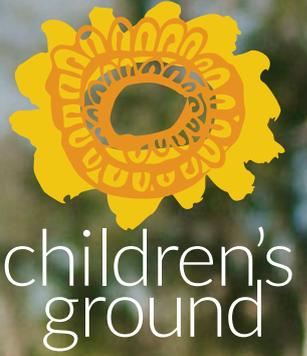


Annual Report



2024

Children's Ground honours First Nations peoples. We pay our respects to ancestors, Elders and Traditional Owners and custodians of these lands. These lands were not ceded.

In Mparntwe (Alice Springs) in Central Australia, we work on the land of the Arrernte people. In the Top End of the Northern Territory, we work in West Arnhem on the land of the Bolmo people. In Garramilla (Darwin), we work on the land of the Larrakia people. In Naarm (Melbourne), we work on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We are thankful to live and work on these lands.

Our commitment to First Nations peoples

To honour our past, to listen to the voices of our ancestors, to respect our Elders and to honour the land. We pay our respects to all First Nations peoples across the many Nations who continue to live by the laws and customs that have evolved for over 65,000 years.

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First Nations people are warned that this report contains images of people who have passed. Photography by Children's Ground staff and families © 2024 except where noted. All photographs, filming and recordings of First Nations people and Country are owned by First Nations people and used by Children's Ground with their permission.

A young Indigenous Australian child is the central focus of the image. The child is looking directly at the camera, with their hands held up to their eyes, framing them like binoculars. The child has dark skin and is wearing a patterned wrap around their waist. The background is a soft, out-of-focus natural setting with green foliage and a warm, golden light. Overlaid on the top left of the image is the text 'Children's Ground is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.' in a white, sans-serif font. In the bottom left corner, there is a small page number '4' followed by the text '| Children's Ground' in a smaller white font.

Children's Ground is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.

We are a First Nations organisation driving long-term change through First Nations Culture and leadership; transforming education, health, wellbeing, employment and community life. We are breaking cycles of injustice and disadvantage with evidence, equity and opportunity.

Introduction

Our vision

First Nations people across Australia have self-determination and enjoy social, cultural, political and economic justice.

Our next generation of children know and celebrate their Culture and identity, have freedom of choice and expression and can live with opportunity, peace, harmony and wellbeing.

Australians recognise our shared history and celebrate First Nations Culture and strength.

Our purpose

To achieve systemic reform over 25 years through the Children's Ground Approach led by our First Nations people, and to evidence this approach for national reform.

To celebrate and uplift First Nations knowledge, creating equity and access to high quality education, health and economy in community for the next generation of children.

What we value

- Respect
- Inclusive and collective leadership
- Self-determination and agency
- Honesty
- Family
- Bravery and disruption
- Love
- Creativity
- Humility



2024 data snapshot

1360

community members across generations engaged with Children's Ground.

There are so many changes in every child when they come to Children's Ground. They come with happy joyful faces when they see the bus coming. They are the first ones to get ready. They grow up with Children's Ground wrapped around them. They grow up going out onto Country, learning and doing and being around family.

Marita McMillan
Senior Arrernte Educator and Community
Engagement Worker

Learning & Wellbeing

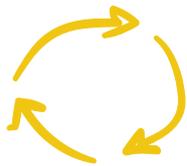
279



children (0-8 years) engaged in early learning activities in their First Language and Culture as well as in English.

Economic Development & Wellbeing

169



First Nations adults were employed with Children's Ground, role modelling expertise and active engagement in work for children and young people.

Data includes all First Nations staff - community and non-community-based staff. Also includes First Nations staff employed in Stronger Communities for Children sites.

Cultural & Creative Development & Wellbeing

779



children, young people and families engaged in cultural knowledge and practice including strengthening and revitalisation of First Languages.

Health & Wellbeing

1173



children and their family members engaged in targeted and universal health promotion and support.

Community Development & Wellbeing

198



community members engaged in governance, designing and directing Children's Ground in their communities, for their children and families.

Message from the Chair



In a year filled with challenges both locally and Territory wide, Children's Ground continued to champion First Nations voices and challenge the status quo.

I was privileged to travel to Canberra at the beginning of this year to honour Dr M.K. Turner OAM and champion her namesake, the M.K. Turner Report. We know our children succeed when their learning environment is founded in their identity, their Culture, their language and their Country. The M.K. Turner Report is pioneering in its key recommendation that the Australian governments commit to the establishment of a new First Nations education system.

As our Elders pass away, we stand on their shoulders and continue to ask for change now - for the sake of our children and before the knowledge of our old people is gone.

In the first half of 2024 Mparntwe (Alice Springs) experienced unrest and turmoil stemming from tragedy amongst our young people. Federal and Territory governments were reactionary and punitive in their response, enforcing curfews in the centre of town in March, April and July.

Children's Ground supported our young people at this time, recognising their pain and their need for compassion.

The state of emergency in Mparntwe arose from long term neglect and trauma resulting from decades of government failure. In First Nations communities across the country there is not enough investment, and the investment that is happening is not being directed to the right solutions.

We are frustrated by the constant questions about 'what to do.' First Nations people continue to present solutions, year after year, decade after decade. Instead of listening and supporting these solutions, our people continue to be policed, institutionalised and criminalised. Our children are dying. Our adults are dying.

Our communities are in deep distress. Our young people feel this pain. The impact of trauma is pervasive, complex and permeates every aspect of life.

We continue to advocate for Governments to invest in whole scale prevention at a community level, run and led by community to create dignity, opportunities, and systems that are culturally designed and effective.

This year we farewelled the former Minister for Indigenous Australians Linda Burney. Her strength and achievement as the first Indigenous person elected to the NSW parliament, the first Indigenous woman in the House of Representatives and the first Indigenous woman to be appointed to cabinet in a Ministerial position has been pioneering.

As we wished Minister Burney the best for the future, we welcomed Senator Malarndirri McCarthy as the incoming Minister for Indigenous Australians. We have maintained an ongoing and encouraging dialogue with her office throughout the year and, with the Minister's support, look forward to delivering more positive outcomes for our communities in 2025.

As the year came to a close, I was deeply heartened to participate in the launch of our 2020-2022 Evaluation Report for Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground Central Australia). Highlighting the outcomes of years of focused and resolute work, the report shows that local First Nations people are leading transformational change with a new reality emerging across our four communities in Alice Springs.

A new generation of children are engaged in early learning, families are engaged in employment and people across all ages are engaging in critical health promotion. First Nations leadership is on the rise and people are feeling empowered and hopeful for the future.

At the child, family and community level, people's lives are changing. I see their confidence and their sense of responsibility grow. People are feeling empowered, and they want to maintain and share that feeling.

As Children's Ground moves from strength to strength through its daily operations in Central Australia, Darwin and West Arnhem Land; as we highlight the talent

of First Nations people at a local and national level; and as we see our children, families and communities grow stronger in their Culture, their language and their pride as First Nations people, I am inspired by our next generation of leaders who continue to stand tall and lead from the front. Our journey is long and it will take years fulfill our vision but I know with our young people growing in confidence and embracing both their past and their future, we are in powerful hands.

As always, I want to thank our two arms of governance: the Children's Ground Board which holds the responsibility of Western Corporate Governance, and our local Governance authorities who hold the responsibility for cultural governance standards. Their expertise leads us in the right direction and their integrity is critical to our success.

Thank you to our First Nations and non-First Nations staff who everyday put our communities first and tirelessly work so our children and families have tangible opportunities and a sense of hope for their future.

On behalf of our Elders and senior leaders I thank our partners. This includes our philanthropic partners, our corporate and government partners and our organisational partners on the ground. Without their incredible, long-term support, Children's Ground would not be able to have the impact that we do.

In 2024 we continued the First Nations revolution of systemic change and structural change, a revolution that you cannot retire from and that lasts until your final breath.

Our Elders and passed leaders demonstrated this by never giving up on the cause. Their legacy lives on through us and the generations to come.

We will continue to fight for systems change just as we will continue to give our children the depth and richness of a Culture that belongs to them.

William Tilmouth
Chair, Children's Ground

Message from the CEO



“...the work they are undertaking and evolving is groundbreaking...The cumulative impact of Children’s Ground working with children and their families and across education, health and employment is what is driving impact. This has the potential for significant and enduring change over time...What has been achieved in this growth model phase over only a short period of time is phenomenal.” – Children’s Ground Independent Research Advisory Group, 2024: Response to 2020-2022 Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children’s Ground Central Australia) Evaluation Report.

The outcomes of our second evaluation for Central Australia and endorsement from the independent Research Advisory Group is a key highlight for Children’s Ground in 2024. Impact and achieving systems change is our core business and the evidence shows that we are on track in Central Australia. We are not designed to simply deliver programs, we are designed as an alternative First Nations system to achieve transformational change.

In Central Australia we have set the foundations for long term impact, and we are achieving significant short-term change as we transform both delivery and engagement in early childhood, preventative health, employment, local governance and empowerment.

Our evidence shows that alternative systems can work and are essential given the Productivity Commission’s damning assessment that business-as-usual in Government is condemning First Nations people to enduring injustice. The Productivity Commissioner Selwyn Button condemned the continuation of business-as-usual by governments with only four of nineteen targets on track.

Children’s Ground was designed to replace the existing status quo with a new system. And while this remains an ambitious vision, the evidence indicates that we are making positive progress.

As part of our reform work, in 2024 we launched the MK Turner Report in Canberra, calling for First Nations-led education reform to address the critical educational outcomes faced by First Nations children. We continue to work with Utyerre Apanpe, representing over 90 First Nations educators and our national partners to progress this reform agenda.

Organisationally, 2024 was a time of transition. We developed from an emerging to an established organisation, albeit still growing and maturing.

Significantly we transitioned from founding Elders to new Elders. It was a profound period of deep change, and what emerged was a quiet and determined shift of our Senior Cultural staff into Eldership. Through profound loss, generational change has emerged as the responsibilities long held by Elders who have passed move to the next generation. We continue our commitment to our Elders outstanding leadership – their vision and responsibility, setting of standards and strategic acumen as well as love, humour, humility and respect.

Aperenge-ntyale is their legacy – the cultural framework that underpins the Children’s Ground Approach, and guides strategy, standards and practice. We continue to deliver the Children’s Ground Approach in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Marlkawo (remote West Arnhem) and Garramilla (Darwin) – three diverse cultural and geographic regions at different stages of their 25-year journey. As Mparntwe gets closer to the full operational model of delivery, Garramilla is now able to secure further investment and is growing with increased place-based delivery and strong local leadership. Marlkawo had an amazing year with intensive intergenerational culture camps successfully trialled through the dry season.

In 2024 we earned income of \$14,262,835, a 19% increase from the year prior. Children’s Ground Limited ended the year with a surplus of \$1,065,463, following two years of losses. The 2023 financial loss was associated with the timing of our Federal Health Department funding, which was delayed by six months but contributed to our financial strength in 2024. Our financial goal in 2024 was to rectify previous year losses and to re-establish our financial principle of growing cash year on year to manage financial risk as the organisation grows. However, the actual year end surplus was higher than expected due to recruitment lags which gave rise to salary savings.

Recruitment challenges were experienced across the sector in the Northern Territory. In the coming years, it is our intention to continue growing revenue to an eventual annual target of \$30M. This aligns with our full budget to implement the Children’s Ground Approach in three regions with the resources, standards and quality required for long term sustainability to deliver learning, health, employment, culture and governance at approximately \$13,000 per person per year.

Children’s Ground’s collective public-private investment strategy saw 36% of income from government, and 64% from philanthropy, corporate partners, general donations and other income. A groundbreaking \$10M partnership with the Goodman Foundation over five years provides critical certainty during challenging times. New Australian Government and NT Government grants were secured in 2024 enabling operational growth in extended hours delivery for 2025 in both Central Australia and the Top End.

This year we have started new partnerships and strengthened old and we recognise and thank the work of many organisations who walk this path with us.

Children’s Ground is made up of extraordinary individuals who work together as an incredible family. I want to celebrate our Cultural Governance in each region who guide everything we do. To our Board, our sub-committees and the Research Advisory Group – the talent and contribution is exceptional. Our philanthropic family backs an ambitious vision for revolutionary change and enables this through money, time, talent, love, advice and guidance. Our Ambassadors share their brilliance to promote our work and honour the voices of our communities. To our staff and volunteers, you are simply phenomenal in your commitment and passion. I thank all of you.

The seeds of change were planted by our Elders and are growing. The roots are deepening, the children are growing, new realities are taking shape. It is inspiring to witness what is possible when people have the freedom to lead with self-determination, local solutions and local talent. The next generation is growing up with First Nations systems of knowledge and practice and western opportunities that will underpin their social, economic, cultural and political freedom and wellbeing. It is critical that we hold this environment, so that this generation can grow into it and lead it into the future.

Jane Vadivelloo
CEO, Children’s Ground

Guided by Elders, grounded in evidence

Children's Ground was born from the vision and leadership of Elders—those who have walked this land, carried knowledge, and fought for a future where their children and grandchildren could thrive. From the very beginning, they envisioned Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe as a place of safety and strength, where First Nations children grow strong in identity, learning, culture, language and wellbeing. Today, this vision is not only alive—it is working.

Evidence shows that when children learn through their First Language and Culture, they will perform better in education, will have improved social and emotional wellbeing, will more likely stay in school and will improve the empowerment and engagement of families in their learning.

Critical progress has been made toward long term change. Our first focus was to establish a new reality for children being born today.

