serious sickness and injury. So what did I learn that’s relevant to this weekend’s theme of education and training?

First of all, I want to pay a tribute, because I had the best organiser, adviser, teacher, research coordinator and community mediator you could hope for in all one person. Her name was Nangaypa Dhamarrandji, my sister and the mother of Miliminyina Dhamarrandji, who’s here at Garma. They looked after me, fed me, were tactful when I was slow to learn, tolerant when I made social blunders, took me everywhere and thought my fear of big spiders was ridiculous (“bawamirri”). As one of the daughters of Mungurrawuy the distinguished elder who was a signatory of the bark petition (and also of course the father of Gulumbu, Galarrwuy and Mandawuy, among his other children) she and her equally learned sisters, their daughters and senior friends, shared a wealth of knowledge with me. Most of us are used to classroom teaching where there is one teacher and a roomful of students. In my case, I was one student with a community-full of teachers. They explained to me the causes of illness, the ceremonies, the medical and the spiritual treatments.

One project which we tackled, with a botanist and a biologist to help, was to record the Yolngu names, preparation, use and Latin botanic names of one hundred bush and sea medicines and treatments. (I recently met a scientist from the CSIRO who was so excited when I told her this that she begged me for a copy). And of course the healing centre, Dithuba Yolngunha here and the project inspired and led by Gulumbu to pass on this knowledge to the young and bring it into the public eye is what Garma is all about. The passing on of thousands of years of wisdom to future generations and sharing Yolngu knowledge with visitors and students.

We all understand things in our own ways. Ever since I was a school science teacher in Papua New Guinea I’d been drawn to age-old traditions - perhaps because white Australian history is so shallow by comparison! I was especially fascinated by traditional medicine in different cultures and the way we all respond to sickness and understand health. Here I learned that at the meeting point between western medicine and Yolngu medicine, everyone was quite practical about what treatments and medicines they used. However they still explained causes and cures in Yolngu cultural terms. When I wrote about this I called it a “socio-medical theory”, to emphasise the very logical links between serious illnesses and deaths, and social conflicts and personal relationships.

We all ask “why me?” and “why now?” when we or our loved ones get very sick. Western medicine doesn’t really have an answer to such questions. Yolngu explanations do. But what stood out then, and what I feel the women’s healing centre is all about today, is the “two way” use of knowledge, from both the western and Yolngu traditions. Whether you called on the services of a doctor, nurse, health worker or marrrggiti (the Yolngu spiritual healer), or took antibiotics or prepared an infusion of, say, *nhambarra* (*Melaleuca Viridiflora*), or all of these, depended on what people had found from experiment and experience worked best.

However, it seemed to me that those who were most comfortable with, and took the best from, both traditions were those who’d had a solid school education and could read and write good Yolngu matha and English when they needed to, who could negotiate for themselves and their families when someone was sick, who understood health hazards and healthy lifestyles. They were those who, as well as their own parents and grandparents, had had teachers and family friends who could encourage and support them in their education. They didn’t stand on one side of the cultural fence looking across; for them the gates were open and they could walk back and forth as they chose.

This leads me to the last part of what I wanted to say. There has been so much debate over the years about the provision of education in remote Australia. But there are some things that public health studies across the world have consistently shown: that is that overall those with a good education have better health, more personal choices and opportunities, a higher income, lower crime rates and lower rates of drug and alcohol abuse than those without. Well educated mothers also have healthier children. It doesn’t matter where or how education is delivered; only that it
is accessible and of good quality. We also know that a strong and proud family and a proud cultural identity are the foundations of good emotional and mental health.

When I first came here the primary school was mainly staffed by mission teachers and early high school education was offered by the secondary boarding colleges Yirara in Alice Springs, Kormilda in Darwin and Dhupuma here. Dhupuma’s catchment was all of northeast Arnhem Land. Student boarders came from several Yolngu towns and homeland centres.

These colleges were set up by the Northern Territory government as pathways or bridges to mainstream high schools. The purpose was to offer locally a good introduction to secondary education and prepare students to go to mainstream high schools. They weren’t perfect. In fact some people were critical of the way the policy of assimilation shaped their purpose and curriculum.

There are bad memories around Australia for other Aboriginal communities about the residential schools of the 50s and 60s. Teachers forbade students to speak their language and tried to suppress Aboriginal culture. As a native Canadian man of the Alert Bay community said of similar schools there, “They tried to make us them”¹. These early dormitory schools really were the vanguard of assimilation, where age-old cultures and languages had no place. But these days are fortunately long gone.

Ten years ago the Nambara Schools Council here sent a submission to a federal government inquiry into remote and rural education calling for bilingual education programs, proper educational services in the homelands, much better teacher training, school facilities and real community participation. In the submission Dr Gawirrin Gumana also raised the idea of a school in the homelands that was accessible to all, likening it to Dhupuma College. He said the leaders had been talking about this ever since it closed. He said (HREOC 1999:23), "I feel strongly about education in Yolngu culture and also in the Western ways, so that the two will be side-by-side and our children will be in the middle with an understanding of both."

Some of the visitors here will have noticed an overgrown ruin of a building just up the road from here. That was Dhupuma College. I’ve never found out why the College, which was opened in 1972 on the site of an old tracking station, closed in 1981. If you read some questions and answers in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly records of the time the buildings were very run down and the costs were high. The teachers’ union at the time said it was a political decision. One speaker said you could send every student to Geelong Grammar for the same amount of money, but of course he missed the point. The point was that Dhupuma was here, not there.

When I read all this I began thinking about all those public and low-cost private high schools we have around our university in western Sydney which share the mission of bringing the best possible education to students regardless of their backgrounds or means. And I reflected on Noel Pearson’s powerful vision of young Indigenous people enrolled on scholarships in private boarding schools in towns and cities, and in residential colleges in universities, where the educational experience and extracurricular opportunities are second to none.

If there can be Greek schools, Arabic schools, Christian schools, Jewish schools, international schools, day schools, boarding schools and correspondence schools across Australia, why not Indigenous schools of all kinds too that teach a standard Australian curriculum in the context of Yolngu history, culture and values? The Homeland School based at Garrthalala to the south of here is one locally meaningful and successful model of a bicultural secondary program for outstation communities.

There shouldn’t be one path but many. As well as scholarships to go to schools down south, there should be a mosaic of public and private girls’ and boys’ secondary boarding schools for remote area Aboriginal students, in the homelands or closer to towns (but far enough away to avoid their distractions). There could be boards of trustees made up of elders, community members and other experienced and knowledgeable individuals who can contribute educational, financial, cultural and pastoral knowledge. They would work closely with parents and their communities and attract dedicated teachers from anywhere in the world. The teachers in turn would provide training and professional development for Yolngu staff as well as the students.

There could be a “new Dhupuma” that is a truly bi-cultural secondary school. It could have partnerships with similar schools across the Northern Territory and in other parts of the country, providing student exchanges that enable visiting students to learn about Yolngu culture and Yolngu students to broaden their horizons. Their education would be both culturally and nationally connected. At our University we always talk about this kind of education as having “roots in the region and branches to the world”. I understand the current Government in the last few years has made a promise to build a new boarding school for east Arnhem, which is good news, but 30 years is a long time to wait. And while Dhupuma is being re-established, the first wave could go to Djarragun College in Cairns, or Nundah College in Brisbane or perhaps board with caring families down south and go to the local school. And some in time could become teachers at the new Dhupuma. There are many promising models and paths, and the more the better.

¹ ABC RN, 360 Documentary, “My Life So Far” 10 July 2010
Two-way education is not about a diminished or diluted education, but a strong and relevant education that starts early, opens eyes and opportunities, provides a bridge between cultures, strengthens families and honors their wishes and responsibility for their children, and unlocks the gate to healthy lives.

At the University of Western Sydney we host the Whitlam Institute which honors the former Prime Minister’s legacy as an advocate and campaigner for social justice. Gough Whitlam is now 94. During the War in 1944 he was stationed here at Gove airstrip with the Air Force, where he met several of the Yolngu elders. Most of us know about the 1967 referendum, but who has heard of the 1944 “14 powers” referendum? This referendum, entitled *Post-War Reconstruction and Democratic Rights*, would have given the Commonwealth the power to legislate for Indigenous Australians 23 years earlier. It was however defeated. Mr. Whitlam recalls he was active advocating a ‘yes’ vote with his men and most of his squadron supported it. “Thus” he wrote in the second Vincent Lingiari Memorial lecture, “my first political campaign had been conducted on Aboriginal lands”. In short, the political career of our former Prime Minister started here, on Yolngu land.

