

# Dampier Peninsula's Community Navigators Empowering Kimberley Families through their Aboriginal-led Woombooriny Amboon Angarriiya Partnership Initiative (WAAPI)

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# WARNING: This document may contain images and names of people who have passed away.

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The author accepts full responsibility for any omissions or errors contained in this paper.

Vanessa Margetts of Mud Map Studio was responsible for the template design of Nulungu Insights.

## Cover Photo

## Cover Artwork

Nyapuru Laurel was a Walmajarri artist and educator from the Kadjina Community (part of Millijidee Station) in the Kimberley region of Western Australia on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert. Along with her sisters, brothers and mothers, Nyapuru advocated to set up the remote Wulungarra Community School and, through her work, contributed to the passing on of knowledge of the land, water, law and culture to future generations. She passed away in August 2015. Extracts from 'Seeing Country' are located throughout the document.



## Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the areas around the Dampier Peninsula who we work with: the Bardi Jawi, Nyul Nyul, Nimanburr and Jabirr Jabirr / Ngumbarl people.

Thank you also to the Dampier Peninsula community partners of Beagle Bay, Lombadina, Djarindjin and Ardyaloon.

Importantly, we would also like to recognise and thank WAAPI's backbone support partners, Aarnja Ltd, Empowered Communities, Woodside, Save The Children, National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), WA Department of Communities (Regional Services Reform). As well as, Kullarri Regional Communities Incorporated (KRCI) and Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm partners.

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Photographs and accompanying images have generously been supplied by WAAPI.

## Acronyms

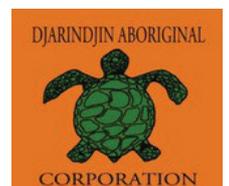
KRCI	Kullarri Regional Communities Incorporated
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
WAAPI	Woombooriny Amboon Angarriiya Partnership Initiative
WA	Western Australia



Aarnja<sup>Ltd</sup>



CYGNET BAY  
PEARLS



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# INTRODUCTION

## Dampier Peninsula's Woombooriny Amboon Angarriiya Partnership Initiative (WAAPI)

The Dampier Peninsula is home to a pristine coastal landscape and rugged country with diverse and abundant marine life, flora and fauna. Valuable Aboriginal cultural knowledge, traditions and science are still shared and practiced, while local tourism and industry opportunities are poised for growth.

Throughout this unique and beautiful region, an exciting project led by the Aboriginal people of Beagle Bay, Djarindjin, Lombadina and Ardyaloon communities called WAAPI - the Woombooriny Amboon Angarriiya Partnership Initiative is taking shape. It aims to empower Aboriginal families and improve outcomes for their children, young people and families living across the Dampier Peninsula region.

WAAPI's focus is on creating strong families, strong leaders and strong communities with an Indigenous governance family empowerment model. This provides a model for a 'voice' to facilitate local decision-making and ensure Aboriginal-led, designed and delivered positive social change.

Dampier Peninsula families see WAAPI offering a new movement for Aboriginal people to lead the way forward in their relationships with community elders, families, children and young people. Furthermore,



Figure 1 Map of Dampier Peninsula region.

this enables their leadership in relationships with government, businesses, organisations and other Aboriginal communities. Hence, this Aboriginal-led, place-based approach is signifying an important step forward for strengthening and building collaborative and empowered Kimberley Aboriginal families and communities. It also enhances their ability to work with government to stimulate policy and systematic change.

## Community Navigators

Driving this grassroots change are the "Community Navigators", who are locally employed grassroots people connected to what is identified as the Nyulnyulan family language group. The family language groups include both mainland and island traditional kinship connections with Nyulnyul, Bardi, Djabirr-djabirr and Nimanburru (mainland groups). The island language groups; Jawi and Oowiini have adopted the Bardi language on the mainland and are integrated as such being part of the traditional kinship system on the Dampier Peninsula. Bardi and Nyulnyul still maintain the practices of the language today, these are the languages used within the context of WAAPI.