Since Children's Ground began there has been an increase in children accessing early years learning from 14% to 68%. Early years learning is now a new norm for all communities and it is the first time culturally designed early years learning has been available. Connected to this is a dramatic increase in nutrition engagement as a foundation to long term health outcomes. Increasing local community employment in each community is shifting economic foundations, norms and skills. Local governance engagement and decision making has been a key driver for change.

The evaluation identified the multi-level change across learning, health, local governance, employment, culture and community life, across generations, as a point of difference and necessary environment for long term change.

Highlights from the evaluation can be found on page 71.

"Anwerne apmere-ke ahentye aneme ampe akweke anwerne-kenhe areye mwerre anetyeke. Itne amagketyeke riterrke, akaltye irremele educationeke, ante future mwerre atnyenetyeke. Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe apmere mwerre itne aneme. Anwerne areme ampe anwerne-kenhe areye akaltye irrerlenghe. Itneke artweye mape itneke itwerle akarelheme. Anwerne ahentye aneme itne mwerre akwete anetyeke."

We want a place where our children are safe—where they can grow up to be healthy, educated and have a better future. Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe is the place for them. We are seeing our kids learning and loving to learn. Their families are walking beside them. We have hope for the future.

Ingkerrekele Arntarnte-areme, Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe, Governance Committee, 2022



Our Elders who have passed continue to guide us and we continue their vision

A defining strength of the evaluation is the central role of First Nations voices—those of the families, staff and community members who are shaping this work every day. Between 2020 and 2022, more than 1,400 people engaged with Children’s Ground in Central Australia, offering insights grounded in lived experience and cultural authority. These voices bring the data to life, offering deep insight into how change is being lived and led every day. They are not just reflections—they are evidence of impact. Community members shared:

- *“Children’s Ground is a place for looking after our children and the country...For all of us to come together, doing something together, to live and breathe what we trying to create.”*
- *“It [Children’s Ground] changed my life too. Because before I didn’t have that job. I used to drink all the time.”*
- *“We are sharing, teaching and learning our language and culture. We still have our culture and language with us. We are responsible, we are doing this for ourselves, not for anyone else.”*

These stories reflect a broader truth: transformational change is not done for communities—it is created by them, through knowledge, leadership, and lived experience.

Affirmation for this vision is not only evident in the outcomes and voices of the evaluation—it is powerfully echoed by leading western experts. The Children’s Ground Research Advisory Group (page 81), an independent panel of highly respected, nationally recognised researchers and academics, formally reviewed and endorsed the findings of the 2020-2022 report. Their endorsement goes beyond a recognition of effective service delivery. It affirms the deeper significance of what has been achieved: a community-led, Elder-designed model that is delivering transformational change. The Group described the evaluation as ‘a landmark body of evidence’—a testament to the strength of First Nations knowledge systems, cultural authority, and long-term leadership.

“This is an example of leading practice that should be implemented across all service and program delivery for First Nations and non-First Nations initiatives.”

Their endorsement recognises that what is taking place in Central Australia is not an intervention imposed from outside, but the realisation of a vision held and led by community. It is a model that places culture at the centre, restores power to families, and creates generational impact.

An excerpt of their letter of endorsement to Chair William Tilmouth can be read below.

Excerpt from the letter from the Children’s Ground Independent Research Advisory Group to William Tilmouth

November 2024

William Tilmouth
Chair of the Board, Chair Research Advisory Group
Children’s Ground

Dear William

Re: Evaluation of the Children’s Ground Approach in Central Australia, 2020 to 2022

...

We wish to communicate to the local Governance and leadership of Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children’s Ground Central Australia) that the work they are undertaking and evolving is groundbreaking.

...

Children’s Ground is a powerful story because it moves beyond traditional approaches of funding discrete or siloed programs. The cumulative impact of Children’s Ground working with children and their families and across education, health and employment is what is driving impact. This has the potential for significant and enduring change over time... Children’s Ground has done the hard work of starting small and building financial resources over time. Over this period, you have established and increased service delivery with diverse buckets of funding. You acknowledge throughout the report that this is a growth model and therefore limited in impact. But **resource limitations should not overshadow the impact that Children’s Ground has had. What has been achieved in this growth model phase over only a short period of time is phenomenal.** The practice evidence and leadership demonstrated is broad and deep...

It is an Approach we would encourage Governments to invest in to secure the resources at scale and to provide sustainability to this important work...

As researchers and evaluators working in some of Australia’s leading research institutions, we commend Children’s Ground for establishing and enacting an evaluation and outcomes framework planned and implemented from the outset, as well as your commitment to public transparency of the successes and challenges of the developing model over the long term. This is an example of leading practice that should be implemented across all service and program delivery for First Nations and non-First Nations initiatives.

Children's Ground

Children's Ground was founded by community Elders and leaders from Central Australia and was then incubated by the Australian Government as a model of innovation to achieve systems change in 2011.

Children's Ground is known as Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (figure. 1) in the Arrernte language of Central Australia and Wurdurd Garriygarmmerren in the Kunwinjku language of West Arnhem.

The Children's Ground Approach is a First Nations system, led and championed by Elders and governed community by community. We have the most evolved systems of knowledge and practice in the world, and our strategies hold the solutions to our future.

Our children, families, and communities are the experts. Our history, our Culture and our knowledge inform our way forward.

We are reforming core economic, social and cultural systems to privilege First Nations experience and achieve essential, lasting change.

We are investing in prevention, early intervention, empowerment and the future of our children, and we're complementing this with Western and global practice.

Figure. 1: Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe. Painting design by Jane Davis, painted by Amunda Gorey (2011). Painting interpretation by Jane Davis and Ingkerrekele Arntarnte-areme (First Nations Community Governance Group).



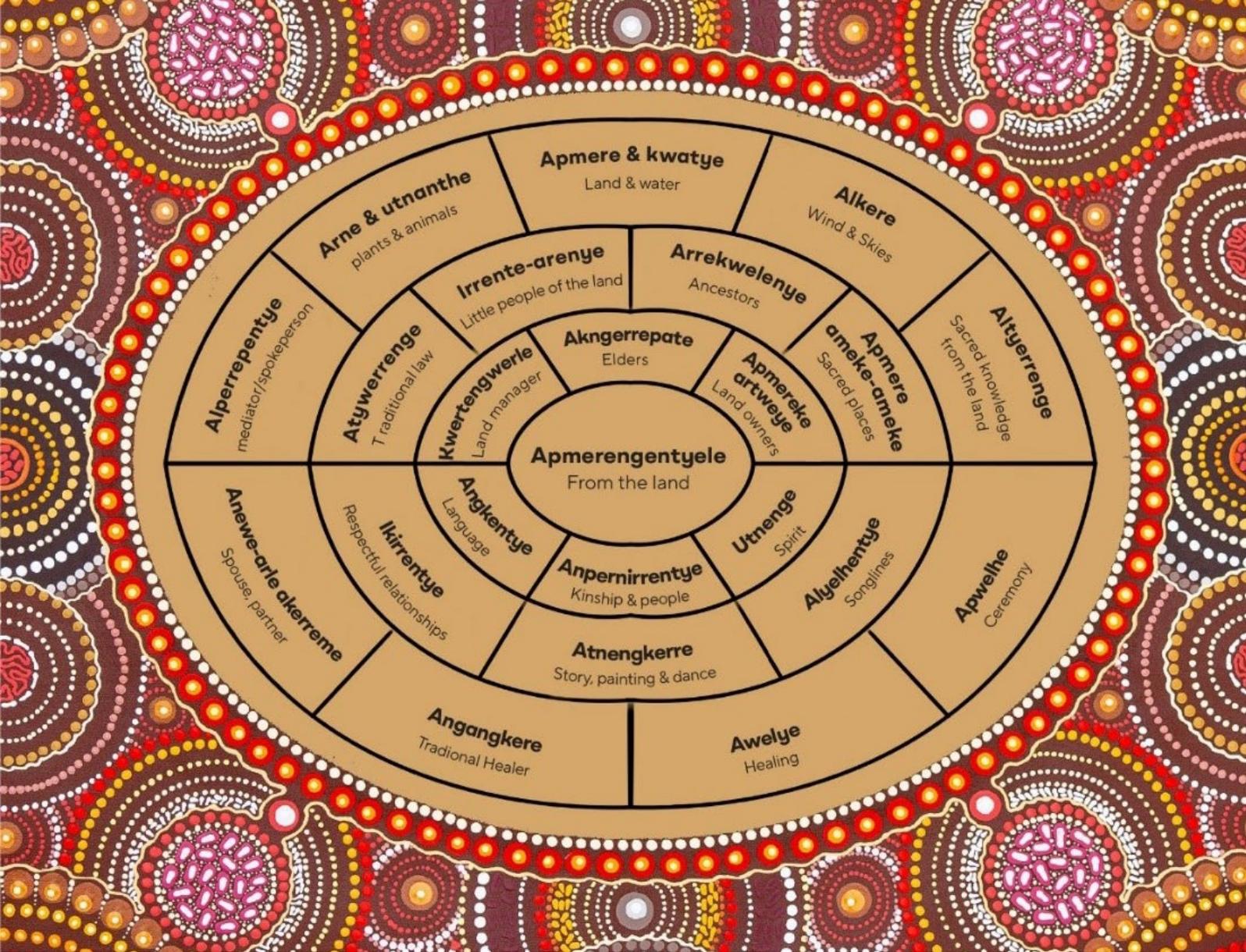


Figure. 2: Apmeregentyele

All First Peoples hold a world view, law and knowledge. We share the foundation of the land and seas as where we come from, who we are, and our responsibility through life. At Children’s Ground this has been articulated by Dr M.K. Turner as Apmeregentyele (figure. 2), meaning ‘from the land’.

Apmeregentyele defines the Arrernte world view—our governance, our laws and our kinship—and through this articulates the interconnectedness of our education, health, economic and social systems.

Beginning with the knowledge and authority of our Elders, our system empowers and connects individuals to their responsibility to the whole community.

At Children’s Ground we place children at the centre of our intergenerational structure and future, and uphold our commitment to their safety, their identity and to ensure they grow up proud of who they are as First Nations people.

We have a solution that can break the cycle that sees children at high risk of hospitalisation, living in economic poverty, excluded from education, and at high risk of welfare intervention, unemployment, incarceration, chronic health issues and early death.

Our children deserve to enjoy a life of opportunity and wellbeing, with a strong education, good health, deep-rooted Culture and the ability to succeed and follow their dreams.

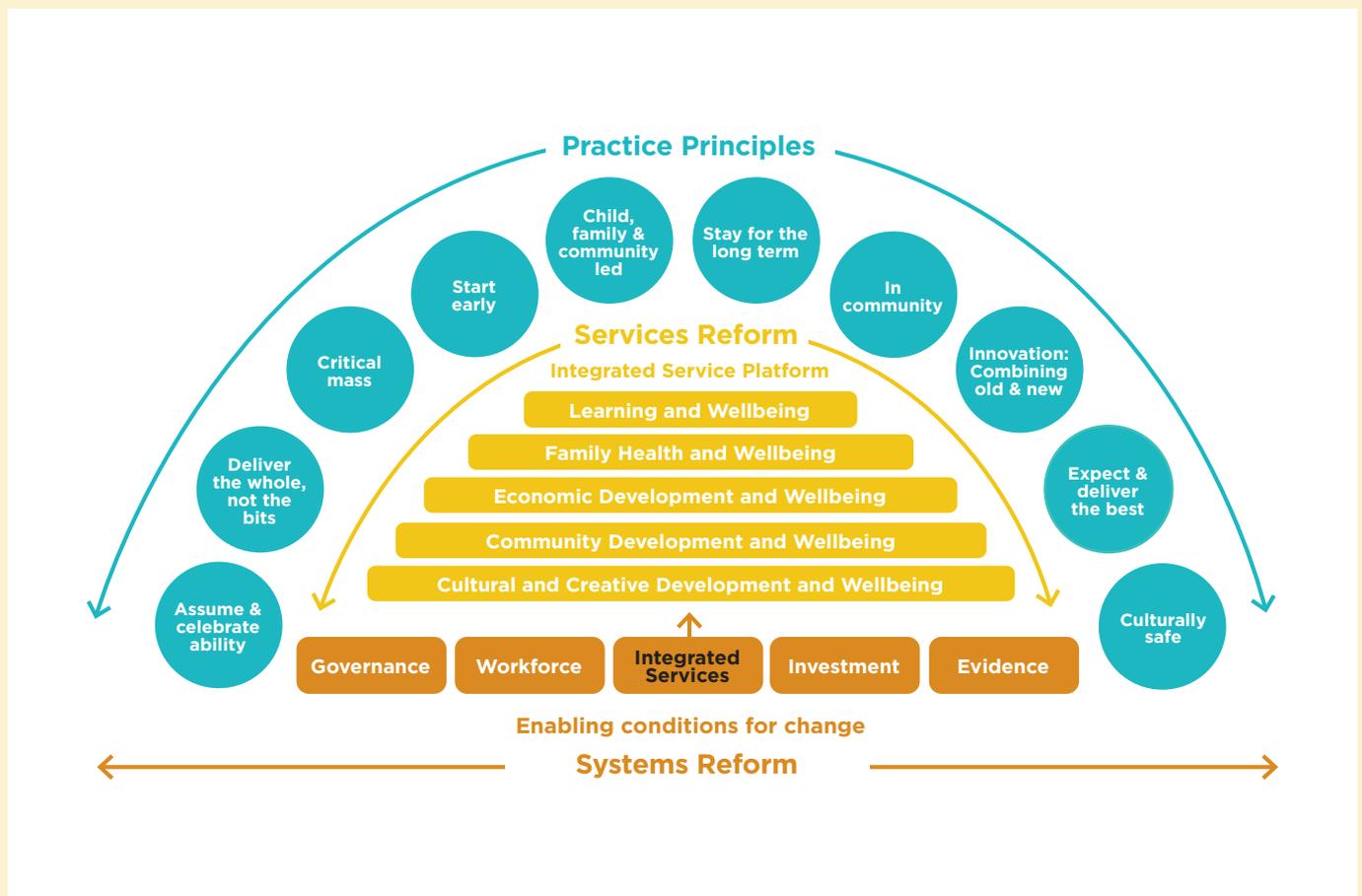
The Children's Ground Approach

The Children's Ground Approach (CGA) (figure. 3) is a 25-year strategy to achieve systemic and enduring change by addressing the key economic, social, cultural and political drivers that create and sustain complex and extreme inequity. It is guided by Apmerengentyele.

