

Children's Ground Quarterly Report: Q2 2021

Sharing our growth, reach and impact over time





"I am continually inspired by the strength and resilience of my people. I honour our Elders and I love watching our grandchildren full of life and spirit. I can see the tide turning. Children's Ground is a celebration of their hope and what this has created in our communities."

William Tilmouth, Arrernte man and Children's Ground Chairperson



William with MK Turner OAM and his Grandchildren

At Children's Ground, we are defying disadvantage every day. So far, 9 First Nations communities have brought Children's Ground to life. We are building the evidence needed to change the systems currently failing First Nations children, families and communities.

Our long-term strategy is that, over time, the Children's Ground Approach will be backed by evidence, turned into policy and funded by Government – delivering economic efficiencies and education, health, employment, social and cultural outcomes.

Our Approach is designed to ensure our children know who they are, are confident and have access to high quality healthcare, wellbeing, education and economic independence. The dual principles of self-determination and human rights underpin change over the course of a generation.

Highlights for this quarter

Wearing it yellow for Children's Ground

A BIG thank you to all the fantastic schools, community groups, organisations and individuals who participated in Children's Ground's first Wear It Yellow Day this National Reconciliation Week.

National Reconciliation Week is the week in which we recognise the history and the depth of our First Nations cultures and achievements. The successful 1967 referendum and the historic High Court Mabo decision are remembered as hard-fought for moments of change. National Reconciliation Day and National Sorry Day bring the work we are yet to do into sharper focus. We remember those who have fought for justice and the First Nations children removed from their families and communities. We also remind ourselves that systemic change is possible and achievable.

Children's Ground's Wear It Yellow Day was launched to engage a wider group of people to support our work and the national truth and justice conversation. Participants used our reconciliation-themed educational resource to facilitate discussions and were encouraged to host a day of wearing yellow – a colour that comes from the earth through the rich ochres of the land and from the centre of the Aboriginal flag, representing the sun, the giver of life.

We were inspired by the children who hold such beauty and humanity and who were so engaged and excited to Wear it Yellow this year. We are looking forward to growing Wear It Yellow participation in 2022.

Impact: This year, 188 schools, childcare centres, organisations and individuals from every state and territory in Australia signed up to participate in Wear it Yellow.

This was an amazing outcome with many schools actively engaging their students in Reconciliation Week and learning about the history of Australia through the voice and leadership of First Nations people. There are many resources and incredible First Nations people across Australia supporting schools in teaching the true history of Australia and celebrating the brilliance of First Nations people and cultures. We are excited about the next generation.

We want to thank everyone who participated. You raised awareness, but you also raised funds for the education of First Nations children who do not have the same access and opportunities to education as most Australian children.

The money you raised will go to First Nations educators, on-country learning, early childhood education and health and educational resources.

This year, we had prominent non-for-profit organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières Australia and Sacred Heart Community taking part to raise awareness. Eighteen schools raised over \$500 each and Northcote Primary School, Seymour College, Gowrie Victoria and Berwick Primary School raised over \$1,000 each. Every single dollar makes a difference and every single child and young person who participates in Wear it Yellow becomes part of the future of reconciliation, truth, justice and respect. As schools and organisations, you are showing leadership and are stimulating conversations about First Nations People's history and aspirations in communities across the country. These conversations, coupled with action, will create change.



Highlights for this quarter



Werte, Dan Sultan!

Children's Ground is very excited to announce our newest Ambassador, Eastern Arrernte and Gurindji musician Dan Sultan.

For our Chair William Tilmouth, Dan is family. He welcomes the passion and advocacy that Dan will bring to his role as an ambassador: *"I am pleased and proud. Children's Ground is all about family strengthening our connections to each other. Dan's contribution will help ensure our children and families voices and talent is seen and heard."*

Dan says: *"I am very proud to become an Ambassador for this extremely important and significant organisation. Created and run by First Nations people and communities, Children's Ground is pioneering pathways for non-Aboriginal Australia to have a better understanding and procedures in order to have our First Nations children's needs, language and culture at the forefront of decision-making in regards to their own future."*

Dan kicked off his ambassadorship for Children's Ground by hosting a fundraising auction of two Fender guitars. Each guitar features a stunning painting by young First Nations artists: Yuin Monero and Wandandian woman Niah McLeod and Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung man Otis Hope Carey.

