Learning on Country Program

Progress Evaluation Report

Dr W. Fogarty

Dr R.G. Schwab

Dr M. Lovell

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National Centre for Indigenous Studies (NCIS) and Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR)

The Australian National University

Canberra ACT 2601 Australia

Acknowledgements

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Overview of the Learning on Country Program and the program evaluation

- The Learning on Country Program (LoCP) was established in July 2013 and was run in four sites in Arnhem Land: Maningrida, Yirrkala, Laynhapuy Homelands (Yirrkala), and Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island).

- The LoCP objectives were to:

    o increase school attendance, course completion and retention to Year 12 or equivalent of Indigenous students enrolled in LoCP-based curricula

    o increase transition rates to further education, training and employment for Indigenous students completing LoCP-based curricula

    o increase inter-generational transmission of Indigenous knowledge and customary practice among Indigenous students enrolled in LoCP-based curricula

    o develop a strong partnership between Ranger groups, schools and local community to deliver a culturally responsive, secondary school curriculum that integrates Indigenous knowledge and western knowledge systems, with particular reference to natural resource and cultural management.

- Evidence for the evaluation was garnered through three main methods which comprise a formative evaluation:

    o collaborative and ethnographic fieldwork at LoCP sites

    o an experimental web portal — the Learning on Country Program Portal — which provided a warehouse of key documents and activities

    o collection and analysis of a wide range of system-level data types from the Northern Territory Government and from local schools.

Summary of program findings

- A total of 308 students were enrolled and selected for evaluation at the start of the LoCP program in 2013, and 307 of these same students continued to be tracked in 2014. This number represented 22% of all students enrolled in schools across the four trial sites in both 2013 and 2014. The focus for all sites (except Shepherdson

College which took a whole school approach, including primary school) was on senior and middle school aged students.

- Of the total LoCP learning activities assessed, 61% targeted senior students, 20% targeted middle year students, and 9% targeted primary students, 3% involved disengaged youth and 7% integrated all year levels.

- The LoCP is showing signs of progression towards its intended outcomes, although sites are progressing at different rates. Qualitative data suggests the trajectory of the program is positive.

- There are serious caveats surrounding the quantitative data including quality of data and the fact that it is too early in the evaluation cycle of this program to make definitive assessments. The findings are therefore formative.

- The key areas that appear to be showing improvement at this early stage are:

  o Attendance and retention of students for highly engaged cohorts. While quantitative data has shown trends towards improvement, it is still ambiguous due to data issues. Interviews with community members, teachers, principals, rangers and students affirm that LoCP has affected attendance in a positive way.

  o Increased awareness and access to pathways of employment for students. Fourteen students have exited the program into employment in a context where progression to employment is fraught.

  o Intergenerational transfer of knowledge. Ethnographic evidence collected in situ and formal interviews with senior custodians demonstrate expanded opportunities for intergenerational transfer of knowledge. This is confirmed in evidence collected from classroom and on country activities, as well as in discussions with teaching and ranger staff. Further, the evaluation shows the positive ways in which the local communities have embraced Learning on Country as a validation, and incorporation, of Indigenous knowledge into work and study in a way that complements and formalises existing activities. One of the concrete outcomes of this is the further development and consolidation of 'both ways' teaching, learning and evaluation.

  o Engaging the wider community in schooling. For example, 65% of LoCP activities involved community members and/or community consultation in their inception and delivery.

- The Learning on Country Program is supporting young Indigenous people to keep and maintain a strong sense of their Indigenous identity. The program was developed through a collaborative process involving the Australian Government, community development practitioners, educators, local Elders and senior Indigenous Rangers

- The project is strongly supported by stakeholders. The design elements of the Learning on Country Program are based solidly on a partnership between Indigenous Ranger Groups and schools and welcome and incorporate views and practical participation by local Indigenous community members. As such it contributes to an increased capacity of schools to address and meet the needs of Indigenous communities.

- The LoCP has been instrumental in developing strong partnerships at both a community and regional level. It is providing a small number of demonstrable employment outcomes so far, and has potential to provide a wide range of employment pathways.

- There are a number of issues associated with data collation that need to be attended to in the next evaluation phase.

- There is a need for the governance model to evolve as the program moves into its next phases.

- Literacy and numeracy outcomes of the program are currently invisible and will not be demonstrated through NAPLAN. A new set of local indicators need to be developed and agreed upon across the sites and by all providers.

- In some of the trial sites, there is more work to do in terms of embedding the LoCP into the curriculum and there is a need to ensure that LoCP does not become simply a VET program. While the VET component of LoCP is important, LoCP needs to continue to connect with higher order year 11 and 12 studies.

- Through the collaborative design of the governance arrangements, the LoCP has been instrumental in meeting community aspirations. The program is delivering local involvement in education, and ethnographic data suggests a high degree of ownership and empowerment is being achieved through this model. The program must therefore remain cognisant of the importance of Indigenous input into local governance arrangements if it is to continue to build upon this strength.

Overall challenges to LoCP

- Clarifying the purpose and focus of the LoCP in relation to other programs, and with respect to stakeholder expectations.

- Frequent changes in the broader policy environment.

- Effective program governance in the context of high staff turnover in remote schools.

- Continuing to involve local communities and Ranger groups and building strong relationships between all groups involved in the implementation of LoCP, including the successful partnership and commitment of the Australian Government to develop this program.

- Issues of curriculum development, logistics and collecting data for ongoing and future program evaluation and improvement.

The way forward

- It is recommended that both the NT and Federal governments consider funding a staged rollout of the program beginning in January 2018. The program has been well designed and early indications are that the model is capable of enduring common setbacks faced in remote circumstances (e.g. exponentially high staff turnover). Anecdotally, there is demand and support for the program in communities outside the trial sites.

- While on a good trajectory, the program could be strengthened through some key improvements in: governance and stakeholder engagement; curriculum development; logistics; and future program evaluation and research. Challenges in these areas have been identified and discussed in consultation with stakeholders during the evaluation.

Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACF	Australian Conservation Foundation
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AEP	Aboriginal Education Policy
AEU	Australian Education Union
AGPS	Australian Government Printing Service
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ALRA	Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976
ALRA NT	Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976 Northern Territory
ALC	Anindilyakwa Land Council
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ANU	The Australian National University
ANZ	Australian and New Zealand Bank
AQIS	Australian Quarantine Inspection Service
ARC	Australian Research Council
ARIA	Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia
ASSPA	Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Association
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ATSIS	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services
BAC	Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation
BIITE	Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CALM	Conservation and Land Management
CDEP	Community Development Employment Program
CDU	Charles Darwin University
CEC	Community Education Centre

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEP	Community Employment Program
CFC	Caring for Country
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CLC	Community Learning Centre
CLM	Conservation and Land Management
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
DET	Department of Education and Training (Northern Territory)
DEET	Department of Education, Employment and Training
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (formerly Department of Education, Science and Training)
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training (now Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations)
DETYA	Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DSEWPaC	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
ECI	Early Childhood Intervention
ESL	English as a Second Language
FACS	Family and Community Services
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
FIM	Family Income Management
HLC	Homeland Learning Centre
HREC	ANU Human Research Ethics Committee
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
IAS	Indigenous Advancement Strategy
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IK	Indigenous Knowledge

IEK	Indigenous Ecological Knowledge
IESP	Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
ILSM	Indigenous Land and Sea Management
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
IRCPP	Indigenous Ranger Cadet Pilot Program
ITEP	Indigenous Training for Employment Program
JET	Jobs, Employment and Training
KJRP	Kakadu Junior Ranger Program
KNP	Kakadu National Park
KLC	Kimberley Land Council
LGANT	Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
LLoCC	Local Learning on Country Committee
LNP	Liberal National Party of Queensland
LoC	Learning on Country (model)
LoCP	Learning on Country Program
LoCPSC	Learning on Country Program Steering Committee
MAC	Maningrida Arts and Culture
MAPS	Maningrida Alcohol Permit System
MCATSIA	Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
MCAPP	Maningrida Community Action Plan Project
MCEC	Maningrida Community Education Centre
MCEECDYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council of Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs
MCEC	Maningrida Community Education Centre
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Maningrida Progress Association

MTJC	Maningrida Tribal Justice Committee
NAILSMA	North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NCIS	National Centre for Indigenous Studies
NIELNS	National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
NLC	Northern Land Council
NNTT	National Native Title Tribunal
NRETAS	Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport (NT Government)
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
NTACC	Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee
NTCET	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training
NTCF	Northern Territory Curriculum Framework
NTDEET	Northern Territory Department of Education Employment and Training
NTER	Northern Territory Emergency Response
NTG	Northern Territory Government
NTPWS	Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PM&C	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
RATE	Remote Area Teacher Education
RSAS	Remote School Attendance Strategy
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SEAM	Improving School Enrolment and Attendance through Welfare Reform Measure
SEWPAC	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

SHEP	Secondary Homelands Education Project
SRP	Strategic Results Project
STEP	Structured Training and Employment Program
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TER	Tertiary Entrance Rank
TO	Traditional Owner
UN	United Nations
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WA	Western Australia
WALFA	Western Arnhem Land Fire Abatement Project
WoC	Working on Country
WSK	Western Scientific Knowledge
WfD	Work for the Dole

Background

Despite major gains in Australia's economic prosperity over the last decade, Indigenous people continue to be the most disadvantaged group in our society. Indigenous Australians are subject to major disparities compared to the rest of the population when measured against conventional statistical measures of well-being, such as income, housing, health, employment and education. Rectifying these statistical deficits forms the cornerstone of bipartisan Australian approaches to 'closing the gaps' Indigenous affairs policy, as well as underpinning the five streams of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (Fogarty 2013, Fogarty et al. 2015).

Education is often touted as the 'road map', or the key, through which future generations will negotiate and overcome these statistical deficits to become productive and engaged members of the wider Australian community. Yet there is a wealth of evidence which demonstrates continued poor educational outcomes for Indigenous students' performance in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions country-wide. The relative educational disadvantage of Indigenous people is most pronounced in the very remote areas of the country where the likelihood of students speaking languages other than English is highest and the availability of education and training services and infrastructure is lower than in rural and urban areas. However, disparity occurs across a raft of indicators at a national level. For example, in a recent overview of Indigenous education between 2007 and 2012, the Council of Australian Governments (2014) found that, in comparison to other Australians:

- Indigenous children are more than twice as likely to start school developmentally vulnerable
- there has been no improvement in Indigenous school attendance nationally (indeed, in some years, attendance has decreased)
- Indigenous students are much less likely to meet minimum standards in reading and numeracy
- while Indigenous Year 12 attainment has increased, after leaving school Indigenous young people are much less likely to be fully engaged in work or study.

In the Northern Territory, where many students live in remote or very remote locations and where English is not the first language spoken at home, Indigenous student outcomes are particularly discouraging. For example, average Indigenous school attendance in the Northern Territory was about 70% in 2009 and 68% in 2012. By comparison, non-Indigenous student attendance in 2009 was about 91%. The attendance in 2012 among Indigenous students in remote and very remote areas of the Northern Territory was even lower, with attendance reaching about 78 and 58 percent, respectively (COAG 2014).

These low levels of attendance have long been seen as a red flag among educators and policy makers. For example, a recent analysis of the relationship between attendance and reading achievement found that achievement at or above national benchmarks correspond with the average number of days a student attends school. When students attend an average of three days a week, few attain the benchmark in reading; when attendance rises to four days a week or higher, about 60 percent attain that benchmark (Wilson 2014). Secondary school completions for Indigenous students across the Northern Territory have stagnated at about 30 percent over the period 2000 – 2012. In very remote areas, however, gains in the early part of this period have reversed with only about 20 percent of students completing Year 12 (Wilson 2014:139). It should be noted that these conclusions are based on very small numbers of Indigenous students, and that Indigenous enrolment numbers are quite variable. In 2006, 24 Indigenous students completed Year 12, but numbers dropped to about eight by 2012. The education outcomes of Indigenous students are also affected by a host of other social and economic variables, often called the social determinants of education. Some of these structural factors include poor health (especially hearing and dental health), high levels of incarceration, low levels of parental education, endemic poverty and highly restricted local labour market opportunities which provide sparse learning incentive. Hunter and Schwab (2003) add to this list a number of other causal factors for educational 'failure'. These include inter-cultural conflict, cross-cultural miscommunication, and institutional racism.

A number of both Federal and Northern Territory Government initiatives to improve school attendance of note have been operating in remote sites during the period of this evaluation. One of these is the 'Improving School Enrolment and Attendance through Welfare Reform Measure' (SEAM), which legislated a conditional linkage between school enrolment and attendance and welfare payments. SEAM was instituted in 2013 following a three and a half year trial of the School Attendance and Enrolment Pilot, a component of broader initiatives of welfare reform involving income management. SEAM aims to identify school attendance problems and provide support through Australia's national welfare agency, Centrelink. In December 2013, the Minster for Indigenous Affairs, the Honourable Nigel Scullion, announced a $28 million Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) targeting 40 remote communities across the Northern Territory (NT), Western Australia (WA), Queensland, New South Wales (NSW) and South Australia (SA). The program recruited 400 local attendance officers, with one school attendance officer being employed for every 20 students in the target locations. In the NT, these federal programs coexist with the 'every child – every day' policy, which has a legislative base in amendments to the NT education act allowing for provisions and offences relating to truancy. These higher level policy strategies have been in operation in all of the Learning on Country Program (LoCP) trial sites during this evaluation. Similarly, the evaluation period has seen a rapidly changing and somewhat uncertain policy environment. Changes in government took place

in the NT in August 2012 and federally in September 2013 and have heralded new policy approaches. Most notable has been the advent of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) which has seen major change in the Indigenous affairs policy landscape. At the time of writing, the Minster for Indigenous Affairs, the Honourable Nigel Scullion, had just announced funding outcomes against the new policy framework.

Against this policy backdrop, the LoCP is a relatively small, localised approach to tackling some of these broader educational issues at four remote locations. This report presents the findings of a two-year evaluation of this trial program.

The inception of the Learning on Country Program

Research on Indigenous education has consistently noted that the best results in engagement and outcomes arise when learning is linked to local community aspirations and values, respects Indigenous languages and perspectives, and involves local people in its development (McRae et al. 2000; Miller 2005). A recent review for the 'Closing the Gap Clearinghouse' evaluated which programs work to increase Indigenous attendance or retention and found that:

> *A common feature of successful educational programs was that of a creative collaboration, which builds bridges between public agencies and the community, often by engaging parents or community-based organisations. (Purdie & Buckley 2010).*

In 2012, the National Curriculum Services (2012) analysed 11 schools in remote regions that were considered to be improving. They listed seven key factors of success that work:

- leadership
- making learning content engaging, accessible and culturally responsive
- a school culture built on high expectations for all students
- empowering, supporting and engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enhance their learning capacity
- building and sustaining teacher capacity to deliver whole-school practice
- coherent whole-school approaches to evidence-based literacy and numeracy teaching
- profound understanding of the importance of school-community partnerships.

'Best practice' education in remote areas must therefore be both relevant and engaging to the local community while simultaneously able to incorporate local Indigenous aspirations and perspectives, as well as embed literacy and numeracy learning in real activity. One potential example of this has been the connection between education and Indigenous land and sea management (National Curriculum Services 2012).

Over the last decade or so, there has been an exponential growth in employment and activity in Indigenous Land and Sea Management (ILSM) programs, Indigenous Ranger programs and natural resource management programs, particularly in remote Indigenous Australia. This is unsurprising given that the Indigenous estate consists of land holdings under various tenures in excess of 23% of the Australian continent. These ILSM programs deliberately combine western scientific and local Indigenous knowledge to manage environmental threats such as feral animals, wildfires and weeds while also pursuing economic development opportunities in areas such as carbon offsets, sustainable wildlife harvesting and providing fee-for-service work in providing coastal security and maintaining biodiversity. Government support through programs such as Working on Country (WoC) and Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) has seen a steady growth in the employment and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in ILSM programs. With growth of employment opportunity in this sector has come a heightened demand for people with a set of skills and knowledge that encompasses both Indigenous and western scientific knowledge, as well as fundamental skills in English literacy and numeracy. In turn, this demand has seen a natural, but gradual, partnering between education providers and Caring for Country (CfC), WoC and ILSM groups (Fogarty 2012; Kerins 2012).

Schools and education programs in remote areas of the NT – and in other Australian states – have recognised the potential of land and sea management initiatives to provide a live learning opportunity for their students. On the one hand, educational programs that link with land and sea management programs capitalise on the real application of skills and concepts *in situ*. The combined uses of Western science and Indigenous knowledge that underpin land and sea management engages Aboriginal people in the learning process, while simultaneously drawing upon high-level scientific concepts in the areas of biology, the environmental sciences, and other scientific fields. At the same time, the English literacy and numeracy skills needed in such work can be explicitly taught through a combination of experiential and classroom-based modes of instruction. Importantly, many students come to this type of learning with strong pre-existing skill sets derived in the Indigenous domain (Fogarty & Schwab 2012; Schwab & Fogarty 2015).

For over a decade, schools and teachers have been partnering students with Rangers and associated land and sea management activity to provide educational experiences for their students. This is especially true in secondary and post-compulsory age school cohorts. Such programs are intended to engage students and the wider community in a mode of learning which recognises and values the importance of Indigenous cosmologies, connections to 'country' and customary practices, while also providing a concrete reason to learn literacy, numeracy and Western scientific knowledge. Pre-existing models of this type of approach were particularly notable at places like Maningrida through their school

'Junior Ranger program' (see case study 1) and through the use of the Gatha Rom approach at Yirrkala (see case study 2). However, ongoing funding and development of such programs has generally been disparate, personality dependant (waxing and waning as interested teachers or Rangers come and go) and disconnected to formal curriculum and policy settings.

As an effort to rectify these shortcomings, a regional group of four Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory came together and built a model called Learning on Country (LoC) and secured government funding to support a two-year pilot program – the Learning on Country Program (LoCP). The development of LoC was not a linear process. The Australian Government (through the former FaHSCIA and subsequently PM&C) built a strong relationship with Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation and local NT education department staff in developing what started out as the Junior Ranger Program with two prospective sites Yirrkala and Yirrkala Homelands. This involved administrative support and seed funding. In developing the program further in 2010 and early 2011 discussions with Maningrida and Galiwinku saw them included in the program.

In 2011 the first workshop was held in Darwin when the four sites came together and at that stage it was agreed to change the name from Junior Rangers to Learning on Country. This was supported by the Indigenous Coordination Centre (FaHSCIA) in Nhulunbuy which set up the intergovernmental working group to assist development. Following funding by DEEWR, Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation contracted Mr Paul Josif and Greg Wearne to undertake the overarching design and initial implementation phases of the program in consultation with the four trial sites.

Learning on Country Program objectives

The Learning on Country Program (LoCP) is a pilot education program that was established in July 2013. The program is an innovative educational approach that brings together Indigenous land and sea Rangers, schools, scientists and Indigenous land owners 'on country' and in classrooms to learn literacy and numeracy, science and work skills as well as local Indigenous knowledge. This pilot was initially run in four sites in Arnhem Land (see Figure 1).
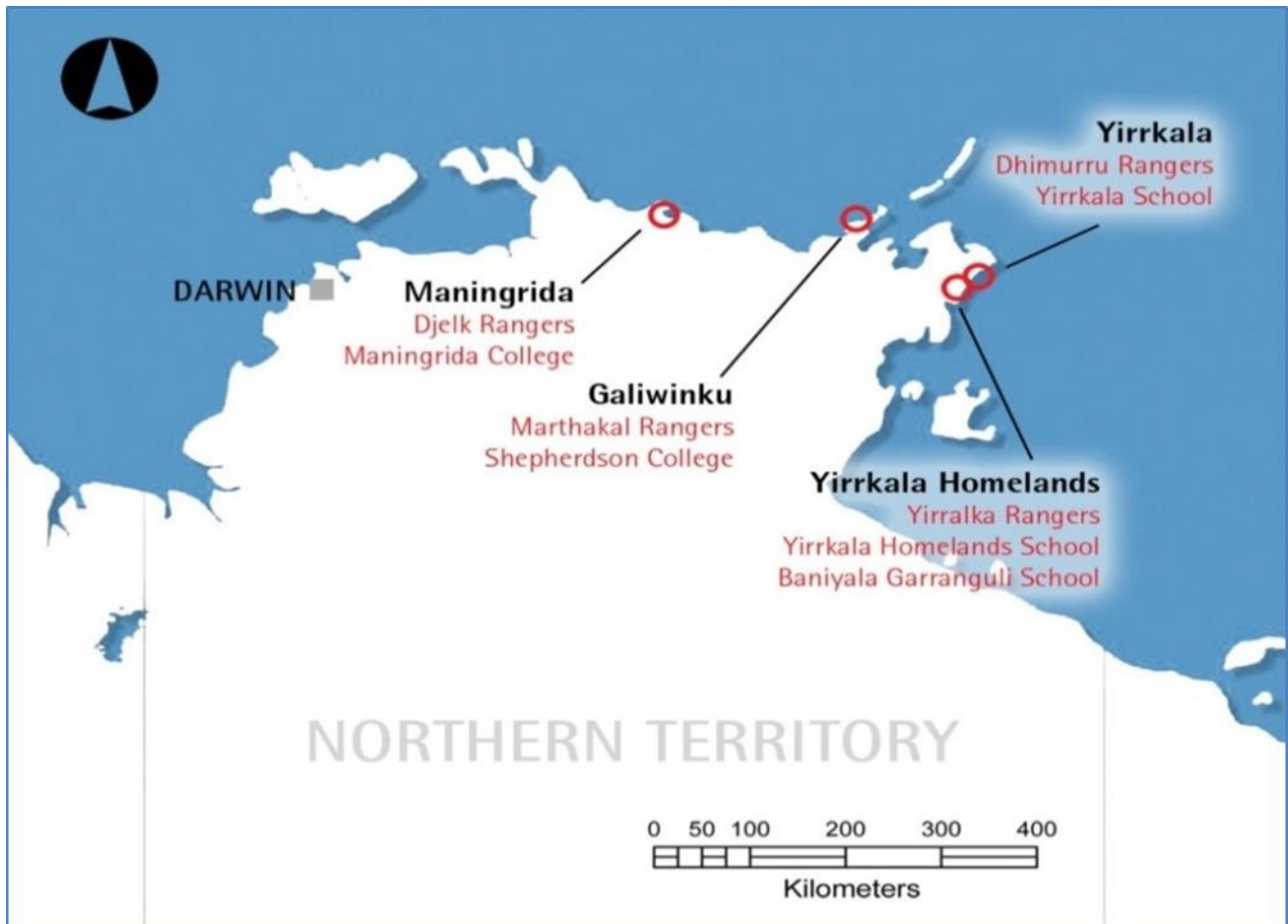
Figure 1. Image: Map of Learning on Country Program (LoCP) pilot sites. Source: Schwab & Fogarty 2015.

LoCP was funded through a combination of sources. Core funding came from the Indigenous Ranger Cadet Pilot Program (IRCPP) initiative, originally within the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). Additional funding was provided by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (DET). The program officially began in July 2013 and is evaluated in this report up until the end of the 2014 school year. While the program began in July 2013, full implementation was not achieved in all sites until January 2014. The start date on which to base the assessment of program effectiveness will be the commencement of the school year in January 2014.

The LoCP objectives, as defined by FaHCSIA, were to:

- increase school attendance, course completion and retention to Year 12 or equivalent of Indigenous students enrolled in LoCP-based curricula
- increase transition rates to further education, training and employment for Indigenous students completing LoCP-based curricula
- increase inter-generational transmission of Indigenous knowledge and customary practice among Indigenous students enrolled in LoCP-based curricula
- develop a strong partnership between Ranger groups, schools and local community to deliver a culturally responsive, secondary school curriculum that integrates Indigenous knowledge and western knowledge systems, with particular reference to natural resource and cultural management.

In addition to these government objectives, the communities from the four trial sites included the following overarching principles as agreed assumptions in their overarching operation plan:

- the primacy of Indigenous ownership and authority
- the importance of inter-generational transmission of Indigenous knowledge and customary practice
- Indigenous Australian and Western knowledge systems informing good two-way practice (two tool boxes)
- the critical role of a system of monitoring, evaluation, improvement and reporting based on participatory planning and management.

The program is primarily aimed at students from Year 10 ages to Year 12. The program also offered introductory activities in Year 7 to 9 progressing to more intensive and specific study in Years 10, 11 and 12. The pilot was to have a focus on senior students and the development of pathways to employment.

Governance of the Learning on Country Program

The LoCP is governed by an overarching steering committee (LoCPSC). The committee includes representatives from schools and Ranger groups as well as Traditional Owners from each of the four pilot sites. It also includes representatives from the Northern Territory Education Department (DET) and each of the four LoCP coordinators. An expert advisor to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Dr Adrian Fordham, was also appointed as a member of the committee during the evaluation period. The responsibilities of the LoCPSC, as agreed in the overarching operation plan, are as follows:

- meet quarterly by telephone link and face-to-face twice per annum and maintain records

- oversee and ensure that each local program has the resources to implement their LoCP
- develop and facilitate improved strategies for the delivery of LoCPs
- liaise with government agencies through the LoCP Government Working Group and the LoCP Contract Management Group and manage overall government support and funding for the project
- regularly report progress to the intergovernmental agencies supporting the program through the LoCP Government Working Group
- continue to identify external funding sources and other resources
- oversee and manage the LoCP evaluation process
- undertake final dispute resolution in the event of local issues being unmanageable locally
- promote the LoCP's successes and, when deemed appropriate by all participants, act as a single voice for the LoCP.

In addition to the LoCPSC, an interdepartmental Working Group was formed to enable 'whole of government policy development of the LoCP pilot. At the commencement of the evaluation, the composition of the LoCP Government Working Group included representatives from FaHCSIA, DEEWR, NTDET, SEWPAC, NTPWS and NRETAS. Many of these representatives have since been subsumed into the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
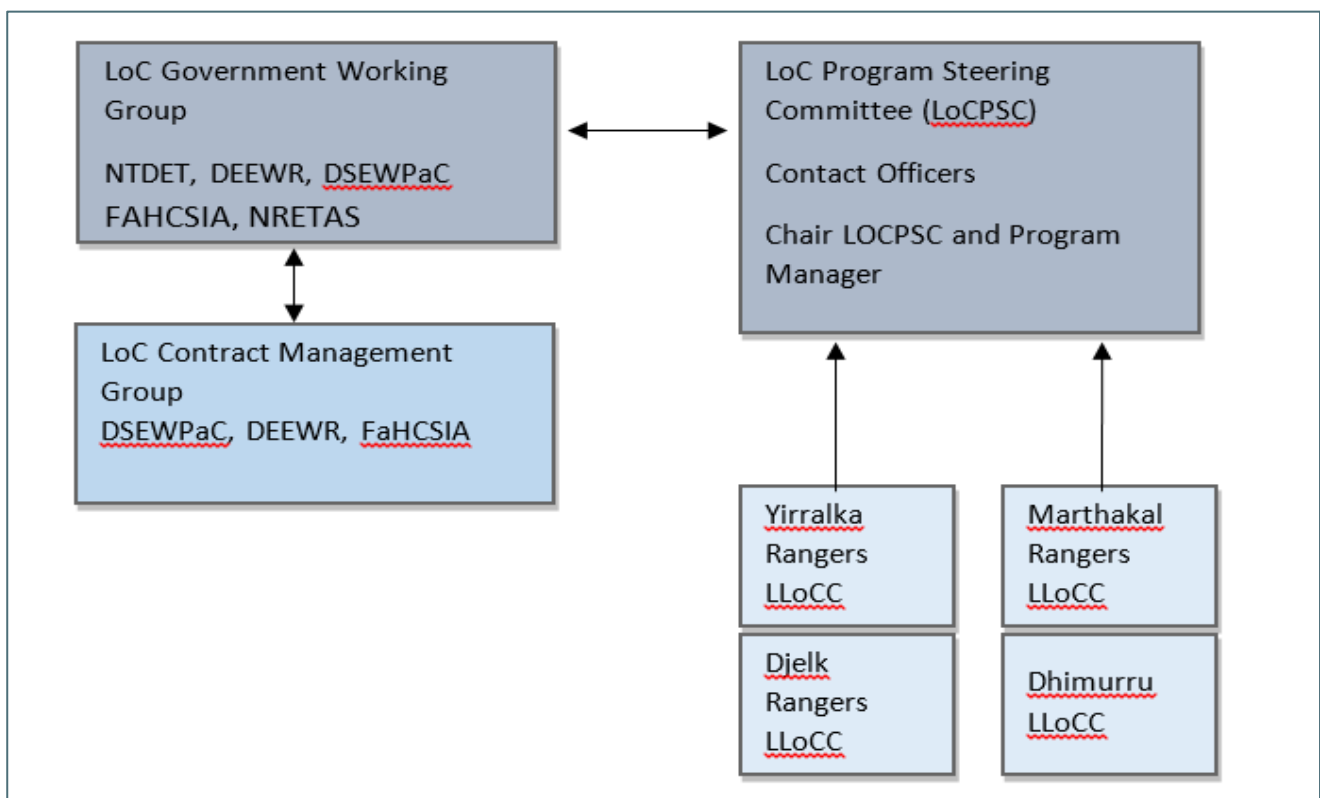
Figure 2. LoCP governance schema. Source: Wearne Advisers & Savvy Community Development Consultants 2012.

Governance at a local level incorporates a number of approaches. Each of the four sites developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the school, the local parent agency (such as Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation in Maningrida) and the local Ranger group. The MoU formed the basis for the formation of a Local Learning on Country Program Committee (LLoCPC). During the establishment phase of the program, each site also developed a collaborative local implementation plan. At a local level, the LoCP is facilitated and implemented by the LoCP coordinator. The LLoCPC operates under the oversight of the overarching steering committee – the LoCPSC (see Figure 2).

The roles and responsibilities of the LLoCPCs are:

- approve the collaboratively developed (i.e. school, Indigenous leaders and Ranger group) educational program in the local LoCP Operational Plan
- oversee and approve the selection and deployment of LoCP-related staff
- review the progress of the LoCP
- manage a continuous improvement process to ensure LoCP objectives/targets are being met
- ensure the collection of program data
- receive regular reports from the LoCP coordinator
- manage and participate in local program evaluation activities
- report regularly to the Ranger group governing body, the School Council and the LoCP Steering Committee
- assist with dispute resolution
- publicise program successes
- undertake relevant governance training and program orientation (Wearne Advisers & Savvy Community Development Consultants 2012).

The unique governance arrangements of the LoCP are critical in facilitating local ownership and ongoing operational development and should be considered the 'engine room' of the program. Findings on Governance can be found at page 105.

Overview of the Learning on Country Program evaluation

The evaluation of the LoCP was commissioned by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), and later overseen by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C). The Tender for conducting the evaluation was won in April 2013 by the National Centre for Indigenous Studies (NCIS) in partnership with the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at The Australian National University in Canberra. The LoCP evaluation was initiated in July 2013, with data collection completed in February 2015.

Aims and research questions of the evaluation

The LoCP evaluation had the following broad aims:

1. to provide formative advice to guide implementation and improvement across the program and at each site
2. to provide a strong, independent evidence base to judge the success of the program relative to outcomes in similar schools
3. to inform decision-making regarding the continuation and extension of the program in other communities.

The evaluation was framed by a series of key research questions, collaboratively developed and designed to inform the three broader aims listed above. These key research questions are outlined in Table 1:

Table 1. Key research questions framing the LoCP evaluation.

Implementation and governance	Outcomes of program	Impact of schooling context
• How effective was the process of establishing Memoranda of Understanding? • How effective are the partnerships between schools and Ranger groups? • What is the nature of the collaboration between the various stakeholders? • What degree of Indigenous ownership and authority exists in on-country activities? • Does the LoCP meet community aspirations and	• Have clearly defined education, training and employment pathways for students been developed? • Are students progressing to further study and/or employment? • How many students are completing Stage 1 & 2 courses and VET courses at the senior secondary and Years 7-9 levels? • What are the levels of achievement across intended	• To what degree have structural factors such as local governance, school size and student characteristics, availability of skilled teachers, breadth of Ranger programs and access to specialised services influenced the success of the LoCP? • Have external factors such as location, seasonality and housing affected project outcomes? • How have local economic and market conditions influenced

Implementation and governance	Outcomes of program	Impact of schooling context
priorities? • To what degree is 'both ways' teaching and learning incorporated in the LoCP delivery? • What type and level of resources are allocated to the LoCP?	learning outcomes for LoCP units and modules? • What are student enrolment and attendance rates? • What are the literacy, numeracy, ICT skills and problem solving/critical thinking outcomes for students in the LoCP? • What are the Indigenous knowledge outcomes? • What are the outcomes and perceptions of the LoCP among Rangers and community members?	outcomes? • What have been the impacts of government policies on the operation of the LoCP?

Evaluation methodology

The LoCP evaluation team brought together extensive research and evaluation experience in remote Indigenous Australia, Indigenous education, economic development, social policy, Demography, Anthropology, Law, and Indigenous Cultural and Natural Resource Management (see research team biographies in Appendix A). The research team also has a balance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and university and community-based researchers. The evaluation methodology was developed in response to a series of key research questions related to the three broad aims of the LoCP evaluation as directed by PM&C.

The evaluation design was specifically intended to maximise stakeholder input in the design of the evaluation and data collection methodology, ensure robust data analysis, and provide ongoing feedback of findings to stakeholders. The evaluation also incorporated both a formative and summative framework and incorporated a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. PAR involves all relevant parties in actively examining activity (experienced as problematic) in order to improve it, by critically reflecting on the underlying historical, political, cultural, economic, geographic and other contexts of the problem to be addressed. It enables action which can be the subject of further research and an iterative reflective cycle of data collection, reflection and action, paying careful attention to power relationships, data collection and analysis, and decisions regarding actions arising from the research findings.

A mixed method approach is the best approach for policies and programs in remote contexts, as qualitative interviews and more quantitative data sets are able to be analysed in terms of their inter-related effects. In the early stages of the evaluation, discussions

were held with the PM&C Evaluation Branch about theories of change relevant to the evaluation. Working in collaboration with the Branch, the evaluators developed program theory and program logic models suited to the evaluation. The program theory and program logic models are presented in Appendix B and Table 21, respectively. These models were useful in the evaluation and underpin the methodological approach designed by the team. Both the models and the methodology are designed to acknowledge that research and evaluation do not always follow a clear, neat and linear path; they are dynamic and organic. The medium to longer term outcomes delineated in the program logic detailed in Table 21 and discussed in more detail below, are ongoing and require tracking against the trajectory of the LoCP beyond the two-year time frame of this evaluation.

In keeping with these higher-level approaches, evidence and data collation for the evaluation was garnered through three main methods:

- collaborative and ethnographic fieldwork
- Learning on Country Program Portal (LoCP Portal)
- collection and analysis of system level data.

Each of these methods is described further below.

Method 1: Collaborative and ethnographic fieldwork

This form of data collation involved a series of formal and informal semi-structured interviews with all relevant parties involved in the LoCP. Interviews were conducted during two primary fieldwork trips. The first fieldwork period took place during August 2013 and the second fieldwork period took place during 2014. Fieldwork involved travelling to each of the four trial sites and spending a working week in situ. A total equivalent of 180 days of 'on-the-ground research' was conducted by five researchers over the two-year period of the evaluation.

In addition, many follow-up phone calls and electronic communications augmented the face-to-face data collection. Using the key research questions derived under the three aims of the evaluation (see Table 2) as prompts, the evaluation team interviewed at total of 174 people across the four trial sites and in Darwin and Nhulunbuy. Many of the interviews were conducted one-to-one, lasting an average of one hour. Other interviews were conducted with groups of up to ten of people in semi-structured focus groups. Interviews were augmented by participation and observation of both on-country and classroom activities at each site. In addition, evidence of curriculum documents, student work examples and photographs were collected from each site. In many cases, the evaluation team consisted of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and local assistants. The following stakeholders were consulted during the evaluation period:

- senior Traditional Owners
- classroom teachers
- senior teachers
- school Principals
- community members
- local government officials
- Government business managers
- interested consultants
- Rangers
- parents
- students
- the LoCP Steering Committee and local LoCP Committees
- the expert advisor
- FaHCSIA (now PM&C)
- the DEEWR Indigenous Ranger Cadet Pilot Program (IRCPP) evaluators
- Northern Territory Department of Education
- members of the NT Governmental Interagency Committee.

Figure 3. Image: Researchers Dr Bill Fogarty and Dr Jerry Schwab discuss the Learning on Country Program with the Marthakal Rangers in Galiwinku.

Table 2. Data collection methods used for each research question.