The CGA is reforming:

- 'How' services are delivered and governed (ten *Practice Principles*);
- 'What' services are delivered (Integrated and culturally responsive service platform across five key *Services Reform* areas); and
- System structures that are 'enabling conditions for change' (five *System Reforms*).

Figure. 3: The Children's Ground Approach



The CGA is underpinned by a robust Theory of Change (figure. 4) that operates across three levels - community, systems and society.

Figure. 4: Theory of Change

INPUT	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	IMPACT
The Children’s Ground Approach (Practice Principles; Service Reform; System Reform)...	...is implemented in collaboration with communities experiencing extreme inequity...	...to bring about Community, Systemic and Societal change over the course of a generation...	...so that children, families and community enjoy social, cultural, political, economic wellbeing.

Achieving our vision requires a significant change across each of the three levels:

Community change

- First Nations people in our local communities have access to and/or lead quality, integrated and culturally responsive services that are inclusive and place-based and create safety and wellbeing.
- Every child enjoys wellbeing with their families.
- Whole communities shift from intergenerational inequity to intergenerational opportunity and wellbeing.

Systems change

- A national integrated service delivery and policy system that meets the long-term needs of children, families and communities and builds on their identity, history, strengths and ambitions. A system that values First Nations knowledge.

Societal change

- First Nations history and Culture is celebrated as central to Australia’s identity.

The CGA's 25-year strategy speaks to the amount of time and dedicated investment it takes to break the cycles of economic, social and cultural disempowerment and exclusion. Fully implementing the CGA over 25 years begins with community engagement, establishing the approach and fostering community growth and empowerment, leading to consolidated and sustained changes.

Simultaneously, Children's Ground undertakes a 25-year longitudinal evaluation within community, building an evidence base of the CGA to influence policy and lobby for change.

Currently, the CGA is being delivered and evaluated in three regions across the Northern Territory. Each is at a different stage of the 25-year Approach. Development and growth in delivery are based on available resources. We are working towards implementing the full CGA in each community as resources increase and enable growth.

Early evidence from our triennial evaluation reports is demonstrating that the CGA is putting key foundations in place to change the status quo.

The Children's Ground Approach is an 'in-community' approach, implementing a bottom-up system, directed and delivered by First Nations people to achieve long-term impact and sustained change. The Children's Ground Approach is about what we do and how we do it.

The CGA is informed by cultural knowledge and practices, as well as national and international Western evidence and leading practice.

First Nations systems of knowledge are placed in the centre, and around this we include Western knowledge, ensuring our children are placed in the best position to succeed.

Implementation of the CGA is phased as children grow. The 25-year approach starts with children pre-birth to eight years and Children's Ground grows with them and their families through to adulthood.

This includes learning for children through primary, secondary and support for tertiary and vocational pathways. As an intergenerational approach, we work with whole communities - from babies to Elders and all of our families in between. This is our strength, structure and responsibility as First Nations people.

On the ground in communities, the CGA delivers services, referred to as the integrated 'Learning, Wellbeing and Development platform' (LWD platform). The platform recognises that an early start in education, health and wellbeing, safety, a healthy family and community environment, cultural identity and economic wellbeing are all critical foundations to a child doing well in life.

The LWD platform integrates the CGA's five key areas of service reform (figure. 5).

The Children's Ground Approach is designed as a partnership approach, and provides a strategic framework for delivery that can be executed by a range of organisations working in a coordinated system that centres the child and the community.

Children's Ground, the organisation, is implementing and evidencing the approach. We do not replicate services, and we work in partnership with other service providers to provide a whole of systems approach, underpinned by the CGA principles.

Over time our aim is to see the CGA as the preferred system being offered to First Nations communities, delivered by organisations beyond Children's Ground.



Figure 5: Five key areas of service reform



Designed as a whole of community approach, Children’s Ground seeks to engage and walk with the majority, ‘a critical mass’ (75%) of children within a community. The assumption is that if a critical mass of children enjoy high quality education, positive health and wellbeing and equity in life opportunities into adulthood, whole communities currently experiencing intergenerational inequity can grow into communities that experience wellbeing, justice and opportunity.

The services that are delivered are important, however, how they are delivered is what leads to engagement, empowerment and sustained change and impact.

Our 25-year approach aspires to excellence, recognising that children, families and communities who need the most, deserve the best, that they are the experts in their own lives, and that it is their voice and talent that will create change.







We want to show our Culture, our land, bush food, showing everything. We should do that for everyone. It's important for our future, for all the kids.

Cecily Djandjomerr,
Senior Bolmo community leader and artist

2024 highlights



January

- 2024 starts with all staff coming together, truth telling, planning, training and getting inspired for the new year ahead in each region.
- January 26: “We have an opportunity, and a responsibility, to understand the truth of our history as a Nation...to learn and grow together.” – Chair William Tilmouth
- Mpweringke Anapipe young ones made bush medicine with Elders at Little Harry’s, learning to identify, prepare and use native healing plants to treat sores (page 32).

The teenagers at Sandy Bore have been exploring film photography and sharing their unique world-view as young Arrernte people

February

- Children’s Ground (CG) learning delivery begins for 2024. Children, families and communities are excited!
- Elders and community leaders from Central Australia (CA) and the Top End (TE) launch the *M.K. Turner Report* in the Hall of Australia’s Parliament with Arrernte anthepe (traditional song and dance) and six key recommendations for First Nations education reform. Present were Ministers, parliamentarians, Aboriginal leaders and CG partners (page 74).



The refurbished 15-Mile community hall in TE enabled learning, nutrition, and meetings—boosting Early Years programs, local jobs, and governance for families.

March



- The Northern Territory Government declare a lockdown in Alice Springs. [We share a ‘Letter to our young people’](#). [“It is time now to invest in our children, young people and our Culture.”](#)
- Children’s Ground partnered with Yipirinya School to create access to primary aged education in homelands at Mpwerinke Anapipe – a dream and vision of our founding Elders. Children learn at hubs and learn on Country with Children’s Ground’s First Nations and western qualified teachers (pages 30-31).
- Learning is in full swing in Darwin with children, families and communities – early years sessions, Alidju (young women’s) Group, and Homework Club (page 56)!
- In Central Australia we grieve the tragic loss of young people to several accidents. Sorry Business impacts all families for many months.

April



- Learning is alive with Learning on Country and centre-based learning across regions:
 - Early Years Learning and Wellbeing sessions recommence in Minmarama/Kalaluk communities. The little ones are having a ball (page 56).
 - At 15-Mile, Homework Club empowers children to explore science and literacy through fun experiments like homemade volcanoes, while building their confidence in reading, writing and numeracy in a culturally safe learning environment.
 - In Central Australia, ampe (children) are learning Arrernte and English literacy side by side, strengthening phonological awareness and helping revive endangered languages (page 30).
 - At Olive Pink Botanical Gardens, ampe (children) are led by Elders to collect bush medicine and identify bush foods—combining curiosity, science, Culture and learning (page 32).

May

- The deadly film clip for 'Merne Mwerre' is released. The song is a celebration of keeping tyerrtye (body) and utnenge (spirit) strong by eating good food and connecting to ampere (Country). Written and sung by first-time songwriter and young leader Edmond Doolan the clip is filmed on Country in Central Australia.
- Our biggest annual fundraising campaign, Wear it Yellow, raises over \$340,000 to support children and families access education, health and wellbeing programs in their Culture and in their communities.



June



During Sorry Business, families took children out to play and heal on Country. Supported by Elders, kids swam, ran and explored—processing grief through play and restoring calm and confidence in nature.

- First Nations employment is taking off—and we're buzzing with excitement! At Irrkerlantye Northern Territory Government funding kicked off a game-changing project. Five local men—previously out of work—were employed under the leadership of two Elders and contractor Chris Bird to transform dilapidated tin sheds where people live. Five people now have a new shed, with insulation, water from tanks, and solar power lighting. We continue the ongoing 40 year fight for tenure and housing and dignity and human rights. But for now these sheds act as tiny cabins with doors and locks. Flicking on a light, making tea, watching footy is gold (page 37).

2024 highlights

July

- Alice Springs enters its second curfew in 2024. Children's Ground leaders continue to advocate for young people highlighting Children's Ground as a model for prevention with learning, health, employment and Culture connecting our young people back to family and country (page 77).
- During NAIDOC Week CG Central Australia welcomes hundreds of guests at their annual Open Day and Darwin communities come together to work on a collaborative artwork.

At Snake Well, families hunted goanna and passed down stories, with older kids teaching younger ones to cook and clean game.



August

- The sixth Utyerre Apanpe First Nations Educators Forum takes place at Desert Knowledge Australia in Central Australia. Over 90 First Nations educators from across Australia come together to progress First Nations education reform and for cultural professional practice (page 76).
- We host the very first Apmerenge-nyele Festival: From the Land with support from Desert Knowledge Australia and the Northern Territory Government. The two-day festival is a gathering of traditional knowledge and practice, innovation, performance and celebration featuring performances from Gomeroi artist Kobie Dee, Warnindhilyagwa woman Emily Warramura, First Nations hip-hop supergroup 3% and Mparntwe's own Dem Arrernte Mape (page 77).

Young people in the Stronger Communities for Children Plenty Highway program fixed up cars for the Red Centre Nats –learning automotive skills and earning certificates toward future work.



September

- Marlkwawo is alive with dry season cultural camps, bringing generations together to learn on Country. Yawkyawk (young girls) harvested pandanus and made bush dyes with Elders, learning weaving practices. Children tracked native bees in a sugarbag hunt, deepening their knowledge of bush ecology. These hands-on experiences strengthen language, Culture and identity. With learning mapped against curriculum, both Bininj and western education are growing strong together (page 52).
- Our album of Arrernte children's songs 'Ampe-mape Alyelheme (Kids sing!)' is nominated for the 2024 Australian Children's Music Awards.



October



- Central Australia is honoured to receive a visit from Catherine Freeman. She had a yarn with community and discussed the human rights issues our people face daily.
- In CA we also had a special visit from the incredible Melissa Leong and Nazeem Hussain. They visited Irrkerlantye (White Gate) to see Children's Ground in action.
- The Northern Territory Government legislates lowering the age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 10 placing children at serious risk. We condemn the decision and advocate for education, not incarceration.
- Bush camp mornings began with nutritious breakfasts - children learn about healthy food, hydration and physical wellbeing ahead of long days Learning on Country.

Young ones at Knuckey Lagoon created a powerful new mural with Darwin artist Taylor Smith, transforming public space and strengthening identity.

November

- Our partnerships are growing. We are proud to announce a partnership with Orange Sky Australia to bring access to an essential mobile laundry service in CA. The bright orange solar-powered vehicle, fitted with three washing machines and three dryers, completes 217 loads of washing across 5 communities in its first weeks of operation.
- In the West Arnhem an incredible partnership with OzHarvest provides critical food security to remote Marlkawo for our Culture camps including lots of barrumundi.
- First Nations researchers Veronica Doolan and Amunda Gorey attend the International Indigenous Research Conference in Auckland (page 72).



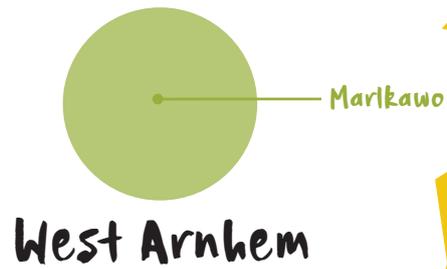
December



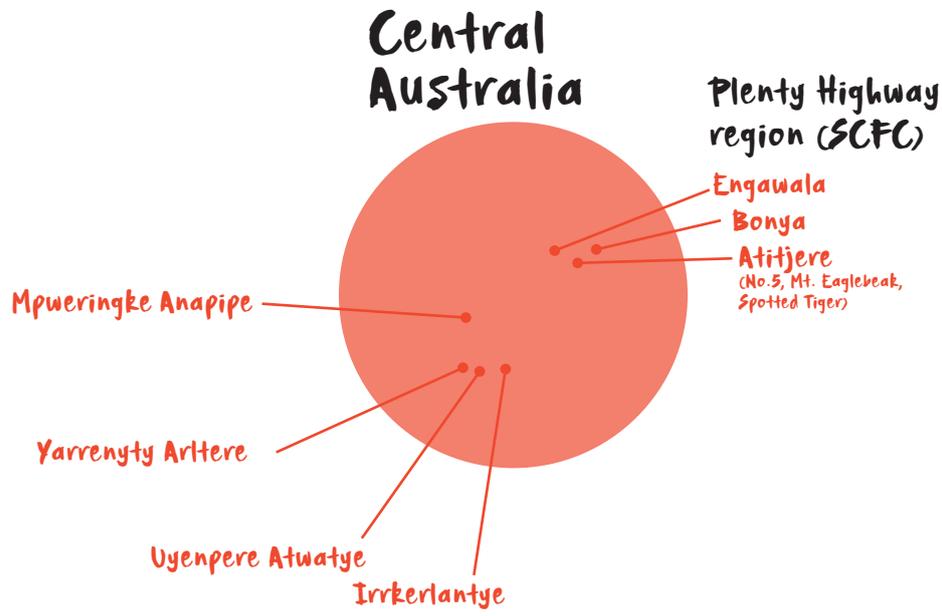
- What we are doing is working. We launch the 2020-2022 Evaluation of Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground Central Australia). The evidence shows that Children's Ground is achieving positive outcomes in areas where governments are struggling to create change in the NT such as employment, early childhood and empowerment. The results show we are on track to long-term change (page 70).
- We proudly announce a 5-year partnership with Goodman Foundation. This significant, long-term partnership will help to scale Children's Ground's 25-year Approach to education, employment, health, economy, Culture and community wellbeing.
- Communities celebrated another year of learning with festive gatherings where children proudly received 2024 learning reports, alongside feasts, facepainting, games and family joy.