Impact: The campaign raised over \$20,000. Fender guitars partnered to produce a video to promote the auction. Hollywood actor Chris Hemsworth bid on the guitars and promoted Children's Ground and the auction to his 50.4 million Instagram followers. Others promoting this on their social media feeds were: Fender (3.5 million followers), Dan Sultan (40.1K followers) and artist Otis Hope Carey (58.8K followers).

Building the evidence base

Our first evaluation of Children's Ground in Central Australia (Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe) is now complete.

The report evaluates implementation of the growth model over the first three years - from 2017 to 2019. With First Nations leadership and participation at all levels of the evaluation (design, data collection, data analysis and reporting), this report will contribute to the national and international evidence base about the impact of sustained, whole of community approaches to improving outcomes in education, health, economic, social and cultural life over the course of a generation.

The release of this report was delayed due to COVID-19. We are preparing to release this as an important baseline for the longitudinal evaluation of Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe over 25 years. Watch for the details in our next quarterly impact report.

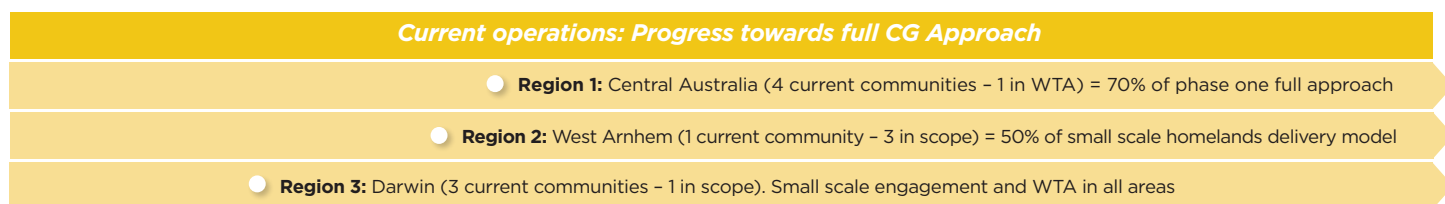
"My son Javontae loves coming to Children's Ground. He reads books and tries to find the lizards. Javontae's Arrernte is improving because he is listening and speaking the language both at home and in his classroom. He is using words like anthaye (give me). Javontae is building trust and relationships with Children's Ground educators so he can feel comfortable without me here. My daughter Myer also loves Children's Ground. She has become a great listener and is always ready to learn. Myer likes learning about her skin name and numbers in Arrernte and English."

Veronica Ross, Arrernte mother

Progress: growth, reach and impact

KPI Growth: Proportion of full CG Approach delivery

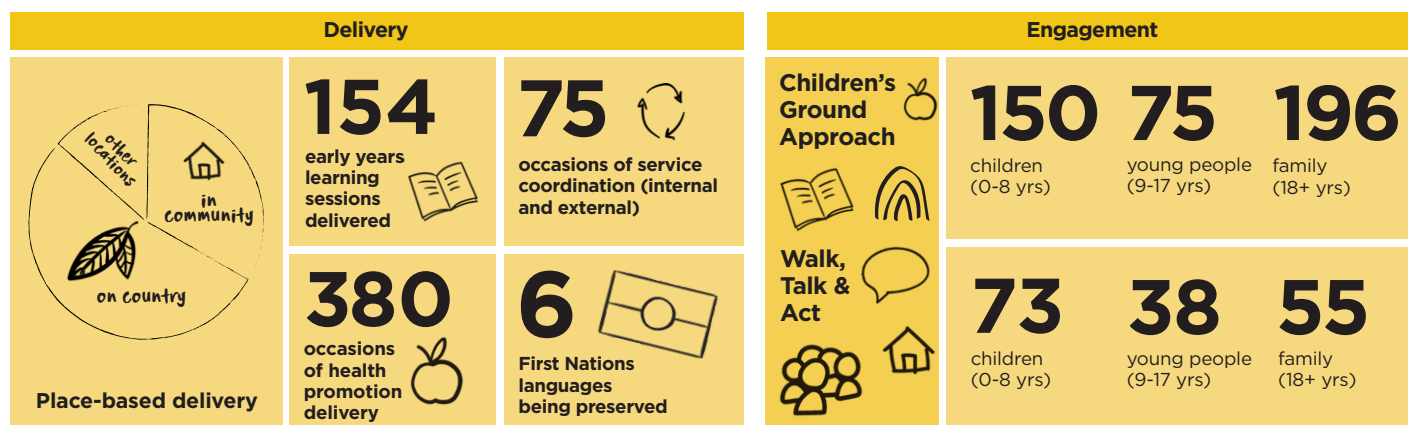
The CG Approach is currently operating and being evidenced in three regions - each is at a different stage of the 25-year Approach. As at quarter two 2021, the CG Approach was being delivered to the extent shown below.