When I visited Mr Whitlam recently he wanted to send a message to those who belong to these lands and to all the visitors at Garma. It is written and signed by him and reads,

*I am very pleased to send my salutations and greetings to the 2010 Garma Festival. I urge each of you to be bold in exploring how all children can grow up proud and secure in their Aboriginal identity and, therefore, able to make choices in life that a good education brings.*

*With all good wishes to my Yolngu friends.*

*Gough Whitlam*

I have it here with me to present to Gulumbu for the safekeeping of the Yolngu families and community.²”

² E.G. Whitlam’s greetings were conserved and framed for a tropical environment. The image of the presentation to Gulumbu Yunupingu is attached.
Time for recognition: Constitutional Change

There were broad discussion throughout Garma 2010 regarding the need for changes to the Australian Constitution so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are recognized and acknowledged as not only citizens, but the First Australians, with all of the inherited customary interests that any other people have, including traditions and laws.

It was stated that the issue of their peoplehood in all that it entails – cultural, social, economic and political customs and traditions – was a matter raised again and again by speakers and this issue became a theme in itself throughout the Festival. Galarrwuy Yunupingu stated:

“We are simply walking around pretending that Indigenous people are part of all of Australia. Ladies and gentlemen, I must remind you that it is not. This country needs to reform the constitution of this land and of this people, us people, you, me, and our children..... Aboriginal people are ....nothing but a good face to paint the history of Australia. It is good for Australia as a back drop. Ladies and Gentlemen we are not the backdrop, we are all of it, we are front, we are in the middle, we are at the back. We are all of what Australia is all about, and we want to be that. In education, what Noel is talking about, before you can do all that excellence in education and perhaps in balance, in balance in a proper manner that Aboriginal people are more comfortable, culturally, socially and the greatest thing of all, economically.

Shane Stone talked about the embrace and acceptance different cultural practice into Australian life and strength of diversity, especially in the Northern Territory, where a multicultural society has grown up and where people of different cultures express and retain their traditions in their languages, schools and other institutions based on cultural and ethnic specificity.

Noel Pearson further added that there has got to be a constitutional settlement underpinning the guarantee of our status as an Indigenous people. The challenge for Indigenous leaders is to show that the recognition of Indigenous people-hood, is not inconsistent with the idea of a single Australian citizenship.

The Transformative Power of Education

The Importance of Education

The notion that education is crucial in addressing the disparity between mainstream and Indigenous Australia was fundamental in all presentations conducted and all dialogues opened over the four days of Garma 2010.

A vision for Yolngu enterprises, job creation, and how outstanding young people are taking up these challenges was presented in the economic development stream. The highlights of this stream were the Yolngu Forestry Project, timber harvesting, construction and furniture making as well as other house building projects.

There was unequivocal agreement that success in education, and successful delivery of education, was essential in ensuring success not only in employment but in many aspects of life and in addressing the disparity between Indigenous and main stream Australia.

“Education is the key to everything that is possible within this world for the Aboriginal people. This is something we have to be mindful of and something that as corporate leaders in the world we have to keep pushing and get implemented in communities and give the kids the opportunity to make something of their lives.” Brian Hughey.

The importance to develop a high quality of content and effective delivery of education was noted by several presenters as crucial in achieving this.
“...All over the world the patterns are the same. Overall those with a good education have better health and they have more personal choices and opportunities. As a group they have a higher income, they have access to better employment, they have lower crime rates and lower rates of substance abuse. So it doesn’t matter where education is delivered or in what form the delivery takes, so long as it is good and relevant education wherever it may be. We also know that a strong and proud family and a proud cultural identity are the foundations of good emotion, physical and mental health” Janice Reid.

Through encouraging a new generation of Indigenous people to gain qualifications and return with these new skills to their communities, education has the capacity to address, and provide long term solutions to broad issues affecting communities such as health, housing and welfare. These individuals, returning to their communities have the potential to act as leaders and use their experience to empower others and strengthen their communities.

“The leadership gives you the opportunity to empower yourself, to empower your family, it cascades, then empower your community and you can become productive members of society, not just a statistic.”

Rick Phinesa Cape York Institute.

Several times it was identified that a crucial skill set to impart upon younger Indigenous generations would be that of negotiation. There were numerous occasions throughout Garma where the need for consultation to cease and negotiations to begin was acknowledged. For this to be achieved it will be necessary to impart both negotiation skills and also an expectation of negotiation to the next generation of Indigenous people.

A new feature of the Key Forum, The Garma Dialogue, was a resounding success. Prof Barney Glover moderated as former NT Chief Minister, Shane Stone, Cape York lawyer and intellectual, Noel Pearson, and Gumatj clan leader, Galarrwuy Yunupingu addressed the question: ‘How can effective education, training and economic development outcomes be achieved?’ The transformative power of education, the difficulties currently faced by Indigenous people in obtaining quality education and the pathways available to Indigenous people for economic development were explained with passion and intellectual gusto.

The Garma Dialogue discussed key issues impacting on Indigenous education and training, with a focus on lessons, reflections and challenges in developing effective Indigenous education, training and development initiatives. The Garma Dialogue was envisaged by Mr Yunupingu as a means of reviving the vigorous debates that occurred at the Forum, and the sense of intellectual excitement that attracted so many leaders in a wide range of fields from around Australia and the world. Noel Pearson explained that in Cape York, Aboriginal parents ‘want our children to be completely able to operate in two worlds and the ambition for our children to have complete facility in their own culture and in western education.’

Experts, teachers, researchers, students and graduates followed with presentations on a range of critical education issues, including sessions in which Yolngu school teachers and university lecturers gave an insight into their innovative and successful bicultural and often bilingual curricula.

Noel Pearson spoke at length regarding the transformative power of education. He stated that there is an urgent need to have a common consensus about the purpose of education. He identified that there are obstacles to be overcome within communities and families to encourage the embrace of western education as well as traditional learning, stating that it is the ability to operate within both worlds which will provide future strength for Indigenous people.

“We want our children to be completely able to operate in two worlds and we have been very strongly influenced by thinking in North East Arnhem land around education, and the ambition that has been expressed up here about giving children complete facility in their own culture and in western education.”

Noel Pearson
There was discussion revolving around the need to educate children in a manner which would encourage them to return to their homes and not isolated from what they grew up in.

“There is a huge hesitation about the embrace of western education, whilst people understand the transformative power of education, never the less there is some hesitation about the full embrace of what we might call western education. People are afraid of losing their children to a bigger world, losing them to the identity and culture and so on. So the first thing we got clear about in Cape York was to say that we wanted our kids to have the means and the ability to go out into the world and retain a centre of gravity back home. We are not equipping kids for a one way ticket out of town, we want to equip our kids for what we call orbits. Orbits imply a constant pulling of gravity back home, those orbits might be very big, they might be modest, they might be virtual, and they might be from Cape York to New York.” Noel Pearson

The capacity to maintain equilibrium between both culture and education was discussed as a crucial element in ensuring that Indigenous people go from a low, to a high socio-economic status on one axis whilst maintaining a high level of cultural strength as well. Pearson discussed three possible paths available:

- Achieving high socioeconomic status at the cost of cultural strength
- Maintaining cultural strength, at the socioeconomic cost
- Building socioeconomic strength and maintain strong cultural determination.

Equilibrium needs to be found. Socio-economic success and cultural strength must both be simultaneously achieved and managed in order to assure long term strength for Indigenous people.

“We’ve got to have strategies and plans to become economically strong and not accept prescriptions that some how poverty is the norm needs to be rejected. Any education must be relentless in its pursuit along both axis. Cultural maintenance and socioeconomic maintenance need to happen in synchronisation and in harmony. Noel stated that it is the task of older generations to fully equip children along their educational journey of both axis.

Human Rights and justice Issues for Indigenous people

“Isn’t that our favourite saying in Australia – a fair go for the little ones, please. A fair teaching, to a fair standard of schooling, to a fair qualification for what they want to be as young men and women. That’s what we want.