Where we work





Northern Territory



Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe

In Central Australia, communities deliver Children's Ground on Central and Eastern Arrernte and Western Arrarnta Country in and around Mparntwe (Alice Springs).

- Mpweringke Anapipe (Northern Outstations, North of Mparntwe)
- Uyenpere Atwatye (Hidden Valley Town Camp, Mparntwe)
- Irrkerlantye (White Gate Town camp, Mparntwe)
- Yarrenyty Arltere (Larrapinta Valley Town Camp, Mparntwe)
- Children's Ground is also the facilitating partner for the federally funded Stronger Communities for Children program along the Plenty Highway in the remote communities of Engawala and Atitjere (220km+ north of Mparntwe).



We are growing closer to full model delivery of the Children's Ground Approach (CGA) in Central Australia, and we are being guided by Apmerenge-ntyetele - the system of learning that has been refined over 65,000 years of teaching and passing on knowledge. The children coming through the CGA are immersed in their Culture as a baseline for growth and every step in their journey is cause for great celebration.

Our four communities and the Plenty Highway region were regularly challenged in 2024. Current and intergenerational trauma is high amongst our families, and grief and loss pervade every aspect of life. Children's Ground continues to be a place where children, families and community can look to the future and focus on our long-term, 25-year approach.

Everyday we are strengthened by our Elders, leaders and champions of our past. We stand on their shoulders and are motivated by their commitment and determination to rise up and continue the work they began.

Our children deserve the very best and we are deeply motivated to create the foundation for them to grow from, to recognise our history and to embrace their identity.

Regional summary

At Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe and in the Plenty Highway region through the Stronger communities for Children Program, another generation of children has been born.

We surround them as family members, leading by example, passing on intergenerational knowledge and showing that our 'voices' are central in demonstrating that our community-based solutions work.

Despite ongoing challenges, next generation Elders are emerging and taking on new responsibilities. Their knowledge is laying the foundation of a future for young ones that is both aspirational and focused on outcomes that were hard to reach before Children's Ground.

884 children, young people and adults engaged with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe.



The CG Approach in ACTION:

Learning and Wellbeing

Through 2024, children and families spent significant time Learning on Country, strengthening health, wellbeing, spirit, healing, identity and kinship, and their unceasing connection to the land. Whether we are close to town or deep on Country, we are immersed on land that holds importance to our children. This is the best place for them to start their learning journey.

With Country as our classroom, we see children's foundation in First Nations Culture and language translate through to western learning and development in science, maths, numeracy, literacy and increasing proficiency in English.

Through day trips, camps or learning on site in our central hub, children and families came together with First Nations and western trained educators, developing their skills and increasing their knowledge so they can walk and excel as confident First Nations people in all areas of life.



In 2024 our primary program at Mpweringke (Burt Creek outstation) took a next step through a partnership with Yipirinya School that saw young people undertaking their learning two days each week at the Mpweringke hub. This development is seeing great outcomes as children are learning from their families, on- Country.

This has fulfilled the dreams and vision of our founding Elders, who established the basic fundamental human right to education on their homelands as a key KPI for Children's Ground to achieve.

Children's Ground is ensuring that children have the inherent right to education in their first languages and Cultures. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Article 14 states:

- Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

151 children (0-5 years) engaged in learning (alongside 249 family members, 18+ years)

40 children 6-11 years engaged in primary learning on Country





Learning on Country partnership with Yipirinya School

A partnership agreement with Yipirinya School, Children's Ground and Mpweringke Anapipe communities enabled enrolled primary aged children to attend hub based and on Country primary years learning with Children's Ground two days per week, including overnight camps.

The partnership facilitated on Country learning that supported two-way learning opportunities, fostered culturally responsive learning environments, and established First Language and Culture into the day-to-day delivery of learning. This provided a critical foundation to English acquisition and proficiency. It is also an opportunity for local First Nations employment and expertise.

During on Country learning and camps developed their skills and knowledge in counting; Arrernte names for bush foods, plants and animals; hunting, cooking and eating bush foods; collecting and making bush medicines and understanding their medicinal qualities; smoking their spirits; talking to the land and ancestors; kinship connections and kinship names; cultural place names and mapping country and geography of Arrernte family placements and country lines.

Attending learning on Country with Children's Ground is important for primary aged children to connect positively with their families, with their Culture and country, and with a learning environment that builds on skills (including health) outside of the four walls of a classroom. It also celebrates the role older siblings have in nurturing the growth of their younger brothers and sisters, focusing on building responsibility down and accountability up.

A huge success of the Learning on Country trips has been the wider engagement of families and community consistently showing up, leading learning and delivering great outcomes.

Providing flexible learning

During cultural sorry, families are often required to travel to sorry camp to mourn the loss of a loved one. Sorry camps may be hundreds of kms away and your relationship to the person who has passed determines when you go and how long you must stay for.

During an extended period of sorry for Mpweringke Anapipe, families living at Burt Creek outstation moved to an outstation, 200km out of town, to follow cultural lore and stay with family. This location and the period of mourning meant children were unable to attend school, families were cut off from work and displaced from town services.

In consultation with community Children's Ground staff travelled to the outstation to continue to provide children with access to primary schooling, learning on Country, early years and health promotion. These camps allowed families to access their work (cultural education, health support and health promotion) and the wider community to access much needed support.



The CG Approach in ACTION:

Health and Wellbeing

In Central Australia health promotion continued to be delivered at a community level as well as in both early years and primary learning sessions. Supporting individual and family health remains an integral component of improving health outcomes.

Our nutrition program continues to be a critical driver of health promotion and preventative health. The nutrition program focuses on healthy nutritional behaviour from the early years, building the foundations for prevention of chronic health disease. It includes normalising healthy food, local nutrition workers expanding skills knowledge and nutrition promotion, and addressing food insecurity.

A key to prevention and health promotion is our healthy routines practice embedded in daily learning and delivery, including face washing, cleaning teeth and hands, and checking for sores and other skin conditions.

This included scheduled follow ups for ongoing conditions and providing a bridge between community and both First Nations and western health practitioners.

Our Maternal and Child Health promotion and support continues to provide a vital service bringing traditional health practices and clinical practices together. This year delivery of our Mums and Bubs program strengthened and we continued to grow the number of babies being supported by regular smoking ceremonies. With a midwife on the team we were able to ensure regular targeted support and health promotion for expecting families and newborns.

The demand for the services of our Social/Emotional Wellbeing team continues, both at a counselling level and in their support and advocacy role. The team assists people in their healing journey, to overcome barriers to employment, address long term and intergenerational trauma and domestic and family violence.

This year we also finished our Healing Garden. A quiet space to sit and in honour of those who have passed.



743 people engaged in health promotion and support (incl. 241 children aged 0-8 years)

680 people engaged in nutrition education and increased nutritional intake (incl. 156 children 0-5 years)

46 children 0-3 years and 100 adults engaged in maternal and child health promotion

393 people engaged in social/emotional wellbeing promotion and support

166 people were supported to engage with clinical health



Orange Sky Mobile Laundry

We were proud to partner with Orange Sky Australia and the Snow Foundation to bring an essential free mobile laundry service to Mparntwe. Arriving in mid-November 2024, the Orange Sky and Children's Ground team completed 217 loads of washing across 5 communities in the first two weeks of operation.

With full operational delivery beginning in 2025, the bright orange solar-powered remote laundry vehicle, fitted with three washing machines and three dryers, offers families important environmental health access and increased ability to improve skin health through the washing of blankets and clothes. This is instrumental in addressing outbreaks of scabies and lice and preventing spreading of infection through open sores. This service will also contribute as an effective way to reduce the incidence of rheumatic heart fever and disease which is an incredibly exciting outcome to our health work.

The partnership will also provide employment opportunities for local community members to become part of the team and operate the laundry service.



Working with local organisations to tackle chronic illness

Through 2024 our health approach took a concerted focus on Rheumatic Heart Fever (RHF) and Disease (RHD), a serious and ongoing health issue for First Nations people in the Northern Territory.

The Deadly Heart Trek team provided skin checks and screenings for RHD across Mparntwe and ran education programs on how families and communities can manage the disease and work to raise awareness for its effects in community.

A new partnership with the organisation HeartKids will allow us to develop local content and resources that address prevention and management of RHD and RHF. Staff and families see how important basic preventative health and hygiene practices are to long term health, and how easily it can be implemented into daily life. This includes both cultural and western health practices. Bush baths are an excellent example of preventative health when considering RHF and RHD, alongside practices like preventing sores from becoming infected and seeking help from the clinic if they do.

The Snow Foundation is also contributing to resource development regarding RHD and together these resources will support resources will support children, families and communities to engage with healthcare in a way that is communicable and appropriate between Cultures and languages.

The CG Approach in ACTION:

Economic Development and Wellbeing

A key priority in 2024 was increasing employment opportunities for First Nations local community members. Many families live under the poverty line due to intergenerational economic exclusion.

Children's Ground prioritises employment of local community-based First Nations people, and implements a flexible workforce strategy to reduce barriers to engagement and employment sustainability. This includes responding to barriers such as racism, lack of opportunity, overcrowding, family stress and health issues.

The goal is to create positive and successful employment experiences, whether working casually or on part- or full-time contracts, that leverage community skills and talents and build leadership experience.

In a year of enormous stress for families, our workforce development strategy was critical in maintaining and growing employment. Staff grew in confidence, experience and leadership.

Key workforce measures include support for cultural obligations, training, individualised mentoring, health and family support, transport, financial literacy and tax assistance and social and emotional wellbeing care. Staff received job-readiness training and access to financial counselling.

We are on the path to creating a long-term, sustainable local workforce to deliver economic wellbeing and quality, culturally centred service platforms.



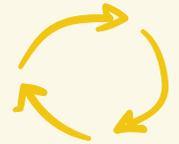
43 community-based First Nations staff were employed at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe

An additional 16 First Nations staff were employed who are part of the Arrernte Nation, but not from CG communities.

6,000 books in First Languages and English supplied to the Indigenous Literacy Foundation book supply program.

All my kids grew up at Children's Ground. I was volunteering since it started. Now I'm working as an early years educator with my youngest daughter attending. I love taking little ones out on Country. It gives me strength.

Veronica Ross,
Early Years Educator



Supporting community-based talent

Faye, a cultural health worker and early years support worker with Yarrenyty Arltene community, completed her training to receive a Light Rigid licence. This allowed Faye to drive a small bus and support the transport of children and families between community, Children's Ground and on Country learning sessions.

On her first community pick-up Faye drove to Larapinta Valley Town Camp and picked up families for an early year's session. The children were so excited and proud to see Faye driving the bus.

When we invest in community members, we invest in the whole community. Faye is an incredible example of how development of the place-based work force is a celebration for everyone. Her skills are taken back and shared - her success is the whole community's success.

Woodford Folk Festival

In December the Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe Band took Arrernte language and Culture to Woodford Folk Festival in Queensland.

Led by Myles Turner, Arrernte man and grandson of Dr M.K. Turner, the band shared Arrernte language, Culture and music with two workshops and two performances. They taught festival goers how to speak and sing in Arrernte, as well as sign language and movements that accompany their catchy songs.

Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe Band started writing music to keep their language strong, and are now sharing it across Australia.

Thank you to the Community Benefit Fund, Virgin Unite and the Indigenous Languages and Arts Program for their support, and Fender for providing a guitar for the festival appearance.

Our children's album *Ampe-mape Alyelheme! Kid's Sing!* was picked up by ABC Kids for distribution this year. Creative projects like this—through album production and live performance—not only celebrate culture but also generate income, support ongoing activities, and open up new enterprise opportunities.

Ampe-kenhe Art Calendar

An integral part of the Children's Ground Approach is taking ampe (children) on Country alongside educators, family and Elders, to strengthen their connection to Country and place ampe in an environment appropriate for cultural learning and exchange.

Throughout the year children painted what they learned, saw and felt while learning on Country, travelling to Rungutjirpa (Simpsons Gap), Uyenper-Atwatye (Hidden Valley), Anapipe (Sandy Bore) and more. As they paint, they develop their fine and gross motor skills, their understanding of who they are and the incredible creative skills that have been passed down to them for generations.

A selection of these artworks were compiled towards the end of 2024 and in partnership with Naarm-based multidisciplinary artist Beci Orpin we created the 2025 Ampe-kenhe Art Calendar.