Key Research question	Data collection methods used
Implementation and governance	
How effective was the process of establishing Memoranda of Understanding?	• Group and individual interviews with LoCP Steering Committee members • Expert Advisor interview • Group and individual interviews with Local LoCP • NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • Ranger interviews • Community consultations
How effective are the partnerships between schools and Ranger groups?	• Group and individual interviews with LoCP Steering Committee members • Expert Advisor interview • Group and individual interviews with Local LoCP • NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • Ranger interviews
What is the nature of the collaboration between the various stakeholders?	• Group and individual interviews with LoCP Steering Committee members • Expert Advisor interview • Group and individual interviews with Local LoCP • NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • Ranger interviews • Teacher interviews • Parent/family interviews • Student interviews • Community consultations
What degree of Indigenous ownership and authority exists in on-country activities?	• Group and individual interviews with LoCP Steering Committee members • Expert Advisor interview • Group and individual interviews with Local LoCP Committee members • Ranger interviews • Teacher interviews • Parent/family interviews • Student interviews • Community consultations
Does the Learning on Country program meet community aspirations and priorities?	• Expert Advisor interview • Group and individual interviews with Local LoCP Committee members • Ranger interviews • Community consultations
To what degree is 'both ways' teaching and learning incorporated in the program delivery?	• Expert Advisor interview • Group and individual interviews with Local LoCP Committee members • Ranger interviews • Teacher interviews • Student interviews • Community consultations
What type and level of resources are allocated to the program?	• Group and individual interviews with LoCP Steering Committee members • Expert advisor interview

Key Research question	Data collection methods used
	• Group and individual interviews with local LoCP Committee members • NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews

Outcomes of program	
Have clearly defined education, training and employment pathways for students been developed?	• Group and individual interviews with LoCP Steering Committee members • Expert advisor interview • Group and individual interviews with local LoCP Committee members • NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • Teacher interviews • Community consultations
Are students progressing to further study and/or employment?	• NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • Teacher interviews • Student interviews • Community consultations • School performance data
How many students are completing Stage 1 and 2 courses and VET courses at the senior secondary and years 7-9 levels?	• NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • Teacher interviews • Student interviews • School performance data
What are the levels of achievement across intended learning outcomes for Learning on Country units and modules?	• NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • teacher interviews • student interviews • school performance data
What are student enrolment and attendance rates?	• NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • teacher interviews • student interviews • school performance data
What are the literacy, numeracy, ICT skills and problem solving/critical thinking outcomes for students in the Learning on Country Program?	• NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • teacher interviews • student interviews • school performance data
What are the Indigenous knowledge outcomes?	• group and individual interviews with Local LoCP Committee members • Ranger interviews • parent/family interviews • student interviews • community consultations
What are the outcomes and perceptions of the Learning on Country Program among Rangers and community members?	• group and individual interviews with Local LoCP Committee members • Ranger interviews • community consultations

Impact of schooling context	
To what degree have structural	• group and individual interviews with LoCP Steering Committee

Key Research question	Data collection methods used
factors such as local governance, school size and student characteristics, availability of skilled teachers, breadth of Ranger programs and access to specialised services influenced the success of the Learning on Country Program?	members • group and individual interviews with Local LoCP Committee members • Expert Advisor interviews • NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • Ranger interviews • teacher interviews • parent/family interviews • community consultations
Have external factors such as location, seasonality and housing affected project outcomes?	• group and individual interviews with LoCP Steering Committee members • group and individual interviews with Local LoCP Committee members • Expert Advisor interviews • NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • Ranger interviews • teacher interviews • community consultations
How have local economic and market conditions influenced outcomes?	• group and individual interviews with LoCP Steering Committee members • group and individual interviews with Local LoCP Committee members • Expert Advisor interviews • NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • Ranger interviews • teacher interviews • community consultations
What have been the impacts of government policies on the operation of the Learning on Country Program?	• group and individual interviews with LoCP Steering Committee members • group and individual interviews with Local LoCP Committee members • Expert Advisor interviews • NT Department of Education and Children's Services staff interviews • Ranger interviews • community consultations
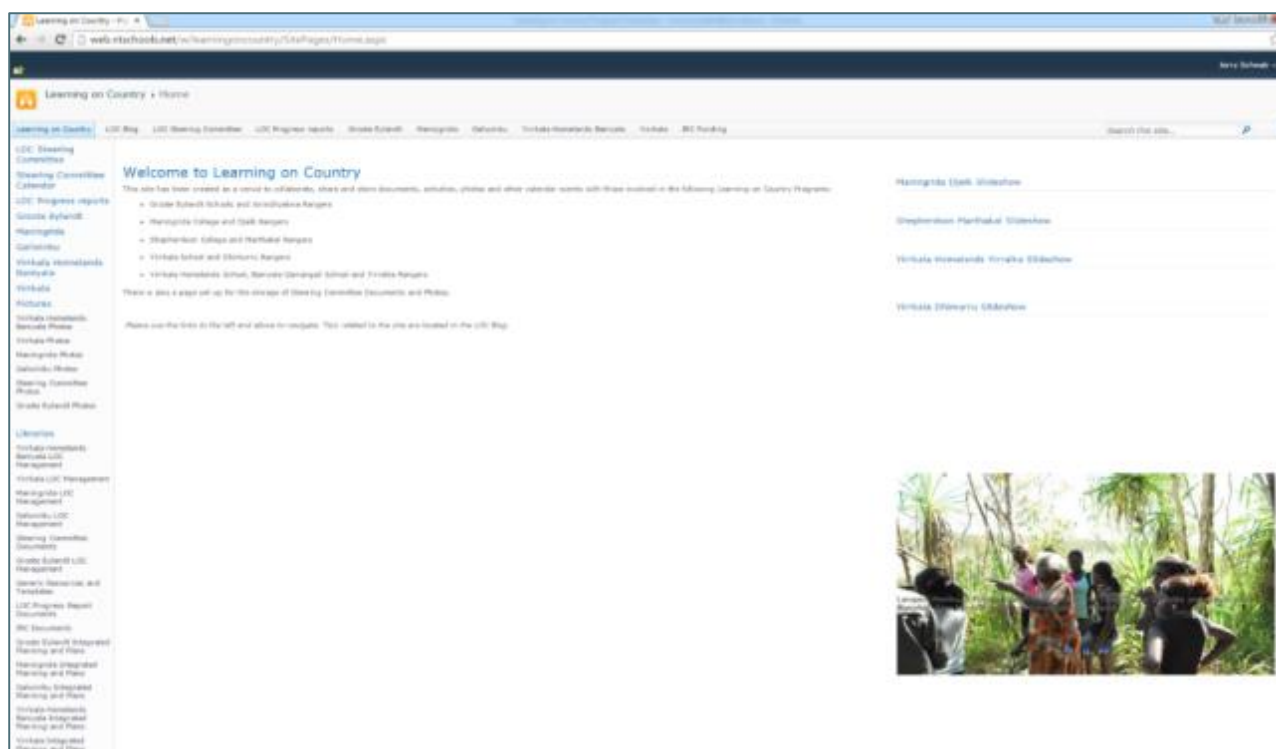
Figure 4. Image: Screen shot of the Learning on Country Program Portal.

Method 2: Learning on Country Program Portal

The second method of data collation for this evaluation was somewhat experimental. In consultation with the trial sites and the LoCP evaluation team, it was decided to set up a virtual Learning on Country 'Portal'. The Portal is a secure virtual website housed within the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training to which access can be controlled. The purpose of the Portal being established was four-fold:

1. to provide a virtual place for each of the sites to share ideas, experiences, curriculum documents, blogs, photographs etc. of LoCP in situ
2. to provide a 'warehouse' of key documents and records. For example, each of the local implementation plans as well as the overarching framework for the LoCP can be found on the Portal
3. to provide a record of LoCP activity, including on-country and off-country activities as well as minutes for LoCP Steering Committee and Local LoCP Committee meetings
4. to provide a source of qualitative data that we could use in our evaluation.

The use of the Portal in the evaluation process was seen as important in providing another layer of data that could help augment the more traditional 'hard' data collected at a system level and the ethnographic data collected in situ. In particular, we were interested in using records of activity to extrapolate information around local engagement and types of activity intensity at a local level. In addition, it was intended that the Portal have the ability to

become a site where the ongoing growth of the LoCP could be recorded. Information gleaned from the Portal is presented under the overall data findings of this report.

Method 3: System-level data

The third method of data collation involved the extrapolation of system-level data from the Northern Territory Government as well as from local schools where appropriate. Both NT DET staff and school-based Principals and teachers were consulted about available data. Data were accessed through a formal request to NT DET and have been used in this evaluation as per our ethics procedures and protocols (see Ethics section in this report). While a number of requested data categories were unavailable (see Method 3 Caveats), the researchers were able to access data on the following:

- enrolment whole school 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex, age and grade
- attendance for non-LoCP students by week 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex, age and grade
- attendance for named LoCP participants by school week 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex, age and grade
- stage one subject enrolment for individual non-LoCP students 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex and age
- stage one subject outcomes (e.g. completions, continuing, withdrawal) for named LoCP participants 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex and age
- stage two subject enrolment for individual non-LoCP students 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex and age
- stage two subject outcomes (e.g. completions, continuing, withdrawal) for named LoCP participants 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex and age
- VET enrolments for non-LoCP students 2012, 2013, 2014 by course/unit/module by sex, age and grade
- VET enrolments for named LoCP participants 2012, 2013, 2014 by course/unit/module by sex, age and grade
- VET outcomes (e.g. completions, continuing, withdrawal) for non-LoCP students 2012, 2013, 2014 by course/unit/module by sex, age and grade
- VET outcomes (e.g. completions, continuing, withdrawal) by named LoCP participants 2012, 2013, 2014 by course/unit/module by sex, age and grade

Analysis of these data categories can be found in the case studies of each of the sites and in the overarching data section of this report.

Data caveats

There are a number of very important caveats that need to be understood in the analysis presented in this report. While the three data collection methods were conducted

independently of each other, they coalesce to provide a basis for our findings (see 'Discussion and ways forward' section of this report). So, while our findings rely on all the data collected, each of the data sets presented their own methodological issues. These caveats are dealt with in turn below:

Method 1 caveats

The ethnographic findings of our research are perhaps the most robust evaluative data we collected. People on the ground who are involved in delivering and managing the LoCP were able to consistently and clearly articulate a set of common narratives about the trajectory of the program at both a local and more holistic level. They were also able to evidence these claims with local material (e.g. student work books, curriculum planning documents and photographs). This was augmented by our own observations in each site which concurred with what we were being told. Triangulation of these narratives across sites and with a variety of stakeholders, importantly including community members not associated with the program, enabled a clear set of successes and challenges to emerge in each site (see case studies described in this report). One caveat to add here is that there were frequent changes in key staff at some sites. This meant that, in some cases, follow-up interviews with individuals during the second fieldwork period (Phase 4 of the evaluation) were not always possible.

Method 2 caveats

While the Portal enabled the collection of extremely useful material and qualitative and quantitative information for each site, the degree to which each site engaged in the Portal's use and some teething issues with access to the website meant that the Portal had some limitations in its use as an evaluation tool. The Portal as an experimental tool for this evaluation had the following issues and limitations:

- The Portal was created at a time when people were struggling to set up the LoCP in their sites and they were very busy with basic operational issues. This precluded optimum engagement with the Portal in the early stages of the program.
- While the evaluation team made a concerted effort to explain the evaluative function of the Portal, it is clear that some coordinators did not fully understand the potential and reasons for use of the Portal in tracking and evaluating the LoCP in their local area.
- The lack of an overarching coordinator for the LoCP program (see 'Discussion and ways forward' section in this report) meant that the role of encouraging coordinators to enter material into the Portal fell by default to the Expert Advisor. This meant that the pursuit of material was being conducted by someone 'outside' the operational group and, as such, was not always perceived as core business by coordinators.

- The evaluation team was inadvertently 'locked out' of the Portal for an extended period.
- The initial reporting mechanism being used in the Portal was not 'user friendly' and needed to be refined during the course of the evaluation.
- Activity reports were done to varying degrees of accuracy and levels of completion.

While these issues have caused some limitations to what the evaluation team has been able to extrapolate from the Portal for the evaluation, the Portal has proved none the less to be a very useful tool. It has enabled the provision of representative data, both qualitative and quantitative, from across the sites. Each of the sites has also become more familiar and much more engaged with the Portal during the pilot trial period. Similarly, the refinement of the reporting tool and the success of the Portal as a place for sharing and storing information would warrant its continuation into the next evaluation period.

Method 3 caveats

The process and validity of system-level data collated during this evaluation have been an ongoing challenge for the evaluation, both in terms of access to and quality of data and in terms of analysis and method. These caveats are important because they demonstrate a need for great care in interpreting the data prima facie, regarding success against stated objectives of the LoCP. Therefore, the following caveats are noted by the evaluation team regarding the system-level data:

- The following data were not available:

  o actual age vs reading age: raw score average by age for non-LoCP students 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex, age and grade

  o actual age vs reading age: for named LoCP participants 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex, age and grade

  o actual age vs maths age: raw score average by age for non-LoCP students 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex, age and grade

  o actual age vs maths age: for named LoCP participants 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex, age and grade

  o actual age vs spelling age: raw score average by age for non-LoCP students 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex, age and grade

  o actual age vs spelling age: for named LoCP participants 2012, 2013, 2014 by sex, age and grade

- While the evaluation was to be over a two-year time frame, all four trial sites were not fully operational until the start of 2014.

- One year of full system-level data analysis is not enough to provide accurate data on the LoCP.

- The numbers of students involved in the program are extremely small (approximately 300) but highly fluctuating, which presents many data challenges. For example, a high number of students have come in and out of the program during the evaluation period, thus continually skewing results in such small data sets. While we have tried to offset this by identifying a tracking cohort developed in concert with the trial sites upon which we present our data, it has been impossible to track program effect on the 'non-LoCP' cohort, many of whom may potentially have been engaging in the program at certain times.[1] At a site-by-site level, numbers of students are so small and attendance so volatile that changes in, for example, one student's attendance can skew results.

- Due to the reasons outlined above, it has not been possible to test whether any differences between LoCP participants and non-participants are statistically valid or significant.

- Data quality and validity of Certificate completions, unit completions and withdrawals for vocational educational achievement, as provided at a system level by RTOs, is particularly poor. This could be amended in a second evaluation period by instigating better tracking at the trial sites. This level of incomplete data sets at a system level was not anticipated in the planning period.

- In each site, students were selected for the LoCP in different ways, making controlling baselines for selection bias difficult. At some sites, students self-selected; in others, students were selected on their good academic and attendance records; another site selected students on the basis of being 'at risk' and as poor attenders.

- Endemic poor attendance at school in general is evident across the trial sites, making controlling for program impact difficult. In an attempt to provide some greater

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[1] In order to have a stable cohort of LoC participants to track, in consultation with trial sites the evaluation team developed a list of individual students who were to be deemed LoC participants for the year 2014. This enabled some continuity for the purposes of evaluation. However, the team also notes that there were a small number of students who were not in this list who engaged in the program at varying times during the entire evaluation period. Some of these may be inadvertently represented in the non-LoC cohort. However, the number is likely to be extremely small and would not affect non-LoC cohort as a comparison group.

level of accuracy, we have added a level of analysis to include a high intensity cohort (those attending greater than 55.2% of the time).[2]

- One of the strengths of LoCP has been its capacity to evolve differently at different sites. However, this has meant that two sites have developed what we have called an 'integrated' program which is regularly timetabled into the curriculum, while two sites have developed what we have called an 'activity-based' program which is more geared to major camps on country that then fed back into the classroom. This makes across-site comparisons very difficult. While we have tried to cater for this in our method, ultimately, any site-by-site comparison is not comparing like with like.[3]

- This evaluation has been conducted at a time of high policy volatility. Major changes at both territory and Federal levels have had potential impacts on the program (see case studies). Of particular note is the potential effects of the Remote Schools Attendance Scheme (RSAS), The Student Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) and the 'Every Child – Every Day' policy, all of which may or may not have had direct or indirect effects on school attendance and performance outcomes of both LoCP participants and non-participants during the evaluation period. Due to data limitations outlined above, it is not possible to control for the effects of these policy changes.

- It was not possible to obtain meaningful LoCP participant performance data related to reading, maths or spelling.

An earlier evaluation carried out upon the IRCPP component of LoCP similarly noted (Atelier 2014):

> However, as in 2013, no quantitative data are available yet to enable an assessment of any improvements in students' attendance, progression, retention or Year 12 completion. In any case, the almost complete turnover of students in the program between the 2013 and 2014 school years means that it would be unreasonable to expect measurable student achievements at this point, and so these are largely for the future. The evaluation was told that lack of quantitative data is of concern to key stakeholders who believe that two years

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[2] The evaluation team separated the LoC cohort into high intensity and a low intensity groupings. The high intensity grouping was based on any student in the LoC cohort attending more than the average attendance at the trial sites. RSAS attendance data supplied to the evaluation by PM&C showed that the average attendance across all trial sites, as at term 3 2014, was 55.2%.

[3] At the start of the evaluation period Maningrida and Yirrkala were probably the only programs that could be considered on a trajectory to become integrated into the curriculum. However, each of the programs have made steady progress from being primarily 'activity based' to becoming 'integrated' over the life of the evaluation. It is expected that all trial sites will achieve integrated status early in the next phase of the LoCP. This will enable more comparable analysis in the next phase of the program.

was never going to be long enough to develop, implement and embed the program and obtain the kinds of outcomes data that are expected.

Given the caveats we have delineated, the quantitative results presented here are suggestive rather than conclusive, and form only one strand of evidence related to the success of the Learning on Country Program. However, remedying most of the more significant quantitative issues with LoCP data should be possible within a longer period of evaluation and during a phase of the LoCP that has moved well beyond the teething problems of implementation. This should be done in concert with the NT education department and local schools.

Phases of the evaluation

The evaluation was carried out in six distinct phases over a two-year time frame (see Table 3).

Table 3. Evaluation timeframe and research phases.

	Date	**Activity**	**Project milestone**	**Funding milestone**	**Progress**
2013	May	Negotiate project terms and develop contract	Initial meeting with FaHCSIA (10 May)		Completed
	June	**Phase 1: Project negotiation and planning**	Submit ANU Human Ethics Committee application (14 June)	Project plan submitted to FaHCSIA	Completed
	July			Approved Ethics application submitted to FaHCSIA	Completed
	August	**Phase 2: Initial fieldwork – year one**	Fieldwork year one (4-20 August)		Completed
	September	**Phase 3: Analysis and feedback on year one**		Progress report year one (1 November) Submission of mid-term report to PM&C (March 2014)	Completed
2014	July				
	August	**Phase 4: Fieldwork – year**	Fieldwork year one (August –		

	Date	Activity	Project milestone	Funding milestone	Progress
		two	September 2014)		
	November		Progress report year two (3 November 2014)		Completed
	December	**Phase 5: Analysis and report preparation**			
2015	February		Report back to community members and field sites		Completed
	March		Draft final report to LoCP Steering Committee and FaHCSIA		Completed
	April	**Phase 6: Feedback on findings**	Report back to stakeholders	Final report (4 weeks after submission of draft)	Completed.

Ethics

This evaluation was carried out in accordance with the full approval of the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (Protocol: 2013/272) after a full application. The evaluation team conducted this research in accordance with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies. The AIATSIS Guidelines are based upon respect for the rights of Indigenous Australians, including rights to full and fair participation in any processes, projects and activities that impact on them, and the right to control and maintain their culture and heritage. Every person interviewed during the period was provided with information about the evaluation and their rights and responsibilities in the research. All people interviewed provided both written and oral consent to the research team. See Consent and Information sheets at Appendix C.

Findings from case study sites

Case study 1: Maningrida

Figure 5. Map of the Maningrida region.

Maningrida township lies on the banks of the Liverpool River in North Central Arnhem Land. It is approximately 550km east of Darwin, 250 km west of Nhulunbuy and 300km north east of Jabiru. Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) and Maningrida Community Education Centre (CEC) service the wider Maningrida region, which covers approximately 10,000 square kilometres and encompasses 32 outstations and, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), a total of 2,567 people who reside in the region. The Maningrida region can be considered as being loosely bounded in the west by the Kunjinku clan estates surrounding the outstation Marrkolidjban (12º14.37, 134º03.79) and the estates of the Djinang and Walaki surrounding Gamardi (12º16.54, 134º40.96) in the east (see Figure 5).

While space considerations herein preclude an in-depth description of the social organisation of different groups within the region, this has been well described in previous

literature including Altman (1982 & 1987), Armstrong (1973), Keen (1994), Meehan (1982) and Fogarty (2011). Social relatedness within the region is divided by a system of moieties which also correspond to spatial relationships to country. There are currently seven major languages and twenty-two different dialects used in the area.[4] The complexity of the communicative field cannot be understated. The 1996 'Needs Survey of Community Languages' (Altman 2005; BAC 1996) found 51 Indigenous languages being spoken in the region, making Maningrida one of the most linguistically diverse places per capita in the world (see also Evans 2010). Many Indigenous people in the area speak their own language as well as one or two other Indigenous languages, and English. While English is the lingua franca of daily business dealings with non-Indigenous people, English is not the dominant language of the area and exists primarily as a bridging tool for cross-cultural engagements with administrative institutions, usage in 'work' roles, for modern signifiers (road or building signs etc.) and in school-based education. As such, daily communicative forms are highly variable.

Maningrida township was initially constructed as a trading post in the early 1950s, and in 1957 was officially established as a government settlement by the Native Affairs Branch (Doolan 1989) under the assimilation policies of the time. Prior to this, the region was part of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve with entry limited by the Aboriginals Ordinance (Altman 2005). Major change in the region came with a national policy shift and the advent of 'self-determination' policy under the Whitlam government of 1972. This change provided the political environment that supported a return of people to their clan estates (referred to as 'country') in the wider Maningrida region. The people's return to country saw a rapid decentralisation occur, with people returning to their clan estates in a rejection of previous state polices of centralisation and assimilation. In order to support people who chose to return to their clan lands, an outstation resource centre called Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) was established. Aboriginal people of the Maningrida region were granted inalienable freehold title to their clan lands following the passing of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976. As a result of the legislative change, BAC was incorporated in 1979 under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976.

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[4] Dialects may be exceedingly different across the region and people may see themselves as part of a discrete or distinct language group, despite official orthography pertaining to dialectical classification. Locally, people of the Bining Kunwok language group, in particular, see their individual dialects as being distinct, separate languages.

Djelk Rangers

Figure 6. Image: Djelk Ranger logo.

The Djelk Ranger program began in 1991 as a BAC Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) project. Since then it has grown extensively, incorporating land and sea management activities undertaken by both male and female Rangers. The Djelk Rangers are ultimately accountable to the senior Traditional Owner members of the 102 different clan from different areas of the IPA, who have strong concerns for the health of their country and culture. The management of the Djelk IPA is overseen by the BAC Executive, through the IPA Advisory Committee, which is comprised of senior Traditional Owners. They meet regularly and provide strategic direction and general oversight of the management of the IPA. BAC also provides financial services and advocacy to the Djelk Rangers.

Their area of responsibility covers the BAC region encapsulating what is now the Djelk Indigenous Protected Area. The Djelk Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) covers an area of 6,672 square kilometres. Following many years of consultation and development, it was declared a protected area in September 2009. Landowners from more than 102 clans were consulted and all gave their full support for the declaration of the IPA and the endorsement of the Djelk Rangers and their management activities.

The Djelk Rangers provide a range of environmental and social services on country including the management of weeds, fire and feral animals. They also provide services to Australian Customs, The Australian Quarantine Inspection Services and Northern Territory Fisheries. In addition to providing services on land, the Djelk Sea Rangers provide a host of services on sea country.

Maningrida College

Figure 7. Image: Maningrida
Learning on Country Program

Maningrida College was established in 1963 and offers education to students from early years through to senior years as well as providing education services to twelve Homeland Learning Centres (HLCs) which are varying distances from Maningrida with varied accessibility (often seasonal).[5] Significant work is being undertaken by the school in regards to community engagement and vocational education and training. In Term One 2014, Maningrida College had 715 students enrolled, with a 53% attendance rate.

Learning on country in Maningrida has a long history with its genesis in a highly successful 'junior Ranger' program instigated by teacher Mason Scholes. Maningrida Community Education Centre (CEC) adapted its senior secondary science curriculum to include courses and topics significant to local Indigenous students and which related closely to ILSM Djelk Ranger activities. These programs fell under 'Contemporary issues in science' and 'Community studies (in science)' which were senior science courses with a heavy focus on scientific inquiry, but that allowed for flexibility in curriculum design and programming. While this aspect has continued at senior levels, in its latest incarnation as part of the LoCP, delivery has diversified to provide:

- VET Conservation and Land Management (CALM) Cert 1 (middle school)
- VET CALM Cert 2 (senior secondary)
- Environmental science courses which includes LoCP content and involves all school students at both senior and primary levels.

This has manifest in a strong focus on integrating LoCP though Certificate I and II CALM cohorts. In the Middle school, LoCP is offered as a Certificate 1 CALM while Middle school also has three rotating classes specifically undertaking at least one period per week of

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[5] Schools in the Northern Territory have a number of different statuses. The 'college' designation relates to schools that provide a full swathe of educational services from preschool through to adult education and may provide services to outlying or smaller communities.

LoCP learning. In addition, the Maningrida college model of LoCP works in conjunction with Maningrida Language and Culture Team which operates within the school. This team has an integral role in facilitating cultural learning activities and camps throughout the broader school year.

Indicative examples of LoCP activities

The following examples illustrate the integration of school based and on country activities at Maningrida. These examples clearly demonstrate the intergenerational transfer of Indigenous and western knowledge through the LoC program. In addition, the use of I-tracker as an integral teaching tool formed the basis of a host of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) learning that occurred at this site.

Figure 8. Image: Maningrida students participating in a LoCP activity.

Examples of Maningrida LoCP activity:

1. Middle School and Senior Secondary Maningrida students attended a Learning on Country Program camp at Dukaladjarrandj on 2 – 6 June 2014.The camp involved Djelk Rangers, Traditional Rangers, community members, Maningrida College staff, NTG scientist Alys Stevens and the North Australian Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) staff Erica McCreedy. The students were involved in a variety of activities including learning about native plants and animals, and how to conduct

biodiversity surveys and assisted the Djelk Rangers with setting up and checking the animal traps every day. The experiential learning was augmented by using I-Tracker. Students participated in I-Tracker training that assisted the students to record their work activities including laying out biodiversity survey traps and camera traps, water health monitoring and feral animal sightings. I-Tracker on-ground training and workshops were delivered in conjunction with curriculum requirements relevant to students enrolled in Conservation and Land Management Certificates I and II. The I-Tracker software is used to communicate scientific data collection methods, and uses sequences adapted to focus on numeracy and literacy requirements for students.

2. During the evaluation, we observed students back in the classroom analysing the data they had recorded with the I-Tracker. The students were engaged and attentive as they worked through the complicated sequences they had mapped out on country during a two-hour lesson. The lesson was co-directed by Erica McCreedy, an expert from the North Australian Land and Sea Management Alliance and by the senior teacher. Using a PowerPoint presentation, data from the I-Tracker were transposed during a whole-of-class exercise and were then used to write a series of sequences and related back into a journal-writing exercise. The evaluation team found the exercise to be an excellent example of experiential learning in a real life situation being used as a platform for higher order learning.

3. Some other examples of LoCP activity we were able to record evidence of included Middle School CALM Cert I Tree and Shrub Planting Activity in which 11 students (Years 9 and 10) were tasked with planting over 15 palm trees (*Cycad species*) in the school grounds as part of a College beautification program. Activity included planning and set-out (landscape design – measuring), adding, mixing and understanding the use of fertilisers, gypsum and mulch. This activity also included the safe and proper use of gardening tools and selecting the appropriate PPE for the tasks. Again, the design of this activity moved from an experiential activity based on real work, embedded literacy and numeracy activity that enable the learning to be applied.

4. Another example of LoCP activity in Maningrida we recorded was a small but excellent example of intergenerational knowledge, language and culture being transferred to students while simultaneously learning about higher order western scientific concepts. In this example, 16 year 11 and 12 students were participating in a unit in environmental science that required a detailed understanding of the anatomical parts of mammals. The Maningrida language and culture team and senior traditional owners were instrumental in facilitating the lesson. Students were required to select an animal in consultation with the local community and according

to cultural protocols. Students then had to learn all the correct anatomical terms for the parts of the animal in English. Then, in concert with Traditional owners, students learned the Indigenous terms for the parts of the animal according to customary law. This was done in language. The students then transposed both sets of learning onto a visual diagram of the animal.

5. As a final example, and one that targeted primary-aged students, we also recorded information about a camp held at Rocky Point – a small distance out of Maningrida. This camp went for three days and featured 18 Year 6 Students, 3 teachers, 3 Indigenous Rangers and 3 Indigenous knowledge experts. The focus of this LoCP activity was as a 'two-way' knowledge camp incorporating cultural and class-based activity. Indigenous and western knowledge seminars and presentations were held for students, with delivery being alternated between local Indigenous knowledge experts, Djelk Sea Rangers and teaching and LoCP staff from Maningrida College. One of the outcomes from this camp was the exposure of younger students to potential employment pathways through presentations on work with the Australian Customs and Border Patrol, The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service and The Northern Territory Department of Fisheries.

Figure 9. Image: On country lesson with I-tracker.

Progress of LoCP in Maningrida

There were 32 LoCP participants in Maningrida, predominantly from the senior and middle years, in 2013 and 29 in 2014.[6] The total school enrolment covering kindergarten to year 12 for 2013 was 534 and 571 in 2014. This translates into a LoCP participation rate of 6% in 2013 and 5% in 2014 (see Table 4).

Table 4. Number of participants and eligible non-participants. Maningrida College, by year and community.

Number of participants and eligible non-participants Maningrida College, by year and community[7]		
	2013	**2014**
LoCP participants (A)	32	29
Non-LoCP participants (A)	502	542
Whole school enrolments (A)	534	571
Participation rate (B) (%)	6%	5%

As discussed earlier, it was not possible to obtain meaningful LoCP participant performance data related to reading, maths or spelling. There are, however, some data related to attendance that can be interpreted as suggesting gains in attendance among participants. Those data arise from small numbers of students and so require careful analysis. The figure below shows attendance rates for LoCP participants and non-participants for the years 2012-2014. Because LoCP activities only began in mid-2013, the 2012 data could be considered as baseline figures. Interestingly, those students who later participated in LoCP were several percentage points above their non-participating peers in 2012. This suggests that students who eventually became involved in LoCP may have been more engaged students to begin with. In 2013, when LoCP activities began in Maningrida, the participating students appear to have attended school at a higher rate than did the non-participants (57% vs 45%). The graph is somewhat deceiving for 2014, appearing to show attendance dropping among LoC participants to a level below that of non-attenders. The likely reason for this apparent drop is that the actual numbers are very low and so when several of the older students moved from the LoCP program into positions as interns with the Djelk Rangers, the average attendance rates appear to drop.

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[6] In the Northern Territory the middle years of schooling represent years 7-10 and the senior years represent years 11-12.
[7] Notes: (A) Average enrolments for the year for each group. (B) Participation rate = Number of LoCP participants as a percentage of whole school enrolments.

Figure 10. Image: In-class lesson with I-tracker data.
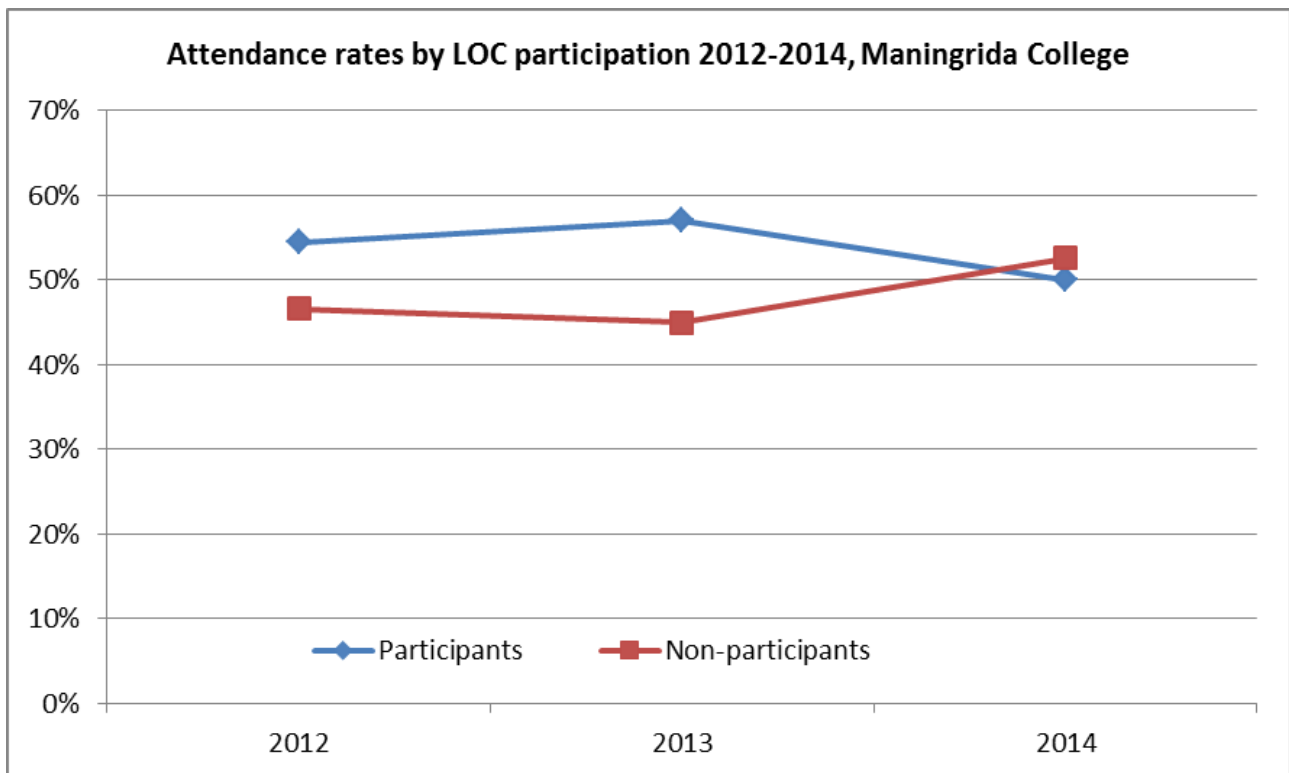
Figure 11. Chart. Attendance rates by LoCP participation 2012-2014, Maningrida College.

Table 5. Attendance rates by LoCP participation 2012-2014, Maningrida College.

Yearly average school attendance Maningrida college, LoCP and non-LoCP participants[8]	2012	2013	2014
LoCP participants *% (N)*	54 *(35)*	57 *(39)*	50 *(38)*
Non-LoCP participants *% (N)*	47	45	53

Another perspective is revealed in a comparison of participant and non-participant attendance patterns on a week-by-week basis over the period 2012-2013. It appears that LoCP had a strong effect on attendance from its first appearance in 2013 through term 1 of 2014. After that, attendance declined and mirrored the attendance patter of non-participants. Again, that shift appears to be a result of the movement of several of the most engaged participants into roles as intern Rangers.
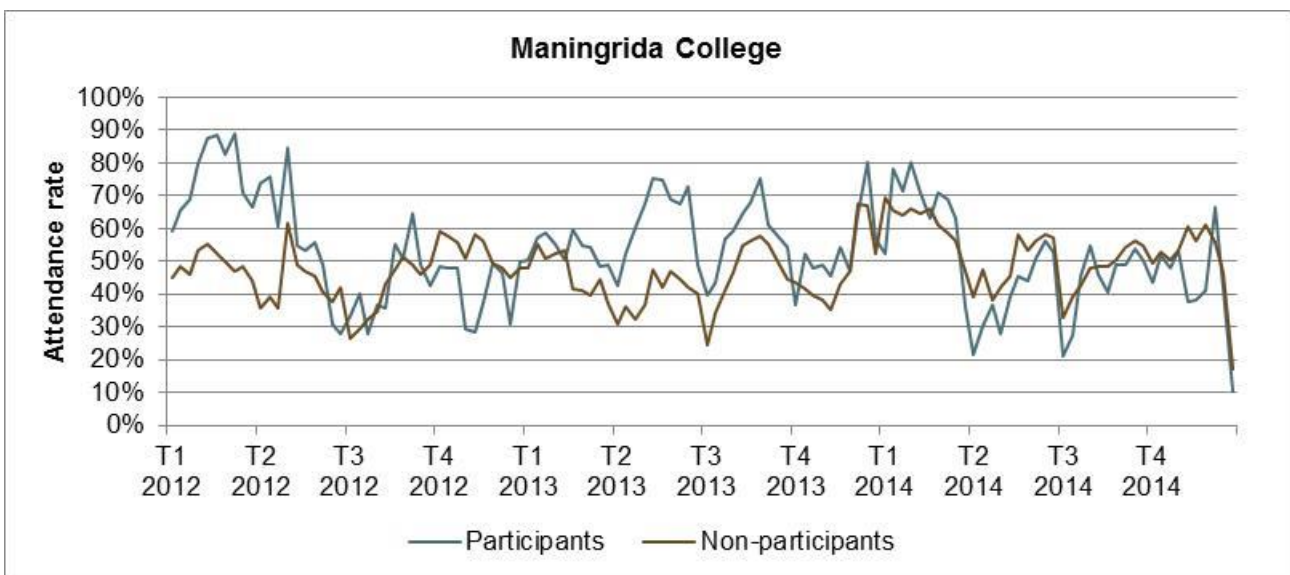
Figure 12. Chart: Weekly and term by term attendance patterns for Maningrida College.