Galarwuy Yunupingu

“As a nation, we cannot leave kids behind and this is the message I’ve heard today and I will take away. We have to be involved in decision making, we have a right to participate in the decisions that effect us. And again I sense Aboriginal people wanting to take control of that decision making process. And it is very important that this is embedded in a rights framework.” Jack Thompson, Australian Actor.

Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner speaks about rights:

Rights are never black and white but grey areas. The UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples agreed to by Australia fourteen months ago is a good guide and way forward. Three concepts are included in the declaration: self-determination (the right to be involved in every decision made about people), sovereignty over land, and free and informed consent. Less consultation and more negotiation.
There are two parts to rights – rights are universal (for everyone, they don’t need to be earned), and all rights are equal. Right wing politics defaults to a defence of ‘responsibility’ when discussing human rights. There is no human right to drink alcohol but there is a right to services and goods. And exercising this right shouldn’t interfere with other people’s rights to safety.

It’s not a perfect world. Challenges like legislation will always be a challenge, as will individual rights versus rights of the collective. Rights are a great guide. We should implement the UN Declaration, it’s a good start to resetting the relationship between States and Indigenous people.

Human Rights need to be embedded in the school curriculum. There is 7 million dollars promised to the Commission (dependent on results of upcoming election), people need to be educated on how human rights can affect people, and what to do if you think your rights have been compromised.

**An Expectation of Excellence**

**Wadeye and Cape York: special presentation on innovative approaches**

_Eileen Deemal-Hall and Rick Phinesa_

There are three programs that have been initiated at the Cape York Institute:

- High Expectancy Secondary: promising students are sent to elite boarding schools: push students rather than pressure them
- High expectation tertiary: supporting the transition to University, this includes mentoring and introducing students to possible employment opportunities
- Leadership Program: Students who have experienced the High Expectation Program provide mentoring and support to students in the other HEPs. The Leadership program has three tiers.

It also includes:

- No alcohol or drugs
- Strength for life, leading by example; Strengthening communities through leadership

One of the main aspects of the Leadership Program is teaching participants the skills and confidence in negotiation. An important aspect of the HES Secondary is the confirmed support of the family and the community. While education is ‘free’ all families contribute $40/week to their child’s education. This represents a formal commitment from the families and community to support their child’s education.

**Generation One: A campaign for education and training**

_Chris Lawrence & Tania Major_

Generation One has, since its inception in March 2010 been using public sessions and structured programs to change attitudes, raise awareness and provide support and pathways for students in higher education.

Tania Major identified the need for a new approach to closing the gap, less programs and less trying to place blame for past problems. Generation One is attempting through several methods to change attitudes of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, working towards stronger communities by identifying role models and mentors for younger generation’s as well as providing support to older, key members of the community.

The programs seek to create strong, supportive foundations within the University experience by identifying support figures such as Professors to fill mentor roles. There are currently pilot programs underway in four universities and these will be developed to also provide pathways from education to employment in the next few years. In using these programs to introduce students to potential employers Generation One is hoping to encourage an easy transition from education to employment. These programs, fostering strong foundations for Indigenous students within Universities, will address the current low rates of enrolment and high levels of drop-outs by Indigenous students.
**Community Education**

The program for Garma 2010 involved a range of community education sessions discussing the utilization of education to strengthen communities by extending beyond the formal classroom setting and curriculum to educate in life skills. During several sessions it was mentioned that in order to provide support for those engaged in education a foundation of supportive family and community is essential. A familiarity with education throughout the community is advantageous and the benefit of educational community sessions addressing life skills was discussed by several participants. Garma had several informative sessions within this category, covering dog health, recognising dementia and addressing domestic violence.

Success in education and subsequently life, needs to come from a beginning of high expectations, positive environments and cultural pride. These foundations for success must be established within communities and families to provide support for those embarking on the journey of education. There was discussion of the need for communities and families to embrace education prior to students entering into the system.

“There is a lot of focus at the moment especially from education and training around the job readiness but there is a step before that and it’s self readiness. And that self readiness covers family readiness and it also covers community readiness. There is no use in training them if they are not ready...especially if the family’s not engaged or the community.” Eileen Deeman-Hall

**“The Forgotten Ones” – Prisoner education in the NT**

*Meg Friel, Director Reintegration, Education and Indigenous Affairs, NT Correctional Services*

Although in the last 20 years commitment to ‘behind the wire’ education has increased, the core needs remain as higher level of education/ increased retention rates in high school. Studies show that Indigenous and non indigenous people are less likely to enter prison if they have substantial education. Likewise they can be deflected from prison in the future if they are educated and equipped for future employment whilst at prison.

Eighty percent of prisoners in the NT are Indigenous – obviously we need to change this statistic. Currently there are over 1,000 prisoners in the Northern Territory. Forty percent are inmates for less than 6 months and 40% will return. Only 37% of inmates attend educational programs within prison. This shows a need for improvement of educational facilities in NT prisons.

The Forgotten Ones is a short film produced by male prison inmates in the NT. It gives an overview of:

- Inmate’s situations, insight into other options outside of education
- Some prisons having farms and factories
- Drug and alcohol programs
- Men going out as work parties to do community service.
- Very few going out to work or universities
- Others needing to attend court/ legal commitments
- Ways to improve current education system in prisons
- The need for long-term teachers – need to develop strong relationships with prisoners and staff
- An introduction of evening classes for men who have other commitments during the day (already happening)
- For trade –based educations prisoners need more opportunities to go offsite
- Receiving formal certificates for contribution and learning
- More interesting/diverse education, especially for women who do not want to conform to stereotypical education. For example cooking and cleaning, e.g. chain saw license, crocodile hunting
- Employers negotiation with prisoners before they leave e.g. “iron bark”, participation in industry whilst at prison
Health and Wellbeing Programs in NT Indigenous Communities

**Charlie King, Catholic Care**

Charlie King has a background working for ABC radio and TV in the Northern Territory. This session revolved around current programs addressing men and domestic violence, programs that are currently in place and the positive outcomes they have had.

The high level of Indigenous men in NT prisons, in particular for sexual assault related crimes, is due to lack of men’s engagement and knowledge of these issues in their own communities. There has been much focus on empowering women to make changes however their interest is also strong due to their own victimisation. Hence for real change to happen dialogue between men needs to take place and a sense of unity against these crimes needs to be formed.

Charlie’s research showed that:

- Some men feel powerless – they do not know who in the community they can go to and they do not have the tools in the form of language to communicate about these issues
- There is a large proportion of ‘unsung heroes’ – men who want to make changes but do not have a sense unity
- Elders in community said “No more!” in these consultations. This formed the idea behind the “No more” campaign, and since then the linkage of arms in football has been used as the campaigns main image – highly symbolic and meaningful to footy crazed men.

A number of solutions were identified through these workshops including:

- Continuation and strengthening of ‘No More’ campaign
- Team building exercises need to translate unity existing in the footy paradigm into the real community.
- The need for strong leaders to set the right example.
- There is a need to keep the solutions community based with elders in very powerful positions
- There is an opportunity for men in prison to teach in indigenous languages to outsiders, both providing money to them and their families helping to strengthen and preserve culture.
- Men having served sentences need to be encouraged to vocalize their wrongs, helping identify the problems and break the cycle of repeat offending.

Charlie stated that there is currently a deficit in understanding of these issues. For success in these areas there will need to be more sex education in prison and communities. This will help provide prisoners with the words to express their wrong doings in relation to sex, body and abuse and shift other’s views and hopefully reduce ignorance.

Understanding the Students

**Strengthening all communities for children**

**Professor Sven Silburn, Emily Ruso and Ann Hanning**

Professor Sven Silburn, Emily Ruso and Ann Hanning presented a comprehensive overview of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI). The AEDI is an assessment tool adapted from the Canadian Program firstly for use among the non-Indigenous community and then applied to the Indigenous community.

The program is supported by the Commonwealth and Shell Australia. It is a measure that includes around 100 questions sourced from Grade 1 teachers that describe information from birth to school entry and is a powerful predictor for children’s success in school. It is a checklist designed to determine how the community is doing in raising their children in the early years.