The calendar was sold at multiple locations in Alice Springs, increasing partnerships with local businesses and awareness of Children's Ground with the local community. It was also available online, proving a particularly big hit during the Christmas period.

Through our sales we brought children's interpretation of Country into hundreds of homes across Australia. All money from sales goes back to our authors, translators, illustrators and Children's Ground to further our First Language and creative enterprise projects.



Community Development and Wellbeing

In Central Australia community development is led by local governance at a community and regional level.

The Ingkerrekele Arntarnte-areme (Children’s Ground’s Central Australian Governance Committee) provide regional direction and leadership alongside local governance established within each site. Community Plans are designed, led and implemented for each community, by each community. Local governance is necessary for all operational matters, ensuring the voice of the community determines the way services are delivered.

Community governance and decision-making occurs through meetings, family nights, on camps and through daily feedback with all generations engaged. This is a community-driven approach rather than a service or organisation-driven approach.

In 2024 the Ingkerrekele Arntarnte-areme were involved with and responsible for final sign off on the 2020-2022 Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe Evaluation report which was launched in December. This was huge achievement for the team, ensuring their actions, commitment and learning is shared publicly. Governance committee members were also involved in major government meetings, planning and visits throughout the year, providing leadership, intricate knowledge and understanding of the Children’s Ground Approach.

Children’s Ground continues to prioritise justice and community-led development across all the communities we work with.

At Irrkerlantye (Whitegate), families continue to face some of the most entrenched challenges, with fundamental human rights still unmet. For over 40 years, families have lived without secure land tenure, safe housing, electricity, or running water, despite decades of advocacy.

In 2024, we achieved a significant step forward. Following prolonged negotiations with the Northern Territory Government, funding was released for immediate amenity upgrades. This enabled the refurbishment of tin sheds that have long been used as homes, despite being in extremely poor condition. While we continue to advocate for long-term housing and water rights this project was a moment of celebration. See the following page for more detail.

122

First Nations community members engaged in governance and decision-making.





Fellas on the tools - improving living standards for Irrkerlantye families

This year, men at Irrkerlantye took the lead to improve basic living conditions in their community. Through a community-driven project that prioritised local knowledge, cultural authority and economic empowerment, seven local men—including two Elders—were employed to complete significant upgrades to four tin sheds that had served as makeshift homes for decades.

Working alongside a technical project manager and builder, the team received support to build job readiness and gain hands-on experience throughout the project. The sheds were stripped back and rebuilt with new steel frames, secure doors and windows, insulated walls and ceilings, and solid concrete foundations and footings. Each cabin was fitted with ceiling fans and front verandahs to provide airflow and shade in the harsh Central Australian climate. Underground connections were established for solar power, allowing for electrical sockets and lighting inside the homes, and pressure pumps were installed to link cabins to nearby water tanks.

Local leadership and decision making was central to the project. Each resident made decisions about the refurbishment of their tin shed. After completing the first cabin, families were invited to assess the upgrades and provide input on adjustments for the remaining three. This ensured the project was responsive to local needs, such as privacy, ventilation, and ease of use for older residents and young children.

The emotional impact of the upgrades was profound. Many families had never experienced the convenience of a working tap or light switch in their homes. Simple moments—like plugging in a kettle or watching television—brought huge amounts of joy and a renewed sense of dignity. For the men involved, the opportunity to contribute directly to their own community through paid employment was a powerful experience, building confidence, skills, and pride.

This project represents more than physical improvement—it is a demonstration of what is possible when local people are resourced to lead change.

It lays the foundation for future community-led development and employment pathways at Irrkerlantye and beyond, and is a testament to the strength, persistence and leadership of families who have advocated for decades in the face of systemic neglect.



The CG Approach in ACTION:

Cultural and Creative Development and Wellbeing

We know through our Elders and through international evidence that our children need a strong sense of identity and cultural and linguistic expertise to support their learning and wellbeing.

We are now seeing this generation of children speaking their First Language more proficiently, having a deeper understanding of their Culture and a more robust practice of their creativity. Through this foundation their western and global knowledge is being strengthened.

Our cultural and creative development across 2024 was focused on celebrations of language and Culture, cultural nights, art workshops and language sessions.

I can sign (use sign language). I have been working at Children's Ground for over a year and a few months. Before I worked here, I didn't know my language and other crucial parts of my Culture. I now can read language, pronounce words properly. Working here has been great.

Zephie Neil-Kunoth,
Health and Promotion Officer

545 children and families engaged
cultural learning and wellbeing





Culture nights

Across 2024, Children's Ground's cultural nights have allowed families to take ownership of their legacy.

Culture nights allow families to create safe spaces to work together in preserving and passing on cultural traditions and knowledge. The sessions are open to all ages and locational groups. Up to four or five generations of a single family have attended at the same time.

Led by the director of Apmerengentyele, C.T., the evenings have involved learning traditional songs and dances. This has long been a goal of the team and is finally being recognised on a regular basis. With dinner included in the evening. It is an important time to connect and discuss plans and strategies for the future to ensure important knowledges are passed on.

Through integrated cultural night sessions, Children's Ground offers a safe inclusive space, led, attended by and governed by First Nations people.

Kinship and Skin Name Creativity with Charles Darwin University

Between September and December, eight First Nations artists and staff participated in design and print training at Charles Darwin University (CDU). They learnt different approaches to design and the techniques behind screen printing.

Throughout the training participants created designs that highlighted their Arrernte skin names and kinship relationships. Eight designs were selected and turned into screens that were printed onto eco-dyed bags.

A selection of these prints were exhibited at the CDU Student Showcase at Watch This Space Gallery in Mparntwe in December.

This work was supported by Children's Ground's creation of new flash card resources to support families and children learning about skin names and cultural kinship systems. The flash cards have been translated into the multiple First Nations languages spoken by families at Children's Ground including Eastern Arrernte, Luritja, and Western Aranda. These new resources are being used by First Nations learning staff in their lesson planning and delivery, to engage children in cultural knowledge transmission while complementing existing skin name resources and activities.

Development of Apmerenge-ntyeye book

Throughout the year we continued exploration of the Apmerenge-ntyeye framework that describes the Arrernte world view based on the visionary work of the late Dr M.K. Turner OAM, founding Elder of Children's Ground.

First Nations language speakers and cultural knowledge holders collaborated on the development of a learning kit which outlines the Apmerenge-ntyeye framework. Director of Apmerenge-ntyeye 'CT' Turner worked with co-directors Veronica Turner and Felicity Hayes on translating the framework, enabling the learning kit to be published in a dual language format (Eastern Arrernte and English). The learning kit was presented for feedback at several language conferences and forums between July and December 2024.

For First Nations young people who may still be developing their language skills, creating dual-language resources supports young people to strengthen their language proficiency whilst providing translations to understand important cultural frameworks and concepts in English (which may be their stronger language). This provides an opportunity to strengthen threatened languages while also communicating important cultural concepts through the transmission of cultural knowledge.



Stronger communities for children – Plenty Highway

Children's Ground is the facilitating partner for the Stronger Communities for Children (SCfC) program on Plenty Highway. Directed by the Local Community Board, the program concentrates on strengthening the new generations' cultural knowledge, health and wellbeing, increasing employment, education and enterprise possibilities in the region.

Each year this program gets stronger and delivery outcomes increase. The team has worked on diversifying funding opportunities while expanding opportunities for broader community engagement.

Language and Culture activities continue to be delivered by community members with learning on Country sessions, camps, plant trips and bush medicine making workshops. Collaboration has been high with the Children's Ground team in Central Australia, as work continues to intersect, and knowledge is shared.

Enterprise activities have continued to grow with jewellery and screen-printing workshops continuing. The Altarpilta Plenty Highway Region brand was created and community members are now selling their art and products at markets and other events. Cultural knowledge is embedded in designs celebrating local talent and knowledges. Artists undertaking screenprinting workshops are also working towards a Batchelor Institute's Certificate 1 in Visual Arts.

The SCfC program also ran 15 language classes and workshops in 2024. Two were held in Engawala, two in Bonya and 11 at the Atitjere learning centre.

By running these language classes and workshops the SCfC team were able to publish three books in the Akarre-Akityarre language.

These books were made by the community members and are now available for the Plenty Highway communities as a language resource.

Entering a vehicle in the Red Centre Nats was a focus again this year as part of the Rusted Gems initiative run by Right Tracks through the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. The team was able to utilise the local mechanics workshop to rebuild vehicles, and participating young people were enrolled in the Certificate 1 in Automotives with CFAT at Desert Knowledge of Australia, acquiring mechanical skills at the same time. 2024 was a great success for the project with generous sponsors donating a toolbox and tools.

The playgroup at Engawala continued to gain strength and has been led throughout the year by three local women. With 14 children attending, and supported by a great partnership with Alcoota School, it has been fantastic to build upon this work throughout the year.

Of major excitement was the establishment of a Youth Board for the region with young people participating from Atitjere, Engawala, No. 5, Mt. Eaglebeak and Milgabore. On average 40 young people have been involved to date and there are now four positions within the team dedicated to employing juniors.

This team joined the older staff members at the SCfC Knowledge Sharing Seminar this year in Alice Springs and each stepped up to deliver some of the presentation. The Youth Board has also been engaged in bush medicine making, health promotion and wellbeing events and AFL training in partnership with Desert Knowledge Australia's Red Tails/Pink Tails program.

It is great to see the next generation coming through.

40

Community-based First Nations staff were employed from SCfC communities in 2024.



Wurdurd Garriyigarrmerren

In the Top End of the Northern Territory we are led by the community of Marlkawo on Bolmo Country in West Arnhem Land.

Marlkawo families were instrumental in establishing and leading Children's Ground's (CG) original proof of concept operations in Kakadu and then decided to take CG to their community of Marlkawo in 2017. At that time there were no families living at Marlkawo and Elders and families wanted to reestablish themselves in their traditional lands. There was no livable accommodation and no other infrastructure except a solar supply that had been maintained by Demed Aboriginal Corporation.

Marlkawo is extremely remote. It is cut off in the wet season. The closest town is Maningrida, which is approximately a two and a half hour drive. Its main service hub is Gunbulunya which is a six and a half hour drive. There are no services in Marlkawo except Children's Ground.

Children's Ground at Marlkawo began in tents and over the years has slowly developed and upgraded basic services and infrastructure for community life and staff. Year on year community determine key priorities for development and delivery based on their community plan, family realities (e.g. illness and Sorry Business), weather and resources.

In Marlkawo, the community delivers a small-scale homeland model of the Children's Ground Approach. Marlkawo is a small community with high mobility. Some families live semi-permanently at the Marlkawo homeland/outstation and others move between larger communities and their homeland.



Regional summary

Community Planning

Marlkawo families and community experience serious impact of weather, ill-health and Sorry Business.

For the Marlkawo planning and review process into 2024, families reflected on the delivery of the Children's Ground Approach and the best way to deliver learning, health, employment and centre Culture. Families have trialled dry season and all year-round operations over the past five years.

Families reinforced the importance of being on their homeland, either permanently or being able to visit regularly, and they want their homeland to be available for future generations. The impact of Sorry Business in previous years and families health had made it difficult for most people to live permanently in Marlkawo during the wet season. Families decided to direct their energy on an intensive dry season operation focused on cultural camps for 2024.

A community engagement officer and program coordinator joined the Children's Ground team in Marlkawo during the dry season in 2024. Working alongside local families and educators, they played a key role in planning and logistics and delivery for dry season operations.

Children's Ground's multidisciplinary team based in Darwin provides educational and health coordination and support, as well as general support for families across the year in both Darwin and Marlkawo.

Dry Season Delivery

The new dry season delivery model was full of exciting energy, and strong engagement with camps bringing the whole community together, from babies through to Elders, with a focus on culturally rich intergenerational learning.

A major highlight was Marlkawo's key community leaders identifying young men as leaders during the camps. When Children's Ground was in Jabiru, community was concerned that young people didn't have access to opportunities and were facing daily challenges with anger and substance abuse. These young people are now in their late twenties, they are young fathers and young men. Some of the men have lost their mothers in recent years but they are stepping up to be next generation leaders.

They have grown into adulthood with Children's Ground, and everyone is celebrating their leadership, their confidence and their talents. They will hold the future for their families along with the young women.

Another exciting development was the strengthening of Malbak Aboriginal Corporation. This is a corporation that Children's Ground helped to establish for the Marlkawo families to build their governance, self-determination and family outstation into the future. Now independent, Children's Ground worked with Malbak and Bolmo families throughout the year to continue developing the corporation, supporting meetings, representation, incorporation and governance training and development. They now have a project officer who is supporting the families to further develop the corporation, working in partnership with Children's Ground. This demonstrates strong progress toward our aim of achieving economic, social and cultural sustainability.

138

children, young people and adults are involved in Children's Ground in leadership, delivery and as participants.



The CG Approach in ACTION:

Learning and Wellbeing

In 2024, Learning and Wellbeing flourished in Marlkawo under a renewed dry season focus, shaped by the resilience and leadership of Bolmo families.

Marlkawo’s learning program is unique: 100% of learning takes place on Country, embedding First Language, Cultural knowledge, western education, health, and wellbeing into everyday life. Learning is delivered intergenerationally, led by local leaders, Elders and families, with support from Children’s Ground staff.

Learning activities were delivered across seven cultural camps, providing consistent and immersive education for children and young people living in remote homelands. These camps created a culturally safe and inspiring environment, where learning was interwoven with everyday life.