This unique role has been largely self-determined by the Community Navigators from their discussions with community, the Navigators have been informing and guiding social planning, ensuring community priorities are the focus, brokering government agency and service provider relationships and advising stakeholders on appropriate community channels for engagement.



Figure 2 People of the Dampier Peninsula.



Supported with specialised training, coaching and mentoring from Aarnja Ltd (Empowered Communities) and Save the Children staff, the role of the Navigators is already creating a powerful shift for enabling positive changes within their communities. This change is resulting from the Navigators' effective leadership, collaboration and mobilisation of individuals and families to create a shared vision and strategy for working and moving forward together. This includes co-designing culturally appropriate activities with local services that target community priorities.

WAAPI's Ardyaloon Community Navigator, Janella Isaac states, "My role did not come with a job description. I found myself ... put in the driver's seat, with my community behind me and saying, ok .. where are we going to take this?"

### Backbone Partnership Support

WAAPI as a collective impact project, is enabled by a backbone support group including Aarnja Ltd (Empowered Communities), Save the Children, Woodside, National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA) and Department of Communities (DoC), Regional Services Reform. For the first time, this partnership brings together a collaboration of State, Federal, not-for-profit, and Aboriginal organisations to work collectively around a common understanding and shared commitment for improving the way services are delivered for the benefit of achieving outcomes for Dampier Peninsula individuals and families, driven by families.

WAAPI's funding is currently sourced through Woodside, administered through Save the Children, and the Commonwealth's Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) that is administered by Kullarri Regional Indigenous Communities Incorporated (KRICI). Empowered Communities has played a key role in supporting the project via its partnership with the Commonwealth. Going forward, WAAPI's Aboriginal leadership intends to become incorporated as an Aboriginal organisation to source and administer future funding resources. This will enable truly Aboriginal-led co-design and partnerships, and thereby acknowledge Aboriginal peoples' right to self-determination.

Joshua Augustine and Rosana Smith, WAAPI's Beagle Bay Community Navigators state

The WAAPI project up the Dampier Peninsular is helping to build community capacity for us to be able to lead this placed based project. With the partnership support we have been able to mobilise community, service providers and government to work together for the betterment of Dampier Peninsula communities leading the way forward for grassroots people to take lead of community control and the future for, our Elders, Men, Women, and most importantly our young people.

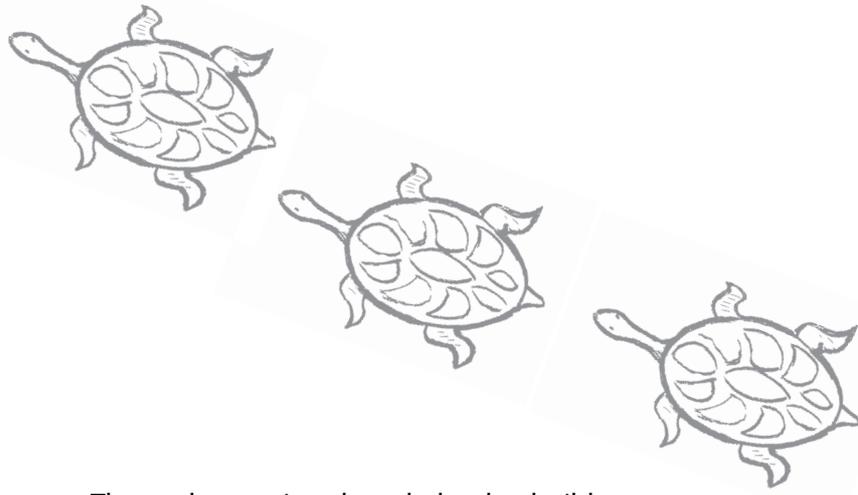
### Aboriginal-Led Research and Place-Based Data for Place-Based Solutions

The Navigators have developed household surveys and been carrying out their own research and consultation within their communities. By listening and talking to their children, young people, families and elders the Navigators are discovering the kind of changes people wish to see, as well as their local priorities, needs and aspirations. Their work has involved all age groups in discussions to collect powerful grassroots data that reflects the lived experience of their people and provides an opportunity for all people to exercise a voice, and have their opinions heard.