There are five domains:

- Physical health and wellbeing
- Social competence
- Emotional maturity
- Language and cognitive development
- Communication skills and general knowledge
The results showed that

- The Northern Territory has the worst outcomes – the test for a child having one developmental vulnerability was 36.3% which compared with the national average 23.3%
- Social gradients information is extremely important and these results showed that while there was a similar gradient from the least advantaged to the most advantaged (associated with the AEDI developmental vulnerability indicator); the percentage in the most disadvantaged was much high in the Indigenous group in all measures
- 69% of NT Indigenous children scored below the national minimum standard
- Educations disparities were evident from year 1.

This information is vital as preparedness for school is one of the most important factors in school achievement and attendance. Also one of the strongest predictors of educational attainment and successful outcomes is developmental readiness. It is therefore crucial to improve the developmental milestones in the early years which will assist in closing the gap in the disparities in education currently experienced by indigenous children. There are a number of influences on the child’s ability to succeed in school while the ‘classroom’ accounts for around 30%. The other factors include:

- Home factors between 5-10%
- Peers around 5-10%
- School principal 5-10%
- 50% is accounted for by the environment surrounding the student, what is occurring in their environment, family and community.

Hopes, Dreams and How I learn: What Indigenous secondary school kids say about school

Dr Lysbeth Ford, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) discussed recent findings in learning styles and patterns of students educational engagement resulting from research trips. Her team utilised quantitative and qualitative research, aided by a linguistic analysis of qualitative results, to determine whether these students conform to the global pattern of students’ educational engagement, essentially, trying to locate differentials in learning styles and motivation for remote and very remote students.

The results showed that 85% of all students surveyed prioritised future job opportunities; the desire to accumulate money; and the capacity to support their family as their top three motivations in education with urban and remote students having higher ambitions than very remote. As these results conform to the expected pattern, the research group believes that the western methodology is applicable to remote areas.

Qualitative data, in the form of 45 prompted questions was used both to inform understanding of the pattern and to explain anomalies. None of the 30 very remote students interviewed are native speakers of standard Australian English. Only three of the above thirty conversed in standard Australian English. Dr Ford noted that long silences were prevalent in the interviews with very remote students. There are questions surrounding the implications of this for classroom management and effective learning.

Dr Ford’s research found that in 2009, only one in three NT Indigenous 15-19 year-olds had completed Year 9 of schooling; one in two had completed Y10 or Y11, but only one in six had completed Year 12 or equivalent. A range of causes have been suggested for this situation, including isolation, irrelevant curriculum, and gross inadequacies in the provision of education.

The project aimed to find out whether western ideas about self esteem and drive to succeed applied to Aboriginal students in NT schools. So they asked the students who attended these schools. In 2007-2008, two Indigenous women and two non-Indigenous men surveyed 1,044 children in 13 NT schools. 733 of these students were Aboriginal.

Then they asked 68 Aboriginal kids why they came to school, what they hoped to get out of it, and how they learnt.

They found that Aboriginal students in NT mainstream schools got a lot more out of school than students at school in Very Remote schools. This was directly related to how comfortable students felt listening to and expressing themselves in standard Australian English. Students interviewed in Very Remote NT schools answered almost one third of the interview questions with silence. For some, this might be due to deafness, or shame at being asked what someone else thinks, but some of these silences are a way of resisting a stream of direct questions. Such direct questioning is normal in mainstream Australian English, but is not the norm in Aboriginal Australia, which favors more gentle, roundabout and leisurely ways of finding things out and allows silence in its conversations, where Standard Australian English does not.
Partnerships

Steve Larkin from Charles Darwin University discussed the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council’s (IHEAC) current work and vision for the future.

The IHEAC vision is for a higher education system in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people share equally in the life and career opportunities that a higher education sector can and should provide. There is still some way to go in achieving this.

Indigenous people continue to be under represented in higher education, while the number of Indigenous students participating in higher education has increased by 4.6% since 2001. The Indigenous proportion of total student numbers has stagnated due to the increasing rates of participation in higher education by non-Indigenous student. IHEAC firmly believe that there is a need to look at mainstream higher education programs to see how they can work better for Indigenous students and achieve better outcomes.

IHEAC is working towards this vision in a number of ways which Steve outlined from IHEAC’s strategic plan. The initial phase is focused on building relationships. IHEAC are building and strengthening relationships within the higher education sector for interaction and collaboration with Universities Australia, the National Indigenous Higher Education Network and the Australian Research Council, for example.

The aim through these relationships is to encourage the senior executives of universities to view Indigenous issues as the business of the university as a whole and not just a concern of the Indigenous education units within the university. There is also a focus on increasing the number and capacity of Indigenous researchers.

IHEAC is also focused on providing advice to Government on the effectiveness of existing higher education initiatives and reforms. This includes a range of advice to the Australian Government on issues such as the Higher Education Reform Agenda and measures, current higher education funding programs and student support. IHEAC are empowered to do this by recommendation 30 of the Bradbury Review of Australian Higher education in Australia.

The next phase in IHEAC’s plan is identifying and developing strategies to improve Indigenous student’s participation and outcomes in higher education and also increasing the number of Indigenous researchers.

The IHEAC vision lies in identifying and developing strategies to increase the number of Indigenous people working in higher education sector, particularly in teaching and learning and in decision making and leadership roles. The next part of the strategy is about broadening and strengthening Indigenous knowledge and practices in higher education.
A new way of learning

Two way learning

The introduction of a new approach to education which enables firm foundations for students in both western and traditional knowledge is essential.

“There has got to be a relentless and unhesitating pursuit of western education, a relentless and unhesitating pursuit of a cultural education and the maintenance of excellence in our culture. Not some kind of weak, intermixing of the two” Noel Pearson.

Establishing a foundation for students in both western and traditional education provides a balance and will encourage the pursuit of cultural identity and strength. One speaker in the Garma Maths session stated “We teach the knowledge of our land to our children; it is the kind of thing we should be teaching them first, before we lose them. Before we lose them to other influences.”

Professor Janice Reid noted that there were many benefits in establishing a familiarity with western culture saying that the people most comfortable interacting with western medicine were those best educated in both Yolgnu and western traditions, which enabled them to pass between both traditions.

Several initiatives are currently underway which utilize the notion of two-way learning, the Garma Maths session conducted by Dhalulu, Rarrirwuy, Banapuy and Leon demonstrated how Yolgnu students are introduced to Maths by first understanding their traditional counting and number systems.

Garma Maths, Yirrkala Community Education Centre

Yirrkala is recognised nationally and internationally for the pedagogy and delivery of the programs that equip Yolgnu children. An example of this has been seen in the Garma Maths program run at Yirrkala School. Leon White and teachers, Dhalulu, Rarrirwuy, Banapuy explained how traditional knowledge is being used in a holistic approach to education. Yolgnu children are being introduced to mathematics through Gurrutu and Djalkiri in a Yolgnu system of mathematics with which they are already familiar.

This is based on a holistic approach to Yolgnu systems of relationships between people and land. They begin with using the systems the children learn from birth and use these to move into the development of western mathematical concepts.

Understanding the Yolngu system of how relationships work and operate gives the children a way to make sense of where they fit in the world and how to make sense of it. So the children have to know where and who and what the language is before they learn of other people’s world, to make sense of how they belong and where they fit.

Two experiential workshops were conducted to demonstrate Gurrutu and Djalkiri to participants. Gurrutu is a life map of sorts and shows where an individual fits into the world around them it provides identity. Djalkiri is land that is part of the people, with Djalkiri you have life. The workshops invited participants to observe how Garma Maths shaped relationships both within Yolgnu culture and acted as a foundation for interaction with outside learning and understanding of the world.

The challenges presented to the audience was to play the role of various family members and board, then disembark an airplane. A seemingly simple task was in fact complicated as audience learnt slowly who was allowed to sit next to whom and struggled with appropriate distance, or averting their gaze when walking around one another in such a confined space.

This demonstration of a seemingly simple task made complex was an engaging, enjoyable way to allow audience members to begin to understand the complex systems of Garma math as it appears in the Yirrkala curriculum and begin to see how Yolgnu learning begins somewhere very different to Western education. There is a strong focus on group learning rather than that of the individual.