The CG Approach requires all key elements to be implemented fully to achieve long term change. Children's Ground is a developing organisation. It is expected to take a further 3-5 years to be fully operational in three regions, as funding resources are secured. These quarterly reports will present progress across key performance indicators (KPIs) and measures of the CG Approach.

How we are tracking against full implementation	WTA	< 25%	35-50%	50-75%	75-100%
	CENTRAL AUSTRALIA	WEST ARNHEM	DARWIN		
Learning & Wellbeing					
Family Health & Wellbeing					
Economic Development & Wellbeing					
Cultural & Creative Development & Wellbeing					
Community Development & Wellbeing					

KPI: Quarter two 2021 access, delivery and engagement



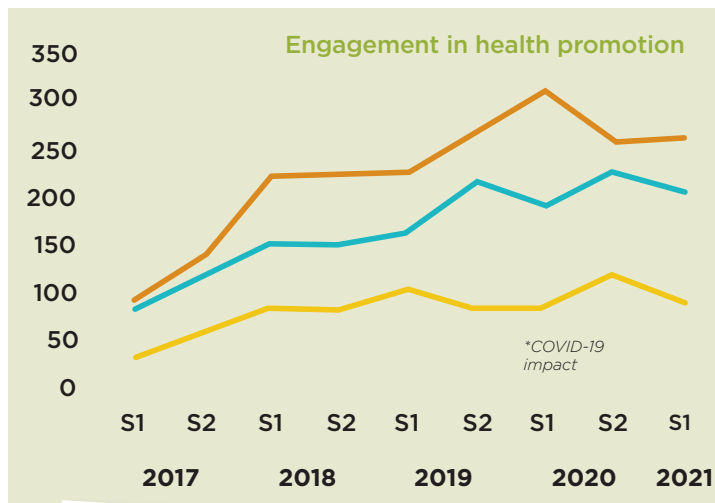
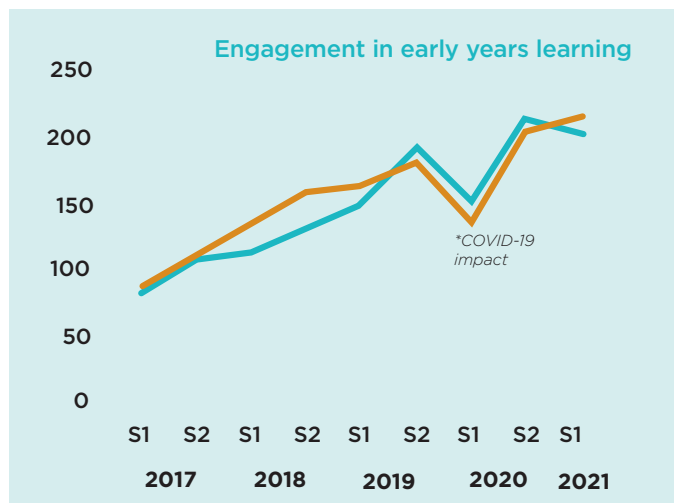
Note: During Walk, Talk & Act, children and their families engage in early years learning 1-2 days per week and in health promotion, governance and employment. These communities are awaiting funding to implement the full CG Approach.