Significantly divergent to the publicly available data, the excellent quality of data the Navigators have acquired has been valuable for informing the real situation for Dampier Peninsula families and children, while challenging



Figure 3 WAAPI Logo.



the public data and their associated accountability of visiting services and resource allocation. Consequently, the relative ease which the Navigators can identify, access and update the research data has led to a new meaning of place-based data. This is proving effective in heightening community and stakeholder awareness of the current social situation at the local level, and thus ability to enact real change through community-led place-based solutions that engage Aboriginal peoples.

Dampier Peninsula communities also consider it is important for government to share local data on their community's education, health, safety, housing and employment with them to strengthen individual and family knowledge, awareness and recognition of issues adversely affecting their wellbeing. Releasing access to this information is viewed as valuable for empowering their people to make choices and seek life opportunities that benefit and enable them to achieve their potential.

Issues related to data sovereignty and the important role Navigators can play in creating and obtaining local place-based data as a community-owned asset is therefore emerging. In addition, the valuable insight the Navigators' Aboriginal-led research can bring for determining critical social factors affecting their family, children and young people.

Continuing to build the Navigators' research capacity in this area will help to support their interpretation, application, management and dissemination of information to inform local decision-making and strategies. Furthermore, continuing to share data and information with community will help to mobilise families to take ownership and responsibility for creating fundamental change within their homes, families, and their child's community ecosystem that affects their wellbeing and future.

### Community Pocket Sessions and Family Cultural Events

The Navigators have collated and analysed their household surveys and place-based data, then presented the results and data back to community at community 'pocket sessions' and special family cultural events, so everyone can clearly see what is important to each other.

The pocket sessions have helped to build momentum, give everyone a say with as many voices heard and encourage wider community involvement. Providing timely and visible evidence of feedback to communities of the families' priorities for service delivery and concerns, is enabling them to collectively set the direction on how to move forward together and mobilise family support to achieve those social changes people wish to see.

The community events organised by the Navigators jointly with their Family Steering Committees and local service providers have celebrated the people's local culture, language, history, identity and place. This focus is helping to bring everyone together to create a sense of belonging, promoting the idea that community wellbeing is enhanced by family wellbeing, and encouraging people to stand strong with one voice in a shared vision for self-determination and empowerment.

### Family Steering Committees for Strong Families

The community engagement and research work the Navigators have conducted has led to people coming together to form Family Steering Committees to recognise, appreciate and apply their assets to mobilise consensus and action around social priorities, where there is the greatest need. In the process of connecting with individuals and families within their communities, the Navigators have succeeded in establishing these committees within each community across the Dampier Peninsula.

The succession of establishing the Family Steering Committee was based on cultural protocols, which reflect the Community Navigators way of doing business in the communities. The community nominated committee members representing key family kinship groups and complex networks within their community. The kinship system is considered important for keeping grassroots people grounded and connected.

The Committees are formed on the belief that if they support their families to create nurturing environments for their children to grow up healthy, strong and proud, future generations will be able to embrace and prosper in future socio-economic opportunities and live long healthy lives. On this basis, the Committees are working



together to encourage individuals and families to come together and support behaviours, decisions and activities that enable social change and create positive futures.

### Indigenous Governance and Aboriginal Leadership for Strong Communities

WAAPI's focus on leadership is important to the region's development, for ensuring strong cultural governance to strengthen community capacity to work together with government, corporations and organisations to achieve what Dampier Peninsula families have been calling for - a brighter future for their children and young people.

The Family Committees made up of 30 family kinship groups have come together to form a WAAPI Aboriginal regional leadership governance body to incite a new movement for societal change for thriving, viable, resilient and sustainable communities across the Dampier Peninsula. This important group of leaders drives decision-making that reflects the local truth; provides a 'voice' to inform; enables the practices of indigenous governance and directs community social development. It also ensures alignment and collaboration between the communities; and guides the backbone partnership on the appropriate support they require for empowering their families.