Education in a New Generation

Culture and Technology: Looking to the future to learn from the past

As technology progresses, new methods for preserving culture and passing knowledge are being explored throughout the country. Utilising protective mediums and archives knowledge is kept intact and the intergenerational transfer of knowledge is assured.

There are several projects underway employing technology in this manner, and there were several sessions throughout the festival discussing the benefits and complications faced when employing these techniques within communities.
The Mulka project is a collaborative process with Yolngu people, “listening and following” to elders and working with the support of the community. Ideas are generated through a series of conversations.

There are other benefits involved in documenting cultural knowledge in a contemporary format such as the increased accessibility to younger generations increasingly inclined towards technology. Being involved in the process of recording and editing there is the opportunity to view things they otherwise might not. Additionally film and animation permit young people to contribute their own stories in a familiar and current medium.

This process also allows stories to pass into the mainstream understanding of Indigenous history and culture, through translation of Yolngu to English or through the addition of subtitles.

Yolngu Economic and Social Initiative The Mulka Project:

The Mulka project is based at Yirrkala Arts Centre. The Mulka project is a digital production house, as well as a museum which archives footage and images from country. Mulka staff constantly work on country, creating new footage/images for permanent storage and archival purposes. What began in 2007, as a small archive and now contains over 30,000 digital images, 5000 audio recordings and 300 videos.

It forms a Yolngu library that documents the culture, people, places and events of Northeast Arnhem Land, from first contact to the Sea Rights legislation. To meet the needs of the community and its culture, elders are constantly consulted along with cultural directors. The project is a new way of passing on knowledge from old to the young people, with on-the-job training for local Yolngu people in cutting edge technology.

Distribution of content is primarily through a cinema at the Yirrkala Arts Centre, and their webpage. Mobile phone distribution is enabled through ‘Bluetoothing’ by youngsters, who then make popular Mulka content ‘viral’ by spreading between mobile phone. The project aims for high quality production values with high cultural values. A trade off in either direction is not acceptable.

Mulka is an educational process in both learning digital apparatus and also learning of culture for those working at Mulka, through the documentation of stories told by local elders, by partaking in the digital process, people are also learning about their own culture, seeing things they might not otherwise see.

There is a community approach to the operation of the cinema also, local community members come and bring their families to watch films, teenagers also come and hang out in the space.

The access to the cinema space, which is used exclusively for the screening of local films assists younger community members to be educated in cultural practices now less observed by their peer group, such as funerals.

“Yolngu elders have been fabulous directors, film director, creative director whatever you want to use. Making creative projects with a Yolngu elder makes everything so much easier because you are on the right side of the politics from the beginning and also you’ve got the community support. Listening and following makes what we do possible.” Rob Lane

On Cultural Heritage and Digital Technology Use by Indigenous People

The Importance of the collection of film and sound archives for Indigenous People

Vicki Grieves (NFSA) and Dr Aaron Corn (Australian National University, National Recording Project), Information Technology and Indigenous Communities.

Mobile technology is the go in Indigenous communities. Mobile technology is important to communities especially where there is little access to landlines. It was suggested that access to mobiles and other technology was a social justice issue and highlighted its importance to future generations.

Technology is a great way to engage young Indigenous people. There is a need for recognition of non-accredited training in technologies in communities, and the need for ongoing support for this training. There is the potential for economic development and income generation from the creation and development of the IT sector in Indigenous communities.

With the return of digital material to communities, there is a role for institutions in providing technical and archival expertise to communities who are maintaining physical and digital archives.

There is need to develop good working relationships between institutions holding indigenous materials. Indigenous intellectual property and rights was discussed.

In relation to the importance of supporting the work of Indigenous community TV initiatives, there was a need for legislative support that refers specifically to supporting Indigenous broadcasting sector and more broadly the information technology sector in Aboriginal communities.
Richard Potock: The Aspiration Initiative, Aurora Project.

The Aurora Project encourages students to aspire to think of things they haven’t before.

The Project has been involved in developing the Indigenous students' guide to scholarships in Australia and overseas, the undergraduate scholarship guide and the postgraduate scholarship guide which were released in 2009.

“The Aurora Project is the collective name for a number of programs that work with Australia’s Indigenous communities and organisations to facilitate prosperity through capacity building. To achieve this, the Project focuses on professional development in law, anthropology, research, management, education and other disciplines.” (http://www.auroraproject.com.au)

An example of a scholarship program that the Aurora Project has been involved in includes the Charlie Perkins Trust for Children & Students. The Trust, inspired by and in memory of Charlie Perkins, has established a scholarship scheme which will give talented Indigenous Australians the opportunity to study at the University of Oxford. There are now 2 Indigenous students going to Oxford University through the Charlie Perkins Trust for Children & Students. The Project is involved with the Roberta Sykes Indigenous Education Foundation.

The Next Step

For Education and Training to Employment and Economic Empowerment

By Janina Gawler

"Development is the expansion of capabilities and having the freedom to choose between different ways of thinking and ... being able to choose how you live" Amartya Sen.

For young Aboriginal people, their future lies in education as a pathway to choices of employment and economic empowerment. The theme for Garma sets this as an aspiration "looking up to the Future".

Education within mainstream schooling and within the framework of traditional Aboriginal cultural education provides the basis of an ability to choose to live within the two worlds described by Pearson in his opening address. Employment - a job and a career provide not only the individual with choices as to how they want to live and use their capabilities and the money they generate, but the flow on effect of a job can have beneficial consequences for the extended family.

Janina Gawler discussed current programs and actions taken to improve the Indigenous engagement within the company both through internal positions and also through community based programs. Rio Tinto Iron Ore is the largest employer of apprentices and trainees in the Pilbara places importance on encouraging employees to strive for excellence through setting targets and measuring results. Initiatives are in place to support continual growth in numbers of Indigenous employees within the company. Rio Tinto currently employees 1500 Aboriginal people.

The Way We Work is Rio Tinto’s statement of business practice. It includes the approach to community relations which is underpinned by the philosophy that they engage with communities everywhere because it is built into the business. Rio Tinto follows a fairly simple formula in working with communities.

Step one – we establish a knowledge base.

Step two – recognising that the social issues we face are frequently highly complex and beyond the expertise of mining companies, we form partnerships, particularly at the local level.

Step three – we collaboratively deliver programmes with measurable outcomes that everybody has agreed to.

A baseline study for labour force participation in the East Kimberley by Taylor (2003) showed that for each Aboriginal person employed they supported nine people. Our anecdotal advice within Rio Tinto is the flow on effects of employment means that the family members of employees are more likely to regularly attend schooling and see their future in employment within the mainstream economy.

One of the challenges in the current system is to change attitudes of educators and employers to recognize that they also present barriers to young people’s aspirations. All young Aboriginal students have a future - it must be the best opportunity for them to make their real choice about their life.

Opening doors through education is the responsibility of government. Employers need to keep sending the message that they want to employ local Aboriginal people and that they will support and facilitate their access to jobs and provide a real career. This message to families - grandparents and parents gives a sense of optimism and hope...
that there are real choices that can be made by them in supporting their children's education and the pathway to employment.

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The destination we want to reach is that we build our socio-economic strength and we maintain and revive and double our strength of our cultural determination. That’s the magic spot. We’ve got to have strategies and plans to become economically strong and not accept prescriptions that somehow poverty is our proper lot.” Noel Pearson

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Rio Tinto is acting now so as to ensure that Indigenous people in the areas around their mining operations have the opportunity to engage and participate to benefit from mining wealth. Diverse opportunity for Aboriginal people in the mainstream and non-mainstream economies is also required.

Currently, Rio Tinto operates a pre-employment program aimed at providing local Aboriginal people with the skills to gain full-time, meaningful employment titled Work Ready. Work Ready helps the company to increase our Indigenous employment numbers, as well as retain and develop Indigenous staff. The program addresses qualifications that make individuals more suitable for on site placement including working with heights, confined space and two way radio operation. In addition:

- Basic vocational skills
- “Life” and “workplace coping” skills
- Drug, alcohol and health issues

This is a twelve week program containing both accredited and non-accredited training. For the duration of the program mentoring is available to all participants.

This is just one of the many programs currently operating to ensure pathways and support for Aboriginal people from education and training through to employment. Initiatives such as the recently opened Wickham careers office, partnership programs in local schools and other community programs that contribute to health and well being are all currently underway within Rio Tinto.