While the previous data were derived from weekly attendance data and overall school year averages, a snapshot of comparative attendance for term one in 2013 and 2014 removes the effect of successful students leaving the program to take up jobs as Rangers. In this figure, it is clear that overall attendance among LoCP participants was markedly higher in term one for both 2013 and 2014 and that attendance levels increased.

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[8] Note: The Northern Territory Department of Education attendance rate tables from which these figures are derived included numbers for LoCP participants but not for non-LoCP participants.
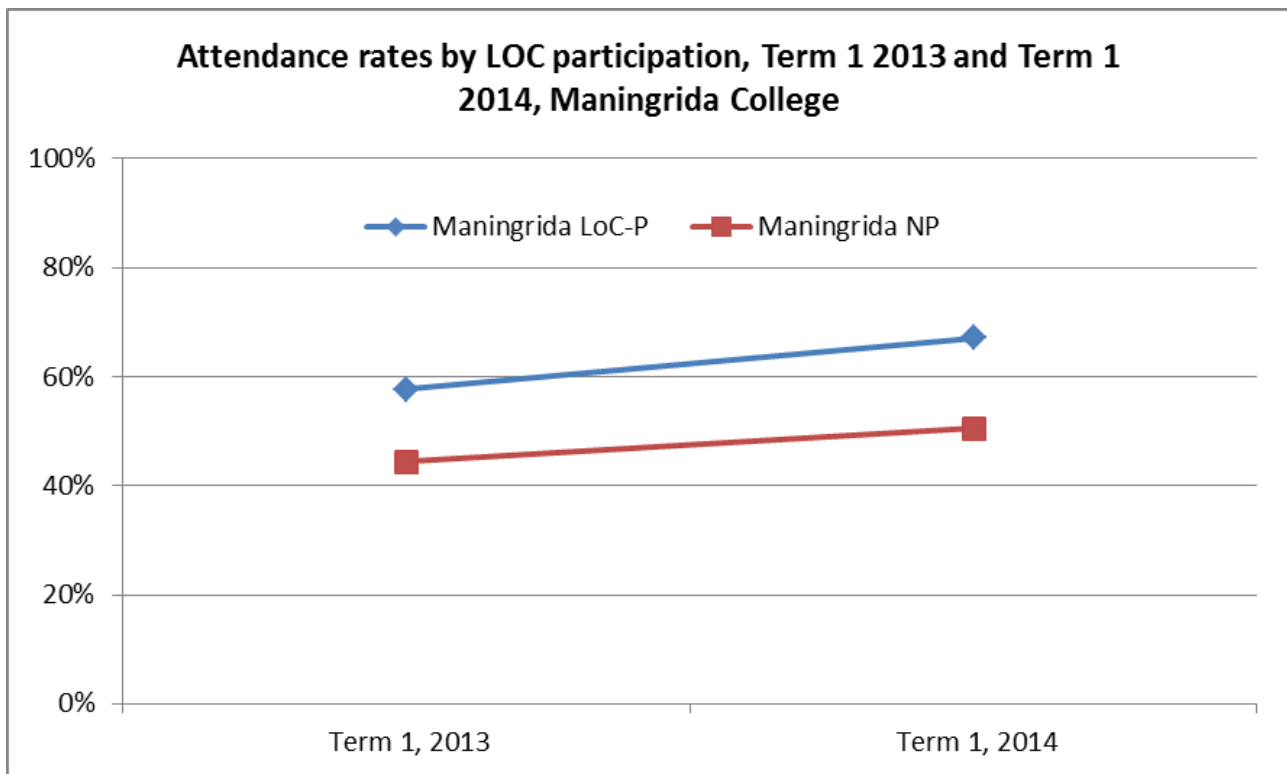
Figure 13. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation,Term 1 2013 and Term 1 2014, Maningrida College.

Table 6. Attendance rates Maningrida, by LoCP and non-LoCP participation.

Term 1, 2013 and Term 1, 2014 attendance rates Maningrida, by LoCP and non-LoCP participation[9]		
	Term 1 2013	**Term 1 2014**
LoCP participants % (N)	58 (30)	67 (34)
Non-LoCP participants % (A)	44	50
Whole school attendance rate for 2013 and semester 1 2014 (yrs1-10) (B)	51	55

As mentioned earlier, poor attendance was a feature of all of the schools, and as a means to try to better understand the impact of attendance on student engagement, we analysed the attendance of students according to what we called 'high' and 'low' levels of intensity. Those students who attended at levels above the average attendance rate of 55.2 % we called 'high intensity participants' while those at or below that level we grouped as 'low intensity participants'. It should be noted that the numbers of the high intensity participants

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[9] (A) The Northern Territory Department of Education attendance rate tables from which these figures are derived included numbers for LoCP participants but not for non-LoCP participants.
(B) Data are from My School website.

were very small, making interpretation difficult, but when we analysed attendance according to this scheme, we noted that LoCP students who were more highly engaged (high intensity attenders) appeared to attend at an even higher level than their non-LoCP peers during 2012 and 2013. The attendance rate of two high-intensity groups converged in 2014. Again, that convergence may have been influenced by the movement of the most engaged students into the workforce and/or there may have been an effect on attendance levels resulting from the implementation of the Remote Schools Attendance Strategy, particularly in the first half of the year when overall attendance levels climbed.
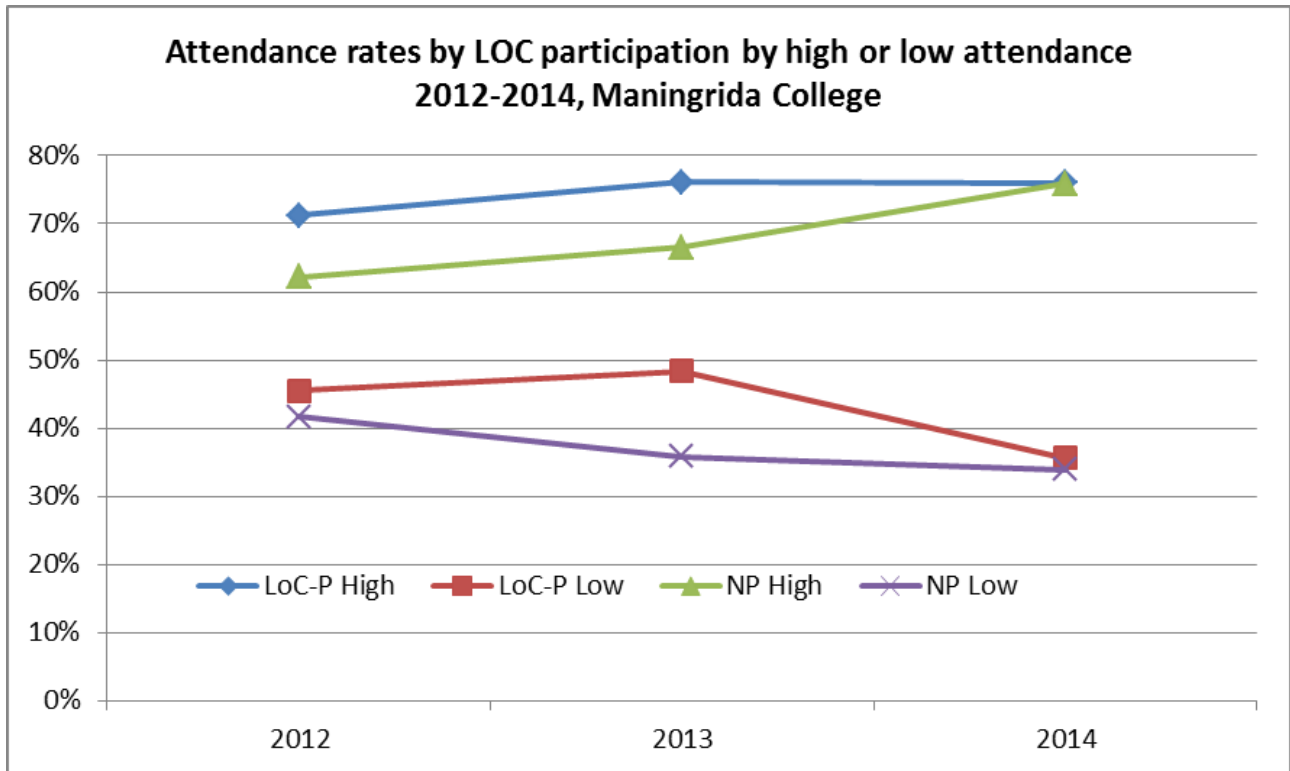
Figure 14. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation by high or low attendance 2012-2014, Maningrida College.

Table 7. Yearly average school attendance rates Maningrida, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants.

Yearly average school attendance rates Maningrida, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants, by intensity of attendance[10]			
	2012	**2013**	**2014**
LoCP participants: high intensity attendance % *(N)*	71 (11)	76 (11)	76 (11)
LoCP participants: low intensity attendance % *(N)*	46 (24)	48 (28)	36 (27)
Non-LoCP participants: high intensity attendance (A)	62	66	76
Non-LoCP participants: low intensity attendance (A)	42	36	34

NTCET performance among LoCP participants

In Maningrida 2013 there were 7 Stage One students who worked toward their NT Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) qualification who were also involved as Learning on Country Program participants. That number grew to 9 in 2014 with an additional 2 undertaking Stage Two subjects. Those students undertook studies in Creative Arts, Integrated Learning, Literacy for Work and Community Life, Numeracy for Work and Community, and Workplace Practices, as well as studying through Personalised Learning Plans.

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[10] (A) The Northern Territory Department of Education attendance rate tables from which these figures are derived included numbers for LoCP participants but not for non-LoCP participants.

Learning on Country VET participation and outcomes

Figure 15. Image: LoCP graduates at Maningrida College. Source: Maningrida College

Students undertaking VET study work toward competencies of individual units or modules that together comprise the VET qualification. Students may undertake several units or modules at once and may work toward competencies over an extended period of time. It is therefore difficult to gauge student involvement in VET studies by looking simply at completed certificates. While that is an important outcome measure, enrolment in and competencies achieved in units is also important. But data on VET also record information on students who withdraw or do not complete a unit. Significantly, a student who does not complete a unit may, and often does, recommence study and eventually achieve competency.

During 2013 and 2014 LoCP participants undertook 254 VET units. As shown in figure 16, LoCP participants achieved competency in 51% of units and withdrew or did not complete 49% of units.[11] These figures represent a percentage of completed and non-completed VET units rather than percentage of participants.

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[11] Anecdotally these completion rates are on par with other VET type programs in similar contexts. Accurate data for comparison were unavailable.
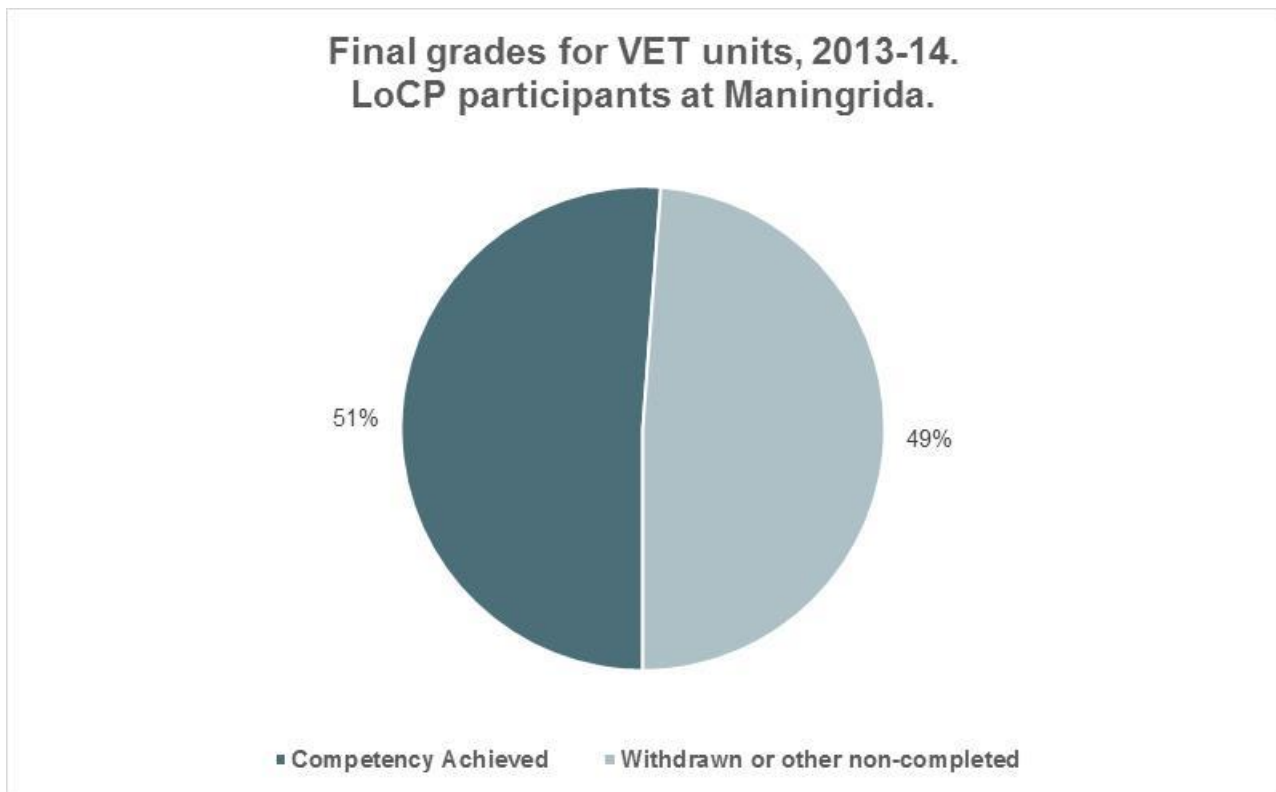
Figure 16. Chart: Final grades for VET units, 2013-14. LoCP participants at Maningrida.[12]

Challenges to an effective program in Maningrida

The following are a number of challenges for LoCP that emerged from the evaluation as conducted in Maningrida. Virtually every one of them has some resonance for the other three sites and so should be considered in that light and not simply as issues to be addressed in Maningrida.

- Leadership. In the early days of the project, school leadership of the project was vested in an Assistant Principal. That individual was involved in early discussions and negotiations, but as the project progressed it seemed to lose direction and it was clear that leadership needed to be assumed by the Principal. When that occurred, the project came back on track and communication and development was much more effective. This illustrated how important leadership is and how, structurally, a project as complex as this requires the school Principal to lead the effort.

- Communication is an ongoing challenge. Related to the previous point, experience in Maningrida showed that communication around the project was clearer and collaboration was facilitated when the Principal became the champion and driver of the initiative. Effective and ongoing communication related to a specific project is

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[12] Data for continuing participants was incomplete.

always a challenge in a busy school and community, but in the context of a new initiative, where developmental work is involved, it is essential that there is in place a system to share information and to ensure clear, consistent messages.

- A whole-of-school initiative: As professional educators, the Principal, senior staff and teachers must look for opportunities to demonstrate that LoCP is legitimate in the educational context. They must convey the message and provide the evidence that LoCP is a real and new approach to learning that can be effective. Ensuring all school staff achieve a deep understanding of LoCP, how it can be interwoven with existing practice, and how it can stimulate new practice, is an important challenge. The school leaders, the school board, and the local LoCP committee need to play key roles in making LoCP a whole-of-school initiative.

- 'Connecting lessons to life': On a practical level, weaving together curriculum and local community interests, needs and opportunities remains a challenge. To 'connect lessons to lives', as one educator in Maningrida said, is likely to be the key to future success of LoCP. That will require creativity, communication, cross cultural knowledge and sensitivity and high level political skills and insight by all involved in the program.

- Adapting LoCP to life in the community: As in all the other sites, it was often the case that LoCP activities were often cancelled or postponed by cultural and ceremonial activities and road closures. Funerals, of course, are unpredictable, and disruption inevitable, but ceremonial activities often take place during the dry season so can conflict with on-country LoCP activities. Close involvement and regular meetings of the local steering committee may help with planning and scheduling. However, experience has shown that some LoCP students, who were enthusiastic performers and attendees, drop out because of ceremonial obligations. The reality is that this is culturally appropriate and acceptable in the community and the students have no choice in the matter. Resolving these tensions and contradictions are probably impossible but they need to be managed.

Summary

The Maningrida LoCP has achieved a great deal since its inception. The evaluation team was able to garner a wealth of evidence that the program is well supported from by all key stakeholders at a community level. There are extremely strong partnerships in Maningrida between the Djelk Rangers and Maningrida College and these are augmented by backing with political and in-kind support from the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation. The program has demonstrated that it is able to provide evidence of intergenerational transfer of Indigenous knowledge as well as achieving outcomes against both standard Curriculum

and Vocational Educational and Training certificated units. The LoCP has demonstrated some gains in attendance for students who are highly engaged in the program and has delivered small but demonstrable employment outcomes for participants. The Memorandum of Understanding was a critical foundation document but has been superseded by a functioning local Committee. LoCP is becoming increasingly embedded across the school and is integrated into the curriculum at a number of levels. The students are demonstrating higher order ICT skills that are being taught in combination with work ready training modules and through experiential activity on country. The Maningrida LoCP has been characterised by stability in key staffing positions and the LoCP co-ordinator has been instrumental in the fashioning of an excellent platform for further pedagogic and pathways growth. As with all the LoCP sites, there are serious issues with data collation (see section on data caveats in this report) that need to be amended as the program goes into its next phases. Local drivers of the program also need to be cognisant about emerging tensions between the drive to attain VET outcomes and the need for higher order learning at senior levels and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. In part, this tension is a result of the confusing and historical funding of LoCP through IRCP. The Maningrida LoCP is meeting the stated aims of the LoCP but must demonstrate more clearly outcomes in attendance and VET and NTCE outcomes going forward.

Case study 2: Yirrkala

Yirrkala is an Indigenous community on the east coast of the Gove peninsula in north-east Arnhem Land, 18 km south of Nhulunbuy and 700 km east of Darwin. According to the 2011 Census, the population of Yirrkala was approximately 843, of which 649 (76%) were Indigenous. The population ranges from 800-1200 due to many people living intermittently between Yirrkala and surrounding homelands, depending on the seasonal and ceremonial activity.

In 1935, a Mission was established in Yirrkala by the Methodist Church. This attracted clans from the local areas into Yirrkala and saw the community increase, however the region is characterised by a vibrant outstation population as well (see case study 3). Yolngu Matha is the main language in Yirrkala and the Rirratjingu and Gumatj clans are the traditional owners of Yirrkala township ara. There are 16 clan groups that comprise the Yolngu cultural block of the Layanhpuy region in which Yirrkala is located. These clans remain connected and are highly mobile for ceremonial and family reasons. Other clan dialects are also used. English is used as a minor language, a third or fourth choice for most people. Yirrkala is accessible by road all year round.

The Yolngu hold native title rights to parts of East Arnhem Land, including rights over the sea. In 1963, the Yolngu launched the first land rights case by presenting a bark petition to

the federal parliament protesting against the destruction of their lands by the establishment of the bauxite mine at Gove. The mine saw the nearby township of Nhulunbuy develop and an influx of non-Indigenous visitors arrive. Concerned for their land and natural and cultural resources, the traditional Yolngu landowners established The Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation (now based in Nhulunbuy) in 1990. A fundamental objective of the organisation is to investigate avenues for incorporating western science-based management practice within traditional resource management. Dhimurru believes that the result can be beneficial in maintaining both the environmental and cultural integrity of Yolngu lands and seas (Dhimurru 2015). The Dhimurru Rangers are an integral part of the Corporation, and there are currently 14 Yolngu Rangers and 7 non-Indigenous staff employed in the organisation.

In 2008, as part of the Northern Territory local government reform Yirrkala became part of the Gumurr Miwatj ward of the East Arnhem Shire Council, which provides local government services to the community. The East Arnhem region is home to many important artists who specialise in paintings on bark as well as intricate pandanus weavings.

Yirrkala School and the Learning on Country Program[13]

Yirrkala School provides education to students from early years to senior years. Student numbers have grown considerably in the past 10 years. The school is currently involved with developing and implementing quality educational programs for students in the process of becoming bilingual and bicultural. Yirrkala School teaches in both Yolngu Dharuk and English. In Term One 2014, Yirrkala School had 193 students enrolled, with a 59.5% attendance rate.

The long-time principal of the Yirrkala School, Dr M. Yunupingu, was instrumental in the development of "both ways" education – incorporating Yolngu knowledge and language in order to support the teaching of mainstream curriculum. The concept of "both ways", is of major significance to local people. The program has its foundation in Galtha which was described by the late Dr R. Marika, another well respected Yolngu educator, as follows:

> This idea speaks of reciprocity, of learning from each other, and is a guiding educational principle at Yirrkala. It has become deeply embedded in talking about teaching and learning, and has been extended to working with non-Indigenous people. It evokes a strong commitment to respectful dialogue, working back and forward, giving and taking, learning from each other across the cultural interface.

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[13] Some of the material in this section of the case study has been provided by Ms Beth Seamer while on placement at Dhimurru. The authors gratefully acknowledge her contribution.

Throughout our consultations with Yolngu and non-Indigenous program staff and teachers we were repeatedly told that the concept of the Galtha Rom Curriculum forms the basis of the approach to LoCP in this region. Galtha rom is a system of planning and curriculum development that ensures that the community and ceremonial elders are in control of the content, direction and pace of the Yolngu learning in the classroom, and that the knowledge which is developed through the workshop reflects the contribution of all the different clan groups and reflects the makeup and interrelatedness of the group of learners. Workshops are conducted by community elders for the children. The teachings of the old people, the details of the land, kinship, totemic ownership, the writings of the children and teachers, song texts, artwork, photographs and important old drawings, papers and photos are usually collated into a booklet or other form of publication more recent times the development of Galtha Rom workshops developed so that formal course requirements of Senior Secondary and Vocational Education and Training courses could be used at all stages of the process. This was necessary so that the multiple learning outcomes from the experiences provided by the Galtha were acknowledged in mapping student progress and achievement and were able to be applied to the LoC process. An example of this is the Djalkiri Strand which is an exit outcome for students in year 10:

> Students will be able to confidently and competently use Yolŋu ceremonial processes and ideas to define meaning. They will be able to integrate Yolŋu knowledge about land with Western knowledge.

Djalkiri literally means foot, footprint or foundation. Djalkiri refers to knowledge which tells Yolŋu students who they are in terms of land, where they stand, and the songs, images, language and totems which make up their identity. The elements that make up the Djalkiri strand are Rom, Manikay ga Buŋgul, Yirralka, Wäŋa, Miny'tji and Dhäruk. Sets of practices collectively known as Djalkiri enact metaphors which explain the way Yolŋu people locate themselves in space, understand land ownership, and negotiate kinship relationships and ceremonial responsibilities. Through work in the Djalkiri strand students learn about their personal and social capability by deepening their understanding about their responsibilities and relationships within Yolŋu knowledge systems that connect the personal, through kin and community, to the land, the sea, the heavens, and all living things (Watson-Verran 1992). These are seen as key learnings underpinning the Galtha approach and are foundational learnings for students involved in the LoCP. The Djalkiri also provides an excellent example of the transfer of Indigenous knowledge through the program.

Figure 17. Image: Galtha Rom. Source: Dhimurru Rangers

A full time Learning on Country Program Coordinator commenced work from the Dhimurru offices at term 2, 2013. Prior to this, there were no dedicated resources to the program however teachers and Rangers recognised the potential benefits of linking Ranger work into the student's classes and so would work together where possible. The Memorandum of Understanding between Yirrkala School and Dhimurru and the subsequent Implementation Plan paved the way for the school and the Rangers to work closely with the community to commence delivery of the program. The implementation plan focused on increasing attendance at school, while building real, practical work skills in order to improve students' chances of gaining a qualification and increase employability.

One of the keys to the success of the Learning on Country Program at Yirrkala was in the program development, which was completed over time as a collaborative process between the Yolgnu landowners and other Yolngu representatives, the Yirrkala School Principle and teaching staff and the Dhimurru Rangers. The program's links to Galtha are critical to maintaining engagement and support from the local community. In 2014 a Learning on Country program is being delivered in both the Senior Years and the Middle Years (Years 8 and 9) classes at Yirrkala School. Students undertake their CALM studies during two-hour blocks on Mondays and Wednesdays, as in 2013. The units are delivered by the

Senior Years teacher, while Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) continues to be the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) responsible for accreditation. For example, to support students' classroom learning in the CALM units, two Rangers (one male, one female) visit the school to work with the class for at least two hours every Tuesday. These Rangers were selected by Yolngu at Dhimurru to be the lead LoC Rangers, a consistent arrangement to support the development of students' trust and sustained interest. Other Rangers participate as the learning program requires (see Appendix D).

Indicative examples of LoCP activities

The following examples illustrate the integration of school based and on country activities at Yirrkala. These examples clearly demonstrate the intergenerational transfer of Indigenous and western knowledge through the LoC program. In addition, the use of I-tracker as an integral teaching tool formed the basis of a host of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) learning that occurred at this site.

Since formally commencing in 2013, the students have undertaken a range of practical, on the ground activities, and used these experiences back in the classroom to develop literacy and numeracy skills, in line with the state and national curricula and VET requirements. Examples of Yirrkala LoCP activity include:

- A broad range of activities undertaken by Yirrkala School students with the Dhimurru Rangers as part of the Learning on Country Program. Workplace safety, learning about land use change, using technologies such as cyber-trackers to record the activities and requirements of land and sea management, learning about soil erosion processes and remediation, collecting and planting native seeds, weed management and learning about the history of country such as the local area's significance in World War II and the Macassans era are just some examples.

- One example of the way in which LoCP is operating was a series of lessons in the Gadayka class that combined an experiential learning session at the Yirrkala Plant Nursery articulated to that to Cert 2 CLM and formed part of a unit Stage 1 (Year 11) curriculum. The class involved plant propagation, work routines of the nursery, safety in the work environment, understanding irrigation systems and tending nursery plants. This class involved senior year's students, one teacher, and the manager of Nuwal Environmental Services. This unit of work than continued onto country with a follow up plant identification at Ganarrimi (Shady Beach): this was a one hour out of the classroom activity involving comparisons of western and Yolngu names and classifications for plants found at Ganarrimi. Both Dhimurru Rangers and the correct local custodians for this area were in involved in teaching the students.

Documentation and language work done on country was then taken back into the classroom and written up into a formal report. This report was then presented back to the Rangers, traditional custodians and peers. This was a Senior Years activity and linked to studies in the Certificate 2 CLM and Stage 1 curriculum.

- Similarly Term 1 of each year is when Dhimurru focus on weed control and revegetation taking advantage of the wet season and plant growth. In term 1 of 2014 the Learning on Country students enrolled in relevant units of their Conservation and Land Management certificate II. Activities undertaken as part of the program include fieldwork at Shady Beach and Macassans Beach where the Rangers showed students first-hand the types of weeds that are problems for native vegetation, including Mossman River Grass, Caltrop, Coffee Bush, Snake Weed, Hyptis and others. The students were required to learn the different types of plants and weeds, as well as count and record their prevalence to assist in the weed management activities of the Rangers. Back in the classroom students documented and analysed the experience utilising a range of skills including, but not limited to, literacy and numeracy. Assessments included writing up the experience in English, recording distances and numbers and mapping the instances of weeds around the relevant areas

- Another example involved students being taught about the concept of an Indigenous protected area. This was a classroom based learning activity for the Senior Years students as part of their CLM studies. The class involved two Rangers and one teacher and focused on the nature of Indigenous Protected Areas and how they might fit with broader concepts of economic development and sustainability. Students were engaged in understanding how Indigenous and Non-Indigenous land tenure systems might be different and/or might coalesce under the rubric of an IPA. This activity also had a work orientation component whereby students learned about the jobs that a Ranger has to do in order to fulfil the obligations of Dhimurru's IPA.

- A final example of the types of activities LoCP at Yirrkala has produced can been involved in a unit of work that is connecting learning about WWII to local experience on country. As part of this unit On 14th May 2014 local students and teachers from Yirrkala school and Dhimurru Rangers visited NORFORCE (the North-West Mobile Force of the Australian Army) to learn more about how they protect country across Northern Australia from threats coming in by boat, such as drug trafficking and other illegal activities. Students were able to board the LCM8 boat, which is used by the Surveillance Unit as part of the border protection operations. Soldiers Major Tim Robinson and Sergeant Norman Daymirringu showed them around the boat and its equipment, and explained the types of entrance requirements and training courses that are available for Indigenous students wanting to join the Army. This activity had

obvious links to units from the stage 1 curriculum but also is an example of the pathways aspect of the program (see Pathways)

During their time working with Dhimurru one of the student's, Rakuwan, wrote an account of what she had learned:

> *So far this year, we learnt how to collect and identify weeds on country. Back in the classroom we wrote about what we did. We also learnt how to measure kilometres and made some maps of where the weeds are.*
>
> *Some Learning on Country students also completed work experience with the Dhimurru Rangers. I learnt about permit applications and two students went with the senior Rangers to learn about how they can look after the country.*
>
> *It is good because the Rangers have a very interesting job, one day I hope to be a Ranger. Learning on Country helps me to complete the certificate in Conservation and Land Management.*

Figure 18. Image: LoCP students, Yirrkala, learning about weeds and safe practice. Source: Dhimurru Rangers.

Progress of LoCP in Yirrkala

There were 46 LoCP participants in Yirrkala in 2013 and 45 in 2014, predominantly from the senior years.[14] The total school enrolment covering kindergarten to year 12 for 2013 was 152 and 135 in 2014. This translates into a LoCP participation rate of 30% in 2013 and 33% in 2014 (see Table 8).

Table 8. Number of participants and eligible non-participants Yirrkala School by year and community.

Number of participants and eligible non-participants Yirrkala school by year and community[15]		
	2013	**2014**
LoCP participants (A)	46	45
Non-LoCP participants (A)	106	90
Whole school enrolments (A)	152	135
Participation rate (B) (%)	30%	33%

As with the other sites, it was not possible to gather reliable data related to the possible impact of LoC on student reading, maths and reading. The primary source of data is qualitative, but there is value in considering what impact LoC may have had on attendance. The figure below portrays the average annual attendance of LoC and other students for the years 2012-2014. LoC was not underway in any of the sites in 2012 so data for that year should be considered baseline. While there was some activity underway in 2013, the only complete year of LoC was 2014. It appears quite clear that LoC had only a marginal impact on attendance. While both participants and non-participants attended at a higher rate in 2014, the year LoC was implemented in Yirrkala, the non-participants attendance increased over the participants.

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[14] In the Northern Territory the middle years of schooling represent years 7-10 and the senior years represent years 11-12.
[15] Notes:
(A) Average enrolments for the year for each group.
(B) Participation rate = Number of LoC participants as a percentage of whole school enrolments.
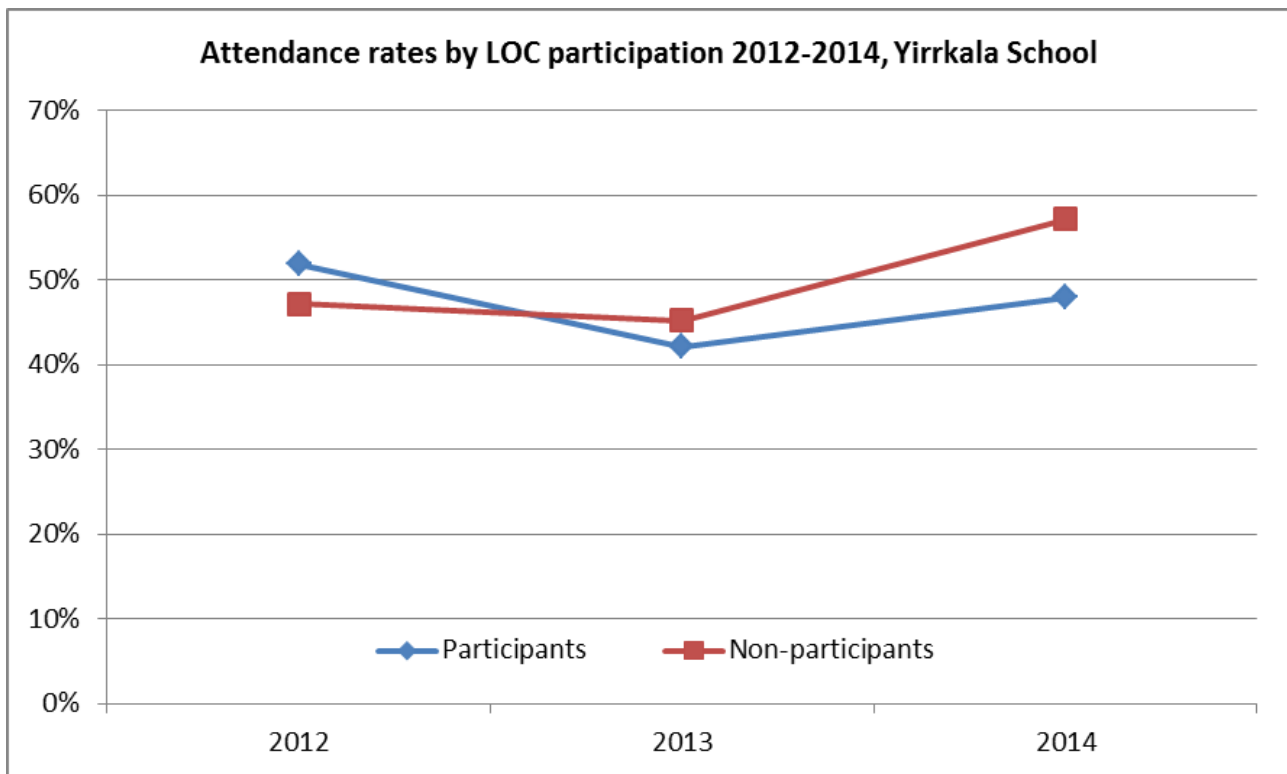
Figure 19. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation 2012-2014, Yirrkala School.

Table 9. Yearly average school attendance rates Yirrkala, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants.

Yearly average school attendance rates Yirrkala, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants (A)[16]	2012	2013	2014
LoCP participants % *(N)*	52 *(78)*	42 *(77)*	48 *(78)*
Non-LoCP participants % *(N)*	47	45	57

Tracking attendance of the LoC and non-LoC students by term over the three years we can see pronounced fluctuations over time. Those students who would go on to participate in LoC were in 2012 attending at a slightly higher rate than their classmates (52% comparted to 47%). Their relative attendance was similar in 2013 but by 2014, the year LoC was implemented, participant attendance levels dropped below those of the non-participants (48% compared to 57%).

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[16] Note:
(A) The Northern Territory Department of Education attendance rate tables from which these figures are derived included numbers for LoCP participants but not for non-LoCP participants.
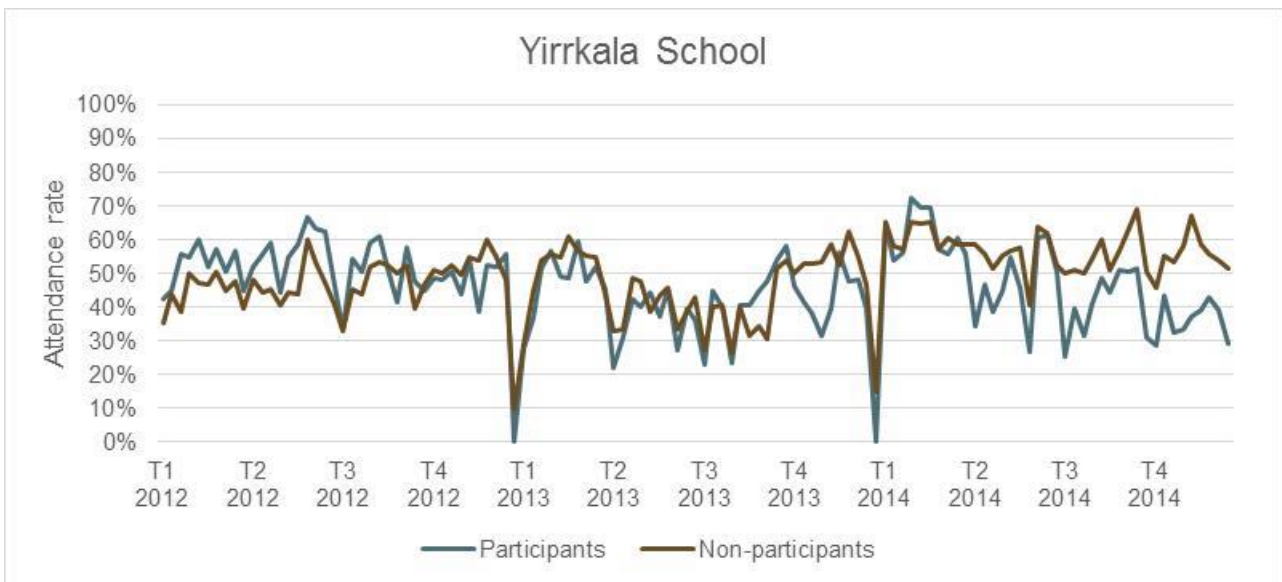
Figure 20. Chart: Weekly and term by term attendance rates, Yirrkala School.