Figure 4 (below) WAAPI Community Navigators from upper left to lower right: Belinda Sampi (Djarindjin/Lombadina), Joshua Augustine (Beagle Bay), Janella Isaac (Ardyaloona) and Rosana Smith (Beagle Bay);

Figure 5 (below right) Beagle Bay Community Navigator, Rosana Smith holding a community 'pocket session' to provide household survey feedback.



WAAPI's mission statement resonates the project's focus on respectful collaboration:

With respect and trust we work in equal partnership to strengthen happy and thriving Dampier Peninsula communities where our babies, little children and our youth are strong, proud, smart, healthy and connected in their family, community and culture with guidance from our elders."The cultural fusion of the Bardi and Nyul Nyul language of Woombooriny Amboon Angarriya, can be translated as "People coming Together, Working Together".

WAAPI is a community owned and branded project, supported by the cultural governance model that the Aboriginal leadership have co-designed to ensure it is an Aboriginal-led, designed and delivered model. This Indigenous governance model is unique to the region for empowering Dampier Peninsula families to take ownership of the social challenges, and for enabling elders, men, women and youth to have a 'voice' and work together with services to co-produce suitable solutions. WAAPI's Indigenous governance also engages local governing bodies through the community council and the Native Title Prescribed Body Corporates (PBCs).

Janella Isaac, WAAPI's Ardyaloona Community Navigator states

It's about communities being informed better about the services coming in, and having an input into how those services are delivered in community... One dream for this community is to see the young leaders standing as strong pillars and just holding this community together, holding it up and just carrying it on. That's the dream that's always been followed through from our Elders, and here we are trying to carry that dream forward.



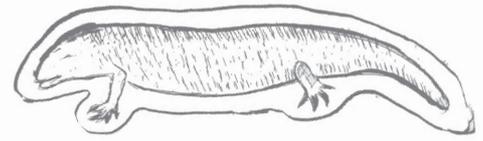


Figure 6 Djarindjin and Lombadina Community Family Fun Day event celebrating National Family Week and vital role families play for 'Stronger Families, Stronger Communities' with spear throwing competitions.

### Local Governance Enabling Co-Design and a Family Cultural Framework for Place-based Development

The WAAPI Aboriginal leadership group has developed a Family Cultural Framework to set objectives, priorities, monitor progress and evaluate social outcomes towards improving their children's learning, safety, health and wellbeing, as well as young peoples' leadership potential and access to meaningful jobs. The Framework provides the overarching story for stakeholders to align their activities and demonstrate a commitment for 'culturally competent' service delivery, engagement and cooperation with Dampier Peninsula communities.

Working with their Family Committees and Local Leadership Groups (women, men, youth and elders) the Navigators are co-designing with local services 'culturally competent' parenting and family support programs and projects. These services are tailored and targeted to be more effective, accessible, valued and efficient and thus, ensure they meet community needs, expectations and aspirations. The priorities include: 1) Early learning from conception to 3 years of age; 2) Local key leadership groups – Governance; 3) Traditional knowledge, Activities and Cultural competence; and 4) Youth engagement.

The Navigators have been using their local governance as a functioning mechanism to support their framework

and implementation of priorities by collaborating with their Family Committees and Local Leadership Groups to engage families, young people and children in the grassroot activities co-designed with services and achieve successful outcomes.

Activities include delivering culturally-tailored parenting workshops to build community awareness of the significance of early years and the importance of families on shaping a child's life; establishing culturally safe 'baby wellness centres'; organising cultural family events engaging parents/carers; delivering afterschool youth activities incorporating traditional practices with elders; promoting One Arm Point Remote Community School opportunities to engage young people across the region; and carrying out skills audits to identify young people's strengths, thus acting as knowledge brokers to facilitate purposeful youth training and employment opportunities that match individual's interests and capacities.