Progress: growth, reach and impact

KPI: Access and engagement over time

Engagement with Children's Ground so far, from 2017 to 2021

Children (0-8 yrs) Young people (9-17 yrs) Family (18+ yrs)



KPI: Reach over time

2389 people have engaged with Children's Ground from 2014 to 2021 across all regions

Category	Children (0-8 yrs)	Young people (9-17 yrs)	Family (18+ yrs)
Early learning	747	403	911
Health promotion	806	490	1147
Preserving culture	532	309	768
Employment	221		
Community leadership (governance)	450		

Children (0-8 yrs) Young people (9-17 yrs) Family (18+ yrs)

The Children's Ground Approach in Action

Learning & Wellbeing

Western learning, especially numeracy and literacy, is important for our children and this is improving every day. But learning is more than just this; our First Nations learning system is about the whole child. This gives the foundation for all learning. We want to highlight some of the important cultural learning that occurred this term.

Highlight: Providing access to Learning on Country

It is important that our children understand their country, where they belong and where other people belong. They need to learn about their father's country and their mother's country through both sets of grandparents. During this quarter, children and families from Uyenpere Atwatye (Hidden Valley Town Camp) attended a two-night Learning on Country camp at Sandy Bore in Central Australia. These camps are an opportunity to extend educational experiences for children from when they wake up on Country through to the evenings, when Elders tell night-time stories. These tales about alkere (sky), kwerralye (stars), amiwarre (the Milky Way), atnyentye (moon) and the utnenge (spirits) that come out at night closely relate to several of the educational resources published by Children's Ground. We supported two young boys in out-of-home care to attend the camp - this was the first time they had ever visited their mother's Country. The children loved this time to reconnect with family and Country - experiences that they miss out on in their daily lives. During the camp, the children's grandmother encouraged them to relearn their first language through singing songs.

"What a celebration! The boys were immersed in language, beginning to learn the language that has been lost whilst they were staying within out of home care."
Children's Ground educator



Highlight: Learning is everywhere at Marlkawo!

Families living at the very remote outstation of Marlkawo in West Arnhem Land are living on their traditional lands and surrounded by their culture, language and Country. Each day they attended Children's Ground, children were engaged in cultural and Western learning. From the outset, the community planned for Western learning to occur in the morning and for cultural learning in the afternoons. Children recently enjoyed another rich day of learning on the land during a trip to collect bush tucker - turtle, prawns and fish - and participated in a cook-up on the sand. All the while, families spoke in language about kinship, traditional health practices and caring for Country.

"This is the most important kind of learning."
Shirley Djandjomerr



Impact: We are going back to our education systems because learning does not just happen between 9-3. Spending extended periods of time on Country has positive outcomes not only for a child's learning, but the social, cultural and emotional wellbeing of the entire family. Children become confident in themselves and in turn become confident learners. Support for families to live permanently on Country has increased access to cultural and Western learning

Across Australia, First Nations children are going into out-of-home care ten times more than non-Aboriginal children. Working in partnership with the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, we were able to reconnect two children in out-of-home care to culture, language, family and country. They spent time with their family, on their country and immersed in their first language (Arrernte). This is important for their spirit: to know who they are and where they belong; to know that they are not alone and that their family and country is there for them. This is crucial for the wellbeing of First Nations children and for strengthening their identity.

The Children's Ground Approach in Action

Family Health & Wellbeing

Highlight: Healing through cultural health practices

Children's Ground hosted our first Men's Camp in Central Australia, facilitated by our Health and Wellbeing Coordinator in partnership with Akeyulerre Healing Centre. This gave Arrernte men, from young people through to Elders, the opportunity to reconnect with country and revisit important cultural practices. The space was provided to talk about men's health and wellbeing and the important role of men in the lives of families and children. The men began to develop plans for an Arrernte men's health and wellbeing program focussed on kere aherre (kangaroo) according to Arrernte Law.

"We want men to feel they are an important source of knowledge and guidance when teaching our kids, our way, on our Country."

Tyson Carmody, Health & Wellbeing Coordinator

"We need those trips out bush to get our young men together for healing on Country and get back to joining in with cultural activities and seeing special landscapes. It's important that our young men are learning about who they are and what they're responsible for."