Looking at Yirrkala attendance through our lens of 'intensity' of attendance, it appears that while there low intensity students who participated in LoC were very similar to those who did not, the high intensity LoC participants had lower levels of attendance than did the non-participants.
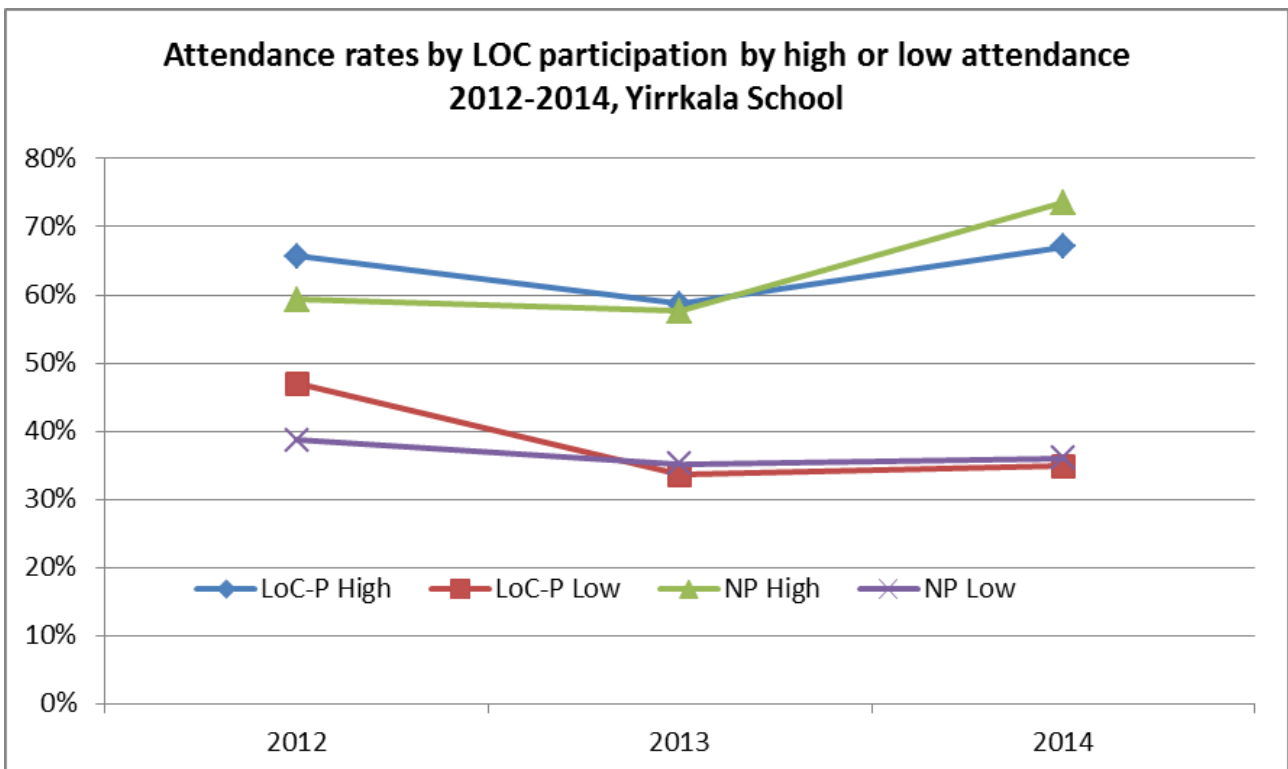
Figure 21. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation by high or low attendance 2012-2014, Yirrkala School.

Table 10. Yearly average school attendance rates Yirrkala, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants, by intensity of attendance.

Yearly average school attendance rates Yirrkala, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants, by intensity of attendance[17]			
	2012	**2013**	**2014**
LoCP participants: high intensity attendance % *(N)*	66 *(29)*	59 *(29)*	67 *(34)*
LoCP participants: low intensity attendance % *(N)*	47 *(49)*	34 *(48)*	35 *(44)*
Non-LoCP participants: high intensity attendance (A)	59	58	74
Non-LoCP participants: low intensity attendance (A)	39	35	36

Taking a snapshot of term one attendance, it appears that there was no difference between program participants and non-participants. Indeed, it appears that while participant attendance levels held steady, non-participant attendance increased strongly between 2013 and 2014, achieving equal levels of attendance. The gain in non-participant attendance may have been the result of the Remote Schools Attendance Scheme.

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[17] Note:

(A) The Northern Territory Department of Education attendance rate tables from which these figures are derived included numbers for LoCP participants but not for non-LoCP participants.
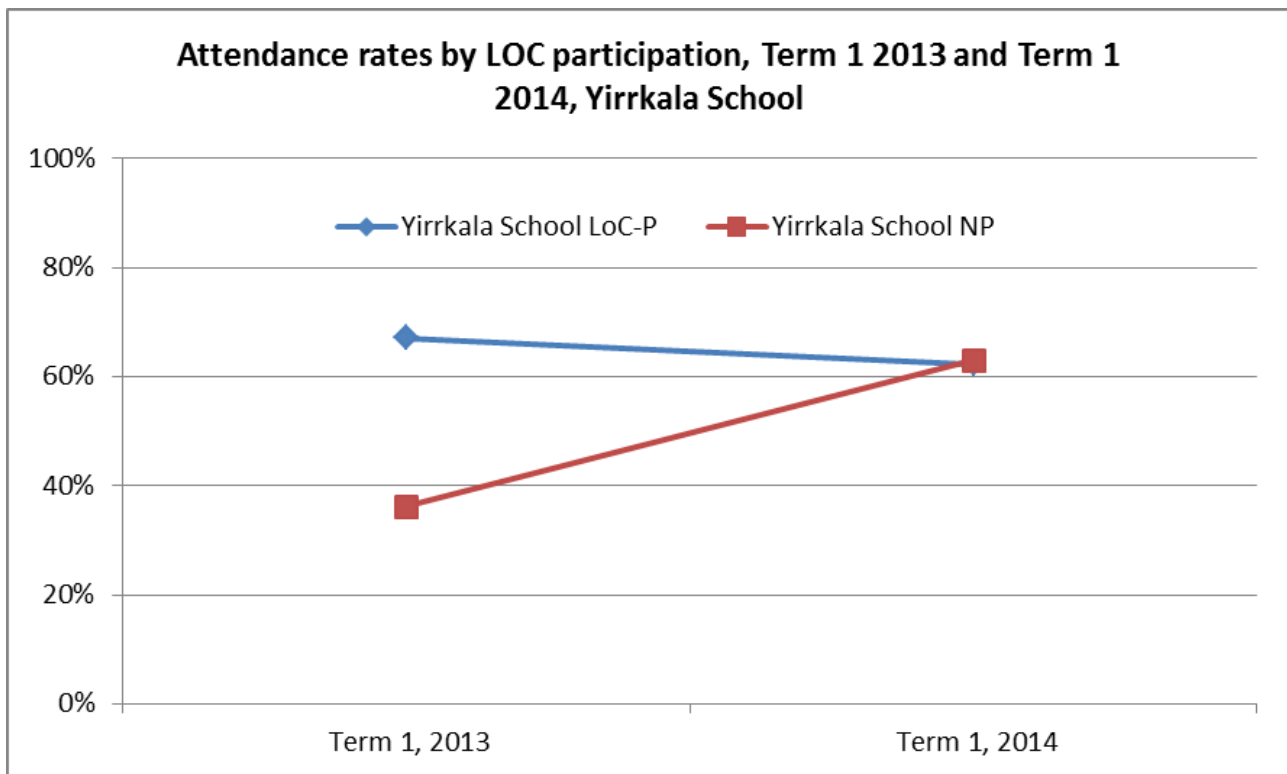
Figure 22. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation, Term 1 2013 and Term 1 2014, Yirrkala School.

Table 11. Attendance rates Yirrkala, LoCP and non-LoCP participation.

Term 1, 2013 and term 1, 2014 attendance rates Yirrkala, LoCP and non-LoCP participation[18]		
	Term 1 2013	**Term 1 2014**
LoCP participants % (A)	67 (21)	62 (23)
Non-LoCP participants %	36	63
Whole school attendance rate for 2013 and semester 1 2014 (yrs1-10) (B)	48	57

NTCET performance among LoCP participants

In Yirrkala in 2012 there were 2 Stage One students who worked toward their NT Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) qualification who were eventually involved as Learning on Country program participants in 2013 and/or 2014. That number grew to 4 in 2013 and 5 in 2014. One additional student undertook a Stage Two in 2014. Those students undertook studies in Creative Arts, Health, Integrated Learning, Literacy for Work

[18] Notes:
(A) The Northern Territory Department of Education attendance rate tables from which these figures are derived included numbers for LoCP participants but not for non-LoCP participants.
(B) Data are from My School website.

and Community Life, Numeracy for Work and Community, Communication and the Community, Science Technology and the Community, Workplace Practices, Physical Education as well as studying through Personalised Learning Plans.

Learning on Country VET participation and outcomes

As noted earlier, students undertaking VET study work toward competencies of individual units or modules that together comprise the VET qualification. Students may undertake several units or modules at once and may work toward competencies over an extended period of time. It is therefore difficult to gauge student involvement in VET studies by looking simply at completed certificates. While that is an important outcome measure, enrolment in and competencies achieved in units is also important. But data on VET also record information on students who withdraw or do not complete a unit. Significantly, a student who does not complete a unit may, and often does, recommence study and eventually achieve competency.

During 2013 and 2014 LoCP participants undertook 267 VET units. As shown in figure 23 LoCP participants achieved competency in 18% of units and withdrew or did not complete 35% of units. Nearly half (47%) of units were continued. These figures represent a percentage of completed and non-completed VET units rather than percentage of participants.
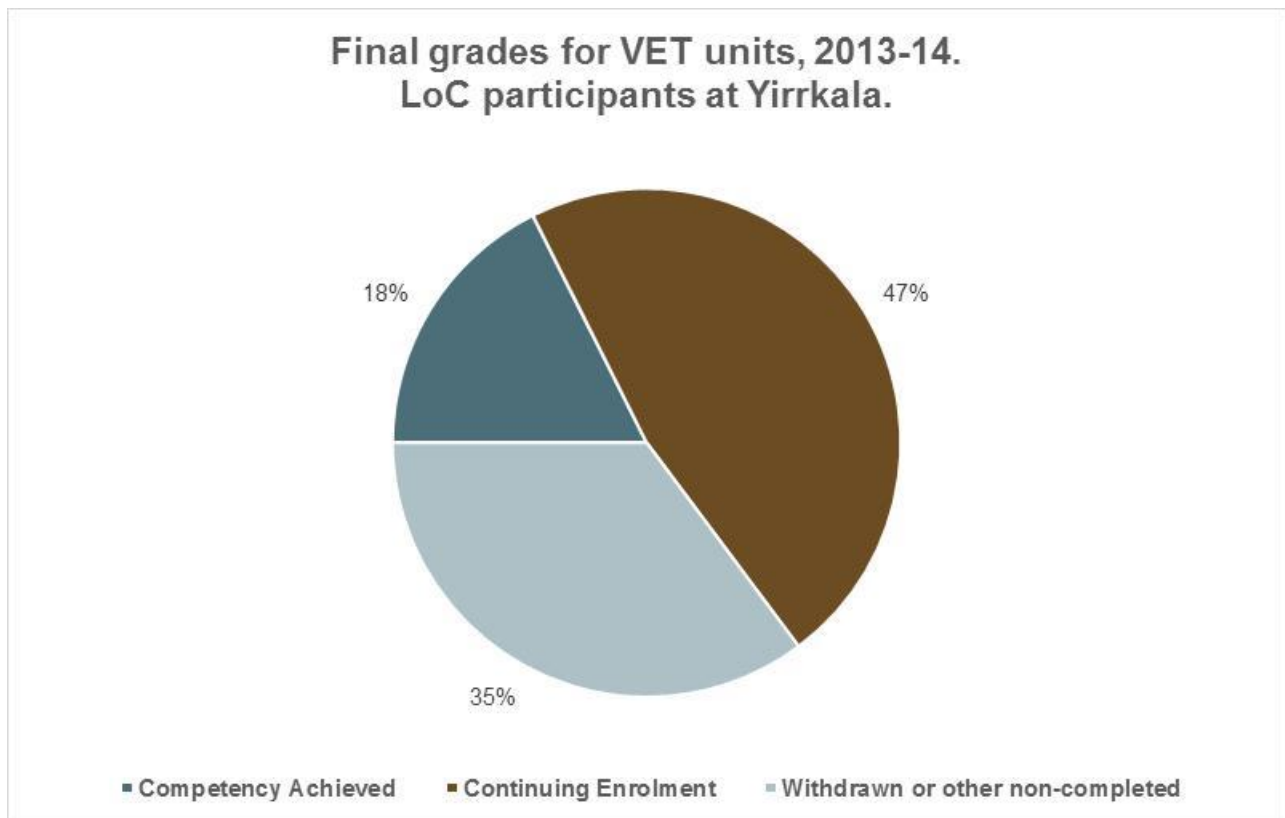
Figure 23. Chart: Final grades for VET units, 2013-2014. LoCP participants at Yirrkala.

Challenges to an effective program in Yirrkala

The following are a number of challenges for Learning on Country that emerged from the evaluation as conducted in Yirrkala. Virtually every one of them has some resonance for the other three sites and so should be considered in that light and not simply as issues to be addressed in Yirrkala.

- Staffing stability: Yirrkala, more than any other site, was challenged by enormous disruptions resulting from unforseen staff changes. In 2014, what was to be the first full year of LoCP activities, the school Principal left, a nearly total turnover of teaching staff took place, including one of the two teachers most engaged in LoCP and the LoCP coordinator went on leave because of family health issues. That the program continued was a credit to all.
- NT Education policy shifts: Over the course of the LoCP project, major changes in remote school funding and support took effect and others were forecast. This resulted in staff cuts and ongoing uncertainty about how education would or would not be delivered in Yirrkala
- Teacher Student ratios: Related to the policy shifts were changes in funding models affecting teaching ratios. Over the course of the project teacher student ratios changed from 14:1 to 20:1
- Lack of student continuity: Yirrkala saw enormous numbers of students come and go and this had a strong impact on the ability of the LoCP to gain traction.
- Public events: One of the key leaders in the community passed away and his funeral was a protracted yet important cultural event that disrupted school and LoCP activities; similarly, a visit from the Prime Minister, while an opportunity in some respects, challenged the LoCP team to maintain momentum in their program.

Summary

The Yirrkala LoCP has been developing at an extremely difficult time for the Community and the surrounding region. In December 2013 Rio Tinto announced that it was no longer going to operate its refinery on the Gove peninsular. This was a cause of great consternation for all in the region as the mine is the major employer and we were told in 2014 that nearly a quarter of the non-Indigenous population of the region had left to pursue other work. This instability has been coupled with an extremely high turnover of teaching staff at Yirrkala School, cuts to teaching positions and school budgets and key changes of personnel across the program. In some regards the fact that the learning on Country program has been able to produce the activity it has is testament to its strong governance and the commitment of local people to the program. While the evaluation team was able to garner good evidence of the types and range of activities the program has been involved in , 'teacher churn' and external social and economic upheaval has led to the LoCP not

being as well integrated into curriculum as could be possible. Having said that, we were able to evidence learning occurring in maths, English, history and geography in units that count towards mainstream curriculum and qualifications. Bedding down the relationship between LoCP and standard curriculum is a key challenge for the next phase of the program. The Yirrkala program has exhibited strong partnerships between the school and Dhimurru. The Ranger / student relationships that are built as part of the program are a key benefit to both parties and one major success of the program was evident in May 2014 when three students expressed interest in and completed work experience with the Rangers (two working on country with the Rangers and one in the office with Dhimurru subsequently appointing one Learning on Country student as a permanent employee.

We were told by Yolngu repeatedly that LoCP in Yirrkala has been successful in engaging not just students, but also the Rangers that are participating in the Working on Country program. In interviews people spoke of the personal development benefits for the Rangers employed under the Working for Country program as providing additional skills including improved leadership and instructional skills, work mentoring skills, and improved program management and organisational skills. The program has demonstrated that it is able to provide evidence of intergenerational transfer of Indigenous knowledge as well as achieving outcomes against both standard Curriculum and Vocational Educational and Training certificated units.

Noting data caveats, the LoCP has demonstrated a neutral effect in attendance for students who are highly engaged in the program. It has delivered some small but demonstrable employment outcomes for participants. The Memorandum of Understanding was a critical foundation document, but has been superseded by a functioning local Committee that has grown in strength over the course of the program. The students are demonstrating higher order ICT skills that are being taught in combination with work ready training modules and through experiential activity on country.

The Yirrkala a LoCP has been characterised by high volatility in staffing but has been able to sustain and deliver the program. As with all the LoCP sites there are serious issues with data collation (see data caveats) that need to be amended as the program goes into its next phases. While the coordinator's role has been integral to the successes of the program, it was made clear to the evaluation that there is some issue about how the co-ordinator and teachers plan together. It is recommended that both the coordinator and classroom teachers, in conjunction with the school and Dhimurru, work out a way to ensure that LoCP staff have more opportunity to spend time understanding each other's roles with the LoCP.

Case study 3: Laynhapuy Homelands (Yirrkala)

The Laynhapuy homelands are located in the Yirrkala region. In the early 1970's, senior Yolngu leaders and their extended families began moving away from the mission communities and the expanding mining town (see Yirrkala case study above), to return to their traditional clan lands ('country') around Arnhem Land. The clan elders aspired to determine their own future, conduct their affairs according to Yolngu law and live and raise their children on their traditional land. Their vision was to develop sustainable, self-sufficient homelands for themselves, their families and future generations; a vision which is still strong and relevant today.

The homelands are on Aboriginal land held as inalienable freehold title by the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Lands Trust, under the Commonwealth Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976. They have around 900 residents during the dry season, and the population fluctuates between 700 and 800 during the wet, making it difficult to identify the fixed homelands population in isolation of the Yirrkala population.

The Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation (LHAI, also known as Laynha) is an Aboriginal owned and managed community organisation, which was incorporated in 1985. Laynha supports some 30 homeland communities across North-East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. LHAI is one of the largest employers of Yolngu people in the region.

Yirralka Rangers

One way which in which Laynha supports homelands communities is through land and sea management through Yirralka Rangers. The Yirralka Ranger land and sea management program began in response to senior traditional owners' desires to better manage their country and deal with threats to cultural and environmental values. Laynha initiated the Yirralka Rangers program in 2003. The Yirralka Ranger land and sea management program began in response to Wäŋa-wataŋu (senior traditional owners) desires to better manage their country and deal with threats to cultural and environmental values.

Laynha initiated the Yirralka Rangers program in 2003 and the Layhnapuy Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) was declared in 2006. The IPA covers an area of 4,500 km² and 480 km of coastline that includes savannah woodland, monsoon vine forest and a number of river systems that form large high value coastal floodplains. The stage two IPA will expand the area to over 17,000 km², including 6,500 km² of sea country, and 800 kms of coastline.

Figure 24. Image: A Yirralka Sea Ranger. Source: Yirralka Rangers.

The word Yirralka describes the attachment relationship and responsibilities between a Yolngu person and their country. Of approximately 50 staff, there are more than 45 Yolngu Rangers employed in both Dhirramu (men's) and Miyalk (women's) groups to deliver environmental management services across the homelands.

The core Ranger services are essential land and sea management activities, including:

- Managing weeds, fire and feral species
- Managing visitors
- Sea country management including removing marine debris, monitoring fishing activities, and marine biodiversity research
- Protecting cultural sites
- Monitoring habitats and biodiversity
- Maintenance, conservation and restoration of habitats of vulnerable and endangered species
- Operating bush plant nurseries
- Fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer – through programs such as Learning on Country

Yirrkala Homelands Schools

Yirrkala Homelands School (YHS) works closely with Laynhapuy Aboriginal Corporation and the Yirralka Rangers YHS is located in the community of Yirrkala (see more info about Yirrkala above) and provides education services to nine Community Learning Centres (CLCs). The CLCs are varying distances from Yirrkala with varied accessibility (often seasonal) to each site and deliver education to small groups of students unable to attend the central school in the area. Yirrkala Homelands School (YHS) provides education services to nine Community Learning Centres (CLCs). The CLCs are varying distances from Yirrkala with varied accessibility (often seasonal) to each site and deliver education to small groups of students unable to attend the central school in the area. The CLCs are the 'classrooms' of the YHS, ranging in size from 20 and 60 students with multi-age classes catering for students from early years to senior years. According to the NT Department of Education and Training, YHS had 253 enrolments and an attendance rate of 82.7%. In many regards the nature of Homeland Centre schooling lends itself extremely well to the foundational ideals and aspirations of the LoCP. As one homeland centre community member put it to us: "everyday these kids here are learning on country. That's what we do".

Given this, there are some decided benefits that students in the Yirrkala Homelands region are able to tap into. Firstly, opportunity to engage with custodians of country and traditional owners is often far greater and can be done in situ without necessarily having to organise a big camp or facilitate engagement through the Rangers or the school. This is because people are already on country and are drawn into LoCP activities by osmosis. Secondly, while other programs in the LoCP need to co-ordinate specific LoCP lessons around a set timetable the HLC model has an inbuilt flexibility that means LoCP is designed and redesigned at each site as opportunity and need arise. For example, many of the activities that students may engage in are already occurring with Rangers working on country in the homeland. The CLC model is also different because it is conducted in a far more Indigenous dominated domain. The lead teacher is often the CLC teacher (as opposed to the visiting teacher) and is also a local community member. Having said that, delivering the LoCP across such a big area and across so many sites provides many challenges, particularly when the program needs to provide outcomes against standard measures.

Figure 25. Image: Yirralka Ranger teaching a young child. Source: Yirrkala Homelands LoCP.

Indicative examples of LoCP activities

The following examples illustrate the integration of school based and on country activities at Yirrkala Homelands. These examples clearly demonstrate the intergenerational transfer of Indigenous and western knowledge through the LoC program. In addition, the use of I-tracker as an integral teaching tool formed the basis of a host of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) learning that occurred at this site.

Examples of Yirrkala Homelands LoCP Activity:

- During the course of the evaluation were able to collect evidence pertaining to a range of LoCP activities delivered across a number of sites in the Laynhapuy homelands region. For example, in one activity the Yirralka Rangers led an activity as part of a VET – Cert 1 CLM Stage 1 module. This activity involved 19 middle years' students, 1 teacher, and 3 Rangers as well as community members in the study of an important ancestral being site. The work was part of a cultural heritage operation being undertaken by the Rangers and involved the detailed documentation of the history and protection of a sting ray site. Students and Rangers worked together to explore the site and to document its physical and cultural attributes. This work was then transposed into workbooks and written up as either part of formal

stage 1 assessments or as modules of Certificate 1 in CALM depending on which course the students were enrolled in.

- Another indicative example of the way LoCP has been roiled out in the Layhnapuy homelands region is the Rorruwuy Culture Walk activity. This component of LoCP consisted of a three day walk on country with 15 students from the primary, middle and senior years. Five Homeland teachers, three local Indigenous knowledge experts, and one Indigenous Ranger structured the learning activities around the stories and ownership of the land they traversed on the walk. At each stage of the walk local indigenous knowledge formed the primary platform for the start of the learning before moving to learning activities articulated with Australian Curriculum areas of history, science, English and Maths.

- The evaluation team was also able to record information and evidence of an activity that combined a unit in certificate 1 CLM and stage 1 under the rubric 'work safely and Record Information about country. This activity involved 14 year 11 students, 2 teacher and 3 Yirralka Rangers. The Rangers led the learning activities, demonstrating how to collect information about country and describing the work of Rangers as custodians of the land. The on-country learning also had an explicit element in which Indigenous knowledge of demonstrating the custodianship and kinship rules that underpin the work of Rangers were made clear to the students. This was done through both stories and direct instruction.

Figure 26. Image: Mapping country. Source: Yirralka Rangers.

Progress of LoCP in Yirrkala Homelands Schools

There were 32 LoCP participants in Yirrkala Homelands Schools predominantly from the senior and middle years in 2013 and 31 in 2014.[19] The total school enrolment covering kindergarten to year 12 for 2013 was 188 and 189 in 2014. This translates into a LoCP participation rate of 17% in 2013 and 16% in 2014 (see Table 12).

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[19] In the Northern Territory the middle years of schooling represent years 7-10 and the senior years represent years 11-12.

Table 12. Number of participants and eligible non-participants Yirrkala Homelands Schools, by year and community.

Number of participants and eligible non-participants Yirrkala Homelands Schools, by year and community (A)[20]		
	2013	**2014**
LoCP participants (B)	32	31
Non- LoCP participants (B)	156	158
Whole school enrolments (B)	188	189
Participation rate (B) (%)	17%	16%

Unfortunately, the patterns of attendance for the Yirrkala Homelands schools tell us little about the impact of the LoCP program. Indeed, attendance for participants and non-participants during the full year of project implementation was virtually identical. What it may illustrate, however, is the impact of severe disruption for the school brought about by a complete change in school and LoCP staffing between the end of 2013 and the beginning of the 2014 school year.

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[20] Notes:
(A)   Derived by combining numbers for both Yirrkala Homeland School and Baniyala Garrangali School – there may be some double counting of children if they attended both schools.
(B)   Participation rate = Number of LoC participants as a percentage of whole school enrolments.

Attendance rates by LOC participation 2012-2014, Yirrkala/Baniyala Homelands
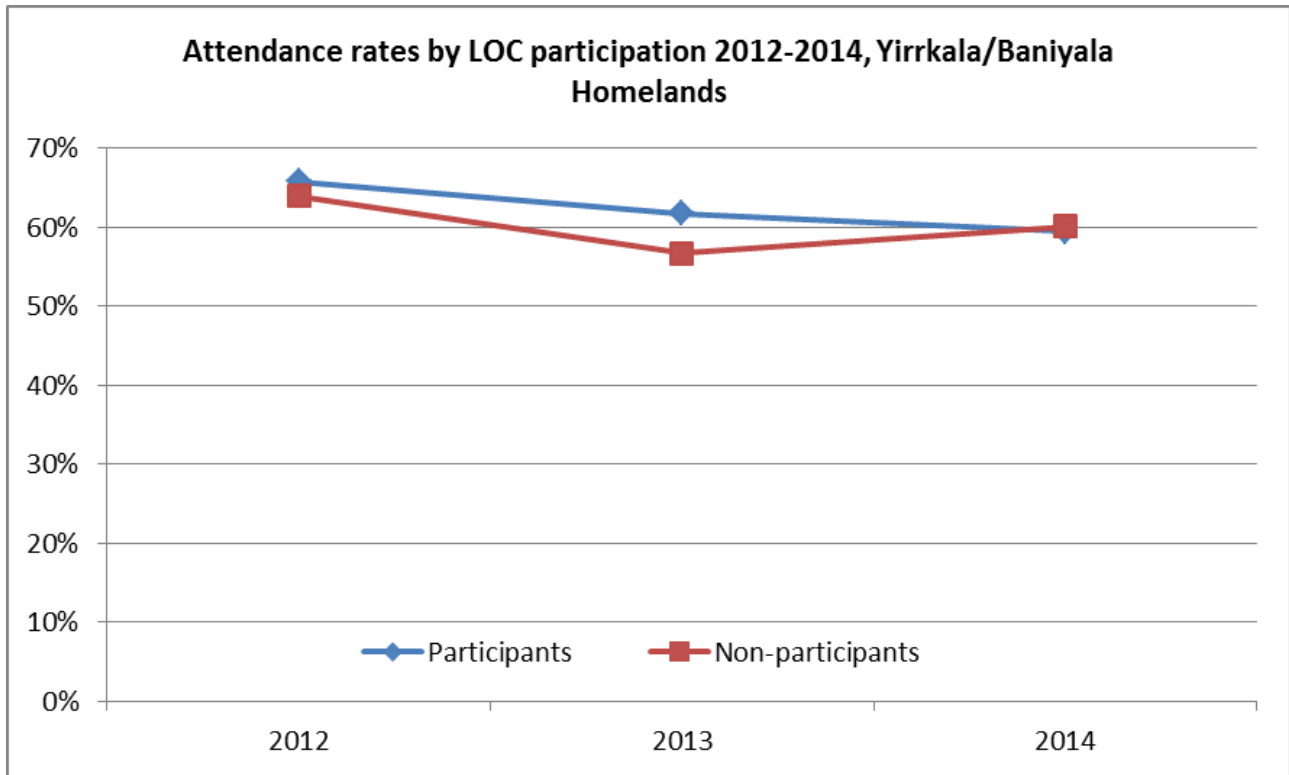
Figure 27. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation 2012-2014, Yirrkala/Baniyala Homelands.

Table 13. Yearly average school attendance rates Yirrkala Homelands Schools, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants.

Yearly average school attendance rates Yirrkala Homelands Schools, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants (A)[21]	2012	2013	2014
LoCP participants % *(N)*	66 *(62)*	62 *(60)*	60 *(55)*
Non-LoCP participants % *(N)*	64	57	60

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[21] Note:

(A) The Northern Territory Department of Education attendance rate tables from which these figures are derived included numbers for LoCP participants but not for non-LoCP participants.
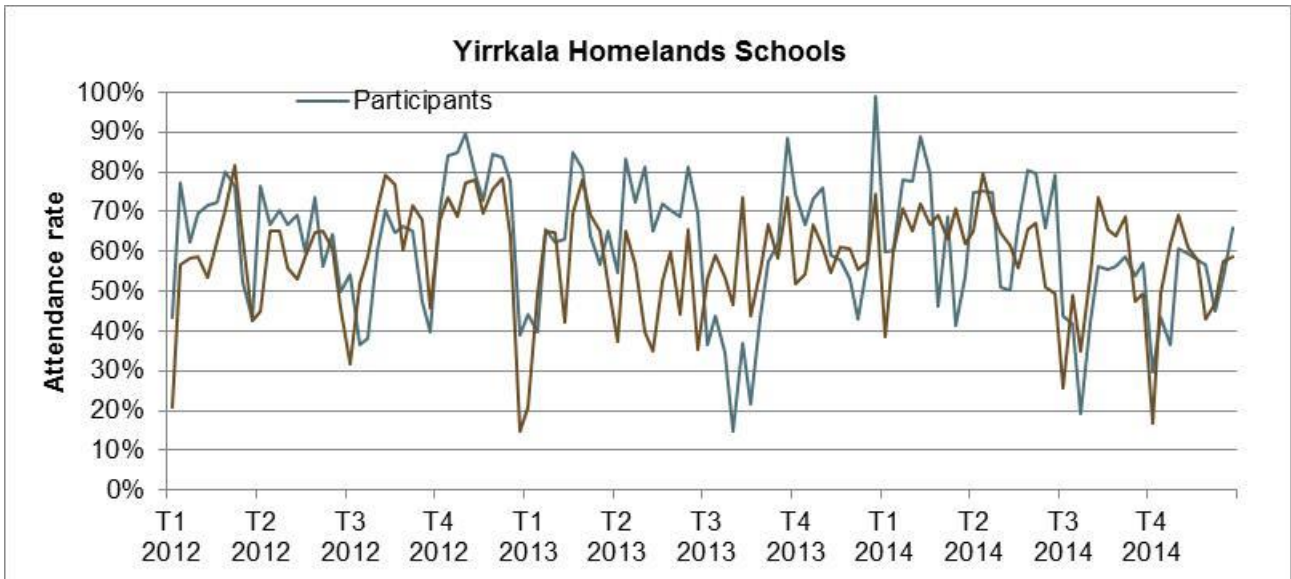
Figure 28. Chart: Weekly and term by term attendance, Yirrkala Homeland Schools.
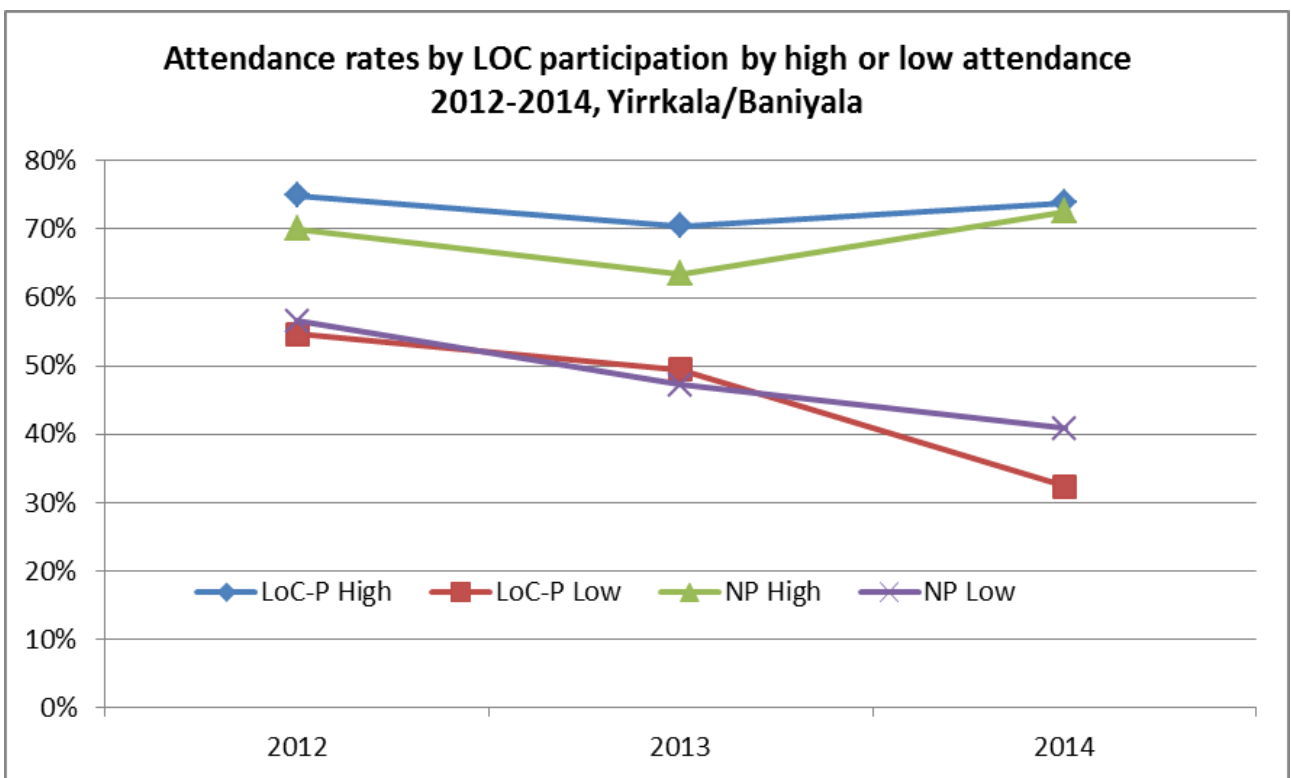
Figure 29. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation by high or low attendance 2012-2014, Yirrkala/Baniyala.

Table 14. Yearly average school attendance rates Yirrkala Homelands Schools, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants, by intensity of attendance.

Yearly average school attendance rates Yirrkala Homelands Schools, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants, by intensity of attendance (A)[22]			
	2012	**2013**	**2014**
LoCP participants: high intensity attendance % (N)	75 *(33)*	70 *(34)*	74 *(29)*
LoCP participants: low intensity attendance % (N)	55 *(29)*	49 *(26)*	32 *(26)*
Non-LoCP participants: high intensity attendance	70	63	73
Non-LoCP participants: low intensity attendance	57	47	41

Challenges to an effective program in Yirrkala Homelands Schools

The following are a number of challenges for Learning on Country that emerged from the evaluation as conducted in the Yirrkala Homelands Schools. Virtually every one of them has some resonance for the other three sites and so should be considered in that light and not simply as issues to be addressed in by the homeland schools.