**Traditional Credit Union**

Morgan Hoyes discussed the origins of the TCU, the role it plays and its plans for growth over the coming years. TCU began 14 years ago in East Arnhem Land, because the elder men wanted a credit union that would teach their people how to use banks, and wanted an indigenous-run credit union. Success is measured by the number of community members that choose to use the bank

TCU work to provide as many opportunities for employment as possible, and have a dedicated training team that tailors their training. Training has been developed to deal with prominent issues particularly those surrounding literacy and numeracy as well as teaching strategies to employees for dealing difficult situations with community members in the workplace, such as deflecting issues to a manager.

Programs have so far been successful with strong retention rates as employees tend to enjoy their position within the company and also the position of trust within the community. TCU has found that even when employees move to other employers the initial work place training provided by them has continued to provide benefits for the employee.

**National Australia Bank**

Glen Brennan discussed NAB’s current status as a culturally diverse employer. He noted that the finance sector within Australia is consistently behind other industries and that it was time for NAB to take a leadership position.

Over the last 2 years, 100 Indigenous employees have entered NAB through their recruitment program. This is not viewed solely as a traineeship by the company but also a recruitment program for people wishing to make a career for themselves.

NAB utilises school based traineeships, where year 11 & 12 students work in a bank branch for one day per week during the duration of the school term. During school holidays students work full time to develop newly acquired skills and at completion of the projects are ready for employment.

This process works also to provide a visible pathway for students linking education and employment, Glenn stated, showing them a light at the end of the tunnel.
Charles Darwin University has recently been granted $32 million to build the Australian Centre for Indigenous Northern Territory Medical Program • Growing Our Own. This program focuses on attracting, training and maintaining teachers in employment.

CDU now has three Indigenous education programs:

• Teaching for Country
• Growing Our Own. This program focuses on attracting, training and maintaining teachers in employment within the Northern Territory. This includes providing additional training for teacher assistants to raise their qualifications, thus rendering them able to be a fully qualified teacher. Although this program has shown to be costly it is yielding successful results.
• Northern Territory Medical Program

The first ever full medical training program offered in the Northern Territory. This program will provide over the next six years qualified doctors who are more likely to remain working in the Northern Territory.

Charles Darwin University has recently been granted $32 million to build the Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledge.

Remote Housing Australia

RHA Managing Director John Benson presented the process undertaken to build the sustainable houses constructed by RHA as well as outlining the dedication to on the job training and sustainable employment embodied by the company.

RHA provides sustainable housing solutions to remote and regional areas using all aspects of this to provide employment and training for local Aboriginal people. Programs carried out by RHA link directly to other employment and training services provided by the State and Federal Government. No massive skillling required, but is still an employment opportunity which utilises the knowledge of basic tool use. Those involved in the program have had great success in learning on the job and the impact on each individual and their attitude and experience in the work place has been quite significant.

The composite used to build the houses contains 50% waste mulched timber, 25% bamboo fiber & 25% perlite (silica). Perlite, like cement is a material which grows in strength over time.

The first housing prototype took 18 days to build. Bluscope and Dulux contribute to the construction process. There is maximum contribution by everyone in the community including women and children, where possible, to make the new owners feel like the house is theirs and the responsibility for upkeep is theirs.

The housing model is suitable for colder climates, such as Alice Springs, as the composite retains temperature very well, and if the perlite percentage goes up to around 33%, then this would guarantee this.

There is a great determination to grow on an economic front and move towards Indigenous ownership of the building process and it is important to continue this as a permanent option to allow continuous employment.

“The only way you can guarantee sustainability and permanency is through ownership”

John Benson, CEO, Remote Housing Australia.

Charles Darwin University

Barney Glover of Charles Darwin University spoke of CDU’s rapid steps taken to work in establishing the institution as an Australian centre for Indigenous education.

This role is considered vital as CDU is currently the only tertiary education facility in the Northern Territory. Currently the University contributes approximately 80% of vocational training in the NT.

Since fulfilling the role of Vice Chancellor in 2009, Barney Glover has introduced a new strategic plan consisting of a number of focus points, one being Indigenous education.

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Environmental management and employment

EcoTrust

In his presentation, Ian Gill stated that EcoTrust is looking for the intersection between the economy, the environment and culture. This is based on a goal of ‘reliable prosperity’ which may also be called ‘sustainable development’. EcoTrust is based in Canada and is now setting up in Australia. There is demand for the work the Trust does which is to produce maps of Indigenous territories which collate Indigenous knowledge.

It involves a global network of information management practitioners. It offers business planning, a revolving loan fund and access to capital for Indigenous land owners and managers.

The Trust produces what it calls ‘land use and occupancy maps’. It has published the book ‘Living Proof’ (UBIC and EcoTrust Canada, 2009) which is an atlas of land use and occupancy maps which include traditional knowledge. These maps are scientifically and legally defensible and are a digital representation of ‘traditional’ land use maps such as those that might have been previously hand-drawn for use in claims. In Australia, the Ecotrust has mapping projects involving the Ngarrindjeri Nation (Matt Rigney) and the Yorta Yorta Nation.

Ian argues that the ‘traditional land use and occupancy maps’ that the EcoTrust develops are better than other representations of Indigenous land and resource ownership and interests because ‘they will stand up in court and there is an absence of good quality maps, not an absence of Indigenous knowledge. It’s the actual underlying knowledge not the map, that’s important. The map is the output. It’s about how confident the community is in its own knowledge’.

Dhimurru management of land and sea in North East Arnhem Land

Djawa Yunupingu, Deputy Chair Yothu Yindi Foundation discussed Dhimurru origins, established in 1992 after 20 years of mining in the area. Traditional owners had come to a point of crisis and despair from recreational access by the non-Aboriginal population of Nhulunbuy (population 4000), and the effect it was having on their place and rights on their country.

Dhimurru was developed from four employees in 1994 that went to college and did Land Management training. The decision was made after the first year to try and minimalise the absence from families and land by trying to bring lectures into Nhulunbuy. Negotiations were held with Batchelor College in Darwin. The subsequent years of the training were conducted locally.

Two way learning occurred between the Yolngu people and the first balanda ranger brought to the area, and knowledge of local flora, fauna and culture was passed on through sharing experience.

There are four teams in Dhimurru: 3 field teams and one admin. Field teams: Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), Sea Country (marine), and Miyalk Rangers (women’s ranger team). The role of Facilitators is to facilitate between Yolngu and western world with funding, scientists, admin, equipment and training etc. Yolngu Senior Rangers supervise teams on the ground.

Team tasks include ghost net cleanups, boat patrols, filming for television and film, feral animal eradication, fences, track maintenance, nursery and vegetation works, visitor management (rejuvenate areas degenerated from visitor use).

In 2000, the land became a protected area. There was lots of discussions with the NT Government, who offered a joint management agreement. However the traditional owners fought for absolute control and set up their own corporation. Since then they have come to an agreement which ensures only people with inheritance and law can make decisions on their land.

John Papple of Parks and Wildlife NT, spoke how they work alongside Yolngu people but Yolngu have total control. There is a two-way exchange of cultural information – cultural information and western knowledge. John said the partnership involves: sharing knowledge, working together and building and understanding relationships. Relationships are very important.

Aside from performing duties like the Dhimurru rangers, there is also a strong focus on maintaining cultural sites. This is done by fencing, increasing signage and creating a digital database of the sites. They will use this for future planning.

There are currently almost thirty male and female qualified rangers which allows a sharing of cultural knowledge with technical and contemporary skills.

The Gumatj Forestry Project

Economic Opportunities, Business Development, Housing, Furniture and Other industries

Discussing the current housing projects underway in remote communities Bob Smith noted that they had developed specifically with local culture in mind. Housing was developed by the local community; the particular model discussed
was designed by Galarrwuy Yunupingu in consultation with architect Greg Nolan. This model is a four bedroom house, designed with a big breezeway in the centre and family needs are kept in mind with spaces for family centres included in the plans.

Current costs of the houses are impacted by prototype techniques and process, the cost is slightly greater than it will be in time. Estimates suggest that future building will be competitive with building prices in the Northern Territory.