### A Family Empowerment Model for Positive Change and Transformation

The Navigators' growing confidence and abilities to mobilise communities is starting to influence families and young people to take responsibility for leading their own plans for change and making important decisions that shape their future, and the future of their children. The WAAPI Aboriginal leadership is also starting to influence how government view Aboriginal family empowerment, genuine authentic engagement, cultural governance and place-based frameworks.

Save The Children's Senior Project Officer, Dr Jess Bunning states

Supporting and building capacity of the Community Navigators has enabled them to have the capacity to inform and guide social planning, ensuring community priorities are the focus. This has facilitated a shift in responsibility and ownership of community outcomes from government to the community.

It is early days, however, the Family Empowerment model, evolving from WAAPI already shows potential to help inform and guide government, businesses and other stakeholders from a cultural perspective of the appropriate pathway forward for determining and realising effective development initiatives within Kimberley Aboriginal communities.

The energetic movement building across the Dampier Peninsula communities holds significant potential for benefiting other Aboriginal Kimberley communities tackling social challenges and seeking positive change and transformation.

The WAAPI Aboriginal leaders are open to working together with other Kimberley Aboriginal communities to share and transfer their knowledge and learnings first-hand, as well as be inspired and learn from other communities aspiring to realise better life outcomes for their children, young people and families.



Figure 7 WAAPI Family Steering Committee members at Lombadina.

## Empowering Communities by Empowering People

The WAAPI project reinforces the power of local leaders to achieve change by working towards common goals with a consistent narrative with their Aboriginal populations to stir transformation of their region's society, culture, environment and economy. The project is providing a grassroots demonstration of building the leadership and development-readiness of Aboriginal people to articulate a clear and compelling future vision for the prosperity of their region.

WAAPI Aboriginal leadership consider their empowerment movement as an important process in nation building efforts to achieve Council of Australian Governments (COAG) targets for closing the gap on social and economic disadvantage of Indigenous Australians.

While enabling cultural recognition, WAAPI offers a new benchmark for developing a strong culture of leadership and bringing Aboriginal people together to cooperate, unite and stand strong as one voice under their Indigenous governance model: a model, that empowers Aboriginal people through a unified 'voice' to co-design a shared vision and family cultural strategy that retains their distinct cultures, languages and identities as Dampier Peninsula peoples and Indigenous Australians.



Figure 8 WAAPI Aboriginal regional leadership group.



The Dampier Peninsula people therefore, envision WAAPI offering a new way of working that focuses on transformational reform, aiming to empower communities by empowering people, and while continuing as Aboriginal-driven, WAAPI holds great potential for stimulating far-reaching influences beyond their region.

### Sharing our experience and knowledge with other groups

Reader please take note, Dampier Peninsula community leaders in WAAPI hold ownership of the approach that WAAPI has developed, including the Community Navigator role, the Indigenous governance model, Family cultural framework and WAAPI brand. If any group would like to make use of this approach in any way, we encourage you to speak directly to the WAAPI Aboriginal leadership group members for permission. We are grateful that WAAPI have shared their learnings with us, and we ask that what they have shared is viewed in the spirit with which it has been shared - to enrich research and grow our common understanding towards achieving improved initiatives and outcomes within this field.

## Author Biographies

**Dr Jessica Bunning**

I am funded by Woodside to work as the Senior Project Officer under Save the Children to assist the Woombooriny Amboon Angarriiya Partnership Initiative (WAAPI) on the Dampier Peninsula. I provide coaching, community development strategic and technical capacity building support to the Community Navigators. Collaborating with backbone and project partners I also enable delivery on requested support by WAAPI's Aboriginal leadership.

I hold a Doctorate in Governance for Sustainable Community Development from Curtin University and a Master of Science Degree in Environmental Sciences from Murdoch University. My PhD research focused on grassroots level, community development initiatives with socio-economic and environmental outcomes that demonstrated culturally strong cohesive communities, evidenced by positive changes in social capital, good governance, community engagement and enhanced overall wellbeing.