Children in Marlkawo have education at their fingertips—embedded in the land, stories, and relationships that surround them. Learning is guided by the seasonal calendar, cultural practice, and the knowledge of Elders, not by a formalised western curriculum. Each day offers space and time for children to learn through play, exploration, and healthy risk-taking. Through storytelling, creation stories, and the knowledge of totems, children develop a strong sense of who they are and where they belong.

Learning is conducted in First Language with children learning to speak, read and write in Kunwinjku. Cultural learning happens in real time, whether at home, on bush trips, or gathered with family, strengthening wellbeing alongside knowledge. These camps brought together children of different ages and families, fostering leadership, community connection and a positive learning environment.

24 children (0-15 years) engaged in learning alongside 34 family members (18+ years)





Learning together with local schools

This year we formalised an MOU with Jabiru Area School, recognising learning at our on Country camps as part of children's school attendance. This agreement supported children to engage in rich, culturally grounded learning while remaining connected to their families and Country. This partnership enabled children's attendance and participation in the full scope of their learning — both cultural and western.



The CG Approach in ACTION:

Health and Wellbeing

Throughout 2024 the children and families of Marlkawo actively engaged in health promotion and support, building on the strong foundation established over previous years.

Community involvement in health promotion and support, nutrition education and social/emotional wellbeing has significantly grown, highlighting both the need for this support and its success when led by First Nations communities.

Individual and family health and wellbeing plans ensure that families have greater agency over their health, wellbeing, and long-term goals. These plans are strengths-based and family-driven, addressing key areas such as preventative health, social and emotional wellbeing, food security, and access to essential services.

West Arnhem families continued to be supported in their travel for medical care, including provision of cultural liaison services, and advocacy for appropriate care while in Darwin. This also included providing transition support for those discharged after surgery, ensuring seamless continuity of care with the necessary follow-up services.

Nutrition remained a key priority in improving the health and wellbeing of children and families, with a strong focus on food security, traditional food knowledge, and long-term health. Efforts have continued to embed nutrition education into daily learning and family routines, ensuring children and parents develop sustainable, healthy eating habits. Children planted and maintained community gardens, prepared their own meals and engaged in open discussions about healthy eating. These sessions deepen children's understanding of food systems, self-sufficiency, and the importance of fresh, healthy food.

122 people engaged in health promotion and support (including 38 children aged 0-15 years)

109 people engaged in nutrition education and increased nutritional intake (incl. 37 children 0-15 years)

108 people engaged social/emotional wellbeing promotion and support

101 people were supported to engage with clinical health





Oz Harvest partnership supports on Country camps

On Country camps with Marlkawo community can involve more than 30 people at a time. A key enabler for this activity is our strong partnership with OzHarvest who have been able to support the camps with significant quantities and quality of food.

They have been regularly supplying fresh fruits, vegetables, meat and more throughout the dry season, including top up deliveries to Gunbalanya (a 5-hour drive from Marlkawo) mid camp. Incredibly, they facilitated a donation of 50kg of fresh caught barramundi each week from a local provider in Darwin.

The community enjoyed the big cook ups of whole barramundi cooked on the coals and have been thrilled with the support Oz Harvest are giving to make on Country camps viable for as many people as possible.



Facilitating access to healthcare

Children's Ground and Marlkawo families continued to establish and maintain strong connections to local healthcare providers to ensure essential healthcare access and support.

Primary health services including Jabiru Health Centre, Gunbalanya Health Centre, Maningrida Health Centre (Mala'la Health Service), Danila Dilba Health Service (DDHS) and NT Government health care including Urgent Care all provided specialist health services included emergency dental, child health, maternal health, ENT (ear, nose, throat), occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychiatry and renal appointments.

Children's Ground support included attending specialist visits with individuals and their families, supporting telehealth consultations, medication access/delivery, treatment of acute conditions, regular check-ups, and chronic illness management.

With families supported to better understand healthcare systems, attend medical appointments, and navigate NDIS services, they are empowered to make informed decisions about their health and well-being, to take a more proactive approach to their healthcare in an effort to reduce child hospitalisation rates.

The CG Approach in ACTION:

Economic Development and Wellbeing

This year saw further steps toward building a strong, community-led workforce model, with a focus on creating sustainable livelihoods for families living on Country.

The move towards a robust dry season delivery model has provided both stability and opportunity, creating space for employment, skill-building, and leadership development in a culturally safe and community-led environment.

A key achievement in 2024 has been the growth of a strong, locally-led workforce in Marlkawo. First Nations staff joined the team in short term and flexible employment during the year, many stepping into formal employment for the first time. Their induction into the workforce was supported by experienced community members who provided mentoring, guidance and on-the-ground training. This local and familiar induction to employment ensured that new staff could build their skills and confidence in a culturally safe and supportive environment. This approach reflects Children’s Ground’s long-term commitment to community-led economic development—where local people lead the way in creating employment pathways for themselves, their families and future generations.

The workforce at Marlkawo grew not only in numbers but in capability. Ongoing mentoring, training and support were embedded across all roles, fostering an environment where people could grow their skills and confidence while working alongside family and Elders.

The development of the Malbak Aboriginal Corporation during the year also marked an important step toward economic independence and local governance. Families came together to formalise their leadership structures and plan towards an economic foundation to support their community’s wellbeing, cultural authority and long-term stability.



29 community-based First Nations staff were employed from Marlkawo

Wurdurd (children) want to live in cultural way, but to have Western way also. To speak English, to be smart with balanda. To have that strong voice, for the family, for the community, for the Kunred (Country).

Raymond Guymala,
Bolmo Elder and senior community member



The CG Approach in ACTION:

Community Development and Wellbeing

Bolmo families continued to demonstrate leadership, cultural authority and a commitment to self-determination, guiding the development of their community and the future of their children. Community governance is central to the CG Approach.

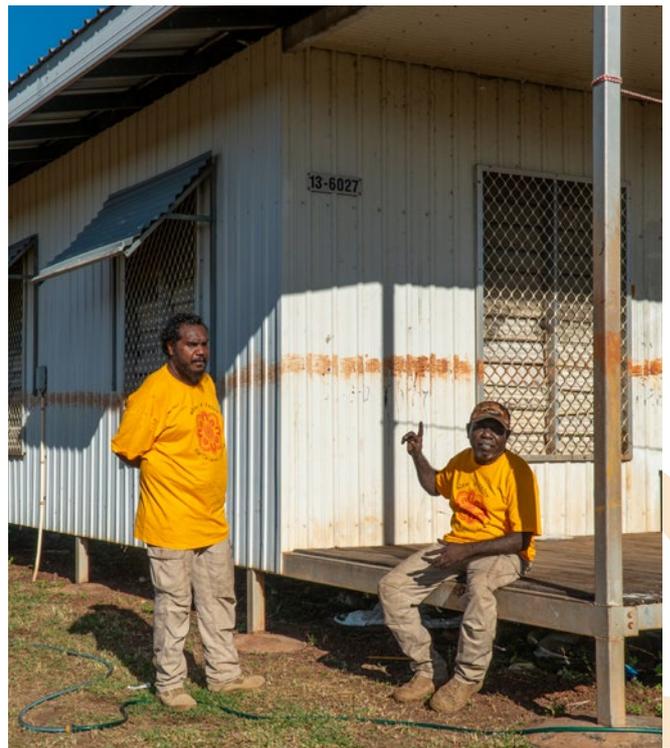
Despite persistent challenges, families continue to uphold their cultural governance systems, ensuring that community development remains grounded in their knowledge, cultural responsibilities and priorities for the future.

The new dry season operations have been a success and local partnerships are strengthening. Partnerships with local organisations—including Demed Aboriginal Corporation and Warddeken Land Management—supported Marlkawo families to strengthen community throughout the year. Together, they worked to improve housing, infrastructure and services in line with local priorities. Warddeken supported sustainable living on Country, and Demed assisted with service coordination and advocacy. These partnerships were led by families and grounded in cultural authority and wellbeing.

Bolmo families are creating a future where children and families can live, learn and thrive on Country—strengthening cultural governance, community leadership and the wellbeing of future generations.



42 First Nations people engaged in Community Governance





Supporting Sorry Business

Throughout the year we supported families to uphold cultural responsibilities during Sorry Business. Following the loss of senior community members in recent years, families came together in 2024 to lead ceremonies and fulfil cultural obligations. More than 100 people were on Country during Sorry Business.

Children's Ground provided practical and logistical support during these times, including assistance with transport, accommodation and food, so families could follow the appropriate cultural protocols on Country in a supported environment.

Community wanted delivery to continue for the benefit of the community, with a focus on learning and health programs.

Sorry Business is central to health, wellbeing, learning and cultural and community life and obligations. It is a time to mourn, honour ceremony and collectively heal.



The CG Approach in ACTION:

Cultural and Creative Development and Wellbeing

Markkawo is the place where families connect back to Country. Here, everything is about Culture and family. Our spirits are stronger and our Country is stronger when we are here.

Some people live here all the time. Other families come and go. It is our home. Here Culture is everywhere for everyone. We come home for ceremony, we come home to heal, we come home to be with family, we come home to connect with Country. We come home to teach our wurdurd (children). This is where we hold our language, law, and cultural practice.

This year we focused on intensive Learning on Country for children, families, and young adults.

Everybody learnt together through the land, with language, cultural stories, creative practice and wellbeing embedded in every experience. We learn through doing—whether gathering bush foods, listening to stories, singing songs, or practicing traditional arts.

Here our Culture is alive and we are teaching it to future generations.



100

children and families engaged in cultural learning and wellbeing on Country



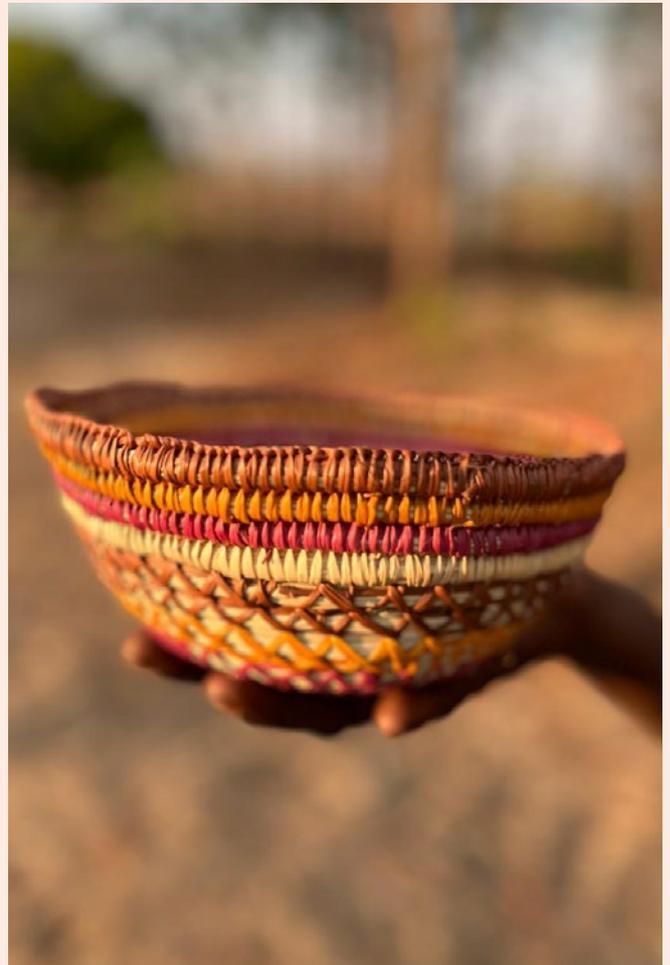


Weaving the future: Women leading Cultural practice

This year saw a resurgence of cultural weaving practices among the women and girls of Marlkawo. Throughout the dry season, the daluk (women) taught the yawkyawk (young girls) how to harvest pandanus, collect bush dyes and practise the art of weaving. These workshops became a vital space for cultural strengthening and leadership, with young women learning the skills that are passed down through generations.

Through the creation of woven items like baskets, women were able to initiate the beginning of an economic opportunity with the sale of their art. This project will continue to develop into 2025.

These activities were not only about preserving and teaching Culture and skills—they were also an expression of community wellbeing, resilience and collective pride. The engagement of young women and children actively in these practices demonstrated the strength and leadership of Marlkawo's women, ensuring that cultural knowledge is sustained and celebrated.



Caring for Country through traditional practice

Bolmo leader Raymond and his brother worked alongside the Warddeken Rangers to prepare the Marlkawo site for learning in 2024 through cultural fire management.

By coordinating controlled burnings and clearings, they continue an important traditional practice that keeps Country healthy and safe. These small, managed fires reduce the risk of destructive wildfires, protect sacred sites, reduce the effects of climate change and support biodiversity. This on-going work reflects the deep connection and understanding between people and place and supports the wellbeing of both community and Country.

Garramilla

In the Top End of the Northern Territory we are led by communities on Larrakia Country in Garramilla (Darwin).

- Knuckey Lagoon
- 15 Mile
- Minmarama and Kulaluk



Regional summary

Children's Ground in Darwin is growing steadily year on year but remains in its early stages of delivery due to limited funding. While operating at a small scale, 2024 was an impactful year with exciting developments in employment, governance, health and learning activities and community development.

A major development has been the move towards place-based delivery. Dedicated community development staff are now located in Knuckey Lagoon, 15 Mile and Minmarama/Kulaluk. In community local First Nations staff lead responsive service delivery based on individual needs.

Children's Ground is about going out into the community, leading programs with members of the community to bring a brighter future for our kids.