The houses will be sustainable, and the processes involved revolve around creating sustainable solutions. The project is not supported by Government funds but rather through training funds, the timber industry and also through kick starts that are available.

Services are provided to the houses in a number of ways. The mill site has a generator and the mill is petrol or diesel powered. At the house there is a diesel, sewerage is septic and the water is bore. In considering sustainable services it was mentioned that biomass has been considered as a possibility for future electricity source. This method has been introduced in Europe and has seen to be successful.

Bob Smith mentioned that benefits that come from a program such as this “It’s not just about the product it is about the jobs and the skills and the meaning that comes from it, that is hard to put a value on it.”

Damien Wright discussed the furniture side of this business noting that Yolgnu already have knowledge of the timber and of wood crafting so the process is really a marrying of the western tradition of wood craft meeting these traditional practices to create furniture.

Damien stated “…there is a union between a European craft tradition and an Indigenous relationship to place and to objects, both of them come at life from the idea that there is a correct way of doing things…and this seems to be a way we can communicate in the workshop … we are trying to frame what we do within that idea and it seems to be successful.”

This table was constructed by men from east Arnhem Land (Russell Gurruwiwi, Claytom Yunupingu, Tony Yunupingu & Nathan Black) under the direction of Melbourne furniture designer Damien Wright. The build time was seven days and the table was constructed in the Gumatj studio at ski beach.

The timber used is gadayka (or stringybark) which is milled at Dhaniya by the Gumatj mill team led by Shane Yunupingu and Mark Blackwell.

The trees that are harvested are chosen by the senior Gumatj elders and the tree is considered to have gifted the use of its timber to the clan and its members.

The furniture studio is still in the establishment stage but select pieces will be on display at the Garma festival and will be for sale in 2011.
Outcomes

The Garma Key Forum: where important issues are discussed

The importance of the Garma Festival Key Forum as a venue for the discussion and debate of issues of local, territory and national importance has grown over the years. Once again, the Federal Government chose the Garma Festival as the venue where important policies and initiatives could be announced. The two announcements made by Minister Macklin of great interest to Yolngu leaders and the media concerned funding for the long term commitment of the Yothu Yindi Foundation to establish the Garma Cultural Studies Institute and the commitment to pursue constitutional change to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution.

The Garma Cultural Studies Institute will be a two-way learning centre for Yolngu and non-Yolngu education and research at a higher, tertiary level with a dual function of enabling external university-style work and research, but also Yolngu learning and research at the highest level.

The senior elders also wish it to be a Yolngu meeting place where the senior elders of east Arnhem Land can meet and make decisions about the future. The Garma Institute would be therefore established as a cultural heartland that is a central repository of our knowledge, understanding, our spirituality and beliefs, where they can be made public and open.

Galarrwuy Yunupingu

The Garma Key Forum: where leaders come to talk

Along with the many Yolngu leaders and elders, Indigenous leaders from around the country participated in the Key Forum and contributed to its success.

Galarrwuy Yunupingu, Shane Stone and Noel Pearson spoke at the Garma Dialogue on the importance of education and the need for standards of excellence.

Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission, gave several presentations on human rights standards and indigenous people.
Shirley McPherson of the Indigenous Land Corporation presented on various economic development projects undertaken by the Corporation and joining in the discussions about the growing number of businesses established by Yolngu, such as the Timber Harvesting and Furniture Project of the Gumatj clan.

Along with The Hon Jenny Macklin, other politicians attended. The Hon Warren Snowdon whose responsibilities in the Cabinet include Indigenous Health attended and was keen to show his support for the Renal Health Mobile Unit. Senator Nigel Scullion attended and held policy discussions with Galarrwuy Yunupingu about education policy.

Professor Janice Reid of the University of Western Sydney and Professor Barney Glover of the Charles Darwin University gave keynote presentations.

**The Hon Jenny Macklin’s announces Governments Indigenous Affairs policy**

Minister Macklin launched the Government’s policy agenda at the 2010 Garma Festival at the Key Forum.

**Funding committed to the Garma Cultural Studies Institute**

The Minister stated that if re-elected the Government would support the Garma Cultural Studies Institute with a commitment of 2 million dollars to support its establishment.

**Announcement of Federal Government commitment to a referendum for constitutional change to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian constitution**

If re-elected, the Labor Government announced that they would establish a panel comprising of Indigenous leaders, constitutional lawyers, members of parliament and community representatives to review the Australian Constitution. The expert panel would be tasked with considering how best to progress Constitutional recognition of Indigenous peoples and to provide options in the form of an amendment that could be put to the Australian people at a referendum.

**Close the gap**

Minister Macklin explained that the Government considers it a national effort to ‘Close the Gap’ and discussed long term strategies currently in place and the need for measurable outcomes and immediate actions. The Minister further announced that more than 5 billion dollars would be invested in programs aimed at meeting the Closing the Gap targets.
The first time I heard the word “school” I was about 7 years old. I was a young boy living with my extended family on the Gove Peninsula under the watchful and strict eye of my father. I spoke no English and knew no white people.

This day I was sitting on the beach, on the other side of Melville Bay. We were just sitting, my friends and I, telling stories in the sand, marking the sand, telling the stories of the day. The figures of two young men appeared in a canoe, in the distance on the water and we stood up trying to identify them before they came any closer. We ran to meet them when we realized who they were — our brother Raymond Yunupingu and our uncle Dak Dak Ganambarr. They gave us fish and other food that they had cooked and brought with them on their trip across the harbour.

They told us that they had seen our fire and had paddled across the harbour from Gunyangara to the western side of Melville Bay, where our fire burnt. And they had brought a message for my father. We were told that there was a call from the missionaries that all the kids from the bush should be going to “school”. “School” was something that we had not heard of. The word was unfamiliar and we did not know what it meant. But the missionaries were calling this word and saying that all the kids of east Arnhem land should go to “school”. It was a message — not a direction — and it was my father, as the senior man responsible for the family, who responded to the message. He said “let’s go to Yirrkala and take the kids to ‘school’. Up until this time we were in and out of Yirrkala, Port Bradshaw and Melville Bay. We moved with the seasons and the ceremonies, taking the lead from my father and the other senior people. But my father had decreed and we acted on his word and travelled to Yirrkala to see this “school”.

It is here that I arrive at the point I seek to make in this article. That point is that it was my father’s direction that sent me to school. I did not even know the word, let alone know the journey that I was about to embark upon. For it was a journey into a strange and foreign world. On that day, at 7, or maybe 8 years of age, I did not even know English. What I knew was of my family, my culture and my land. Left to my own mind I would never have considered an education in the balanda world to be of any importance at all.

Had I been forced to go to school by anyone other than my father I would have followed my sense of independence and my will and refused. For what meaning, what value, could an education in a foreign tongue, about foreign ways, have? But I was a child and fortunately the decision was not mine to make but my fathers. And he had made up his mind. His thinking, as always, was drawn deeply from the Yolngu world and in this instance he drew on the inspiration of Ganbulabula, our ancestral hero.

This is not the place to tell the full, brilliant story of this hero, except to say that he looked only to the future and he made new paths in the world. He looked up, to the future, through a circle of wild bees that drifted through the leaves of a stringybark tree. My father took inspiration from our hero and he decided that we must “look up and to the future”.

He realized that if we were to survive in the future we had to embrace that future and do so with strength and discipline.

He talked to his children and explained to us that we would always retain our culture and every part of our language and our identity — that he would never allow us to stop being who we were — that the land was our backbone and from it we would remain who we were. But, as children, we had to be prepared for the future and that future meant learning the ways of outsiders. And he enforced his decision with discipline and determination. Later, one of my brothers, when he walked away from school at Yirrkala, was sent to Darwin to learn, such was my father’s determination.

So we travelled to Yirrkala and the school became the activity of the day and my father guided us into this new world and way of life. What was important to Dad was that we learned to speak English and to read and write in English.
It was his duty to ensure we knew every word of our own language and all the power of our ceremonies and culture. School was very simple. We were seated on the ground and wrote out our 1,2,3’s and A,B,C’s in the sand! The teacher would inspect our work and if the teacher was happy we wiped it, cleared the sand and wrote it again – 1,2,3 – A,B,C.