Mitchell Doolan, Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe Men's & Youth Team

Impact: The men's health and wellbeing team focuses on physical health, mental health and cultural health. It supports our young men at risk, it promotes safety for our families and reconnects young men with their law, culture, land and responsibilities. At Children's Ground, young men are becoming leaders and role models. They are finding their place and their identity. They are building their confidence. For a long time, we have been worried that our young people are lost. We are now watching them find their way and we are proud.



Highlight: Locally led approaches to COVID-safety

When the first reports of COVID-19 community transmission in the NT were announced this June, Children's Ground pivoted all operations to keep communities informed and prepared. Led by community leaders, we found safe and creative ways to communicate with families during lockdown periods.

In the Top End, First Nations staff from each community spoke to all families and relayed any concerns or needs back to other Children's Ground staff. We were able to swiftly coordinate the provision of essential supplies to each community, including face masks and food. Staff worked with community members to develop informative, appropriate health messaging including a 'How to Wear a Mask Properly' comic, mask hygiene fact sheet and 'COVID bingo'. Creating information by community and for community is critical in ensuring information reaches people and is understood.

Elders and First Nations young leaders promoted the importance of vaccinations during a time when people were worried. In first languages, they shared information and encouraged families to begin to get vaccinated, explaining the benefits and risks and ensuring people could make informed decisions.

Impact: The First Nations community leadership embedded within the Children's Ground Approach makes swift responses to community level issues and concerns possible and effective. During the NT lockdown, locally designed and led communications enabled greater engagement with trusted health messages. When misinformation relating to COVID-19 spreads through communities, our leaders at Children's Ground promptly facilitate family-to-family communication and support.

The Children's Ground Approach in Action

Community Development & Wellbeing

Highlight: Starting the Children's Ground journey

This quarter saw First Nations leaders begin the Children's Ground Walk, Talk & Act engagement phase with families in a new community in Darwin (15 Mile). This followed a significant period of grief and sorry business (an important time of mourning) within the community during quarter one. Their community engagement is now in full swing, with regular delivery of early learning, including integrated health promotion and ongoing conversations and community planning with key leaders and families. A Community Plan is emerging, based on the family's aspirations and worries and on the needs of their children, grandchildren, families and whole community. The community has made plans to fix up and re-open an old unused demountable so there can be a space for families to gather for early learning sessions.

Impact: Families at 15 Mile are feeling empowered. They are making plans for their community and seeing action at the same time. Too often, 'consultation' with First Nations communities ends there. By leading their own Walk, Talk & Act community engagement and planning, consultation is leading to action - in early learning, health, early-stage employment for families and local community decision making and delivery. Here, Jersey is developing healthy eating practices by participating in preparation of nutritious meals for her friends and family during a learning activity in her community.



Creative & Cultural Development & Wellbeing

Highlight: Showcasing cultural pride through dance

During quarter two, Mpwerkingke Anapipe community (outstations to the north of Alice Springs) held two family nights on Country as part of extended hours learning on country. They had a particular focus on traditional dance. At one family night, a senior First Nations educator led the men and boys in a performance of traditional Arrernte men's dance (altharte). At the next family night, it was the girls' turn to perform traditional Arrernte women's dance (anthepe) to an audience of proud family members.

"Darius and Lucas joined me for the Traditional Welcome to Country Dance. This was a magic moment for me because these two young boys stepped up to show pride in their culture and country. It made me very proud." Edmond Doolan, Young Arrernte Leader

Impact: The land holds our identity and our law. Our dance has been passed through generations; it tells story, it educates and it holds important history and knowledge. Nowadays, it is much harder for families to be on their Country to continue this important learning and cultural knowledge. We celebrate through dance and song. At the same time, children, young people and families are engaging in cultural revitalisation and transmission. This is about healing. It is our education, our health and our culture.



Children from Uyenpere Atwatye are collecting and grinding ochre during a Learning on Country session.

Our cultural learning has deepened each term at Uyenpere Atwatye. Arrernte educators are becoming so much more confident in delivering learning and are adding layer upon layer of deep cultural learning each session. It's incredible to observe the way it is transforming each term.

Our Arrernte and Western-trained educators are working collaboratively to ensure both Arrernte language and English are being taught. Arrernte educators are creating their own language resources to ensure this learning takes place. These language resources are used throughout learning sessions on a regular basis.