In the Top End we have early years now and after school programs. Before we didn't have this. To have the children come and love to come and learn, and to come with their parents who also love to come. To be happy with their children.

Jacqueline Treves,
Minmarama Community Leader and Larrakia Traditional Owner

338

children, young people and adults engaged with Children's Ground

Local community centres continue to be a central place for Knuckey Lagoon and 15 Mile, while a small storage shed is being utilised at Minmarama/Kulaluk until a more substantial structure can be developed. Decisions are made in real time, by community and in community.

The three communities have strong local leaders who have been guiding, leading and growing Children's Ground.

Key highlights included community leaders attending the launch of the MK Turner Report in Canberra and community members attending Utyerre Apanpe and the Apmerengentyele cultural festival in Alice Springs.





Learning and Wellbeing

2024 has been a year of steady development and leadership change. Eastern Arrernte, Alyawarr, and Kija woman Erin Reilly joined as the new Regional Director and brings wonderful experience. In the second half of the year we focused on establishing stronger place based delivery and delivering pathways for culturally rich, holistic learning.

We continued to deliver small scale early years learning and family wellbeing, and after-hours programs that combined First Nations knowledge systems with western education approaches.

In Knuckey Lagoon and 15 Mile, community centres are central spaces for children, families, and community members to gather, learn and lead. These centres now host a range of activities—from early childhood sessions to youth programs and cultural events—providing a safe and supportive environment where learning and wellbeing are nurtured.

At Minmarama/Kulaluk, where community infrastructure remains limited, delivery was also limited for the year. The team worked closely with local leaders to use local halls and community centres in the wider community for delivery and governance activities. Early learning sessions and after-hours activities recommenced in 2024, following a period of community reflection, governance strengthening and cultural consultation.

Our Learning and Wellbeing delivery in Darwin place families at the heart of their children's learning journey. Learning on Country is a core component of our Learning and Wellbeing framework and delivery. By embedding cultural knowledge through on Country learning and family-led activities, children engage in leading practice by learning through connection to Culture, Country, and community.

This year Children's Ground further integrated cultural and western learning experiences and social and emotional wellbeing by including more family excursions that complement Learning on Country.

Families attended libraries, local child and family centres, wildlife parks, aquatic centres and more. These activities created diverse opportunities for children and families in learning and wellbeing.

Our flexible, community-led approach allows us to respond to a range of challenges that impact program delivery. This includes enduring grief and trauma for families that require community closures for Sorry Business. It also includes infrastructure limitations, community stress and ill-health of staff and families. We have been able to adjust delivery to ensure cultural safety while maintaining access and regularity of learning and wellbeing opportunities.

The Learning and Wellbeing platform in Darwin continues to grow slowly. Together with families, Elders and community leaders, we are creating a future where children can walk confidently in the world—grounded in the knowledge, language, and Culture of their people, while deeply engaging with both First Nations and western education systems.

35 children (0-5 years) engaged in learning alongside 67 family members (18+ years)

Being on Country, being surrounded by family, learning our Culture, learning our language. That's what we need to do. That's the only way that we're going to teach the next generation, so that they're able to carry that through for themselves and their own children."

Ricky-Lee Tilmouth
Community Coordinator - Knuckey Lagoon Community



After Hours programs

Starting in 2023, the after-hours programs in Knuckey Lagoon, Minmarama/Kulaluk and 15 Mile continued this year and is now becoming embedded as a regular activity. The aim is to create safe, supportive environments where young people feel connected, valued and empowered in their cultural identity.

These programs not only promote well-being but also provide young people with access to meaningful opportunities, measured through levels of engagement and participant feedback.

Key activities include:

- The Spark Box program, which incorporates culturally relevant learning apps to build literacy skills and confidence, preparing young people for learning while honoring cultural values. These sessions are further supported by nutritious snacks and guided by staff.
- BoxFit and PARBA and Hoops4Health basketball programs focus on fun, skills, physical health and resilience, offering First Nations-led activities that provide role models and instill pride in active, healthy lifestyles.
- A Mural Project, led by a local artist, empowered young people to express pride in their community through art, creating a welcoming space that enhances self-confidence.
- Visits from the AFL Footy team connected young people with cultural role models
- Holiday programs offered activities such as skating and Wildlife Park visits, broadening their experiences and strengthening community bonds.

In line with Children's Ground's vision and guided by community leaders, these after-hours programs provide place-based, community-led activities that foster pride, cultural connection, and joy. Youth input into activity development has led to plans for excursions to local cultural and recreational sites, including sporting venues, museums, and galleries, further deepening connections to Culture and place.



Health and Wellbeing

Whilst still in early-stage delivery, Darwin communities have taken significant steps to target key priority health needs for individual communities. Universal health support and education is integrating into early learning. Targeted health support has been provided to children and families.

Through the Health and Wellbeing Framework, Children's Ground continues to embed health education within early learning, to develop community-driven change that supports the next generation to grow with strong focus on health, Culture, identity, and wellbeing.

In 2024, community leadership identified critical health and wellbeing priorities, including environmental health, nutrition, and social and emotional wellbeing. In response, Children's Ground's Learning and Health teams delivered quarterly health education themes to support health literacy and knowledge on issues such as Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD), skin infections, and mental wellbeing. These themes were reinforced through ongoing collaboration with healthcare and social service providers, strengthening the bridge between families and culturally safe clinical care.

Key partnerships were developed and maintained with organisations including Healthy Living NT, YMCA, Palmerston Youth Centre, and local sporting associations. These partnerships supported the delivery of community-led, integrated health and wellbeing programs with a focus on youth engagement and family support. Holistic, strength-based approaches ensured that health promotion was embedded in everyday learning and living, seeking to empower families with tools for prevention and resilience.

Mental health education was prioritised across community programs. In a year marked by significant Sorry Business, one-on-one and group-based social and emotional wellbeing support provided safe, trauma-informed care for children, youth, and families. Women's Groups continued to offer culturally safe spaces for conversations around parenting, identity, emotional literacy, and mental health, while programs for young people built leadership, confidence and cultural pride.

Wellbeing was also supported through early learning sessions and On Country activities, where children explored emotional regulation, cultural identity and connection to Country, strengthening their sense of belonging and mental health.

At a community level, clean-up campaigns and the distribution of beds and mattresses supported healthier living conditions where overcrowding continues to be a key concern. Families also worked closely with local housing and service bodies to improve communication and ensure cleaner, safer environments.

A major advancement in 2024 was the employment of local community First Nations health leads in each community. These local leaders are embedded within their communities, driving culturally responsive, place-based health support and initiatives. The aim is to strengthen health literacy, self-determination, community governance, and decision-making.

308

people engaged in health promotion and support (including 53 children aged 0-5 years)

112

people were supported to engage with clinical health

279

people engaged in nutrition education and increased nutritional intake (incl. 50 children)

43

people engaged maternal and child health promotion

242

people engaged in social/emotional wellbeing promotion and support



Community-led health and early learning leadership

Each of the three Children's Ground communities in Darwin now has First Nations community-based women's health leads and early years leads living in community.

These roles guide health promotion activities and early learning initiatives and ensure that the scope of health education and activities is determined by community priorities and delivered in a way that aligns with local knowledge and cultural values.

The Women's Health Lead is responsible for identifying priority health issues affecting women and families, coordinating preventative care and support services, and ensuring that women and girls receive accessible, community-led health education.

The early years lead works closely with families to embed health promotion into everyday learning, ensuring that young children receive foundational health education through culturally grounded, play-based, and on Country learning experiences.

Flu immunisation community event at 15 Mile

Showing leadership in health prevention, the 15 Mile community requested flu vaccines. The Health and Wellbeing team engaged an external provider in the lead up to flu season and facilitated a local event to provide flu shots in community.

The team with local community leaders liaised with all households and provided fliers to inform people and grow knowledge and access. More than 30 people attended and 14 community members were immunised.

It was an opportunity for the community to support their health, come together for a BBQ and for Children's Ground to meet new families.

Partnerships continue to support health access

Through 2024 we continued strong partnerships with local health providers to cater to community needs. This included:

- Danila Dilba Health Services (DDHS) to increase and support health access, treatment, and chronic illness management. Ongoing collaboration has also included health checks and preventative healthcare initiatives tailored to specific needs.
- Renal & Elder Care Services for the coordination of local renal services and home care providers to support key Elders and leaders requiring ongoing health management.
- Royal Darwin Hospital and local care facilities for cultural liaison services and advocacy appropriate care. Additionally, we provided transition support for those discharged after surgery, ensuring seamless continuity of care with the necessary follow-up services.
- Eye & Ear Health initiatives with external providers for in-community ear and eye health checks, with follow-up services delivered in partnership with DDHS and Children's Ground's community health team.



The CG Approach in ACTION:

Economic Development and Wellbeing

This year we progressed our commitment to creating pathways to employment, leadership and financial empowerment.

A key focus is building local employment pathways over time through Children's Ground's flexible employment model. Communities leading Children's Ground in Darwin have historically experienced chronic unemployment and systemic barriers to workforce participation and broader economic opportunity.

Children's Ground's flexible employment model recognises the cultural, social and economic realities of community life, including lack of employment experience, grief, mobility, stress and caregiving responsibilities, that can impact employment engagement and sustainability. The workforce development approach includes both support, training and cultural based employment options.

Employees worked across a range of roles, including early childhood, community maintenance, youth programs, after-hours learning activities, and health and wellbeing initiatives. Flexible work allows for variable work hours based on personal circumstances and community needs. Both permanent and casual work options are provided as people build confidence and experience.

Employment was just one part of the story in 2024. Equally important was the focus on building the knowledge, skills and confidence of staff and emerging leaders.

Since working with Children's Ground, I feel more confident in being athletic and sharing that passion with community. I have developed strong skills to talk with the young ones and support them. My strengths are also how I show care and respect to everyone I work with and all that participate in the sessions

Aida Goodman,
Youth Worker - 15 Mile

Throughout the year employees accessed a suite of tailored training opportunities designed to develop job readiness, financial literacy, digital skills, and leadership capability. Training included compliance and safety protocols, professional systems, personal development, and culturally grounded leadership principles. Staff were also supported in practical areas such as setting up banking, accessing digital platforms like MyGov, and obtaining employment documentation and identification.

Professional development opportunities key community leaders included participation in governance forums, political advocacy in Canberra, and participation in the Utyerre Apanpe National Educators Forum.

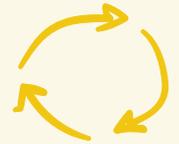
By combining employment opportunities with structured training and professional development, we are creating the foundations for long-term, community-led economic empowerment in Darwin.

22

community-based First Nations staff were employed from Darwin CG communities

An additional 19 non community-based First Nations staff worked with communities in Darwin and Marlkawo.





Backing the talent of young people: Building strength through flexibility

One of the most powerful lessons from our Economic Development and Wellbeing focus in Darwin has been the importance of flexibility, patience and cultural care in supporting young people into employment. This year, nine young people aged between 15 and 32 took their first steps into the workforce with Children’s Ground, many navigating employment for the first time in their lives.

While our initial target was to employ four young people, we welcomed nine into flexible and part time employment, providing soft entry points and adapting roles to suit individual needs and circumstances. Their working hours varied significantly — two young people worked over 200 hours, three worked between 100 and 200 hours, and four worked fewer than 45 hours. Each engagement, regardless of hours, reflected meaningful progress towards employment readiness and personal empowerment.

The employment journey was not without challenges. Some young people paused their work due to personal grief or community obligations, including Sorry Business. For instance, one person ceased work following the passing of their parent.

Another relocated away from community, ending formal employment but leaving a legacy of leadership and inspiration for others. These experiences affirmed the critical role of flexible, culturally safe employment models that honour community responsibilities and the emotional realities of First Nations life.

Each young person’s journey has contributed to a broader shift: strengthening leadership, fostering financial literacy, and creating role models for younger children in their communities.



Community Development and Wellbeing

First Nations decision-making and self-determination, the heart of community development, continued to strengthen in 2024. Our approach remained grounded in place-based governance, ensuring that community members led and shaped the future for their children, families, and broader community.

Community leadership, knowledge, and vision continue to guide the delivery of programs, events, and engagement. Bi-monthly stakeholder meetings were held at 15 Mile and Knuckey Lagoon, where community members set the agenda and shared priorities directly with local services, government representatives, and organisations. These meetings created space for honest dialogue and accountability, ensuring that external agencies listened to and acted on the voices of First Nations people.

Young people began to emerge as a vital part of community leadership, finding their voice in governance meetings, in community and regional decision-making and with stakeholders.



Although a formal Youth Leadership Group is yet to be established, the groundwork laid this year has enabled young people to find their voice and influence community priorities. This work will continue to progress into 2025.

The 'Walk, Talk & Act' engagement process, fundamental to the Children's Ground Approach, continued to underpin community governance activities. Informal social events—such as community breakfasts, Women's Groups, cultural events, and after-hours learning programs—remained crucial in building trust, social capital, and collective decision-making. These culturally safe spaces, co-designed with Elders, leaders, and young people, create the space for governance to emerge, aligned with the values and aspirations of the community.

While 15 Mile and Knuckey Lagoon benefited from revitalised community centres, Minmarama/Kulaluk continued to face infrastructure challenges, limiting governance activities. Community centres are critical places for people to come together. In Minmarama/Kulaluk, the lack of a community centre or adequate communal areas for children, young people and families has created on-going challenges to achieving place-based delivery and uplifting local governance and community centred events and activities. Despite this the community was able to use communal spaces local to the nearby area to effectively hold community governance and program delivery. Ongoing leadership and delivery reflects the community's enduring strength and commitment.