- Staff stability: At the beginning of the 2014 school year there was a complete turnover of all staff involved in the delivery of LoCP: Principal, LoCP Coordinator, 2 Senior Teachers, and some other teachers. As in Yirrkala, the challenge this presented was enormous.

- Geographic dispersion: The Yirrkala Homelands Schools are located in multiple locations, some of which are difficult to reach in the wet season. This presented a range of difficulties in bringing together local teachers and local steering committee members. Meetings were thus very difficult. For example, one LoCP meeting involved $5000 in air charter to bring key people to Yirrkala. Clearly these costs are unsustainable and represent a significant challenge to the program, particularly in relation to the need to ensure there are local voices brought into the discussion of LoCP.

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[22] Note:
(A) The Northern Territory Department of Education attendance rate tables from which these figures are derived included numbers for LoCP participants but not for non-LoCP participants.

- Building and sustaining a shared sense of purpose and common approach: The Homelands education model involves two types of teachers. Indigenous Homeland Teachers live and work in their home communities, and they are assisted by visiting non-Indigenous teachers who come to the communities on a regular basis. In addition, the school principal is located in Yirrkala as is the LoCP Coordinator. Given these unusual and special circumstances, and the logistical complexities, there is a challenge in ensuring all communicate clearly and regularly about the program and that each can support and conduct the program in an effective manner.

- Coordination and planning between the Rangers and the school: The LoCP coordinator position was in a state of transition and had not yet developed a long term work plan. This presented a major challenge as it was very clear that the articulation of Ranger work and curriculum was a key to the success of LoCP.

- Political uncertainty of Homelands Education: During 2013 and 2014 there was a continuing sense of political uncertainty about the future viability of homelands education. This presented a significant challenge to building a program for LoCP in homelands and affected the ability of people to invest themselves in an approach to learning that, while it was commonsensical to their experience of education on their country, appeared to be undermined and unvalued by government.

Summary

There is natural fit between LoCP and educational activity in the Yirrkala Homelands region. The fact that so much of the learning and ILSM work already takes place literally 'on country' presents a wealth of opportunity for pedagogic intervention. Similarly the Homelands program has a long and detailed history and experience of developing workshop based curriculum that can be used as best practice for curriculum development and flexible design of programming. While this flexibility is a strength of this model of LoCP provision of the LoCP in the Homelands also faces some difficulties, most notably dealing with the tyranny of distance. The Yirrkala Homelands LoCP has had a great deal of instability in staffing. At the beginning of the 2014 school year there was a complete turnover of all staff involved in the delivery of LoCP: Principal, LoCP Coordinator, 2 Senior Teachers, and a number of visiting teachers. Inducting new staff in to the LoCP has been a challenge. As with the Yirrkala hub school, the death of a very senior and significant leader of the community also meant a period of major upheaval. The evaluation team was repeatedly told that policy instability around the future of homelands schooling and the associated review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory has been an ongoing cause of consternation for LoCP staff and communities.

The evaluation team was able to garner good evidence of the types and range of activities the program has been involved in and were able to evidence of learning occurring in maths, English, history science, geography and in units that count towards mainstream curriculum and qualifications. Equally, it was obvious to the evaluation team that the high level of 'on the ground 'involvement of Yolngu at every stage of the pedagogic cycle was a real strength. The Yirrkala homelands program has exhibited strong partnerships between the school and Lahnapuy as a parent body. Despite a high turnover of key people the Yirralka Rangers and the Homelands schools have an excellent working relationship. However, it should be noted that longer term planning needs to be conducted by both the Ranger and school groups to better co-ordinate actives. The evaluation team garnered no information on the MOU at this site. The team was able to collect evidence that students are demonstrating higher order ICT skills that are being taught in combination with work ready training modules and through experiential activity on country.

As with all the LoCP sites there are serious issues with data collation (see data caveats) that need to be amended as the program goes into its next phases. Noting data caveats, school attendance data from this site have exhibited a positive trend for highly engaged students but is inconclusive. The evaluation team was able to clearly see that LoCP has immense support in the communities in which it is being delivered through the Homelands program. Documented transfer of Indigenous knowledge on country was a strength of this program. However, there was some comment from community that more Yolngu involvement in planning is essential. The evaluation team saw evidence of the LoCP achieving outcomes against both standard Curriculum and Vocational Educational and Training certificated units in this site.

Case study 4: Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island)

Galiwin'ku is the largest and the only community on Elcho Island. The island is located above Arnhem Land, 150 km north-west of Nhulunbuy and 550 km north-east of Darwin, and is bounded by the Arafura Sea and the Cadell Strait. Galiwin'ku is also the Aboriginal name for the whole island. After the Goulburn Island mission was set up in 1921, Elcho Island was chosen as the site for a second Methodist overseas mission. However, oil drilling by the Naphtha Petroleum Company closed the mission site, which was relocated to Milingimbi. Galiwin'ku was eventually established in 1942 as a refuge from possible bombing of the Milingimbi Royal Australian Air Force Base during World War II. The Methodist church started its Methodist overseas mission in Galiwin'ku in 1947. During the 1950s a fishing industry started, a large market garden flourished and a cypress pine logging industry and sawmill began. During early settlement, the mission encouraged Aboriginal people to stay on their traditional homelands and use Galiwin'ku as a service centre. However, the mission ended with the self-determination era of the 1970s, and the community is now one of the largest Aboriginal communities in north-east Arnhem Land. In

2008, Galiwin'ku became part of the East Arnhem Shire and the Shire took over local government (NT Government 2015). The population of Galiwin'ku and its surrounds, according to the 2011 Census, was approximately 2,124, of which 1,890 (89%) were Indigenous. Djambarrpuyngu is the most widely used language in Galwin'ku.

Gumurr Marthakal Rangers

The IPA of Gumurr Marthakal Rangers was founded in 2004 and encompasses the area of the Wessel and English Company Islands and Arnhem bay. There are 9 full time Rangers to manage this 20,000 km² area. The Rangers are responsible for access, monitoring and management of the land and sea within this IPA. The Gumurr Marthakal Rangers activities include fisheries (species monitoring, vessel surveillance and illegal fishing), marine debris, weed management, preservation of traditional knowledge and hunting grounds, sacred site management, water monitoring, visitor management, fire management, feral animal control, terrestrial species monitoring, community awareness and knowledge sharing. This region is also an integral part of a larger biodiversity preservation strategy where endangered species such as the Northern Quoll and Golden Bandicoot have been relocated to islands not under the threat of cane toads to preserve and expand total populations.

Shepherdson College

Shepherdson College is a Community Education Centre (CEC) located at Galiwin'ku. The College provides education for students from early years to senior years, and educational services to seven Homeland Learning Centres (HLCs). The HLCs are varying distances from Galiwin'ku with varied accessibility, and deliver education to small groups of students unable to attend the central school. There is close interaction between the school, HLCs and the community. In Term One 2014, Shepherdson College had 729 students enrolled, with a 57.1 % attendance rate.

Prior the establishment of the LoCP Shepherdson College had had no formal educational links with the Marthakal Rangers, however, the Principal at the time was extremely supportive of the idea and had begun steps toward implementing a learning on country approach of sorts within the school. This work coincided with the establishment of the MOU. The MOU was extremely important in outlining and delineating the start to the formal LoCP. It was also crucial in designating the roles and responsibilities between and within the organisations concerned with LoCP.

At the time of writing the LoCP at Shepherdson consisted of three separate but interlinked components. The first is a structured senior secondary class of Certificate 1 and Certificate II in CLM. The second component of the LoCP is a regular excursion of years 7/8/9 just outside the school grounds which is designed to engage the students in their immediate

surrounds. This part of the program has had a specific concentration on students who are designated 'at risk'. The third component of the LoCP at Shepherdson consisted of organised LoCP camps that involved the entire primary school cohort.
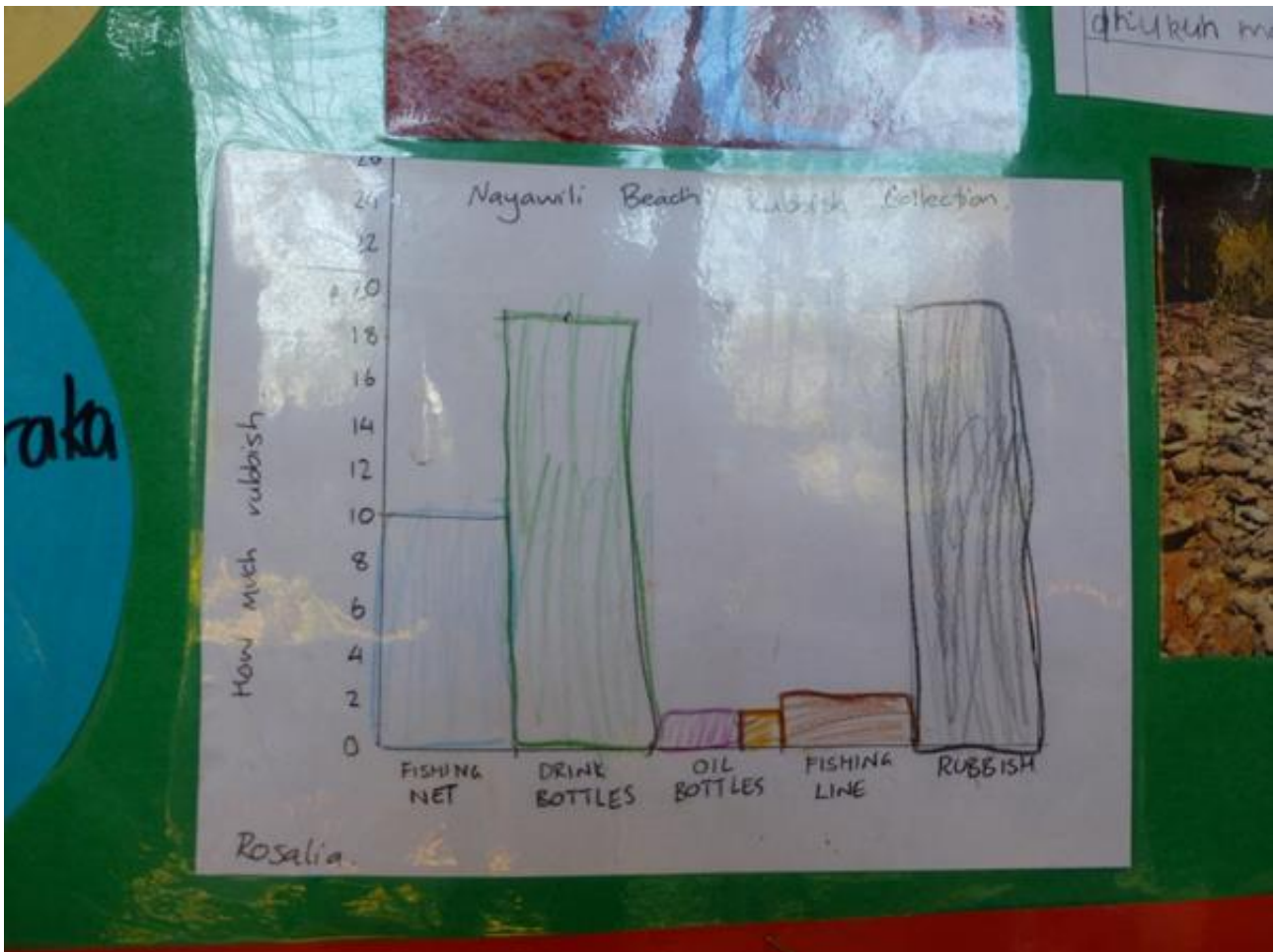
Figure 30. Image: Experiential numeracy activity. Source: Galiwinku LoCP

Indicative examples of LoCP activities

The following examples illustrate the integration of school based and on country activities at Galiwinku. These examples clearly demonstrate the intergenerational transfer of Indigenous and western knowledge through the LoCP program. In addition, the use of I-tracker as an integral teaching tool formed the basis of a host of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) learning that occurred at this site.

Examples of Galiwinku LoCP:

- One of the LoCP units the Evaluation team was able to record evidence of was called 'Recognise Plants and record information about country'. This activity involved 15 Year 10, 11 and 12 students, 8 Rangers and one teacher and a trainer from NAILSMA. The activity was based around an outstation visit in which the Rangers introduced the students to I-tracker and shared Indigenous knowledge of plants and

their usage. Students learned about and compared Western and Indigenous systems of naming and classification and collected organic samples for continued study. The sequence that was designed for the I-Tracker program was then used as a basis for a literacy and numeracy program that was delivered back in the classroom. This unit had a heavy emphasis on the ICT skills needed to design the sequence as well as a strong focus on the use of scientific classificatory terminology for plants that were under study.

Figure 31. Image: I-Tracker training. Source: Galiwinku LoCP.

- A second example of LoCP that the evaluation gathered information about was a unit about recognising fauna. In this unit senior secondary students engaged in a field exercise which consisted of ant trapping and Identification. This unit is an example of the linkages between LoCP and real world issues that allow students to engage in real world work. In this case the 'fire ant' is just one of a raft of potential highly invasive ant species that have the potential to cause massive damage to Australia's biodiversity. One of the tasks Rangers are engaged in is monitoring and assessing these species. During this activity Senior Secondary students, directed by the Indigenous Rangers, collected ant specimens at the community barge landing. This involved ensuring that the specimens were collected in accordance with the requirements of AQIS. Students then returned to the classroom and analysed the specimens under microscopes in the classroom. As a next step in the learning sequence, students produced a schema and diagram and were required to be able

to identify parts of the ants. As a final stage in the pedagogic structure of this activity the Ranger, in conjunction with teachers and local traditional owners, led a discussion about the habitat in which ants can be found and the biological role of ants in the local ecosystem. This was conducted in both English and language and drew upon both high level scientific knowledge and local level Indigenous knowledge. Students were then required to classify the ants, identify both native and introduced ants and understand the role and purpose of scientific classificatory systems.

Figure 32. Image: Certificate II CLM training. Source: Shepherdson College.

- As a final example of LoCP activity, and a demonstration of the versatility of the LoCP concept, a small excursion was conducted with a group of primary aged students to a place called Wadangayu. As part of the mainstream primary curriculum around local history the students were engaged in identifying and recording stone tools. The On Country lesson was focused on identifying artefacts such as scrapers, cores, back blades and spear tips. The children were then taught how to identify stone tools through the structure and bowl of percussion that is formed when a tool is struck by hand. The students then considered the uses of the tools and talked about the conservation of the site and tother site of local historical and cultural

significance in both and archaeological and customary sense. This small example of LoCP in a primary setting involved two teachers and two Indigenous knowledge experts.

Figure 33. Image: Mapping and dancing, Galiwinku LoCP students in action. Source: Galiwinku LoCP

Figure 34. Image: Writing Songlines. Source: Galiwinku LoCP.

Progress of LoCP in Galiwinku

LoCP was being developed and activities undertaken in 2013. There were 141 LoCP participants in Galiwinku predominantly from the senior years 2013 and 147 in 2014. The total school enrolment covering kindergarten to year 12 for 2013 was 497 and 497 in 2014. This translates into a LoCP participation rate of 28% in 2013 and 26% in 2014 (see Table 15).

Table 15. Number of participants and eligible non-participants Galiwinku, by year.

Number of participants and eligible non-participants Galiwinku, by year[23]		
	2013	**2014**
LoCP participants (A)	141	127
Non-LoCP participants (A)	356	371
Whole school enrolments (A)	497	497
Participation rate (B) (%)	28%	26%

From the beginning of that year, it was possible to see a relatively higher level of attendance among program participants than among non-participants (51% compared to 41%). This might be attributable to high levels of interest in the new program and increased engagement among students. By the time the program was to be fully deployed in 2014, the attendance rates of non-participating students rose to nearly the same level (48% for non-participating students compared to 51% for participating students).
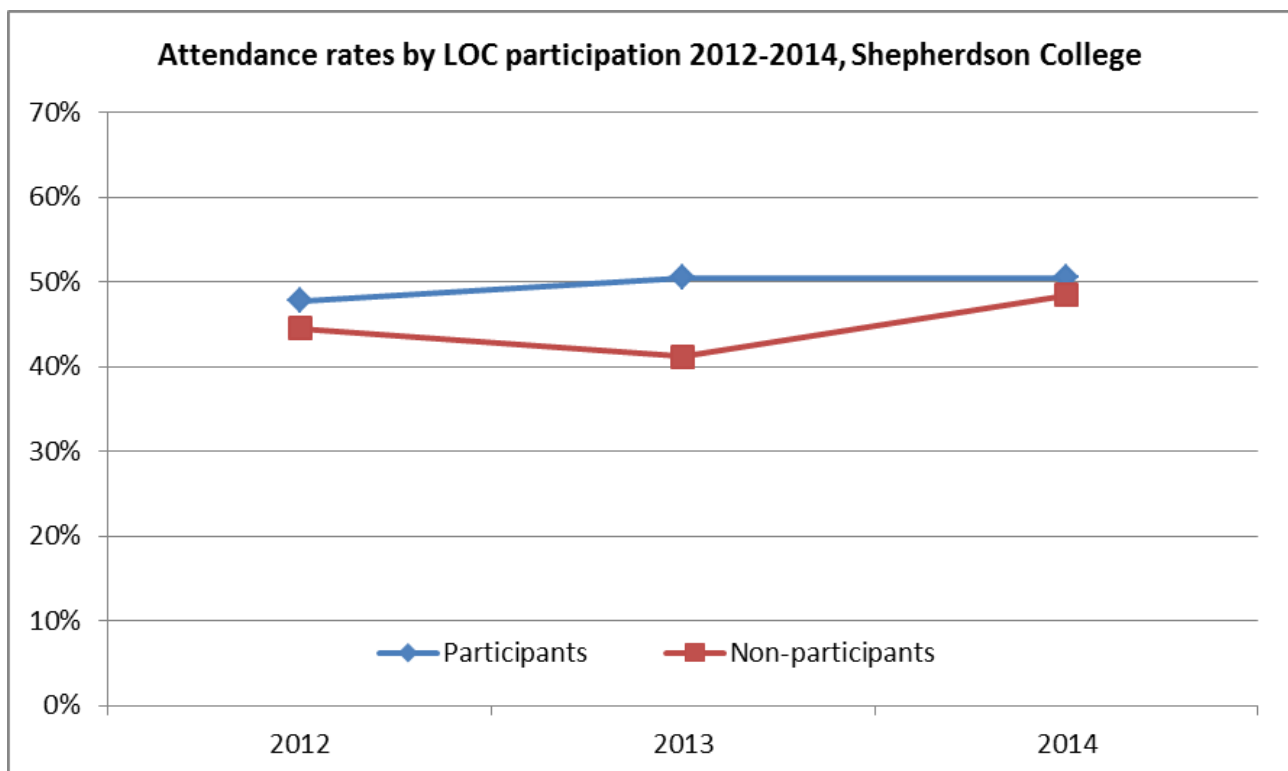
Figure 35. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation 2012-2014, Shepherdson College.

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[23] Notes:
(A) Average enrolments for the year for each group.
(B) Participation rate = Number of LoC participants as a percentage of whole school enrolments.

Table 16. Yearly average school attendance rates Galiwinku LoCP and non-LoCP participants.

Yearly average school attendance Galiwinku, LoCP and non-LoCP participants[24]			
	2012	**2013**	**2014**
LOCP PARTICIPANTS % *(N)*	48 *(176)*	51 *(181)*	51 *(182)*
NON-LOCP PARTICIPANTS % *(N)*	45	41	49

Looking more closely at the attendance patterns on a week-by-week basis, the convergence of the 2014 annual attendance rate seems to have occurred over the course of the first term of classes, with a slightly higher attendance rates of program participants peaking at the beginning of the school year.
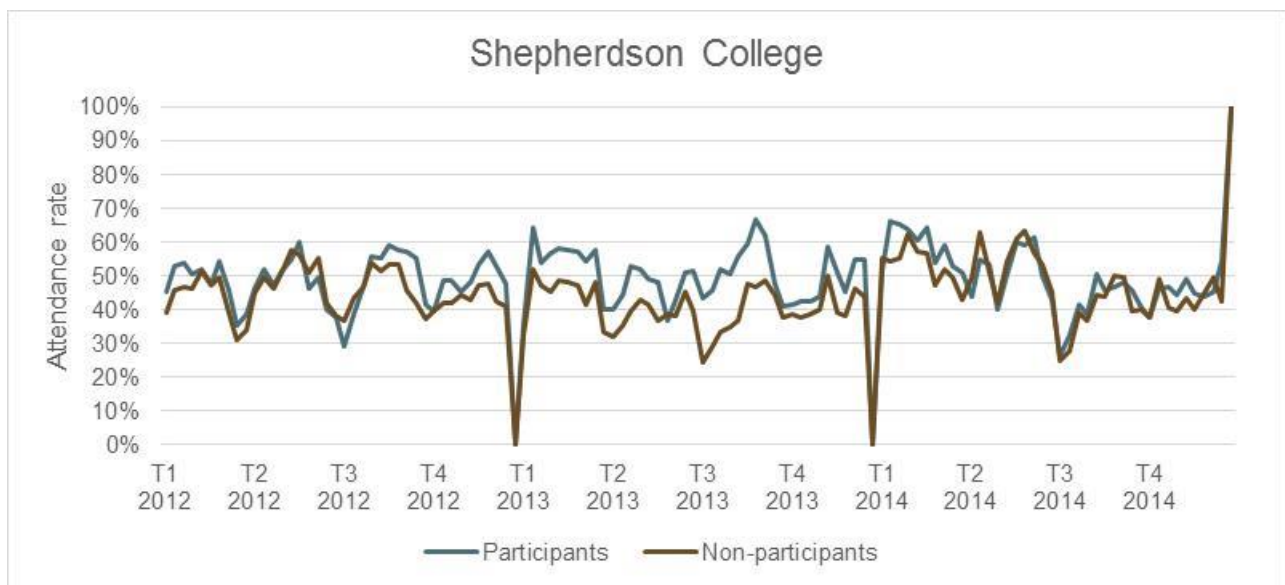
Figure 36. Chart: Weekly and term by term attendance, Shepherdson College.

Looking at the annual attendance patterns in terms of intensity, the next figure shows a strong increase in the highly engaged students from the baseline in 2012 of 65% to 70% and ultimately 75% in 2014. But this increase is also apparent among the highly engaged non-participants between 2013 and 2014 when the attendance for those students rises from 62% to 74%. As is the case in the other three sites, the low intensity LoCP participants' attendance rate declines from 2013 to 2014.

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[24] Notes:
(A) The Northern Territory Department of Education attendance rate tables from which these figures are derived included numbers for LoCP participants but not for non-LoCP participants.
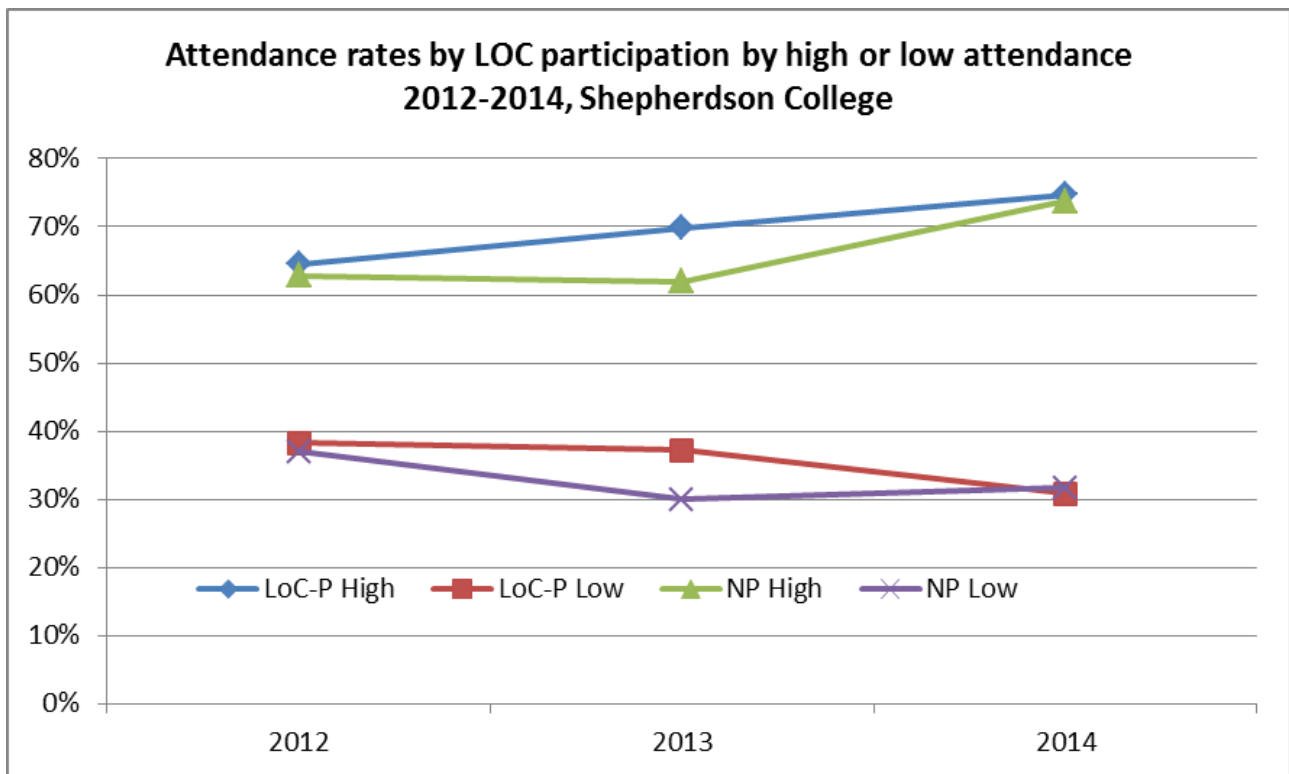
Figure 37. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation by high or low attendance 2012-2014, Shepherdson College.

Table 17. Yearly average school attendance rates Galiwinku, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants, by intensity of attendance.

Yearly average school attendance Galiwinku, by LoCP and non-LoCP participants, by intensity of attendance (A)[25]	2012	2013	2014
LoCP participants: high intensity attendance % (N)	65 (79)	70 (78)	75 (78)
LoCP participants: low intensity attendance % (N)	38 (97)	37 (103)	31 (104)
Non-LoCP participants: high intensity attendance	63	62	74
Non-LoCP participants: low intensity attendance	37	30	32

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[25] Notes:

(A) The Northern Territory Department of Education attendance rate tables from which these figures are derived included numbers for LoCP participants but not for non-LoCP participants.

The attendance patterns portrayed in the first term snapshot follows the expected pattern in showing an overall increase in attendance among both LoCP participants and non-participants over time and a slightly larger increase among the participants than the non-participants.
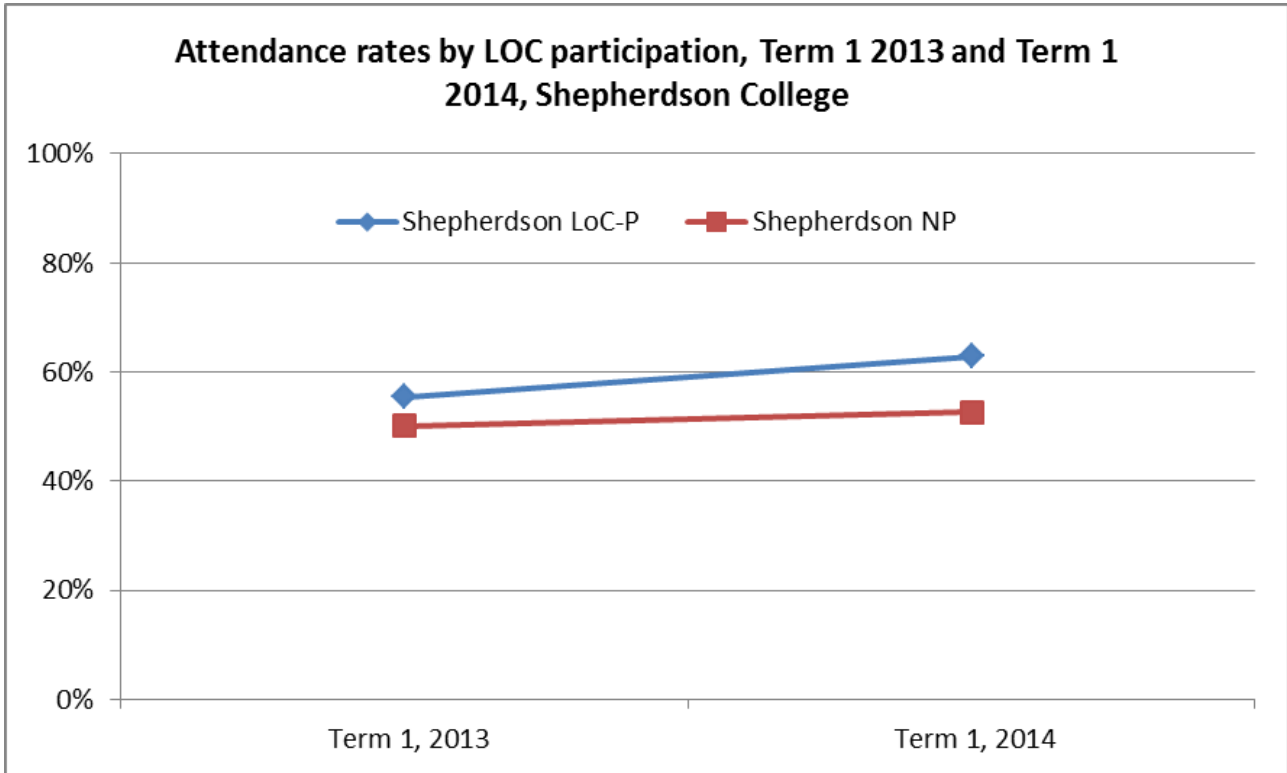
Figure 38. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation, Term 1 2013 and Term 1 2014, Shepherdson College.

Table 18. Attendance rates Galiwinku, LoCP and non-LoCP participation.

Term 1, 2013 and term 1, 2014 attendance rates Galiwinku, LoCP and non-LoCP participation[26]		
	Term 1 2013	**Term 1 2014**
LoCP participants % (A)	55 (127)	63 (143)
Non-LoCP participants %	50	53
Whole school attendance rate for 2013 and semester 1 2014 (yrs1-10) (B)	50	61

[26] Notes:
(A) The Northern Territory Department of Education attendance rate tables from which these figures are derived included numbers for LoCP participants but not for non-LoCP participants.
(B) System-level data are unavailable. Data are from My School website.

NTCET performance among LoCP participants

In Galiwinku in 2012 there were 9 Stage One students who worked toward their NT Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) qualification who were eventually involved as Learning on Country program participants in 2013 and/or 2014. That number grew to 12 in 2013 and 9 in 2014. Two additional students undertook a Stage Two in 2014. Those students undertook studies in Creative Arts, Health, Integrated Learning, Literacy for Work and Community Life, Communication Products, Child Studies, Numeracy for Work and Community, Communication and the Community, Food and Hospitality, Workplace Practices as well as studying through Personalised Learning Plans.

Learning on Country VET participation and outcomes

As noted for both Maningrida and Yirrkala, students in Galiwinku undertaking VET study work toward competencies of individual units or modules that together comprise the VET qualification. Students may undertake several units or modules at once and may work toward competencies over an extended period of time. It is therefore difficult to gauge student involvement in VET studies by looking simply at completed certificates. While that is an important outcome measure, enrolment in and competencies achieved in units is also important. But data on VET also record information on students who withdraw or do not complete a unit. Significantly, a student who does not complete a unit may, and often does, recommence study and eventually achieve competency.

During 2013 and 2014 LoCP participants undertook 850 VET units. As shown in figure 39 LoCP participants achieved competency in 49% of units and withdrew from 46% of units. Only a small percentage of units (5%) were continued. These figures represent a percentage of completed and non-completed VET units rather than percentage of participants.
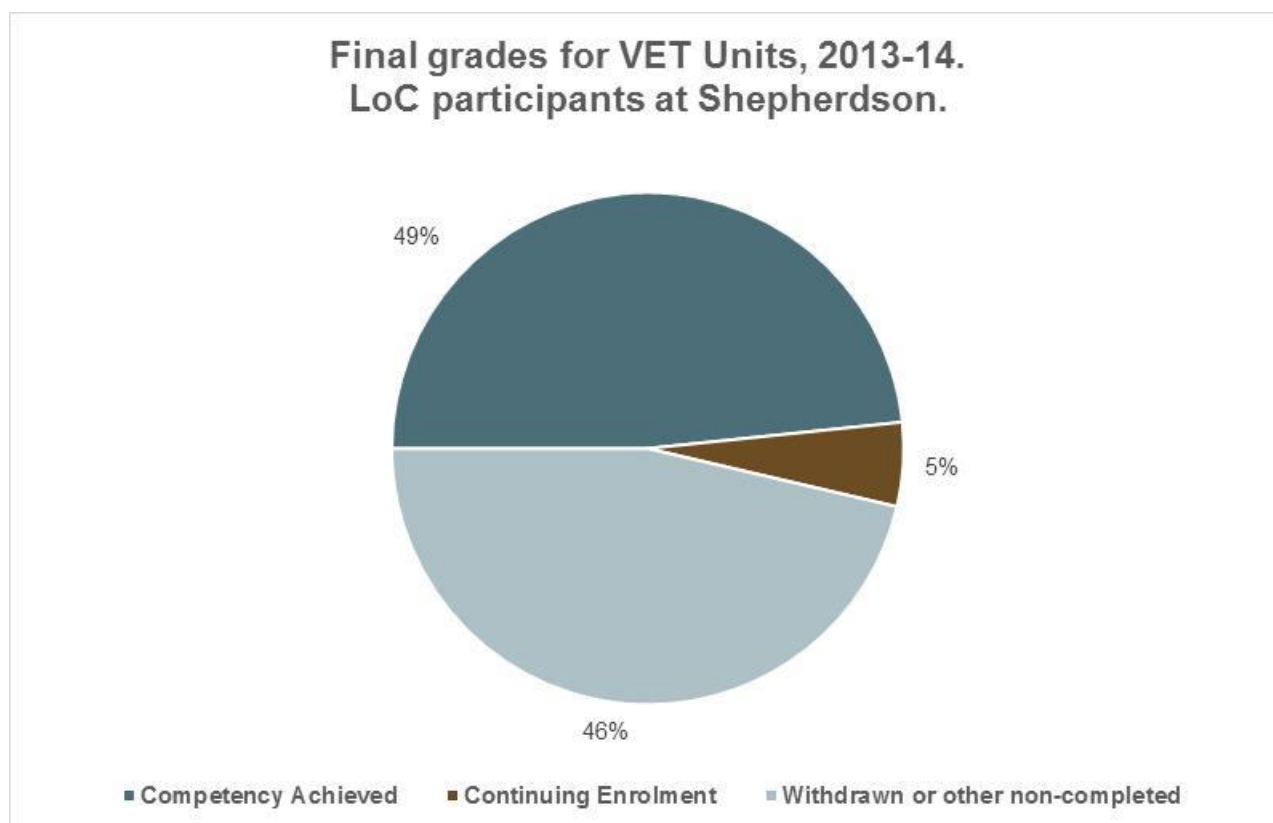
Figure 39. Chart: Final grades for VET Units, 2013-14. LoCP participants at Shepherdson.

Challenges to an effective program in Galiwinku

The following are a number of challenges for Learning on Country that emerged from the evaluation as conducted in Galiwinku. Virtually every one of them has some resonance for the other three sites and so should be considered in that light and not simply as issues to be addressed by the Galiwinku community.

- School Leadership: A new school principal arrived after the project was accepted and did not fully understand and certainly was not fully invested in the project. The result was a lack of leadership, a lack of shared vision and ambivalence among teachers about the value of the LoCP project.

- Ranger Leadership: During the development and implementation stages of LoCP, there were significant changes in leadership among the local Ranger group. This created a vacuum in leadership and a lack of understanding of what role and how the Rangers could and should work with the LoCP program.

- Key staff changes: Between 2013 and 2014 the LoCP Coordinator resigned and was replace by a new Coordinator who was faced with effectively building a new program. Given the initial lack of support by both the school Principal and the

Ranger group, this new coordinator essentially redefined and constructed a program that quickly won the support of both the school and the Rangers.