From 2004-2009, I worked as a Programme Coordinator for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Centre in Paris. Collaborating with a diversity of international partners and stakeholders we implemented community development and capacity building projects with

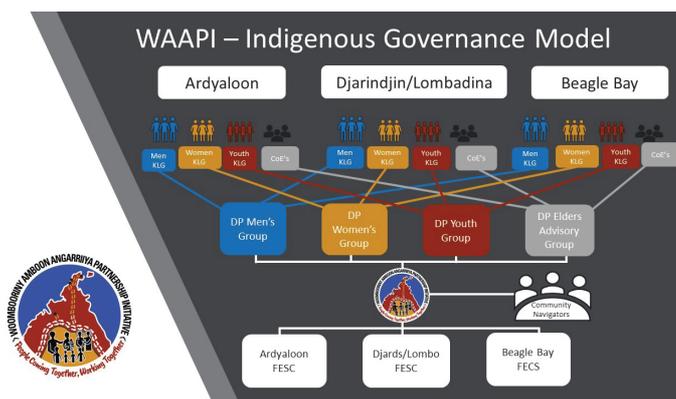


Figure 9 WAAPI Indigenous Governance Model.



Figure 10 WAAPI Family Cultural Framework.

Indigenous communities worldwide to create positive benefits for Indigenous peoples living near World Heritage Cultural and Natural Sites and Biosphere Reserves.

In the past, on graduating with an Arts Degree in Anthropology and Master of Arts in Cultural Studies from the University of Western Australia I worked in South Africa with the Pretoria Art Museum and African Window Cultural History Museum.

I am driven to support empowering Indigenous peoples across the world. I am committed to supporting practices that demonstrate authentic engagement with Indigenous communities and enable their capacity to lead, design and deliver on initiatives that facilitate their children, young people and families to reach their greatest potential.

Janella Isaac

Becoming a grandmother in 2017, now raising three young children preventing them from potentially been placed in out-of-home care, a devoted partner to her fiancé and affectionate mother and stepmother to three

strong-willed young people. Janella feels blessed and is currently living with her family in the remote community of Ardyaloon north of Broome. With strong connections to both her parent's country, Janella is driven by her passion to empower her people, so that one day they become self-determined.

Through her Mayala, Bardi and Jawi heritage, Janella's close relationship with her elders embedded the essence of her people's history and culture which are very important. Her own lived experience has taken Janella on a journey that motivated her into the position she has found herself today.

In dealing with the dynamics of a community filled with people having strong cultural presence and like most communities, social issues. Janella's involvement with Native Title process, land and sea management planning, providing support towards building a blue economy in the region, such as; her involvement in the Aarli Mayi Project, and engagement in an Aboriginal-led sporting organization has only help shaped her into a person of strong resilience.



Figure 11 Dr Jess Bunning and Janella Isaac at Changefest19 Conference in Queensland.



Figure 12 Djarindjin and Lombadina Community Navigator, Belinda Sampi with Youth Centre staff.

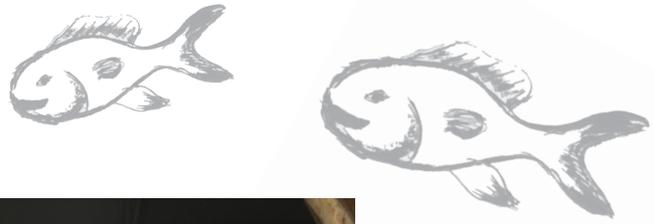


Figure 13 Working with Agunya to co-design Men's leadership group activities, with youth (Agunya staff Ian Hudson with Navigators Janella Isaac [Ardyaloon] and Joshua Augustine [Beagle Bay]).



Figure 14 Workshop in Beagle Bay with Family Committee on Significance of Early Years Learning.