"We are consistently seeing children being immersed in learning language and on their Country. We are seeing the learning of skin names completely embedded in every session. A skin name holds a child's identity and connection to land and people. The children who attend regularly are able to demonstrate which skin name they belong to and how they relate to others.

We are seeing old ways of teaching being introduced through play and children are exploring and learning like the old people used to. During place-based sessions held at the community centre, we are seeing children making paint brushes out of sticks they find on the ground as their Arrernte educators have taught them. We are seeing ochre crushing embedded in every session to help self-regulate and as a tool to learn and explore that connection to Country.

This type of play uses cultural practice as the foundations for learning, exploring, problem solving, socialising, creative thinking, fine and gross motor skill development, and pre-numeracy and literacy learning. The quality of the program is worth celebrating as it developed rapidly from when we first started delivery in 2019."

Amber, Uyenpere Atwatye Educator

"I'm Cassandra, I've got five children of my own. I really like working at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground Central Australia). I'm learning a lot here. It's great to be employed in my own community. I can bring my own kids to Early Years learning and work as an educator at the same time. We want our children to be strong with our knowledge because it's slowly fading - we want to bring that back."

Cassandra, Uyenpere Atwatye Arrernte Educator



Changing the conversation

First Nations leaders participated in ChangeFest in June 2021. The national movement is a growing community of committed and passionate changemakers. They reached out to Children's Ground and the team gave two presentations about the Children's Ground Approach and First Nations led education systems. Their presentations were received with great interest and enthusiasm from the audience. Senior Arrernte cultural educators from Alice Springs, Lorraine Gorey and Felicity Hayes were role models and supported our emerging First Nations leaders in the Top End Pauline Grant, Kathy Thomsen, Jackie Treves and Esther Kenyon.

Together, we can change the date

Over the past five years, Children's Ground staff members have been voting with their feet to call for a new date of national celebration. The 26th of January is a day of mourning and trauma and survival for First Nations people. It is not a day that brings Australia together. Did you know that the Government only named 26th January as a national holiday for Australia day in 1994? If we are to celebrate our country together, we need a date that we can all celebrate.

At Children's Ground, we name an alternative public holiday which staff have a choice to take. This year, it was on June 28th. This is a neutral date we chose to celebrate all Australians and our amazing country.

We invite all employers to issue this same invitation to their staff. When most Australians choose to work on Australia Day, there will be a groundswell for a new day of celebration and a new Australian identity. Let us walk together.

"Iwerre Anwerne-kenhe areme ilte Australia Day-ke. This is our pathway to a new Australia Day. This is us as a team working from the grassroots to take a new route forward. Join us and walk beside us on this path."

MK Turner, Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground Central Australia) Director.

Taking action for reconciliation

The national theme for this year's Reconciliation Week was 'More than a word: reconciliation takes action.' This is a week during which Children's Ground and First Nations people stop to recognise significant moments in our history. The Stolen Generation, the 1967 referendum and the Mabo decision. Children's Ground contributed to national Truth Telling through our ongoing webinar series. This year, we focused on the responsibility of non-First Nations people in the reconciliation process. The panel featured prominent non-First Nations academics, activists and artists including Sarah Maddison, Sophie Trevitt and Shane Howard. They were powerful as they spoke the role and responsibilities of non-First Nations people in addressing the injustices perpetrated against First Nations people in Australia. With deep experience across academia, the arts and justice, they provided critical insights for all non-First Nations people to explore. Watch this important conversation [here](#).

Speaking up about children's rights

Delegates from the Australian Human Rights Commission: National Children's Commissioner Anne Hollands, Director of Children's Rights Susan Nicolson, Eugenia Munozprietio and Susan Newell visited Ampekenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground Central Australia) to consult with families about the next iteration of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. The delegates met with over 40 staff, families and children at our Health, Learning and Wellbeing hub at Mpweringke (Burt Creek). This was an opportunity for children, young people and families to have their direct voice into this important framework. On Country and in community, they discussed how to keep First Nations children safe and well.

"Children and young people have a right to have their views and voices heard. Listening to children and young people also has very tangible benefits for policy development, at both the program and broader strategy level." – Anne Hollands, National Children's Commissioner.