- Teacher engagement: In the context of weak leadership, the first year of the project saw a struggle to communicate to teaching staff the value and possibilities of LoCP. Indeed, on our first visit in 2013, few of the teachers understood that their school had a project called Learning on County. But as the program took shape in 2014 under the new LoCP coordinator, the school principal provided support, the Rangers engaged and efforts began to demonstrate to teachers the potential of LoCP as an effective model for promoting learning. Today, that engagement is growing quickly. In terms of engagement, teachers say LoCP is the most effective thing happening

- Assessing learning outcomes: LoCP in Galiwinku is developing and enthusiasm is growing, but teachers note that it is sometimes very difficult to assess LoCP in terms of learning outcomes. This signals a need to ensure that teachers are supported in terms of developing appropriate approaches and assessment models. Communicating with teachers in the other LoCP sites would be a valuable investment to this end.

Summary

The LoCP at Galiwinku has been the least well bedded and the slowest of the programs to integrate fully into the school during the evaluation period. In part this has been because in the first year of the program on Galiwinku there has been 3 principals, 16 different teaching staff, 4 CEO's of Marthakal and 3 different Ranger coordinators. However, this must also be attributed to the failure of a new principal to fully understand or engage with the LoCP concept in his first year at the school. This caused the LoCP at this site to struggle in its implementation phase. As the principal concerned noted during an exit interview with us:

> I really just didn't get this Learning on Country thing at the start. It seemed so different to where I had come from in my educational experience. I realise now that actually, this is one of the most important and engaging programs the school has.

Ironically, the Shepherdson program has had the greatest number of students of all the sites engaged in LoCP. While the program at Galiwinku certainly had some teething problems, the evaluation team notes that the governance structure was able to intervene and rectify the issues at this site. Essential to this was the intervention of Mr Paul Josif, who on instruction from the Steering Committee was able to coordinate a workshop with all stakeholders at this site and reboot the program. He also spent many hours on the phone providing support and mentoring to those coordinators who sought it. The steering committee was able to provide induction to the principal and also to revisit the entire

concept of LoCP through a reestablishment of the local LoCP committee and a reengagement of the community in the program. While the Steering Committee was able to engage Mr Josif through a small amount of governance funding, this cannot be relied upon going forward. This is an excellent example of the critical need for the LoCP Steering Committee to have funding to appoint a full time overarching position (see Ways Forward). In many ways the Galiwinku trial was a test of the ability of the program to cope with difficulties and challenges and the evaluation team see this as a positive for the operational capacity of the LoCP steering committee and the governance model more generally. By the time of writing the Galiwinku program has re-oriented itself to a position of greater strength. The team has been impressed by the way in which the most recent coordinator has reinvigorated the program there have certainly been a great many successes in this trial during the latter period of the evaluation.

The Evaluation team was able to garner evidence that the program is well supported by all key stakeholders at a community level. Despite issues in both organisations there is an emergent and developing relationship between the School and the Marthkal Rangers. The program has demonstrated that it is able to provide evidence of intergenerational transfer of Indigenous knowledge as well as achieving outcomes against both standard Curriculum and Vocational Educational and Training certificated units. Noting data caveats, the LoCP at Galiwinku has demonstrated gains in attendance for students who are highly engaged in the program and has delivered some small but demonstrable employment outcomes for participants. The Memorandum of Understanding was a critical foundation document but it has not always been used as it was intended. Indeed, in an earlier stage of our fieldwork, key personnel within the program were unaware of its existence. LoCP is becoming increasingly embedded across the school and is starting to become integrated into the curriculum at a number of levels. There is some work still to do in this regard, particularly at the senior secondary level.

The students that have been exposed to the LoCP are demonstrating higher order ICT skills that are being taught in combination with work ready training modules and through experiential activity on country. As with all the LoCP sites there are serious issues with data collation (see data caveats) that need to be amended as the program goes into its next phases. One of the key challenges for LoCP at Galiwinku will be to ensure that all senior staff in the school and in the Marthakal Rangers are well versed and briefed about the intended outcomes of LoCP and that they continue to support the program in their daily operations at a local level. The local LoCP committee will be integral to achieving this and in ensuring the role of the co-ordinator is supported going forward.

Findings from program-level data

This section provides an overview of all data gathered at a system level. See 'Evaluation methodology' for details.

NTCET enrolments for Learning on Country Program participants

LoCP participants from Galiwinku, Yirrkala and Maningrida undertook study toward the NTCET during the periods 2012-1014. Enrolments are summarised in the following table:

Table 19. Summary of enrolments in NTCET subjects.

Subject	2012	2013	2014
Shepherdson College			
Personal_Learning_Plan	7	2	2
Integrated_Learning	3	0	7
Literacy_for_Work_and_Community_Life	1	17	9
Communication Products	0	8	0
Child Studies	0	6	0
Workplace Practices	0	6	0
Creative Arts	0	3	7
Numeracy_for_Work_and_Community_Life	0	3	6
Food_and_Hospitality	0	0	3
Communication_and_the_Community	0	0	2
Arts_and_the_Community	0	0	1
Yirrkala School			
Creative_Arts	2	2	0
Health	2	0	3
Personal_Learning_Plan	2	0	1
Workplace_Practices	2	0	4
Physical_Education	0	3	3
Numeracy_for_Work_and_Community_Life	0	3	3

Subject	2012	2013	2014
Integrated_Learning	0	0	2
Literacy_for_Work_and_Community_Life	0	0	1
Communication_and_the_Community	0	0	1
Science_Technology_and_the_Community	0	0	1
Maningrida Centre			
Creative_Arts		2	0
Integrated_Learning		13	0
Creative_Arts		2	0
Numeracy_for_Work_and_Community_Life		1	3
Personal_Learning_Plan		0	8
Literacy_for_Work_and_Community_Life		0	9
Workplace_Practices		0	9
Integrated_Learning_II		0	8

Figure 40. Chart: Percentage of NTCET units completed.

Students completed 144 of the total 188 units. This is a completion rate of 77%.

Percentage of NTCET units completed

Non-complete units or no grade
23%
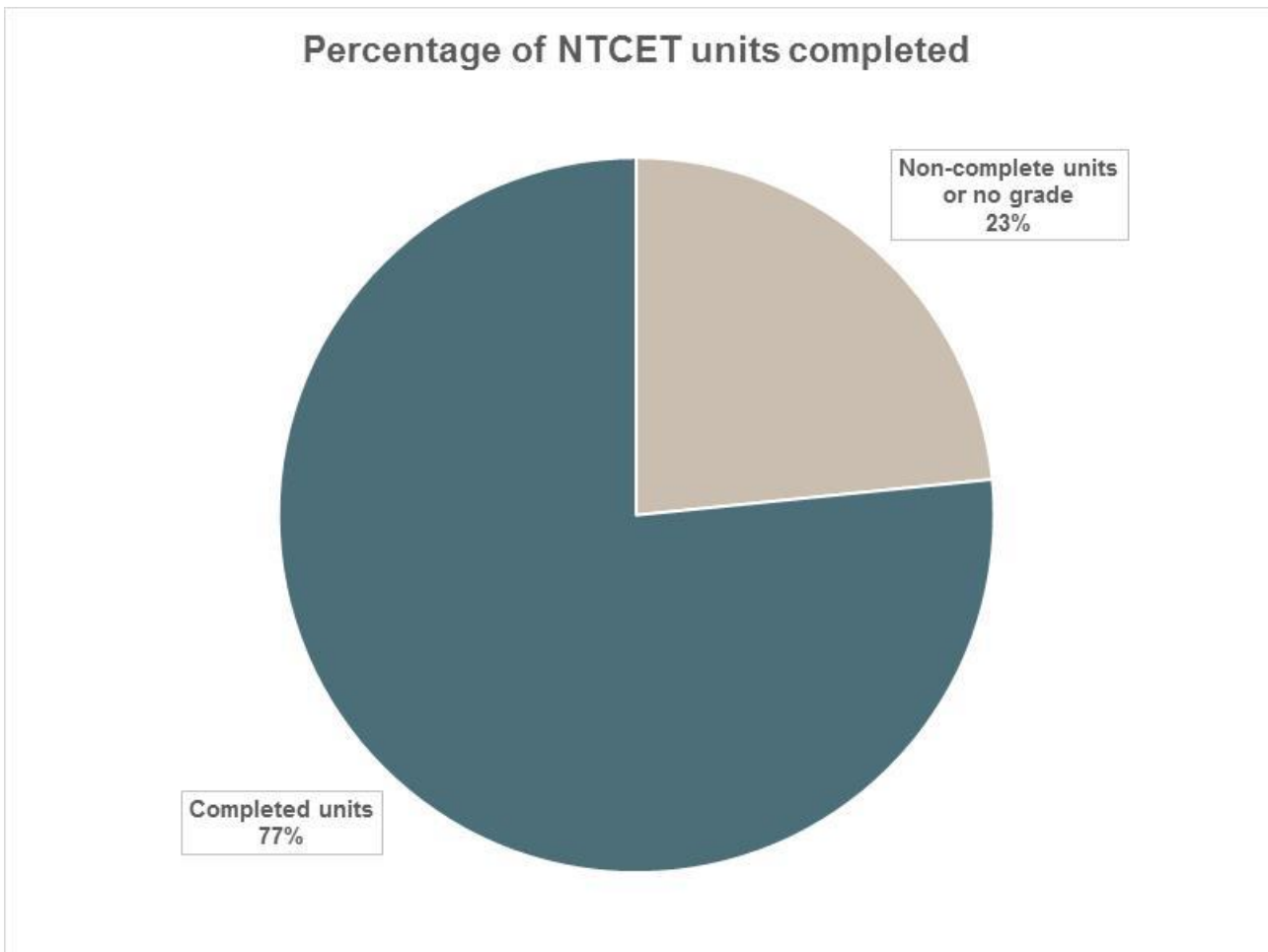
Completed units
77%

Of those units completed, the majority (114 out of 144 units or 79%) were completed with a final grade of 'C' or above.
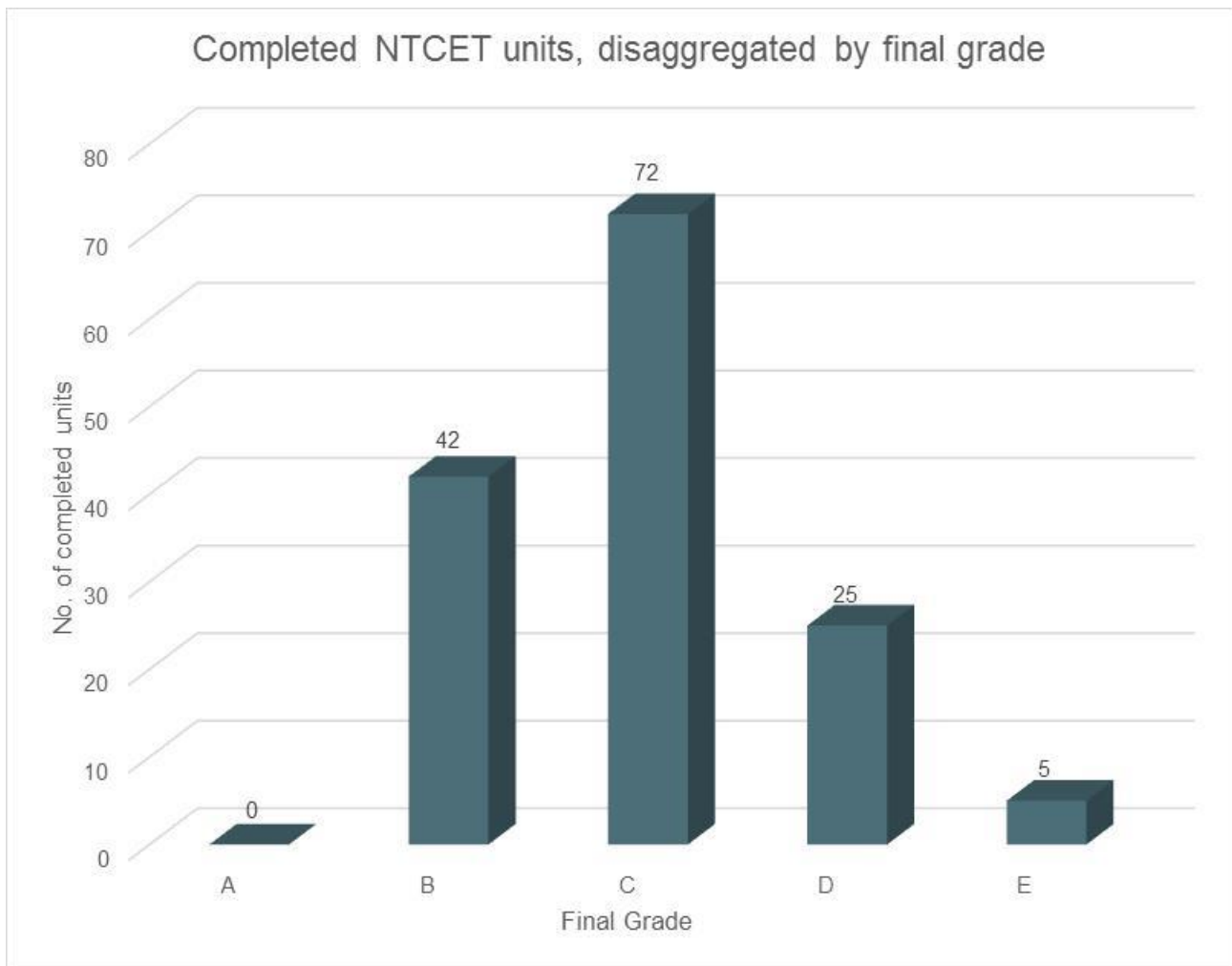
Figure 41. Chart: Completed NTCET units, disaggregated by final grade.

Learning on Country VET participation and outcomes

As noted above, students in Maningrida, Yirrkala, and Galiwinku who undertake VET study work toward competencies of individual units or modules that together comprise the VET qualification. Students may undertake several units or modules at once and may work toward competencies over an extended period of time. It is therefore difficult to gauge student involvement in VET studies by looking simply at completed certificates. While that is an important outcome measure, enrolment in and competencies achieved in units is also important. But data on VET also record information on students who withdraw or do not complete a unit. Significantly, a student who does not complete a unit may, and often does, recommence study and eventually achieve competency.

As shown in figure 42, in 2013 and 2014 in Maningrida, Yirrkala and Shepherdson College (Galiwinku), LoCP participants achieved competency in 43% of VET units, and withdrew or

did not complete 45% of units. The remaining units were continued (12%).[27] These figures represent a percentage of completed and non-completed VET units rather than percentage of participants.

Final grades for VET units, 2013-14. LoC participants at Maningrida, Shepherdson and Yirrkala.

12%

43%

45%

- Competency Achieved   - Continuing Enrolment   - Withdrawn or other non-completed
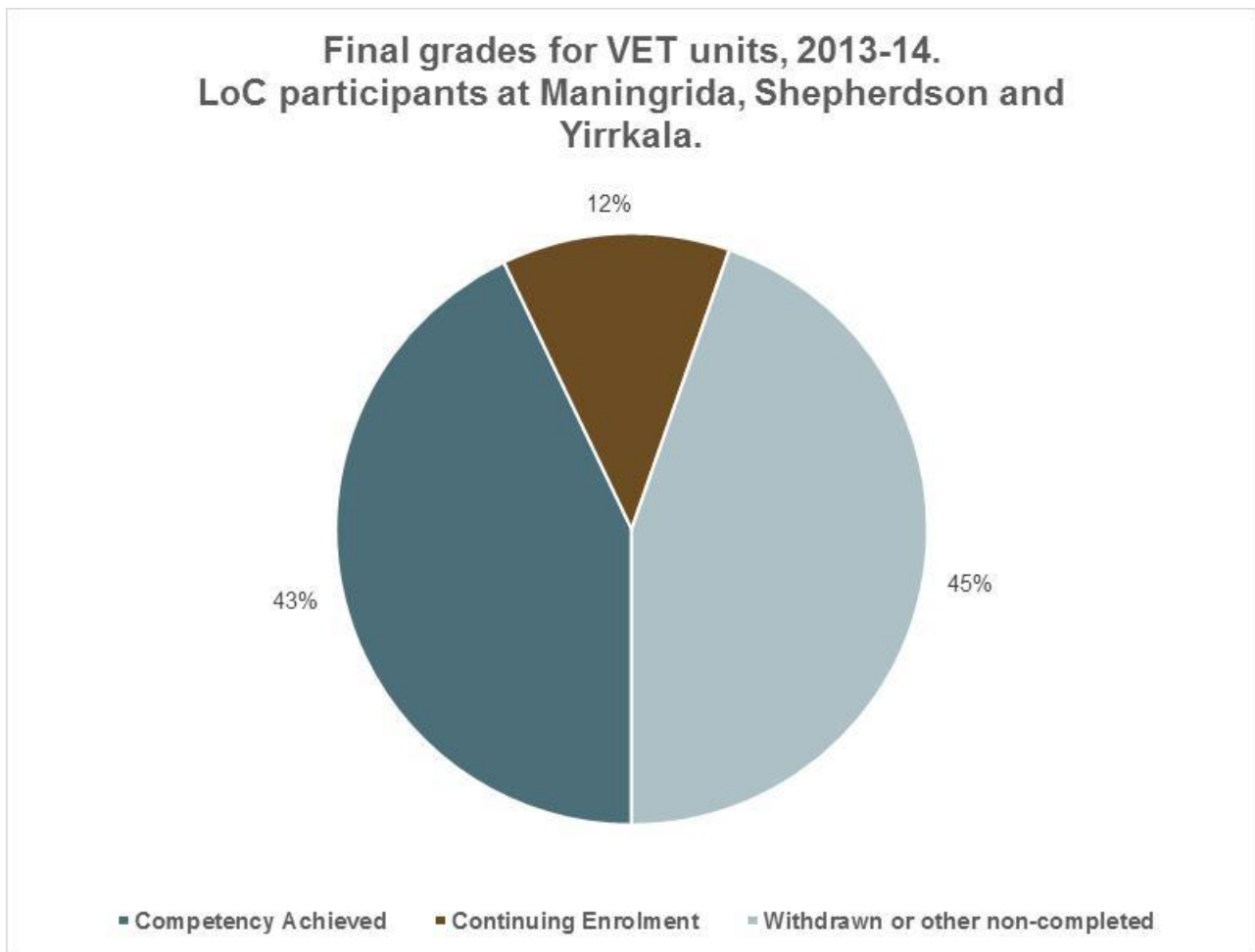
Figure 42. Chart: Final grades for VET units, 2013-14. LoCP participants at Maningrida, Shepherdson and Yirrkala.

VET summary

Certificate 1

Seventeen students completed at least one Certificate 1 course, with the breakdown between case study sites as follows:

- Maningrida: Out of 26 LoCP students, 23 attempted a Certificate 1. There were 9 students who completed one Certificate 1 and 3 students who completed 2 Certificate 1's.

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[27] Anecdotally these completion rates are on par with other VET type programs in similar contexts. Accurate data for comparison were unavailable.

- Shepherdson: Out of 71 LoCP students, 40 attempted a Certificate 1. There were 5 students who completed a Certificate 1.
- Yirrkala: Out of 24 LoCP students, 2 attempted a Certificate 1. There were no students who completed a Certificate 1.

Certificate 2

Five students completed at least one Certificate 2 course. However, the breakdown of enrolments in each case study site shows that many more students attempted a Certificate 2 level course and may have built partial competencies:

- Maningrida: Out of 26 LoCP students, 10 attempted a Certificate 2. There were no students who completed a Certificate 2.
- Shepherdson: Out of 71 LoCP students, 53 attempted a Certificate 2. There were 5 students who completed a Certificate 2.
- Yirrkala: Out of 24 LoCP students, 22 attempted a Certificate 2. There were no students who completed a Certificate 2.

Overall participation, enrolment and attendance rates for Learning on Country Program

There were 308 LoCP participants across all four sites in 2013 and 307 in 2014. The total enrolment for all four sites in 2013 was 1371 and 1393 in 2014. This translates into a LoCP participation rate of 22% in both 2013 and 2014 (see Table 20).

Table 20. Overall number of participants and eligible non-participants by year and community.

Overall number of participants and eligible non-participants by year and community[28]		
	2013	**2014**
Maningrida		
LoCP participants (A) (N)	32	29

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[28] Notes:
(A) Average enrolments for the year for each group.
(B) Participation rate = number of loc participants as a percentage of whole school enrolments.
(C) Derived by adding numbers for Baniyala Garrangali School and Yirrkala Homeland School – there may be some double counting of children if they attended both schools.
(D) Data for the total of all schools were not provided separately so were obtained by adding the results for individual schools. Participant enrolment numbers obtained in this way are lower than total data provided elsewhere for the number of participant attendees for each school and in total for the number of participant attendees, which were 308 (cf 251) for 2013 and 307 (cf 232) for 2014.

Overall number of participants and eligible non-participants by year and community[28]		
Non-LoCP participants (A) (N)	502	542
Whole school enrolments (A)	534	571
Participation rate (B) (%)	6%	5%
Yirrkala		
LoCP participants (A) (N)	46	45
Non-LoCP participants (A) (N)	106	90
Whole school enrolments (A)	152	135
Participation rate (B) (%)	30%	33%
Yirrkala homelands (c)		
LoCP participants (N)	32	31
Non-LoCP participants (N)	156	158
Whole school enrolments	188	189
Participation rate (B) (%)	17%	16%
Galiwinku (Shepherdson College)		
LoCP participants (A) (N)	141	127
Non-LoCP participants (A) (N)	356	371
Whole school enrolments (A)	497	497
Participation rate (B) (%)	28%	26%
Total		
LoCP participants total (D) (N) (as provided)	251	232
Non-LoCP participants (D) (N)	1120	1161
Whole school enrolments (D)	1371	1393
Participation rate (%)	18%	17%

Interpreting the patterns of overall attendance among LoCP participants across the four sites is a difficult task given the varying numbers of participants, the differences in program structures and offerings and the contrasting start timelines and many interruptions. In

addition, as we have seen each site has had to wrestle with different challenges in terms of staff changes, funerals, policy and program reconfigurations and surges in interest and enthusiasm. The system-level data on which the evaluation was to be based, are highly variable and in some places incomplete. Consequently, the following discussion is in many ways premature but we believe there are some indications of impact that are worth exploring.

The overall attendance rates for LoCP participants across the four sites appears to have been higher than among non-participants in the early stage of the program. Only in 2014 did the attendance rates of non-participants reach the same level, an artefact perhaps of the Remote Schools Attendance Scheme.
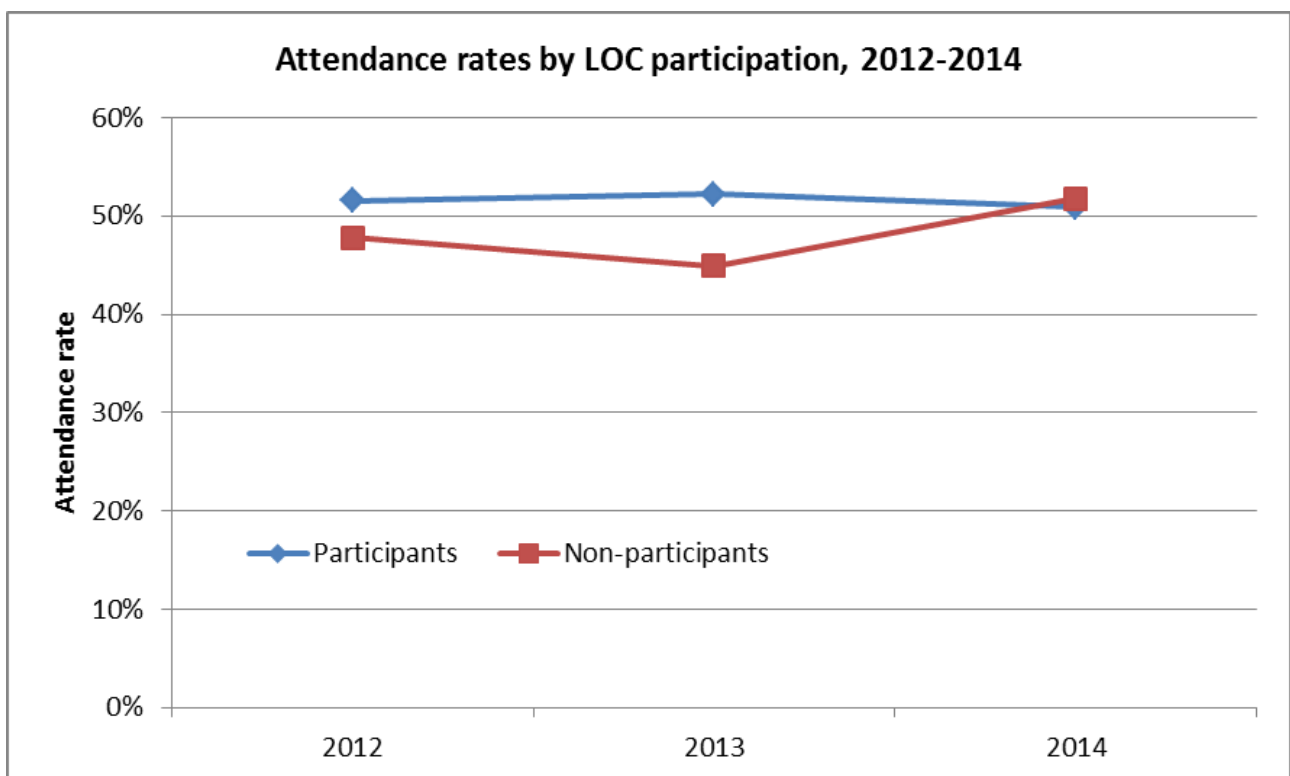
Figure 43. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation, 2012-2014.

This apparent higher rate of attendance for LoCP participants is even clearer when the data are separated by gender. Females in 2012 who would eventually participate in LoCP attended at a higher rate than others and their rate of attendance remained above the rate of non-participants for both 2013 and 2014.
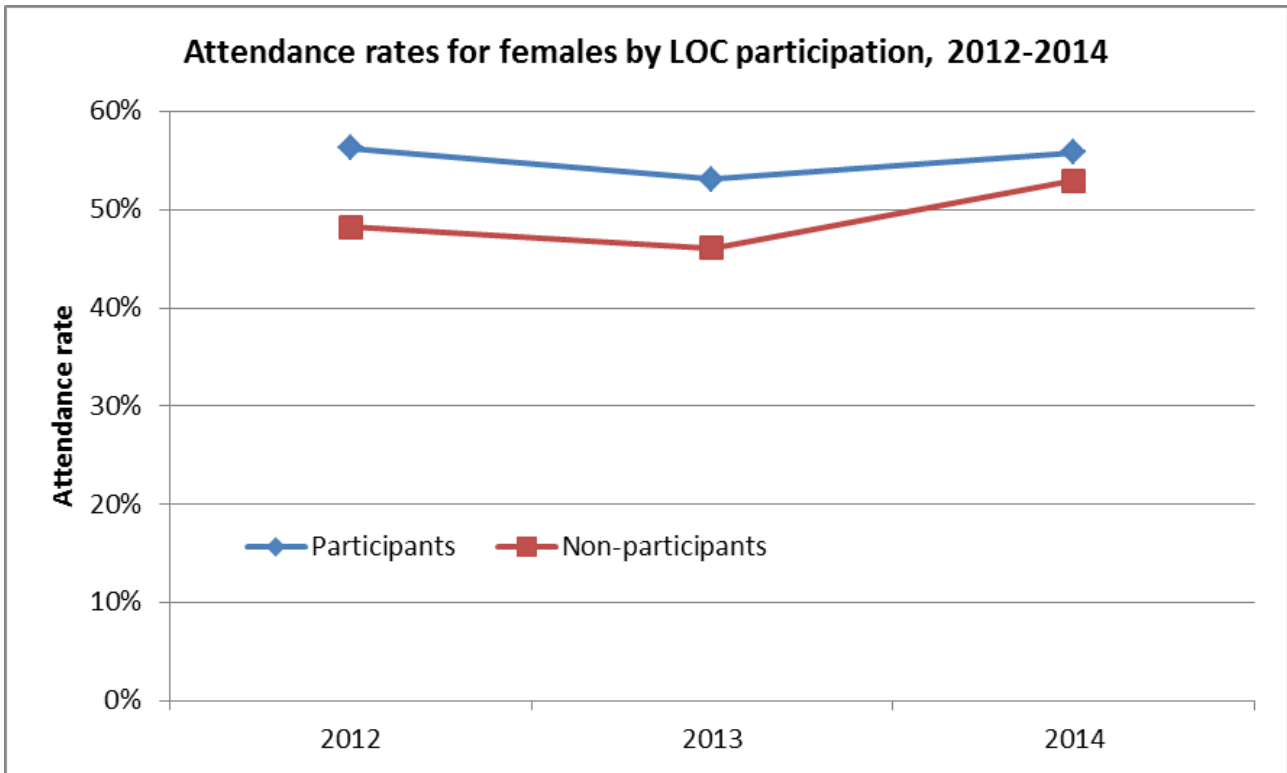
Figure 44. Chart: Attendance rates for females by LoCP participation, 2012-2014.

Male LoCP participants, in contrast to females, attended at a higher rate in 2013 but that rate declined and fell below the rates of non-participants in 2014. It is difficult to know if these changes, all relatively small, are meaningful.
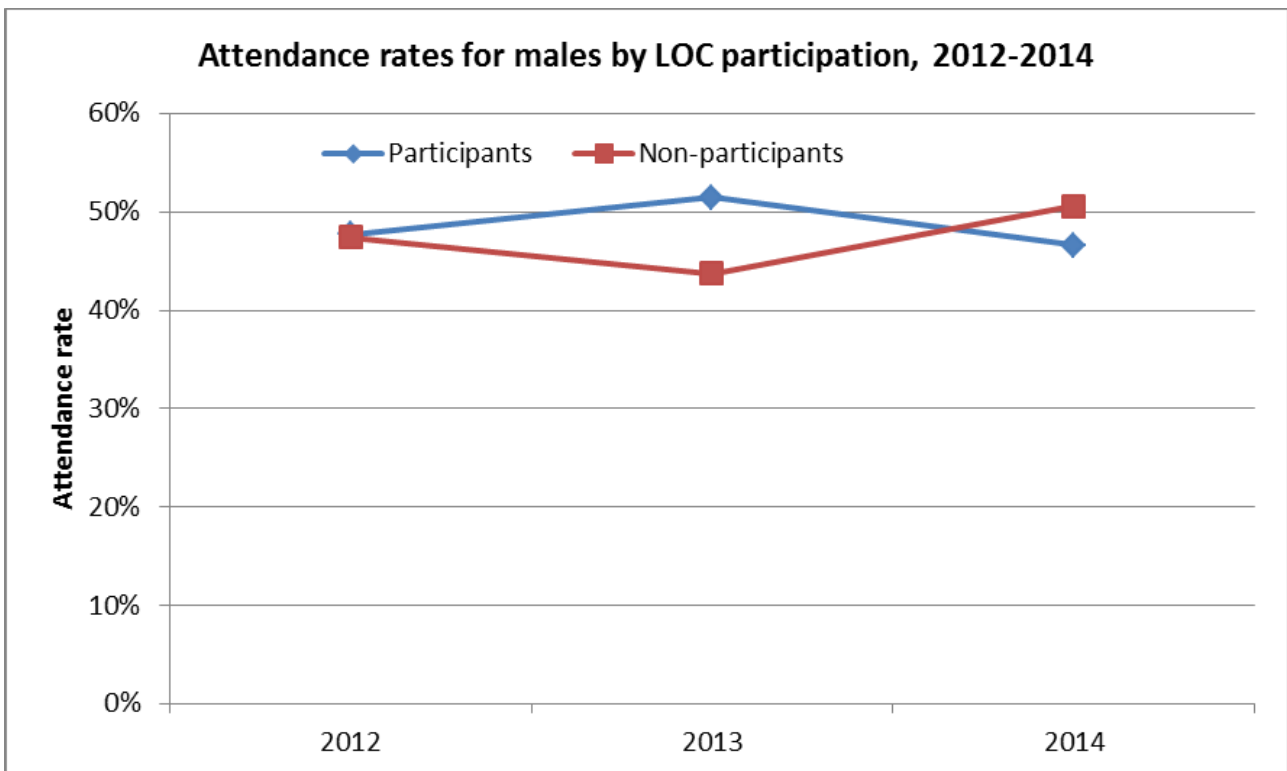
Figure 45. Chart: Attendance rates for males by LoCP participation, 2012-2014.

The data on participation by intensity mirror what was seen in the individual sites: high intensity participants in LoCP increased their attendance over time. While high intensity non-participants' attendance rates also increase between 2013 and 2014 it is difficult to assess the reasons for that increase. It is intriguing that low intensity students' attendance rated dropped fairly sharply between 2013 and 2014. It could be that the Remote Schools Attendance Scheme pulled up the attendance for all students. Or it may be that community and school enthusiasm pulled up the attendance rates for the most engaged students, even if they were not themselves participants.

The qualitative data we gathered suggested that both of these factors could have contributed to the patterns observed. But interviews with community members, teachers, principals, Rangers and students affirm that the LoCP affected attendance in a very positive way. As one of the school principals pointed out, LoCP is has proven to be very effective in keeping more kids in school who were attending but would normally lose interest and leave; it is, however, not able to retain those students who struggle and have never been good attenders.
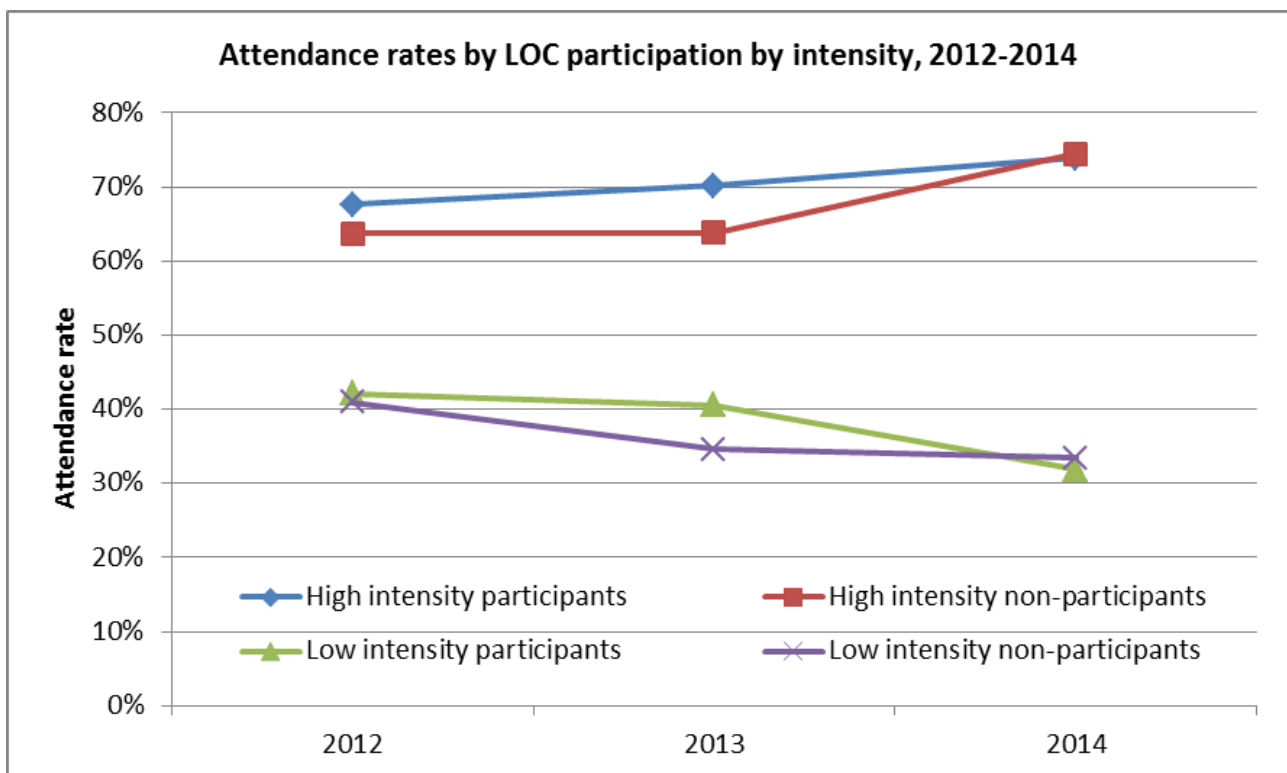
Figure 46. Chart: Attendance rates by LoCP participation by intensity, 2012-2014.

Summary of Portal data

The Portal, described in detail earlier, has enormous potential and could be a powerful tool for capturing details about activities, participants, and contextual features of Learning on Country over time and across numerous sites. For the purposes of this evaluation, the

instrument proved to be of uneven value. The input was sporadic and of variable quality. However, it is still useful for the glimpse of activities it provides. What follows are some summaries of various dimensions of the project not otherwise available.