Figure 15 Ardyaloon Family Committee member cooking turtle satays for WAAP's Cygnet Bay Harvest Festival fundraiser.



Figure 16 Children at a Dampier Peninsula event.



Janella's current position, as the Community Navigator, suits her passion and interests around community development. Her role is to improve the effectiveness in capacity to design, implement, manage or otherwise contribute to existing, and where services are non-existence work to develop and strengthen the capability and capacity of her community in the areas of family and children services. Presently, in her role Janella has contributed towards instituting a framework where indigenous governance is used as a reference tool for the governance structure in her region on the Dampier Peninsula, which is driven through the Aboriginal-led Woombooriny Aamboon Angarriya Partnership Initiative.

Janella endeavours to create a pathway for young leaders of her community to help them reach the point of self-autonomy. Janella would like to see a platform being developed that will see distinctive regional areas forming a united 'voice' which will be based on a cultural governance preamble, where each designated cultural block strives towards building their own regional assemblies to oversee a vision that can reach an achievable and positive social outcome.

Rosanna Smith

I was born in New Zealand and raised in Australia. I married a local man from Beagle Bay. I have three teenage children and have lived in the Dampier Peninsula area with my family for 19 years.

I previously worked for Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Organisation for five years as the Tenancy Support officer in Beagle Bay, delivering the Support and Tenant Education Program to community tenants.

Within my community, I am a member of the Beagle Bay Sacred Heart School board, a Director for the Community Store - Outback Stores, and I am Vice-Chairperson of the Beagle Bay Women's Centre. I like to engage and participate with activities that are focused on Youth and Families.

Working as a Community Navigator for Beagle Bay, as part of our Woombooriny Amboon Angarriya Partnership Initiative, I help to coordinate culturally appropriate, designed and targeted delivery of children, youth and family services within the community.



Figure 17 Youth from One Arm Point Remote Community School.



Joshua Augustine

My name is Joshua Augustine, I come from a small remote community north of Broome called Beagle Bay. I attended school as a boarding student at St John's College with and graduated year 12 in 2007. I came back home to Beagle Bay for little over six months, before deciding to move back to Darwin to live.

My main passion and line of work is working with high school students and youth. After graduating Year 12 I started working as an Indigenous Education Officer at St John's College for three years from 2008-2010. During that period, I also studied at Charles Darwin University (CDU) and I entered a Tertiary Enabling Program to get into University, which I passed and then started to study a Bachelor of Teaching for a few months. At CDU, I started to get involved with an Indigenous Ambassadors Program. I was one of the first Indigenous Ambassadors for CDU travelling to remote communities, promoting higher education, talking to high school and primary students in remote communities. I was letting them know that you don't have to be extremely smart to go to University, you just have to be committed, have the will power and have your own vision. This opportunity brought me to places like Tiwi Islands and some parts of Arnhem land.

I moved to Broome to work at Broome Senior High School for two years on a contract as an Aboriginal Islander Education Officer. After the two years, when my contract expired in 2012, I decided to apply for a position with Save the Children, which ran a program called HYPE (Helping Young People Engage). This was an initiative from the Broome Shire that involved working with the Broome Police.

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I think working with young people over the years and seeing their disadvantages opened my eyes to go back home and work, to see how I can improve and work with youth, and ultimately the community. That's when I got involved with WAAPI through Beagle Bay Futures Indigenous Corporation (BBFIC), and from there the rest is history, from "Little Things Big Things Grow."

Belinda Sampi

Belinda Sampi works as a Community Navigator for Djarindjin and Lombadina communities, as part of the Woombooriny Amboon Angarriya Partnership Initiative implemented across the Dampier Peninsula to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people and families.

As a Navigator, Belinda helps to co-ordinate culturally appropriate, tailored and targeted delivery of children, youth and family services within her community. Belinda and her Family Committee support building community through their Indigenous governance model to inform and implement social planning.

Belinda is empowering her community's ability to co-design, implement and manage working alongside local services early years, youth engagement, parenting and family support initiatives.

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