

Raising the voices of young people in remote Aboriginal communities in Australia to identify place-based support needs: The Bigiswun Kid Project

Authors: Rice LJ¹, Carter E², Bear E², Bedford M³, Cannon L¹, Carter C², Davies J², Rice N⁴, Thomas S², Wells ²F, Elliott EJ¹

1. The University of Sydney, Faculty of Medicine and Health, Specialty of Child and Adolescent Health, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
2. Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre, Fitzroy Crossing
3. Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation, Fitzroy Crossing, Australia
4. Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service, Broome, Australia

Background: There is a global push for adolescent-specific services informed by young people; such services are crucial for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples because adolescents make up one-third of the population. The authors of this study worked with young people and their families to: identify the support that young people need to thrive in very remote Aboriginal communities; report how young people and their parents would like these supports support to be delivered; and describe what was learned from piloting support during the research project

Methods: We interviewed 83% (n=94) of all young people born in 2002–03 (aged 17 to 19 years) who were living in the Fitzroy Valley at the time, and 89% (n=101) of their parents. Using an Aboriginal participatory action approach, the authors worked with young people and local Aboriginal leaders to pilot some supports.

Results: The young people identified 12 supports that they needed to thrive in late adolescence/early adulthood. Based on the interviews and co-design consultation with young people, we identified five supports to be provided in a youth SEWB service. These included mental health support, particularly clinical psychology for people with moderate mental illness; community wellbeing workshops; male- and female-specific wellbeing workshops; and support to access existing services, particularly health services.

Conclusion: Partnering with young people ensured that community strengths and challenges were incorporated in the service design. Study findings were used to secure funding for the implementation and evaluation of a SEWB service in the Fitzroy Valley. The process and lessons learned in the Project could be used to engage, consult and partner with young people to design services in other remote regions.

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