The figure below, Targeted Student Group as Proportion of all LoCP Activities, depicts the engagement of LoCP students in activities according to their position. For example, 61% of reported LoCP activities targeted senior year students. Middle school students were the next largest group at 20 %, while Primary students were engaged with 9% of the reported activities. Activities involving primary, middle and senior years together account for 7%. Disengaged youth were the specific target of about 3% of LoCP activities reported on the Portal.[29]
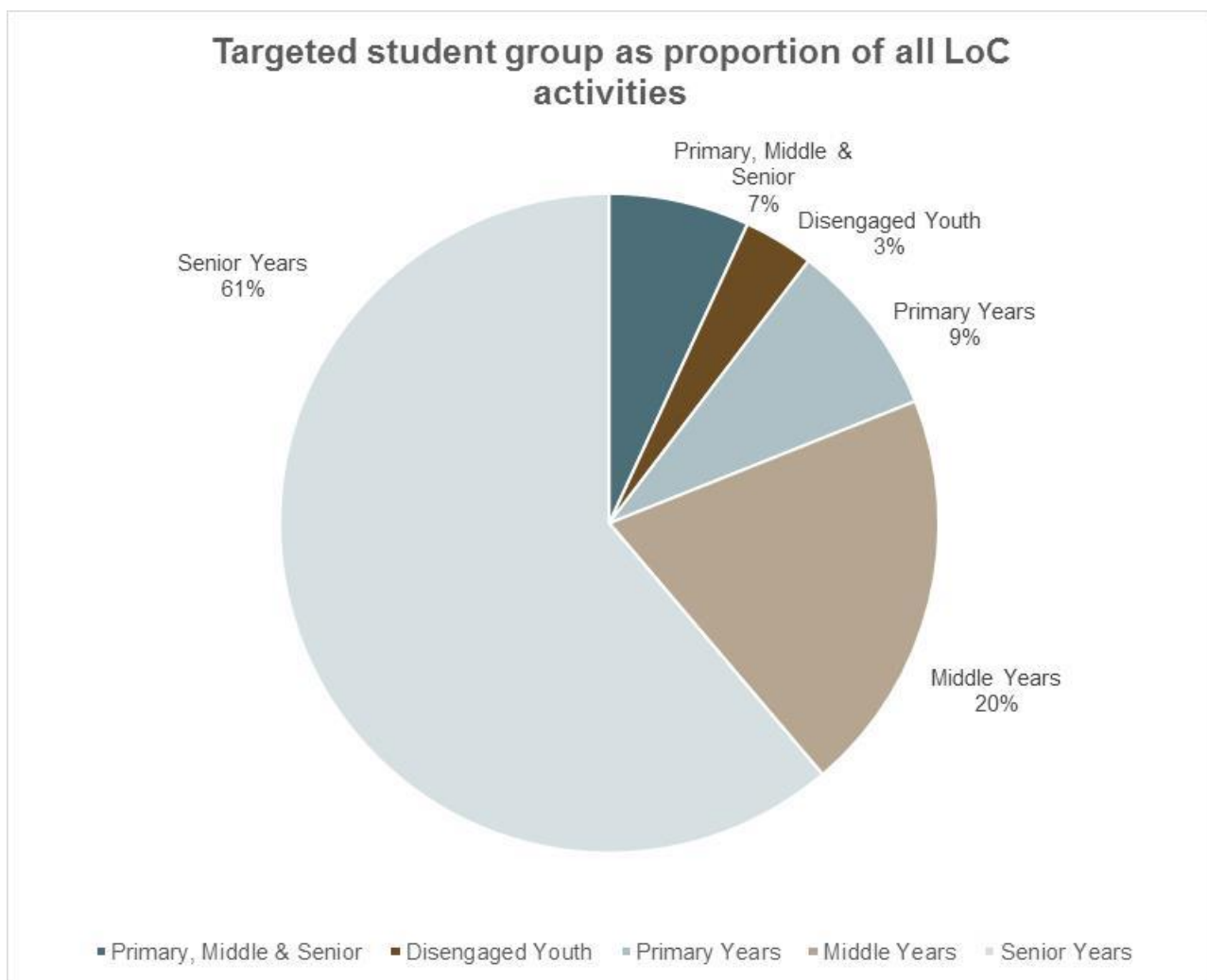
Figure 47. Chart: Targeted student group as proportion of all LoCP activities.

The next figure, Targeted Student Group for LoCP Activities, disaggregated by School, provides a view of those targeted groups as they differ from school to school. Most

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[29] In the Northern Territory the middle years of schooling represent years 7-10 and the senior years represent years 11-12.

noticeably, Galiwinku, while emphasising the senior years, had otherwise distributed efforts across all ages. Yirrkala Homelands activities are aimed at both senior students and the whole of school. Yirrkala school strongly emphases the senior students in its LoCP activities.
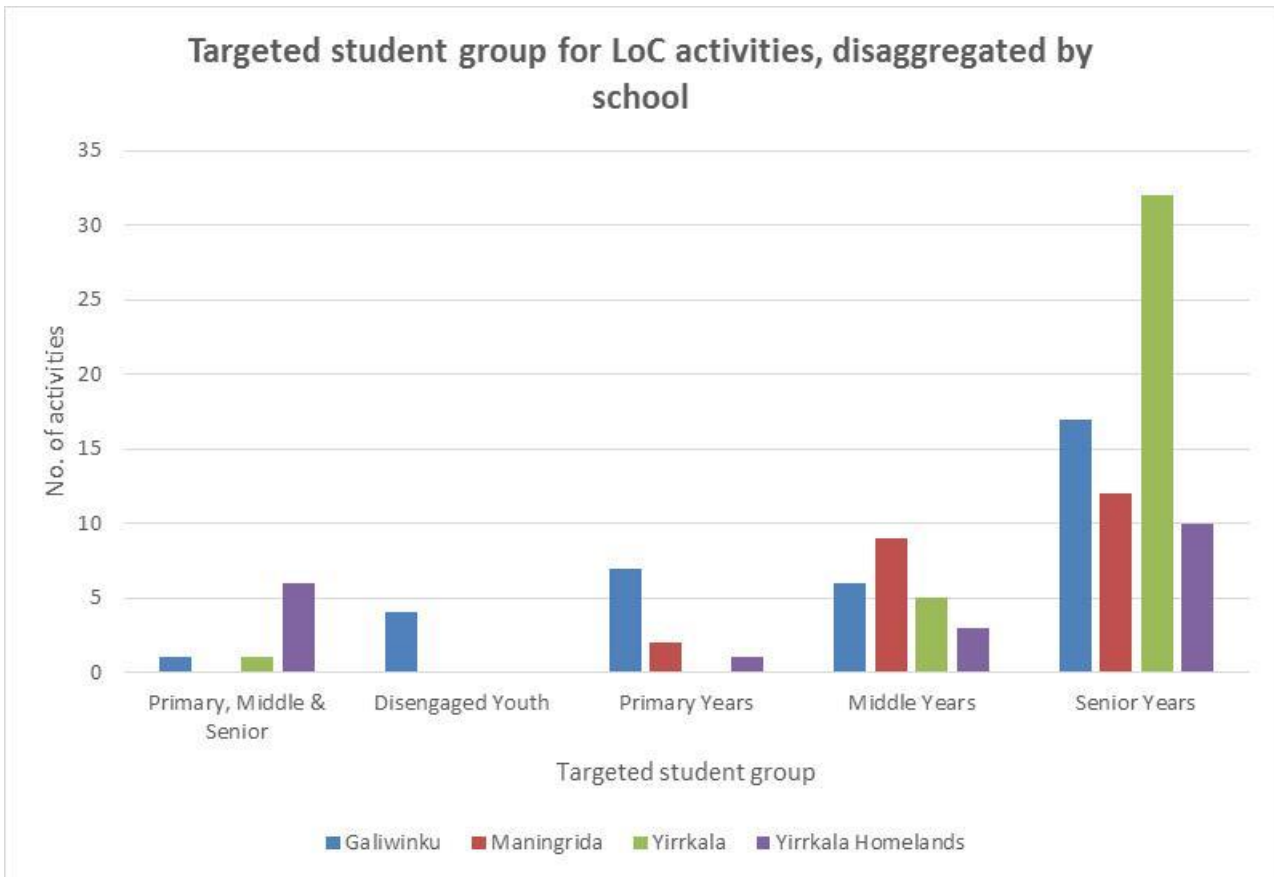
Figure 48. Chart: Targeted student group for activities, disaggregated by school.

In the next chart we can see a breakdown of reported activities across the four sites in terms of their relevance to VET certificate 1 and Certificate 2 courses. While 62% of reported activities were not directly related to VET, 38% were. Given the heavy emphasis on VET as the project took shape, this confirms the breadth of other Learning on Country activities and the significance of those activities for non-VET and younger students.

LoC activities linked to VET courses, as percentage of total activities

9%

29%

62%

- Certificate 1
- Certificate 2
- Non-VET activities
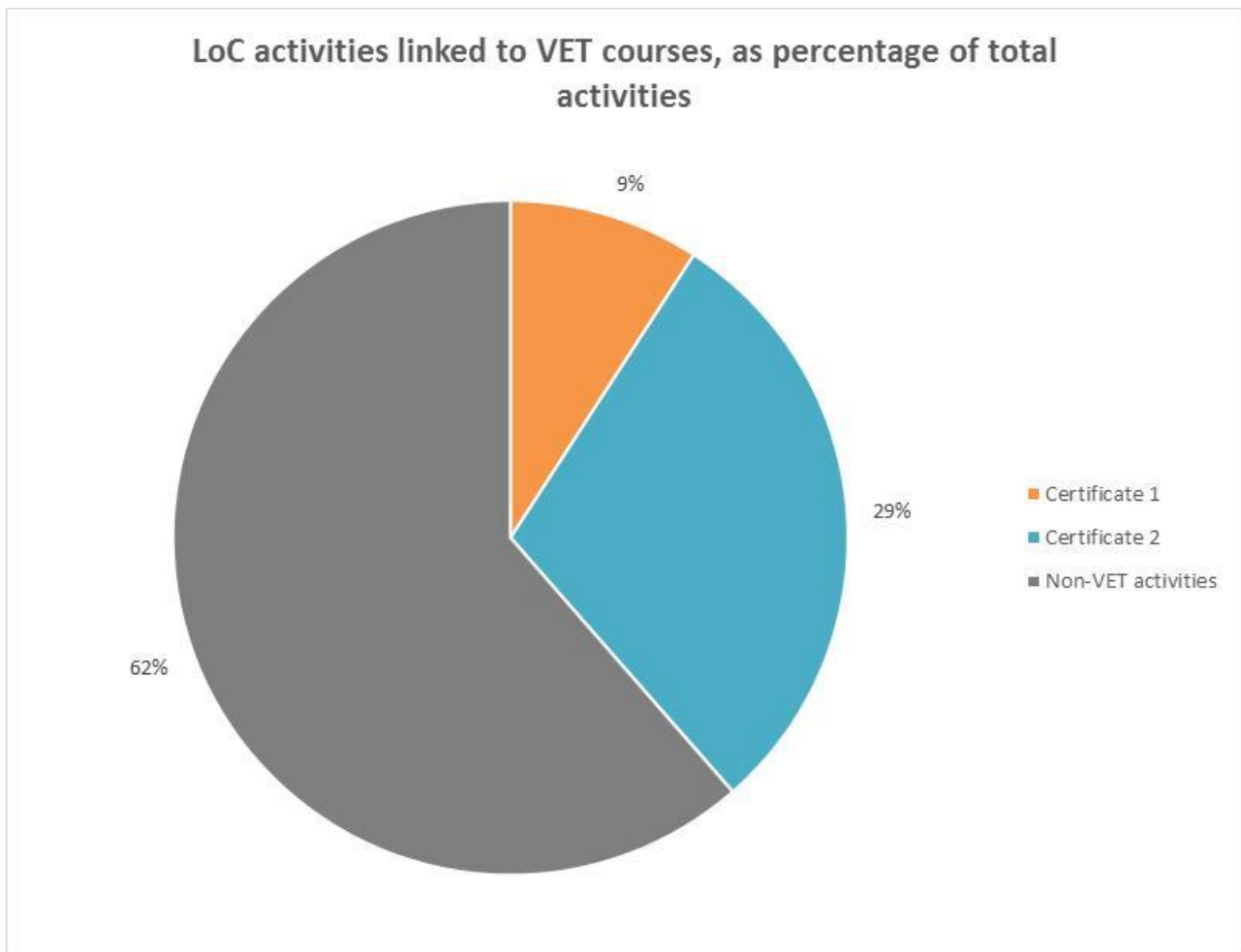
Figure 49. Chart: LoCP activities linked to VET courses, as percentage of total activities.

The final figure, Consultation with Community Members, as Proportion of all LoCP activities, shows clearly how important community consultation is in the program. A clear majority of activities (65%) involve consultation with community members. This consultation can take many forms, from gathering ideas in a local steering committee meeting, to seeking permission to take children onto country, to carrying out the logistical planning for a fieldtrip or overnight camp. Given the importance of community engagement to education in general, this chart provides a powerful message about the way in which LoCP operates and perhaps a hint as to why so many people in all participating communities see the program as 'theirs'.

Consultation with community members, as proportion of all LoCP activities
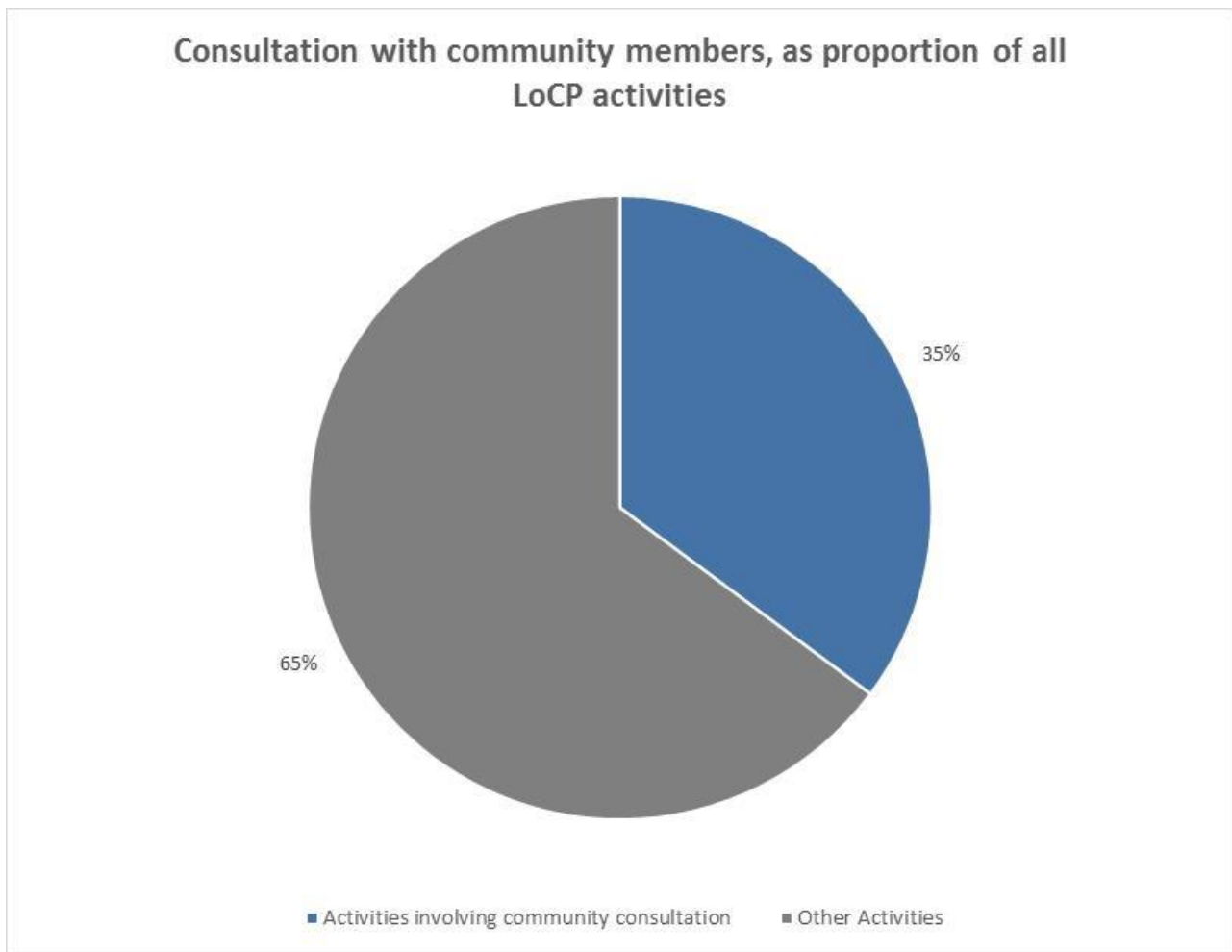
Figure 50. Chart: Consultation with community members, as proportion of all LoCP activities.

LoCPs are demonstrating positive partnerships with corresponding community schools and a commitment to the project objectives through working with local Ranger programs. The LoCP model emphasises pathways for education and future employment for Indigenous students that is visible to their families and communities. The LoCP has encouraged the development of improved relationships with stakeholder communities, schools and Ranger programs which has become integral to the success of the LoCP. The trust and commitment established between all stakeholders is the foundation for LoCPs future success and longevity.

Educational and employment pathways

Since its inception, the trial of the LoCP has had a heavy focus on the pathways and employment possibilities that the program may produce. In particular, this focus has been a driver of funding and has also been a very specific aim of the government. Towards this end, in the early stages of the implementation of the LoCP a project officer was engaged by DEEWR to undertake a review of the possible linkages LoCP could make to employment in the trial sites. The project officer conducted 50 interviews and held

discussions with employers and other stakeholders. The consultation was intended to garner the across the four communities of Maningrida, Galiwin'ku and the Yirrkala/Lahynapuy Homelands and Nhulunbuy region over the six month period of May – November 2013. The review was intended to identify employment opportunities, skill sets required and training and work experience assistance employers could provide as well as to map potential employment pathways. The review found that there were a number of job opportunities that were available and suitable to LoCP participants beyond school. These included employment in horticulture, conservation and land management and fisheries; human services in child and aged care; customs surveillance; mechanics; tourism, hospitality services and 'other' cultural activities.

In addition the review found that:

- employers were aware of the LoCP program, its focus upon pathways development and the types of student outcomes that were being achieved;
- the vast majority of the employers were interested in employing future LoCP students;
- employers identified work opportunities for LoCP school leavers and the skills expected;
- some employers expressed a willingness to conduct specific in-house training for students involved in employment or a traineeship;
- the vast majority of employers and prospective employers were willing to be involved in school organised work experience programs and LoCP

While the review provided the LoCP program with some information regarding pathways and increased employer's knowledge and understanding of LoCP during the consultation, the evaluation team was made aware that generally the exercise was a 'missed opportunity' to map solid pathways to the project. In particular, the review failed to identify a raft of potential activities, higher education and training options and employment options that LoCP students could potentially access beyond and within their local communities. For example the mapping of potential employment options within in Maningrida at Figure 53 provide a wide range of possible pathways that could be connected to LoCP.
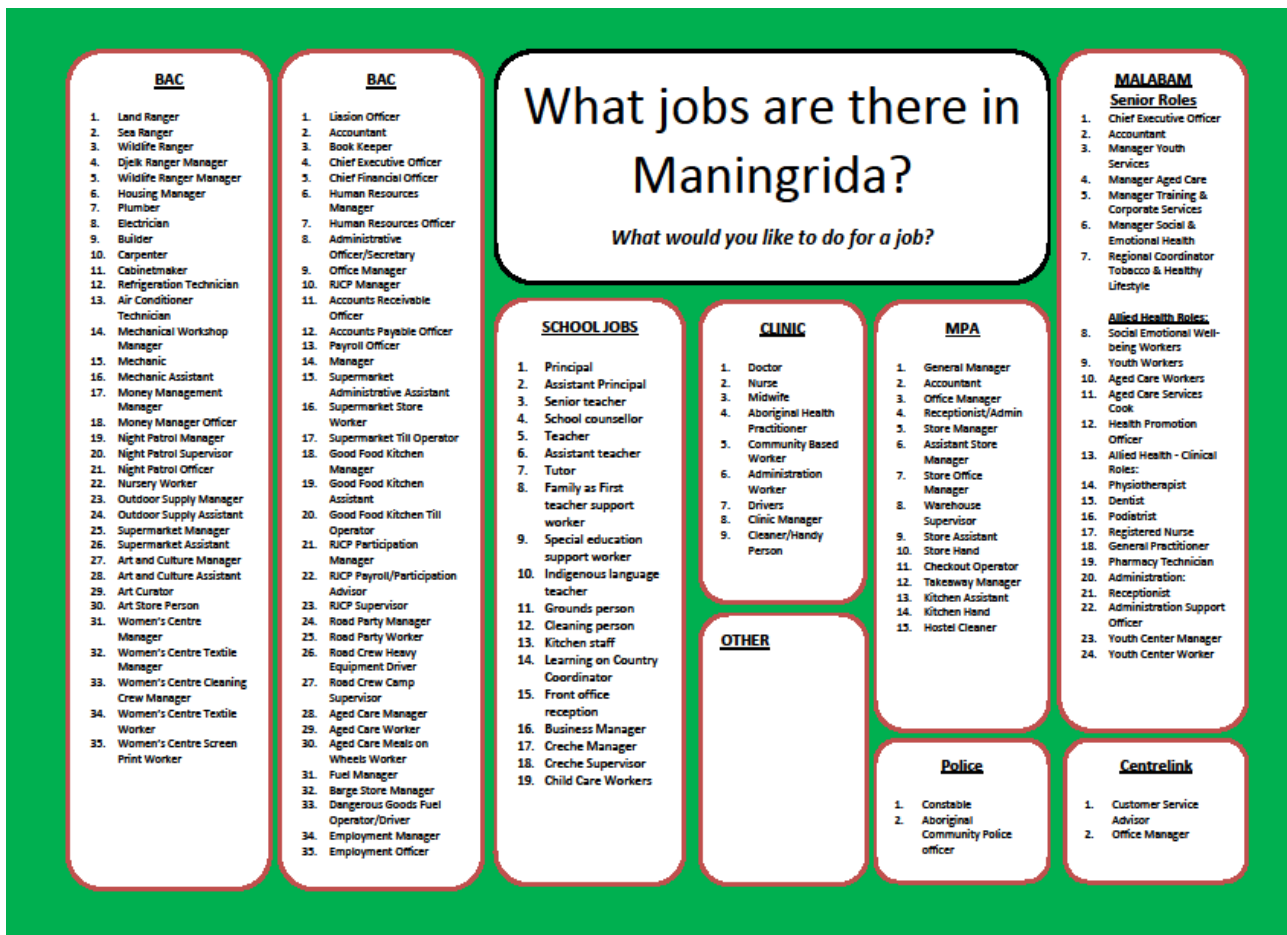
Figure 51. Image: Maningrida employment chart. Source: Maningrida College.

Equally, it was felt by some of the people we interviewed that the concept of a pathway in this context was ill defined and that there needed to be an explicit recognition that in the Indigenous domain a pathway to a full and productive life might include employment as just one component. That is to say, that fulfilling customary and cosmological obligations to kin, clan and country might also be real and valid pathways for a young Indigenous man or woman. Similarly, there was initially some lack of understanding by some stakeholders that LoCP was not just about becoming a Ranger. Having said that an employment aspiration survey conducted in Maningrida found that becoming a Ranger is certainly a highly desirable option for many young people (see Figure 52).
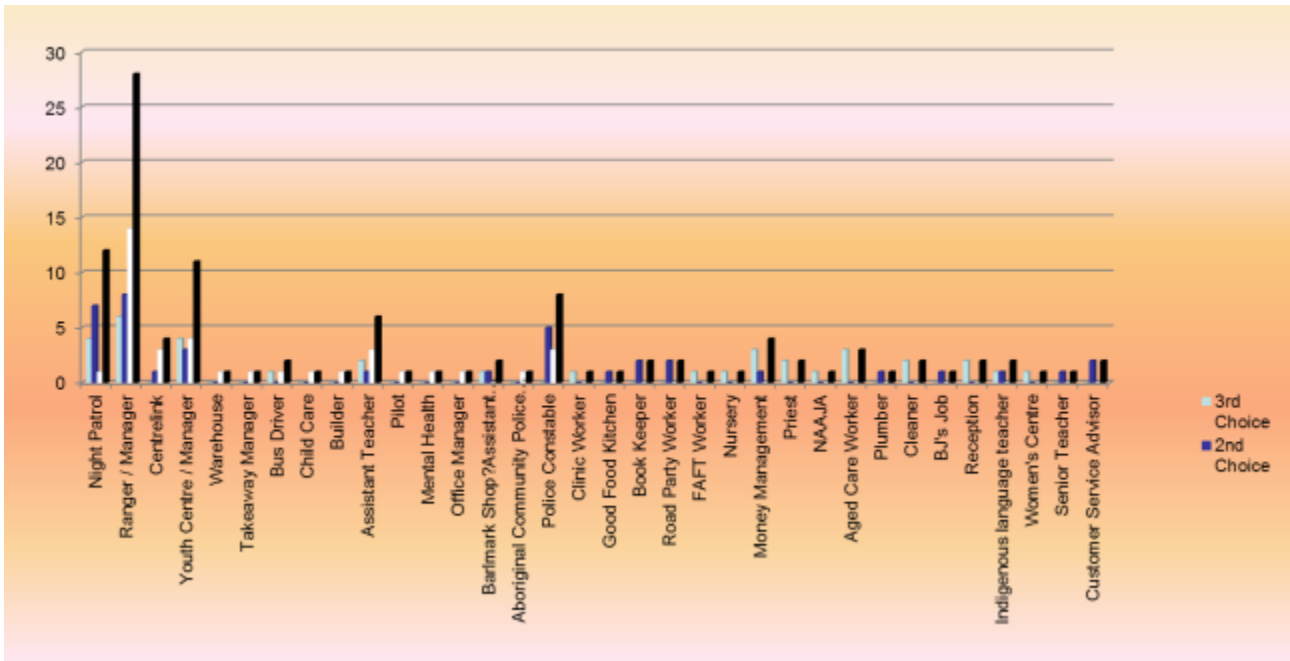
Figure 52. Image: Survey of student employment aspirations 2014. Source: Maningrida College.

In addition, the LoCP certainly provides a very strong pathway through school into Ranger work as demonstrated by Figure 53.
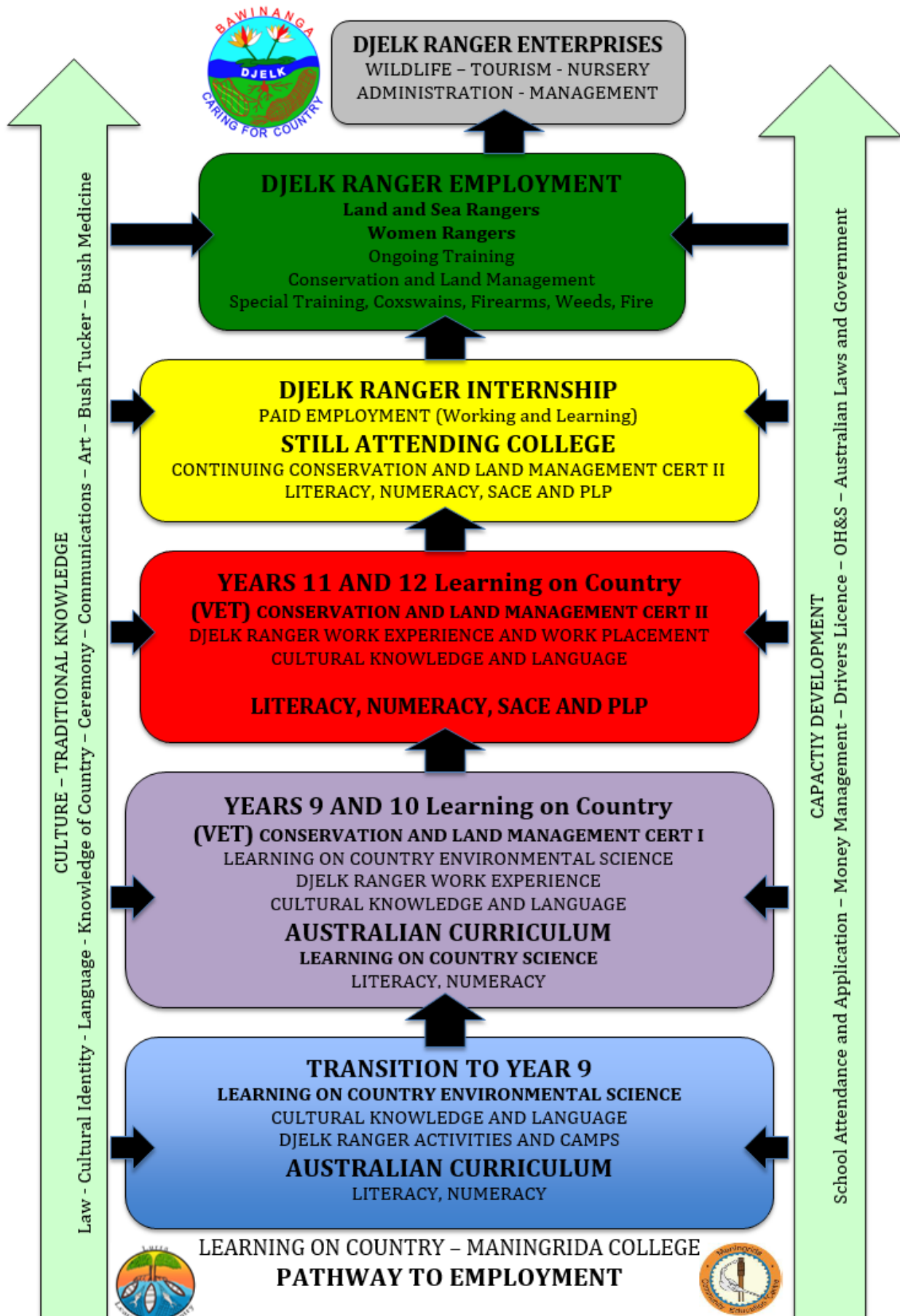
Figure 53. Image: LoCP pathway process schematic.

While the development of strong pathways for LoCP in this project had some initial challenges in terms of understandings and breadth, it is the finding of the evaluation team that the LoCP has been demonstrably successful in the area of engaging students and ex-students in both full and part time employment. Each of the sites has managed to exit at least some students into full time employment. Four LoCP students exited into traineeships and then in to full time employment at the Maningrida site. One LoCP student exited into a traineeship, and one into full time employment at the Galiwinku site. At the Yirrkala site one LoCP student graduated through year 12 and is employed full time at the Arts Centre, two LoCP students are employed at Dhimurru and five other LoCP students have exited to full time jobs directly related to their LoCP VET courses. In such a short time, this is a remarkable achievement given the notoriously difficult challenges a pathway through school into employment can present in the remote contexts of the trial sites. In the same vein, the LoCP has certainly made demonstrable impacts in fulfilling the want by communities for students to have access to opportunity for intergenerational transfer of knowledge and to learn about pathways towards customary development. Not with standing these successes it is obvious that the LoCP has untapped potential to grow its ability to provide pathways to employment. There are a raft of exciting possibilities in environmental science, Customs, AQIS, education, health and other government and non-government service agencies. The potential to build on the initial success is immense.

Ranger group capacity development

In all Ranger groups the evaluation team was able to see evidence of capacity development as a result of Ranger involvement in LoCP. In many cases this entailed two or three key Rangers taking on responsibilities for teaching, planning, designing and delivering LoCP activities in their local communities. The effects of LoCP on Ranger capacity can be seen in a number of ways. First, a key component of a Ranger's work is the intergenerational transfer of knowledge in the pursuit of local social and environmental outcomes. This is illustrated by the following comment by a senior Ranger:

> *LoCP adds value to Ranger work. Part of Range work is to facilitate the transfer of Indigenous knowledge and LoCP allows them to do this by working with the school.*

However, some of the unintended benefits of involvement in LoCP go beyond this. As one Ranger coordinator noted:

> *Ranger groups occupy a challenging interface and I think there are benefits flowing from participation in LoCP that go beyond supporting our role in intergenerational knowledge transfer and to the very core of what we are trying to achieve in delivering cultural and environmental services*

to our constituents. Every action we take is a negotiation and LoCP helps
to position our Yolngu leaders more appropriately within our work place
and provides a valuable opportunity for cultural learning amongst our
Ngapaki staff as well.

Second, we were able to see, and were repeatedly told by both Rangers themselves and by the wider community, that LoCP was providing a clear opportunity for leadership development. This was demonstrated to the evaluation team in a number of ways at all of the sites visited. An excellent example we observed was the way in which a quite unruly class of students became instantly attentive the moment a senior female Ranger walked in to the classroom. It was made clear to us by both the students and the teacher that this response was not unusual when Rangers visited the school as students have a very high level of respect for Rangers. In this way, senior Rangers provide leadership and become role models for both students and for less senior Rangers.

In addition, the evaluation team observed that Rangers were often highly prepared for LoCP lessons, and were developing higher order skills in public speaking and the use of technology both on country and in classrooms.

In all the trial sites, Ranger groups were very clear that benefits flowed from LoCP directly into their organisations, especially regarding community engagement and professional development of Ranger groups.

Progress and challenges of the Learning on Country Program governance model

The governance model was carefully designed and negotiated with the assistance of a very experienced facilitator but the process was arduous and time consuming. While the model was being developed, the participants were also working with and through government to secure resources and this meant that aims of the program shifted and changed over time. In addition, while there was a core of interest and commitment, there was also some variation in belief about what could and should be part of a Learning on Country Program. Ultimately the governance model was shaped to accommodate that variation but there remained some tensions about the direction of the program as well as some variation in levels in interest, commitment and experience among the participants representing the four sites.

Ultimately, the LoCP Steering Committee became the key governance body for the project. It was a very effective structure in many respects:

- Open, and democratic it served well in building some unity of purpose both between interested government departments and among the sites. That unity of purpose resulted in significant funding being found to trial the approach.

- The process of building a governance structure resulted in the development of some very useful guidelines and documents to assist in building local LoCP programs including: Terms of Reference, background documents explaining the purpose of a Memorandum of Understanding, a template for developing a local MOU, a model for a local operational plan, a proposal for an evaluation framework, and a range of other useful checklists and governance-related materials.

But the LoCPSC model also revealed some shortcomings:

- The LoCPSC Chair was elected from among the members and that role had no real power over the constituent groups. As a result, representatives of the four sites worked together when it suited them and operated autonomously when it didn't.

- The LoCPSC had no formal Executive Officer, with the role being filled by the Executive Officer of one of the partner Ranger organisations. While he filled that role as best he could, it was at considerable cost in terms of his time and energy. Again, because that role was voluntary, that person had no formal power to direct activities or monitor performance.

- In retrospect, many project participants (Principals, teachers, Rangers, LoCP Coordinators), found there were relatively few opportunities to meet with counterparts from the other sites but on the few occasions they did, usually in meetings appended to formal Steering Committee meetings, they found those link ups to be extremely rewarding and productive. But the governance structure was not really intended to facilitate such collaboration.

- The operations of the LoCPSC over time exposed the weakness of relying so heavily on the leadership of the school principal. In at least one case, the principal really never grasped the potential or the responsibility of leading the Learning on Country Program and the local version of the program suffered through a period of drift and ineffective communication. Time was lost and the program had difficulty recovering. In another case, the Principal left the leadership to an Assistant who was deeply ambivalent about the program and so missed opportunities to progress the approach in that community.

At its core, the governance model has some great strengths but requires some important modifications and changes in emphasis to support future success in Learning on Country.

Discussion and ways forward

Summary of program findings

The following summary gives an overview of the evaluation. It draws together all findings from each of the case study sites and incorporates ethnographic data, data from the LoCP Portal and a range of system-level data collected and analysed during the life of the evaluation. A total of 308 students were designated as participants in the LoCP in 2013 and 307 students were designated as participants in 2014. Individual metrics for each site are provided in the case studies. The evaluation team has mapped the progress of the LoCP against the program logic model provided. A logic model is useful in tracing out the impact of a program or project by showing how components of a program contribute to a set of anticipated outcomes. We identified 13 key outcomes represented in the Learning on Country Program logic (see Table 21).

Table 21. Learning on Country Program logic.