It wasn’t until the late 50’s that we saw pencils and books but it was a start for us kids. We had good teachers. I still spoke Gumatj and my mind, as it does now, worked entirely in Gumatj, though now I can translate my thinking into the words, ways and concepts of the western world. But at this time I knew just a few simple words, like slang words, and I couldn’t speak English.

By the early 1960’s I was growing up to be a young man – a teenager. I had a teacher who was a born and bred Victorian and a principal who was also Victorian born and bred and they also taught Victorian methods and syllabus mainly in the area of literacy and numeracy. I was given special tutoring by the principal and there were 3 white kids in the class doing the same correspondence as myself and 5 other Yolngu kids. There was myself, my brother and 4 others all of whom are now dead. It was during this time that I was excelling at my schoolwork that there were suggestions that I would be eligible to go away to Victoria to Geelong Grammar. But when this was suggested to Dad and Mum they simply said “no”. Dad felt, on his observation, that too much whitefella education in my brain would have taken me away from the families and he was well aware that too much indoctrination would have destroyed my sense of Gumatj self and ways and would, in turn, have destroyed me as an individual.

But then in 1964 when the suggestion arose that I would go to the Brisbane Bible College he accepted the offer. I believe that his acceptance on this occasion was firstly due to my advancement in Gumatj learning and secondly the explanation to him that the Bible College involved leadership training in a contemporary way. In other words, he wanted me to learn how to lead in the white world as well. And it was on these terms that he approved my leaving my country for the first time and travelling for an extended stay at the Methodist Bible College on the river in Brisbane. I went to Brisbane for nearly 3 years and today I know that, whilst lonely at times, and difficult, it was not a waste of time at all.

It was a strengthening for me and a new way of looking at things. There were efforts made by the Methodist church people to transform me into an Aboriginal clergyman but I resisted these things. I chose a leadership course as dictated by my father and became a youth leader and this became an important role for me and when I returned to Arnhem land. I worked for many years at the Yolngu school, Dhupuma College which had been established by the Yolngu elders and which my father had championed. I was the Sport and Recreation officer and these were great days as young Yolngu people made their start in the world. Politics came later for me.

It is not lost on me that in 1978, the year I became Chairman of the Northern Land Council, the Northern Territory government, in its first year as an independent government, made the decision to close Dhupuma College and to open a Rural College in Katherine. I still feel hurt by that decision.

I feel this way because I still see some of the men and women whose education at Dhupuma College was cut so short and I feel for them and the loss of their opportunity to live life to the fullest extent. They are our leaders today but they were cut down from where they were to be. They are all wonderful men and women but they were prevented from being what they could be and restricted by lacking what the outside world demands. My story carries lessons in it for us all.

I was lucky and I want my experience to be available to others. But there are others without the leadership and guidance I was so fortunate to have. And I had a school to go to, I had a family to come home to, I was safe at night, with food on my table and love all around me. My life wasn’t dominated, nor my culture devalued, like the way it is for so many Aboriginal people today. I want all my countrymen to have the opportunities that I had. I want them to be everything they are and that they can be.

My father’s vision will be renewed at this year’s Garma Festival which starts on 6 August at Gulkula near Nhulunbuy. The theme is “Looking Up to the Future”. It is a renewal of a commitment and a determination by Yolngu people to believe that we have not lost what it is we are; nor are we destined to remain as third world people in a first world nation – we will remake our future so it is as beautiful as our past - but to take this path we need to prepare ourselves, discipline ourselves and believe in ourselves.

Named Australian of the Year in 1978 Galarrwuy is a member of the Gumatj clan of the Yolngu people. He has led a number of negotiations with mining and government bodies chair of the NLC, he led the Gagudju people in negotiations with mining and government bodies. Not opposed to mining in principle, Yunupingu sees it as a way for Aboriginal people to escape the welfare trap if it is conducted on the traditional owners’ terms.

In 1985, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his services to the Aboriginal community. Galarrwuy Yunupingu is one of 100 “Australian Living National Treasures” selected by the National Trust of Australia as
leaders in society “considered to have a great influence over our environment because of the standards and examples they set”.

He has appeared on a number of compilations and recordings as a musician and songwriter including, Land of the Morning Star: Songs and Music of Arnhem Land: The Tibetan album fundraiser Mantra Mix with Gapu. He arranged a number of traditional songs for Yothu Yindi and provided vocals for the Album Birrkuta “wild honey”.

**Dhupuma College 1972-1982 A special historical presentation**

Dhupuma College was a transitional and residential college for North East Arnhem Land Aborigines. The Northern Territory government closed it suddenly in 1978. Many Yolngu leaders were educated there, and were shocked that it closed. It provided a sound education for many, and no secondary schooling was provided for Yolngu people following its closure. The college was named by Mr. Mungurrawuy Yunupingu, an elder living at Yirrkala. He named the college because it stands in his country. Dhupuma means "looking up and ahead" and is a suitably symbolic name for a place where young people prepare for the future.

This college monogram which appears above comes from sketches by Bruce Manggurra of Numbulwar, a former student of the College. It depicts an Aboriginal man looking up at the bees which have made a sugar bag in a hollow tree. The circular formation of bees symbolises the sun, whilst the lower circle symbolises a billabong or water-hole. The meaning is that Aboriginal people seek the sweet things and the necessities of life and the students of Dhupuma, if they are to achieve in the wider Australian society, must also seek for the good things and necessities of life through a full and varied educational programme.

The college was situated at the former ELDO (European Launcher Development Organisation) complex approximately eighteen miles south-south-east of Nhulunbuy on the Gove Peninsula. The original complex is being expanded by the addition of further buildings which will enable a total accommodation of two hundred and fifty staff and students.

The college programme was designed to cater for the academic, social, sporting and recreational needs of teenage Aborigines in the transitional period and opportunity is provided for a wide variety of close cultural contacts through this programme. Students from Milingimbi, Elcho Island, Yirrkala Angurugu, Umbakumba and Numbulwar firstly do a residential academic course at Grade 7 level during their first year in residence. They then attend the Nhulunbuy Area School in subsequent years to receive secondary education. Evening programmes at Dhupuma supplement academic skills acquired at day schools.

**Mr. Mungurrawuy Yunupingu**

Much decision making concerning college policy and programming was in the hands of the students through the College Council, the Sporting and Social Club, and the Tuckshop Committee. Dhupuma is assisting in the preparation of Aboriginal people for the future - wherever and however they choose to spend it. The college provides an opportunity and time for the development and testing of skills, ideals and modes of expression in preparation for adulthood and perhaps, in some cases, for leadership.

Dhupuma College was a transitional and residential college that educated about 250 children and young adults in its prime. It was an exceptional place from which came many of the leaders of east Arnhem land that are well known today.

The proposal is to re-establish Dhupuma College at the Gulkula (or Garma) site approximately 30 kilometres from Nhulunbuy in east Arnhem land.
The site where the original Dhupuma college was situated (and where I would propose the new Dhupuma site be situated) is a former ELDO (European Launcher Development Organisation) complex. It is Gumatj land and today is the site of the annual Garma Festival.

I was the Sport and Recreation officer at Dhupuma College from 1971 to 1974 so I know the College well. It was so efficient that it operated evening programs.

When it was closed in 1978 by the NT Government of the day Yolngu children had only the choice of Kormilda College in Darwin which has never produced anything like the results of Dhupuma College.

My family has long sought the re-establishment of Dhupuma College.

My senior family members have agreed with a proposal to invest significant amounts of our income in the re-building of a facility that can perform the task that Dhupuma College performed. We appreciate that the Yirrkala School is important and that it needs investment and we will invest in a way that is agreed by the education experts and the community.

We want the new facility to complement the Yirrkala and Nhulunbuy Schools and the Homeland Centres and provide options for students from those schools (as well as any other Aboriginal school in the Northern territory) as the students move into senior primary and secondary years. A tertiary arm is also planned for the facility.

We strongly believe that a secondary college and boarding school should operate as Dhupuma College once did and we believe that the best site for that is Gulkula, which has good road access, is dry and soli and has power and water and cleared land. We understand the Commonwealth will make a decision concerning a new boarding facility in east Arnhem land and we believe this would fit nicely with the proposal to re-establish Dhupuma College, which was itself a boarding facility.
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