Learning on Country Program logic[30]						
	Resources / inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes		Impact
	Your planned work			Your intended results		
				Short term	➔ Long term	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Learning on Country Program Steering Committee (LoCPSC) and Government Working Group (GWG)	Local Learning on Country Program Steering Committees (LLoCPSC) established for each of the four programs with four local operational plans	LoCPSC, GWG and LLOCPS work together to steer and coordinate LoCP activities	LoCPSC, GWG and LLoCPS provide strong governance to manage a continuous improvement process to ensure LoCP objectives/targets are being met	Local governance, leadership and external partnerships support local aspirations and goals for education and employment		
B	LoCP Overview Framework and Operational	LoCP coordinator, school VET co-ordinators and Ranger	Natural and cultural resource management based	Improved attendance and uptake of educational and vocational	An increase in students progressing to further study	Increased capacity of schools in LoCP communities	

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[30] Extracted from the LoCP Framework and Operational Plan.

	Learning on Country Program logic[30]						
	Plan developed with partners	group staff map activities to appropriate Conservation and Land Management (CLM) modules	educational activities are undertaken in both classroom based study sessions and field based sessions and workshops	opportunities including those currently disengaged from school		to address and meet the needs of Indigenous communities	
C	Funding, employment of coordinators and signed MOUs	Completed MOUs and implementation plans with all 4 Ranger/school groups	Potential employment pathways and targets with the numerous employers are scoped and developed	Integrated existing work experience and structured work placements provide pathways to employment or further study	An increased pool of confident, numerate and literate " work ready" Indigenous people	Local people in LoCP sites are employed (many of these in local community jobs)	Increased life choices, cultural, social and economic health available to participants
D	Successfully functioning Ranger groups	Rangers work collaboratively across age groups with senior Traditional owners increasing their understanding of leadership, education and training	Increased knowledge and skills of Ranger staff, particularly with regard to leadership and inter-generational transfer of knowledge	Control, use and sanctioning of Indigenous knowledge, skills and understandings are in the hands of the proper senior custodians, senior Traditional owners and senior Aboriginal leaders	Community capacity extends and formalises existing activities that already incorporate Indigenous Australian and Western knowledge systems	Increase capacity of LoCP Ranger groups to deliver natural cultural resource management (NCMRM) outcomes	
E	Evaluation and senior advisors	Critical baseline data and LoCP monitoring and reporting established	Formative advice provided to guide implementation and project improvement	The evidence base demonstrates what works, for who and why in the program	The further development and consolidation of "both ways" teaching, learning and evaluation		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

A summary overview of progress toward each outcome is discussed below:

Short term outcomes:

- Outcome 4A refers to the provision of a strong governance mechanism involving the Learning on Country Program Steering Committee, the Government Working

Group and the Local Learning on Country Program Steering Committees in each of the sites. This three tier approach has yielded substantial progress toward this outcome with increasingly rigorous monitoring of movement toward objectives and targets. Each of the three tiers have very different roles and responsibilities and in the initial stages of the project it was not always clear to all the participants who was responsible for what. To a large degree that was understandable given the LoCP was new to all. As the project progressed the overarching Steering Committee took a more prominent and directive role and facilitated discussion and analysis of challenges emerging both in individual sites and for the project overall. The Steering Committee meetings were important events in this regard but they also functioned to build trust among the project participants and enabled effective sharing of advice and support.

- Improved attendance and educational/vocational engagement are the aims of outcome 4B. As described elsewhere, there were indications of some positive impacts and some progress in the short to medium term.

- There was some progress made toward integration of work experience and structured work placements (4C), but it is too soon to know to what degree that progress is meaningful for the long term.

- Outcome 4D relates to the degree to which Indigenous knowledge, skills and understanding were part of the LoCP program. There is strong evidence from all sites that good progress has been made. In each site the evaluation revealed, in both observations and documentation, that there was ongoing engagement with Indigenous rangers and other local Indigenous knowledge experts. This occurred 'on country' in camps, excursions and fieldtrips, as well as in the school. This outcome was also facilitated by the tradition of the 'Galtha Rom' curriculum that underpins much of the 'both ways education' throughout the region.

- The development of an evidence base to demonstrate what works for whom and why (Outcome 4E) is a long term aim of the program. The difficulties in documenting and analysing such evidence has been a continuing theme of the evaluation, particularly in relation to quantitative data. However, some progress has been made. Systems continue to be refined and these should enhance this evidence base over time.

Medium term outcomes:

- Local governance and leadership (Outcome 5A) has grown strongly over the short history of the project and local goals and aspirations are being clearly articulated in

all four sites. While those goals in relation to education and employment (which started from a low base of opportunity) have yet to be fully realised in all fours sites, good progress is being made overall.

- The Learning on Country Program evolved with an emphasis on increasing student participation in further study (Outcome 5B). At this relatively early stage of the program, only limited progress has been made.

- Outcome 5C refers to the program goal of contributing to the development of a pool of confident, numerate and literate young people who are 'work ready'. Again, it is too early to make a summative judgement but there is strong anecdotal evidence from all sites that some progress is being made in this regard.

- One of the outcomes (5D) that is most readily apparent among the program outcomes is the positive ways in which the local communities have embraced Learning on Country as a validation and pathway into work and study in a way that complements and formalises existing activities. One of the concrete outcomes of this is the further development and consolidation of 'both ways' teaching, learning and evaluation (Outcome 5E). Good progress is being made in terms of each of these desired outcomes.

Long term outcomes:

- A long term outcome the evaluation hoped to find was an increased capacity of schools to address and meet the needs of Indigenous communities (6B). This is an ongoing goal of all schools, and one that requires a longer lens to monitor that capacity over time. The evaluation data up to now shows good progress toward this outcome by all four sites. The Learning on Country Program is well designed to meet that outcome because it is based so solidly on a partnership between Indigenous Ranger groups and the school, and because it welcomes and incorporates views and practical participation by local Indigenous community members.

- The employment of local people (Outcome 6C) is another long term outcome that will need to be monitored over time. It was never expected that the Learning on Country Program could achieve significant outcomes related to employment in the short term. However, and unexpectedly, there has been good progress on this outcome in some of the sites. In Maningrida, for example, four young people have made the transition from school to paid employment as Rangers (see 'Educational and employment pathways').

- Finally, though the Learning on Country Program was never focused intently on increasing the capacity of Indigenous Ranger groups to deliver NCMRM outcomes (Outcome 6D) there is clear evidence from interviews and observations that the project has made strong gains in that regard. The work of Indigenous Rangers is profiled and highlighted in LoCP activities. Rangers have acquired new skills and the leadership of Rangers has been developed, affirmed and made observable for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people involved in the program. This is an important outcome for which good progress continues to be made (see Findings from Program-Level Data, 'Ranger group capacity development').

Overall, the LoCP is on a positive trajectory towards meeting its intended outcomes. The key areas showing improvement are: attendance and retention of students for highly engaged cohorts; pathways to employment; intergenerational transfer of knowledge; and engaging the wider community in schooling. The LoCP is supporting young Indigenous people to keep and maintain a strong sense of their Indigenous identity, and was developed through a collaborative process involving highly respected community development practitioners and educators with long-standing commitment to Indigenous affairs, as well as local Elders and senior Indigenous Rangers. The project is strongly supported by communities, schools and Rangers across eastern and western Arnhem Land. The LoCP has been instrumental in developing strong partnerships at both a community and regional level, is providing demonstrable employment outcomes and has potential to provide a wide range of employment pathways.

There are a number of issues associated with data collation that need to be attended to and there is a need for the governance model to evolve as the program moves into its next phases. Literacy and numeracy outcomes of the program are currently invisible and will not be demonstrated through NAPLAN. A new set of local indicators need to be developed and agreed upon across the sites and by all providers. In some of the trial sites there is more work to do in terms of embedding the LoCP into the curriculum, and there is a need to ensure that LoCP does not become simply a VET. The LoCP has been instrumental in meeting community aspirations but must remain cognisant and vigilant of Indigenous input into local governance arrangements.

Overall challenges to LoCP

Clarifying the purpose and focus of LoCP

1. LoCP is a program funded by the federal government and laid over the top of NTEd programs and structures. Moving beyond 'add-on' to becoming a fully integrated program is necessary but presents some challenges.

2. Teachers don't always know what LoCP is or could be. There's a need to develop some goals and guidelines as in 'a LoCP teacher will be able to…'.

3. There is a risk that LoCP will come to be seen as a VET program. It is not and this should constitute only one element of the teaching and learning cycle.

4. Conflation of LoCP and IRCPP caused some confusion about how the two programs interrelated. This caused some issue with what goals were emphasised during implementation and led to some lost time during the early phases of the project.

5. The success of the program brings its own challenges that require continual negotiation and a balance between what is possible and what is workable. This will become an increasing issue as pressure grows in other communities to access the LoCP.

Ongoing shifts in the broader policy environment

6. In all the communities there remains residual damage after the Intervention. People, particularly men, feel disempowered and untrusted, and treated as though they are all sexual predators. Reengaging men in the world of young people is a challenge that needs to be thought through sensitively.

7. The policy environment in which LoCP operates is particularly fraught and has been subject to monumental shifts during the trial period. Ongoing policy change is a major challenge for the LoCP to navigate.

Strengthening program governance and ensuring the program continues in a context of high staff turnover

8. There is enormous variation in commitment by key local leaders (eg. school Principals, Ranger Coordinators). The project will falter without continued strong, clear leadership and timely and well-designed inductions when there are staffing changes.

9. Local Steering committees had varying levels of engagement and commitment over the course of the project. If LoCP will require local communities to invest time and energy to support and drive the program if it is ever to move beyond an 'add-on'.

10. Lack of a LoCP regional coordinator/executive officer has been a major issue that must be addressed.

11. As a new project with local variation, there is not yet a clear 'how to' model document to assist in cases of staff turnover, let alone provide guidance on establishing LoCP in additional sites.

12. Teachers and senior teachers involved in LoCP need an opportunity for induction and ongoing professional development specifically related to LoCP.

13. Key individuals often make the difference between a LoCP program that works very well and one that doesn't. Keeping good staff and sustaining relationships will be an ongoing challenge in this context.

Involving local communities and Ranger groups, and building strong relationships between all groups involved in LoCP implementation

14. In any Indigenous community the success of programs depends on the relationships of trust of various people involved. Building those relationships takes time and this is not always recognised at a policy level.

15. Local Indigenous people's level of engagement can be significantly affected by pressures of community life that have nothing to do with the LoCP program. Constantly searching for ways to maintain that engagement is vital.

16. There is an enormous and sometimes invisible issue around concern for the safety of children. This involves elements of the need for cultural safety in terms of the right permissions to visit country and in some cases fear of the bush. Dealing with this openly at local LoCP committees is essential.

17. In many remote communities, school is seen to be for boys and those of senior secondary age are culturally and socially the status of men. LoCP has untapped potential to bridge this divide.

18. The world of the School is very different from the world of the Ranger; both need to work hard to articulate clearly to each other their needs, priorities and capacities.

19. Incorporating the views and voices of women continues to be a challenge at all levels of governance. Finding a means of welcoming and encouraging participation by women remains a challenge.

Curriculum and pedagogy

20. As emphasis increases on English and Maths, especially at the primary level, it becomes harder for some teachers to see how to integrate these subjects with

LoCP. Good pedagogic leadership and curriculum support is required to mitigate this.

21. Some LoCP teachers, Rangers and coordinators appear to believe on-country camps fulfil the requirements of LoCP and so there can be a tendency to de-emphasise LoCP in the classroom in some cases. The classroom component must be considered as just as important as the experiential learning.

Logistical issues

22. The logistical needs of LoCP requires careful planning of the school time table which may involve planning well in advance of the beginning of the school year.

23. Bringing 'country' into classroom curriculum is more complex than might initially be assumed. It requires time for collaboration and development.

24. One LoCP Coordinator estimated that it takes three times longer to get a LoCP event up than it takes to do the event. The work loads of coordinators need to be monitored and understood to ensure 'burn out' is not an issue.

25. On days of LoCP activity, attendance increases making it difficult to plan and support those activities.

Collecting data for ongoing program improvement

26. There are continuing difficulties in recording and reporting LoCP activities and identifying which students participated in a LoCP activity. While some headway has been made, the importance of this task was never fully accepted and acted on by all LoCP teachers in each site.

27. Protocols and methods of system level reporting in the NT are not conducive to providing good data on a complex program like LoCP. A collation protocol needs to be established going forward.

Ways forward for Learning on Country Program

Funding

1. Implementing a locally coherent LoCP program is complex, but the model has worked and has led to a number of significant achievements. The program is still bedding down in the trial sites and replicating this in other sites will be challenging. Nonetheless, demand for roll out of LoCP is high in communities throughout Arnhem Land. It is recommended that both the NT government and the Federal

Government consider funding a staged rollout of the program beginning at the end of the next 2 years of funding if the trajectory of the program continues on its current course.

Governance and stakeholders

2. There is a clear need for an overall LoCP regional coordination/executive officer, through a salaried managerial role. This is critical to the project's ongoing success. Additional external funding outside operational funds may be required.

3. The key role in the success of local LoCP programs may be the LoCP Coordinator. While LoCP Coordinators should be encouraged to collaborate and share strategies, there should be a recognised Lead or Senior LoCP Coordinator who maintains regular contact with existing and mentors new Coordinators.

4. Bringing LoCP coordinators together adds enormous value to the program. A carefully planned and well-funded professional development program for Coordinators will become increasingly important as LoCP continues to develop.

5. It is recommended that, if possible, Local LoCP committees be given a minimum one day's Professional development per year.

6. The governance model of the LoCP needs to evolve to meet what we see as future demand. In particular the model needs to formalise its role and positions. To achieve this goal, it is recommended that the steering committee investigate possibilities of incorporation and/or the development of a constitution.

7. LoCP induction process needs to be designed for all new teachers and new Rangers. New school principals and Ranger program coordinators need to be a priority for LoCP induction.

8. A manual for implementing and monitoring LoCP programs should be funded and developed.

9. Facilitating and monitoring work on LoCP-related scope and sequence planning at each site needs to be made a responsibility of school principals.

10. Each local LoCP Coordinator should mentor a local young person or people in the Coordinator's role. This could be designed through the local LoCP committee.

11. The overarching steering committee should continue to provide the mechanism for professional development and the exchange of ideas between the sites.

12. Yolngul and Bining Governance structures need to be thought about more. Yirritja /Duwa, Guyal / Butal representation need to be discussed at a local level. A key challenge is to be representative yet functional in terms of numbers.

Curriculum development

13. Better long term curriculum planning is needed in all sites. Ensuring each site aligns Ranger work seasonal activities with school curriculum is a key challenge but an essential element of 'partnering' the curriculum.

14. External contributors to LoCP can be very effective in providing course material and training (e.g., BIITE or CDU visiting lecturers) and extending the course. Their contributions should be incorporated whenever possible.

15. The data are exhibiting a noticeable divergence between the performance of highly engaged and less engaged students. While this may be expected, the LoCP may need to consider different strategies for 'high intensity' highly engaged students and 'disengaged students'.

Logistics

16. The likelihood of ceremonial activity disrupting programs and individual attendance is highest in the dry season (term 3). Both the local LoCP committee and the steering committee need to take a role in considering how ceremonial commitments of students can be considered as outcomes for LoCP in terms of Indigenous knowledge transfer and customary engagement.

Future program evaluation and research

17. A comprehensive data collation program needs to be devised between the LoCP sites, RTOs, future evaluation personnel and system-level data mangers in the NTG.

18. Comprehensive record keeping and reporting of LoCP activities and participants needs to be mandated at all sites. It should be a primary role of the coordinator in each site and should be overseen by the school executive.

19. The development of a public LoCP website would be extremely useful for dissemination of information and for research and educational development.

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Appendix A: Evaluation team biographies

Dr William (Bill) Fogarty

Dr Bill Fogarty is a Research Fellow at NCIS. Bill has a PhD from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at The Australian National University, on the topic *Learning Through Country: Competing Knowledge Systems and Place Based Pedagogy*, and a Masters in Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development (MAAPD) from the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences. Dr Fogarty has lived and worked in remote communities for over 15 years and has extensive experience in research on Indigenous education, employment policy and service provision. He has qualifications in anthropology, communications, social research methods, education and applied development.

Dr Robert (Jerry) Schwab

R.G. (Jerry) Schwab is a Research Fellow at CAEPR where he undertakes research related to Indigenous education, literacy and youth policy. He has been involved with educational research and development in Australia and overseas (USA, Canada, United Arab Emirates and Egypt) since the mid-1980s. Since joining CAEPR in 1995, he has carried out primary and secondary research on issues as diverse as Aboriginal community-controlled schools, notions of educational 'failure' and 'success' among Indigenous students, Indigenous workforce development and Indigenous education outcomes at the primary, secondary and post-compulsory levels.

Professor Mick Dodson

Professor Mick Dodson is a member of the Yawuru peoples – the traditional owners of land and waters in the Broome area of the southern Kimberley region of Western Australia. He is Director of the NCIS at The Australian National University and Professor of Law at the ANU College of Law. Mick Dodson was Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner with the Human Rights Commission. He served as Commissioner from April 1993 to January 1998. From August 1988 to October 1990, Mick was Counsel assisting the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. He is Chair of the ANU Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Committee and a member of the Board of the Lingiari Foundation. He served on the board of Reconciliation Australia and was, until recently, its Co-Chair. He was also a founding member and chairman of the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre. Professor Dodson has been a prominent advocate on land rights and other issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as a vigorous advocate of the rights and interests of indigenous peoples around the world In 2009, Professor Mick Dodson was named Australian of the Year by the National Australia Day Council.

Professor Matthew Gray

Professor Matthew Gray is Director of CAEPR, Director of Research, College of Arts and Social Sciences and is a Public Policy Fellow of the ANU. Professor Gray was previously Deputy Director (Research) at the Australian Institute of Family Studies (2005–10). He has published research on a wide range of social and economic policy issues including those related to Indigenous Australians, and has particular expertise in work and family issues, labour economics, social capital and social inclusion, measuring wellbeing, the economic consequences of divorce, child support, and social and economic policy development. He has undertaken extensive work on economic policy issues involving Indigenous Australians, including health status, labour market outcomes, poverty and the CDEP scheme. Professor Gray has extensive experience in evaluating major government policies and programs having led the Australian Institute of Family Studies evaluation of the 2006 changes to the family law system and having been heavily involved in evaluating the Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.

Dr Jillian Guthrie

Dr Jill Guthrie joined NCIS in April 2012 as its Research Fellow. Her PhD, undertaken through the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales, is titled A phenomenological exploration of the experiences of families of Indigenous children hospitalised in the Australian Capital Territory. Jill is a graduate of the Master of Applied Epidemiology (MAE) Program at the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health (NCEPH) at ANU. Jill has previously worked as an academic member of the MAE and a Research Fellow at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in Canberra. She is a member of the NHMRC-funded Indigenous Offender Health Research Capacity Building Group (IOHR-CBG). Jill Guthrie is a descendant of the Wiradjuri people of western NSW, and has lived in Canberra ACT for over twenty years.

Mr Matthew Ryan

Mr Matthew Ryan is a Kune man from Korlobidahdah in the NT. Matthew is a community leader having held a number of local positions of authority including being a member of the West Arnhem Shire Council and being the ex-chair of the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation. Mr Ryan is a board member of the Karrkad-Kanjdji Trust and has served on the Northern Land Council, and as a representative of the Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council. Matthew has been working in the field of Indigenous Natural Cultural Resource Management for over a decade and was one of the first Indigenous Land and Sea management co-ordinators in the country when he led the highly successful Djelk Ranger program. Matthew has previously worked with both Dr Schwab and Dr Fogarty on the

linking of Indigenous land and sea management and education and is well known and respected in each of the field sites for this evaluation.

Dr Melissa Lovell

Dr Melissa Lovell joined NCIS as a Research Officer in March 2014 to provide research assistance on a range of research projects. Her PhD, undertaken at the School of Politics and International Studies at ANU, was completed in 2012 and focused on the politics of the Northern Territory Intervention. Melissa Lovell's research focuses primarily on the fields of social policy and Indigenous Affairs governance. Melissa is involved in a number of research projects at NCIS and has research interests in Australian politics, social policy, political ideology and political theory.

Ms Corinne Walsh

Ms Corinne Walsh joined NCIS in April 2013 as a Research Officer to provide research assistance on a range of projects. Corinne has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology and Sociology from Macquarie University, where she graduated in 2008. In 2010 she gained a place in the Graduate Program for the Australian government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and moved to Canberra to pursue this. Corinne has worked in a range of research, policy and program areas including FaHCSIA and the NSW Department of Health. Corinne is currently undertaking a Master of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development (MAAPD) here at the Australian National University and is due to graduate at the end of 2015. She hopes to embark on a PhD in the near future to further explore ear and hearing 'problems' amongst Indigenous people, and how policy and practice can better respond to this issue.

Appendix B: Theory of change model

Program Theory for Learning on Country Program

Theory question	Both ways teaching and learning, integrates cultural knowledge and mainstream curriculum in the education system to improve educational attainment and employability and maintain traditional knowledge. This occurs through students learning in the context of their history, land, songs, ceremonies, totems and kinship which is held in trust by the elders; the incorporation of student wellbeing and identity in teaching; and meeting formal course requirements for Senior Secondary and Vocational Education and Training courses.
Vision	Local people have increased life choices; cultural, environmental, social and economic health
Goal	Community-led policy increases individual skills, educational attainment, employment opportunities and maintains Indigenous knowledge

Long term outcomes

An ongoing system of knowledge transfer continues for future generations	Young people have a sense of purpose and can work across two cultures	Communities and the LoCP partners continue to work together in two-way partnerships for the benefit of the communities

Intermediate outcomes 3-5 years

- Rangers have increased leadership, planning and coordination skills
- Teachers have increased knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture and issues and improved communication with Indigenous students and parents
- Increased capacity of Indigenous organisations, government agencies and business to work together
- LoCP students are role models for other young people
- Young people move into meaningful employment or further education
- Functional pathways to meaningful employment or further education are maintained
- Younger people take on responsibility for cultural maintenance
- Young people have the skills to move into employment or further education
- Job experience, linkages to further education and employment and entrepreneurs established
- LoCP students apply Indigenous ecological knowledge and western scientific knowledge to Natural Cultural Resource Management
- Young people attain their year 12 or equivalent
- Pathways to employment connecting school curriculum activities to work and further education and training opportunities **are articulated??**

Short term outcomes

- Traditional owners pass knowledge to younger people
- LoCP students have improved literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
- Partners deliver on their roles, responsibilities and agreed commitments for the LoCP
- Increased respect for Traditional Owners and rangers and their knowledge by younger people
- Young people attend school 95% of the time
- Partners understand and agree to their roles and responsibilities for the LoCP success
- LoCP students, rangers and traditional owners participate together in cultural activities
- Other students want to participate in LoCP classes both in the field and classroom
- All partners roles and responsibilities are defined for the LoCP
- Traditional Owners and rangers actively support, guide and instruct students in LoCP activities
- Young people attend and enjoy learning in LoCP classes
- The LoCP curriculum is developed jointly by school teachers and Indigenous rangers, with rangers having responsibility for 'on country' activities

Assumptions

Rangers, LoCP coordinators and teachers have or develop the commitment and necessary skills to teach and support LoCP students	Senior advisors provide timely and useful planning and program information for the Steering and Local committee's consideration	The local Indigenous community (including parents, elders and ranger groups) support education pedagogy that combines cultural knowledge and practice with the national curriculum	Useful, relevant and timely evidence is collected and analysed throughout the LoCP	Steering, Government and Local committee's use ongoing evidence to undertake timely review and adjust LoCP to meet expected outcomes	All partners understand and strongly support the purpose and objectives of the LoCP
Businesses, government agencies and employment services provide ongoing support for pathways for employment	Steering Committee and Special Advisers understand and can apply the research base and principles underpinning the LoCP pedagogy	The LoCP is consistent with Commonwealth and Northern Territory government education policies and curriculum frameworks	External influences such as seasonal disruption and funerals are not sufficient to disrupt LoCP program delivery	There is an adequate provision of resources – staffing and infrastructure to support LoCP	Education authorities and institutions and school principals and academia, provide ongoing support for two-way education and pathways for employment

LoCP partners (not ranked)

- Ranger groups
- Traditional owners
- Local community
- Governments (PMC and NT DET)
- Local service providers, business, entrepreneurs and academia
- School principles and teachers
- Middle, at risk and senior school
- LoCP coordinators
- Steering committee
- Local LoCP committee
- Government Working Group
- National Centre for Indigenous Studies
- Senior advisors

Note: the progress markers are not linear even though they set out that way. There are numerous interconnections between the parts. Another job to determine the critical linkages

Appendix C: Consent and information sheets

Informed consent sheet

Project Title: Learning On Country Program Evaluation

Researchers: Dr William Fogarty and Dr Jerry Schwab

The National Centre for Indigenous Studies (NCIS)

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR)

      The Australian National University

      Canberra ACT 0200

Bill.Fogarty@anu.edu.au

Jerry.Schwab@anu.edu.au

Our research is funded by the Commonwealth Government (the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs).

Some important things about participating in the research:

- You are not required to take part in this research if you do not want to.
- You are allowed to pull out of the research at any time.
- When we talk with you, we will need to write down notes and we may record what you say (by tape-recorder, video or photograph). Before we write notes, take photographs, or audio/video recordings of you, we will make sure you (or your parent/guardian) are happy for us to do so. If you are not happy, the material will not be used.
- We will ensure that nobody outside the research team has access to any information you provide.
- Anything we publish from the research will not include the names of people under the age of 18. The names of people over 18 will not be included unless they give their specific permission to include their names.
- Our notes will contain individual names but those notes will be for our use only and we will ensure as best we can that they are seen only by us. Still, while we will do our best to keep our notes confidential, it may be best to only talk about things that you are comfortable sharing with others.
- A copy of any papers, journals or reports we write as part of this project will be returned to your community, department or organisation.

If you have concerns about the research we are doing, you are welcome to speak to either of us about those concerns or to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee at our university (their address is on the information sheet we gave you).

I have read the Information Sheet and agree to participate in this research YES / NO

Age:

Signed (by parent/guardian if under 18):

Date:

Are you happy for us to talk to you individually (you can have a parent or mentor present if you wish)?

YES / NO

Signed (by parent/guardian if under 18):

Date:

Are you happy for us to talk to you in groups with other people (who you may or may not know) present?

YES / NO

Signed (by parent/guardian if under 18):

Date:

Are you happy for us to record you (by written notes, audiotape or videotape)?   YES / NO

Signed (by parent/guardian if under 18):

Date:

If so, do you wish to have your name or other information about yourself published alongside anything you have said/done?

YES / NO

Signed (by parent/guardian if under 18):

Date:

Are you happy for us to take photographs of you?

YES / NO

Signed (by parent/guardian if under 18):

Date:

If so, do you wish to have your name or other information about yourself published next to the photograph?

YES / NO

Signed (by parent/guardian if under 18):

Date:

Do you have any questions about the research?

YES / NO

Participant information sheet

Researchers:

Dr Bill Fogarty National Centre for Indigenous Studies at The Australian National University, Canberra

Professor Mick Dodson National Centre for Indigenous Studies at The Australian National University, Canberra

Professor Matthew Gray Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at The Australian National University, Canberra

Dr Jerry Schwab Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at The Australian National University, Canberra

Dr Jill Guthrie National Centre for Indigenous Studies at The Australian National University, Canberra

Ms Corinne Walsh National Centre for Indigenous Studies at The Australian National University, Canberra

Project Title: Learning on Country Program (LoCP) Evaluation

General Outline of the Project:

The Learning on Country Program (LoCP) is an education program that the Government is running in the following remote communities:

- Galiwinku
- Yirrkala
- Maningrida
- The Laynhapuy Homelands.

The Learning on Country program aims to help keep young people in your community keen to go to school and learn about the world around them, especially valuable local Aboriginal knowledge, which they can pass on to the next generation. The program aims to develop strong partnerships between Ranger groups, schools and local communities so we can all work together to help young people take part in education, training and jobs.

Our team of researchers have been chosen by the Government (the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) to evaluate this Learning on Country program over two years - 2013 and 2014. Our job is to look at the program to

figure out what is working well and what is not. The Government is paying us to undertake this research.

The researchers would like to come to your community and talk to you about what you think of the Learning on Country program, and about general education and employment issues in your community. This information will help us make the program stronger and help meet the needs of the people in your community.

Participant Involvement:

The research team will make two visits to each of the four communities on (insert dates) to see the Learning on Country program in action and collect information about the program.

We will collect this information through:

- Interviews (with individuals and with groups who have an interest in the LoCP, including school students)
- Workshops and focus groups (adults in the community who will share their views on Ranger-based work, employment, education etc)
- Participant observations of LoCP activities in action (researchers will observe and record the interactions using notebooks, audiotapes and photographs)
- Data and numbers e.g. school exam results.

We will talk to your school and other people in your community, and they will give you the information about where and when we will be in your community to do the research. It is entirely up to you if and when you want to take part. There will be no penalties or any negative impacts if you choose not to participate in the research.

After we have collected all our information, we will write up a report which may contain words you have said or photographs of you. We will give this report to your community for you to read so we can hear your feedback or ask any questions before anyone else sees the report. Once you and your community are happy, we will then give the report to the Commonwealth Government. We may also use the information you give us for other research later on, such as journals and other academic articles. Again, we will make sure you are happy for us to do so before we publish.

Exclusion criteria:

The only people who can participate in this project are those who are involved or interested in the Learning on Country Program.

This may include:

- Students and their families

- Teachers
- Training and further education providers e.g. VET
- Rangers
- Elders
- Traditional land owners
- Industry e.g. mineral, agriculture, fishing and farming
- Government

Participants must be over the age of 14.

Confidentiality:

If you would like to take part in our research, we will first have to get you to sign a form to say you are happy. This form will be in simple English. We can provide interpreters if you do not understand anything. Nobody under the age of 18 will be able to take part in the research unless their parent/guardian says it is ok.

Our research team members have a lot of experience in making sure your privacy is protected at all times. Before we take any photographs, notes or audio/video recordings of you, we will make sure you are happy for us to do so. We will double check with you to make sure you are absolutely happy for us to publish something you have said or a photo of you in our research, otherwise the material will not be used. The Consent Form (attached) gives you the opportunity to say what you do and do not want.

If you feel worried or uncomfortable at any stage of the research, please do not be frightened to tell somebody. You can tell anyone in our research team, or a member of your community who you feel comfortable talking to. You can also tell the ANU Human Research Ethics Office if there is anything you are unhappy about. Any concerns and complaints you may have will be taken very seriously, and will be taken to the local Aboriginal organisation or appropriate Steering Committee partner.

You are allowed to say no or pull out of the research at any time without providing an explanation. If you do withdraw from the research, nothing bad will happen to you or anybody else involved.

Data Storage:

All information we collect from you – such as things you have said, photographs, your exam results – will be kept safe on a password-protected laptop or in a locked cabinet at The Australian National University. We will ensure any information you provide us is kept safe and not able to be seen by anybody else outside our team.

All information that you give us will be destroyed after five years.

Queries and Concerns:

For any questions and concerns about this research and what is involved, please contact:

Dr William Fogarty

Research Associate

National Centre for Indigenous Studies Building #5, Fellows Road The Australian National University Acton ACT 0200 Australia

Ph: +61 (0)2 6125 4221

Fax:+61 (0)2 6125 0103

Email: bill.fogarty@anu.edu.au

Web: http://law.anu.edu.au/ncis

Ethics Committee Clearance:

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee.

If you have any concerns or complaints, please contact:

Ethics Manager

The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee

The Australian National University

Telephone: +61 (0)2 6125 3427

Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au

Oral consent script

To be translated to relevant local Indigenous language (on advice from local contacts) and read out after the Participant Information Sheet.

I have read out the Participant Information Sheet about this research project, *Learning on Country Program (LoCP) Evaluation.* Was this information clear? Do you have any questions about the project?

1. Some of the information you give me may be published in English or in your local language. I will use a pseudonym in any publication unless you tell me that want me to use your real name. Is that OK? Should I use a pseudonym, to protect your identity, or do you want me to use your real name so that others can identify you?

2. I will keep any information you tell me in interview confidential as far as the law allows. I will keep notes of our interview in this book (*show*), and I will transcribe these notes and store them safely. They will be protected by a password only I know, or in a locked cabinet. I will not give anybody outside the research team access to any information you provide. Are you OK with this?

3. I need to tell you that although I will avoid using information that will allow other people to identify you by what you say, it is still possible that people will be able to guess who you are. So, you should avoid giving me any information which could identify you. Is that clear?

4. You are not required to take part in this research if you don't want to, and you can decide to withdraw from this project at any time. That means, if you want to stop the interview you can. After the interview, you can tell me (or local contact) you do not want me to use what you have told me. You do not have to give a reason why. If you decide not to participate, I will not use any of the information you have given me unless you tell me you want me to. If there is anything you tell me that you do not want to me mention, tell me and I will keep this confidential. Do you understand? Is this OK?

5. I would like to record this interview using this audio-recorder *(show).* This is helpful for me because I can listen back and make sure I have understood what you have said, or might otherwise miss or forget. It is not essential that we record the interview though. Do you agree to be recorded, or not?

6. I would like to share the findings of the research with you when it is complete. To do this, I would like to provide [insert relevant stakeholder] with a copy of a brief summary report that explains the findings of the research. You can ask these people to share the findings with you. I can also send you your own copy of the report, if you would like this. Would you like to receive a copy? If yes, would you like to receive this from the above mentioned people, or would you like me to send it to you personally? Where to?

7. The interpreter *name* is here to help me understand everything you say, and to help you understand me. Is it OK if the interpreter helps us to communicate like this? You can also have someone else present, as well as or instead of the translator, if you want to. Do you want to do this?

Do you have any other questions? Is it OK to start the interview now?

Appendix D: Activity plan LoCP Yirrkala

Table 22. Activity plan LoCP Yirrkala

	Season		Years 7/8	Years 8/9 Nguykal	Years 10/11/12 Gadayka
TERM 1 28 Jan - 4 Apr	Mayaltha and Midawarr	**Learning theme**			Weed management, site restoration and revegetation
		Class on Country / Galtha workshop			Class on country at Garanhan and multiple visits to Shady Beach.
		Relevant "season" in Dhimurru's operations			Weed management and revegetation/restoration
		Dhimurru objectives			Senior Rangers consolidating skills by demonstrating and guiding LoCP students in CLM competencies
TERM 2 14 Apr - 20 Jun	Midawarr and Dharratharra	**Learning theme**	Wetlands	Macassans, trade and their impact on Yolngu society	Continuation of Term 1, with Workplace Awareness visits and work experience for year 11 and 12.
		Class on Country / Galtha workshop	*Merri Galtha* Workshop @ Yamuna near Gunyapinya wetland	Day class by Gumatj elders at Butjumurru and nearby archaeological site. Visit to Bukularrnggay Arts. Yolngu speaker who visited Macassa.	Class on country at Watawuy and multiple visits to Shady Beach.
		Relevant "season" in Dhimurru's calendar	N/A	N/A	Soil erosion and site protection works
		Dhimurru's objectives	Engage Yolngu with a stake in the management of Yamuna/Gunyapinya, thereby assisting Dhimurru in negotiations about management of the area. Also, moving forward the	A step toward Yolngu engagement in the celebration of the listing of Garanhan stone picture site on National Heritage register (date to be determined)	As per term 1

	Season		Years 7/8	Years 8/9 Nguykal	Years 10/11/12 Gadayka
			discussion of protection of sacred spring and cycads, and creation of a walking trail to support student learning		
TERM 3 **21 Jul - 26 Sep**	Dharratharra and Rarranhdarr'	**Learning theme**		Indigenous People: Inuit and sustainable harvesting	Homelands: History of the movement and student connections to Homelands.
		Class on Country / Galtha Workshop	*Miyapunu Galtha* Workshop @ Djawulpawuy (b/t Yirrkala and Nhulunbuy) Week 5, 19-21 August 2014 (Dhimurru not available week 6)	Garrathala (planning led by Homelands School and Yirralka Rangers – TBC) Week 7 or 8	
		Relevant "season" in Dhimurru's operations	Marine debris clean-ups, turtle nesting and hatching surveys … (seasonal activity)	Yirralka Rangers: Time of year for… (seasonal activity)	
		Dhimurru objectives	Yolngu forum on hunting of turtles while laying, including production of educational video (to be confirmed) Train staff turtle monitoring (to be confirmed). Engage research partners (to be confirmed)	Putting MOU between Dhimurru and Yirralka Rangers into practice – working together on a joint project.	
TERM 4 **6 Oct - 12 Dec**	Rarranhdarr Dhuludur' and Barra'mirri	**Learning theme**			World War II:
		Class on Country / Galtha Workshop			Day visits to multiple local sites with landowners (Catalina, XX, XX) *Galtha* Workshop at site of Donald Thomson's camp, near Garrathala (to be confirmed with Yirralka as lead)
		Relevant "season" in Dhimurru's calendar			
		Dhimurru objectives			