34

First Nations community members engaged in governance and decision-making.



Youth leadership

In Darwin, young people are becoming role models, taking leadership roles, influencing community decision-making and supporting the intergenerational responsibilities within their communities. Their involvement is positively impacting younger children and peers, fostering pride, connection, and active participation in community activities and governance.

In Minmarama/Kulaluk, young leaders contributed to cultural and community projects, including local infrastructure maintenance and organising fishing trips. These activities strengthened community bonds and gave young people a chance to learn, role model and lead.

At 15 Mile, young people supported sports programs like after hours basketball and football by preparing sessions and encouraging participation. This has built teamwork, wellness, and resilience and engagement

In Knuckey Lagoon, young people participated in educational initiatives such as Utyerre Apanpe (First Nations Educator’s Forum), empowering them in their leadership and contribution to culturally, socially and politically important platforms.

Alongside Children’s Ground, our young people are growing into the next generation of leaders.



Knuckey Lagoon mural project

In 2024, young people from Knuckey Lagoon led a vibrant mural project that transformed their community space. Working alongside renowned Darwin street artist Taylor Smith, local youth designed and painted a large-scale artwork reflecting their pride, Culture, and hopes for the future. The project created a space where young people could share ideas, build confidence, and celebrate their identity. It brought the community together—families, Elders, and children—all contributing to a welcoming, creative space. More than just a mural, the project empowered young leaders to shape their environment and highlighted the strength of community-led initiatives in action.

Cultural and Creative Development and Wellbeing

Throughout this year our work in Darwin continued to place First Nations leadership, identity and cultural authority at the centre of delivery. Community members led initiatives to restore and sustain language, reconnect with Country and share cultural practices.

This year saw a focus on passing down traditional knowledge and creative skills and revitalising skills that have been impacted by colonisation and displacement.

In each community, Elders and cultural leaders had guided conversations about language restoration—acknowledging that many languages in this region have few or no current speakers. Learning sessions integrated language alongside creative and educational activities where possible to provide children and young people opportunities to be immersed and to hear sounds, stories and knowledge of their people.



Learning on Country remained key to the Cultural and Creative Development and Wellbeing platform. Bush trips, storytelling sessions, creative arts activities and cultural practices were embedded across after-hours programs, school holiday activities and early years learning—creating opportunities for children and families to connect with Country and Culture.

Children's Ground worked alongside local artists, Elders and First Nations-led organisations to deliver culturally rich programs. Community members led creative development initiatives such as visual arts, music and storytelling that provided platforms for children and young people to express their Culture, identity and pride.

Initiatives like the Young Alidju Group brought together young women from diverse language groups, providing a culturally safe space to learn about health, cultural protocols and identity.

Across all communities, cultural knowledge holders and educators worked together to ensure that cultural learning remained central to children's daily experiences.

Through this culturally grounded, intergenerational approach, Children's Ground in Darwin is supporting the next generation to grow up strong in Culture, confident in who they are and empowered to carry their knowledge into the future.

134 children and families engaged in cultural learning and wellbeing on Country

At Children's Ground we want to see and help the kids grow healthy and have a clear mind. So that they know what they are doing and saying.

Making sure they have a healthy lifestyle. Teaching them how to speak both western and cultural way.

Jacqueline Goodman,
Community Leader - Knuckey Lagoon



Blak, Loud and Proud – Celebrating NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC Week 2024 was a vibrant celebration of Culture and creativity across Children’s Ground’s Darwin communities. Guided by the 2024 theme, ‘Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud,’ children, young people, and families from 15 Mile, Knuckey Lagoon, and Minmarama/Kulaluk came together to create a large-scale collaborative artwork.

At 15 Mile children designed and decorated their own shirts to wear at the Darwin NAIDOC March. These sessions were more than art activities—they were a powerful opportunity for young people to express their cultural identity and pride.



Keeping language and Cultural knowledge alive

The Young Alidju Group at 15 Mile continued to show the power of intergenerational cultural learning. This group of young women—representing more than five language groups—met regularly to learn about health, language, and cultural protocols. These sessions were more than health and language lessons; they were an opportunity to connect young women with cultural knowledge holders, strengthening their understanding of women’s business, wellbeing and their shared connection to Country.

This year, the group’s work extended beyond their immediate learning, contributing to ongoing conversations about how language and cultural authority will guide Children’s Ground’s programs into the future.



Children's stories



Eight-year-old Ellarisha has been coming to Ampekenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground Central Australia) learning, health and cultural education since she was born. She and her siblings have grown up here.

During Mpweringke Anapipe sessions, spending time on Country heals Ellarisha's spirit. She has become aware of and explores her totems, skin name, family group, her country and her family's Country. She is able to draw a map outlining her country and give directions to key features. Ellarisha loves to draw and paint the Country she is on. She can describe what she has drawn and name where she is.

Ellarisha is developing the skills to express her thoughts and ideas in Arrernte and English.

She is able to identify the purpose of the text and re-tell the story in her own words. Ellarisha engages in Arrernte and English stories. She can sound out and write simple words and with help can read simple texts.

She is also developing her numeracy skills by counting in both Arrernte and English, using objects from the land—like animals, seeds and plants—to understand numbers in meaningful ways.

When Ellarisha is learning on her country she feels supported and safe to make positive choices in her learning. She actively listens and engages when learning from her family or Childrens Ground staff.



Kaden

This year Kaden has continued to develop new words and phrases. He uses Arrernte words such as kwatye, kere and mwerre. He also communicates with gestures. During playtime Kaden says to other children 'my turn now' or 'come, look at this'.

We have been singing songs together such as 'Kangaroo', 'Three cheeky monkeys', 'twinkle twinkle little star' and 'akaperte pwerlape'. Kaden enjoys singing with the group as well as sometimes singing on his own.

He knows that Mount Undoolya is his family's Country and that Harts Range (Eagle Beak) is his Dad's Country. Kaden is learning both ways, his mother's country and father's country and both languages. He is developing an appreciation for his family's land and is so excited when he goes out on Country.

He is beginning to identify plants that can be used in bush medicines. He also remembers what animals he has seen in particular places. He looks for kangaroos, emu, tyape and caterpillars. Kaden is beginning to learn about, use and create traditional tools such as clapsticks and shovels and crowbars used for hunting.

Recently Kaden has been showing great empathy and care for people around him. He looks after his younger brothers, sisters and cousins when they are hurt or are out walking on Country.



Tiny

Two-year-old Tiny has always feared lizards and creepy crawly creatures. She would often scream and run-away as a young baby. When family caught bush foods, she would hide and be fearful while others chased and held the animals with confidence.

Over this last year, cultural educators and family have introduced games and activities that helped Tiny become familiar with bush animals. She has been learning the names and where the animals live. During on Country trips they would show Tiny how to hunt and gently support her to watch and listen. The more she was exposed to the traditional practices the more confident she has become. This year we have seen Tiny become a confident reptile wrangler, picking up, carrying and examining small lizards and animals.

Tiny's cultural educators know her best. They knew how to share their knowledge for Country and its creatures with her. Over time they developed activities and built on her curiosity. Through play, language development and learning we see children develop a strong positive sense of identity and belonging. Tiny now leads the way confidently picking up creatures and being a part of hunting trips.

Evidence shows that the quality of family engagement in a child's life and early education is one of the most powerful predictors of a child's development. Learning and wellbeing research links this engagement to empowerment of parents within the child's learning journey, improved family well-being, improved cognitive development, learning performance, social-emotional development, and health. Family engagement is critical in high-quality early childhood care.

Children's stories



Ovoidah

This year Ovoidah has been developing her critical thinking and problem-solving skills while participating in early years learning sessions with 15-Mile community. Recently she discovered that if she stacks donuts in order as she removes them from the stand, she can replace them in the correct order by reversing the process.

Ovoidah has a deep and natural curiosity for exploring her environment. She feels confident and comfortable venturing around her community independently, shows how well she is connected to her surroundings. Ovoidah's connection to her Culture, family, and community is evident, particularly in her love for spending time out bush with her parents, further strengthening her bond with both her Culture and the land.

Ovoidah has shown significant growth in her social development over the year. She enjoys forming and exploring relationships with other children in her community, and she engages with family members and educators in a way that reflects her growing sense of trust and attachment. She is becoming increasingly confident and assertive in her communication and blends both her First Language and English when speaking, reflecting her cultural background and her growing language skills.



Dante

Dante has regularly been coming to Children's Ground sessions at 15-Mile community in Darwin since he was a baby.

When he first started early years sessions he would often play by himself. Now, with support from his early years educators, Dante wants everyone to join in with him.

He has started to use words to tell people about what he is doing. Dante loves to sort toys by colour and enjoys playing games with the parachute – especially singing 'twinkle, twinkle little star' while the parachute is draped over his head.

This year Dante has learnt all about bush apples – where they grow, what time of year they grow and what will make them grow big. He also knows that when they are red, they are ripe to eat. He has been learning the names of different fruits and vegetables and has been trying new healthy foods while on session.

In 2024 Dante continued learning in both his First Language as well as English. He is growing up being celebrated for his Culture and identity, while also being supported in his western learning.

Experiential learning is a foundation to First Nations learning and considered leading practice in early childhood learning and care. Children are learning through *Apmerengentyele* – the Arrernte world view – which teaches them how to learn, how to be, how they are connected and their responsibilities to both the land and to people. This begins from birth. Through this they learn information, knowledge and skills. Learning is about creating the space for children to become who they are meant to become. To ensure that their spirit and sense of belonging is firm. This is foundational to their social and emotional wellbeing for life and allows a child to open their minds and bodies to learning.



Verna

Verna attends Children’s Ground’s Early Learning Sessions at Knuckey Lagoon in Darwin.

Verna shows a deep connection to country and Culture, displaying an interest in exploring land and understanding how to care for it. Her curiosity about Culture is evident in her interactions, she is showing great interest in learning about what shapes her world. Verna is developing a sense of pride and respect for cultural practices and an increasing awareness of the knowledge shared by her Elders.

Verna enjoys participating in activities that promote physical wellbeing and is developing an understanding of how to look after herself independently, she has made progress in developing her social and interpersonal skills. Verna is becoming an effective communicator, using a range of ways to express herself.

She listens attentively to others and shows respect when they speak, which enhances her social interactions.

Verna demonstrates patience when waiting for her turn to speak and actively contributes to decision-making in her learning environment. She is building confidence in larger social settings and is beginning to refine her ability to interact with others.

First Nations people have the oldest early childhood and learning systems in the world, with practices, standards and expertise that are leading practice.

Research and evidence

Children's Ground recognises the history of First Nations people being the subjects rather than leaders of First Nations focused research. Children's Ground takes a participatory approach to research and evaluation. It's conducted by First Nations people with First Nations families, working alongside non-First Nations staff with western research qualifications.

In this way First Nations people are at the centre of research, in design, execution, analysis and communication.

2020-2022 Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground Central Australia) Evaluation Report

In December we proudly released the *2020-2022 Evaluation of Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground Central Australia)*. Building on the first evaluation from 2017-19, this report shows that across the four communities leading Children's Ground in and around Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Children's Ground has effectively engaged children, families and communities in meaningful ways, creating safe, supportive environments that foster participation and empowerment.

With evidence of improved preventative health knowledge and behaviours, increased access to cultural and western learning, and stronger family connections, the foundation for long-term systemic change is being established. See key findings on page 71.

The evaluation shows that children and families across Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe are consistently experiencing a locally-led, culturally-rich environment—where early learning, nutrition, health and wellbeing are delivered in ways that honour First Nations knowledge systems. These are spaces where children are surrounded by family members who are not only present but leading, learning and employed, creating a strong foundation for intergenerational change.

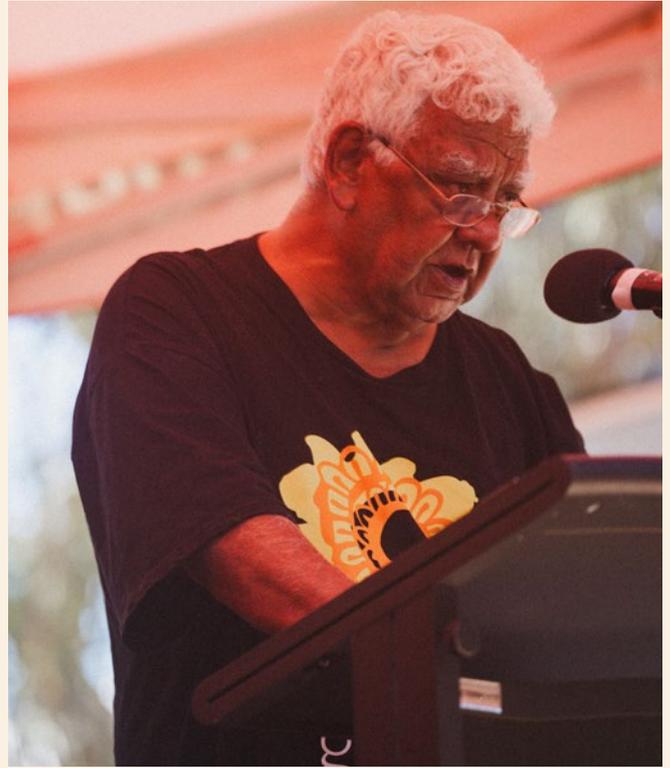
Crucially, this evaluation was undertaken by First Nations community researchers, working in partnership with Children's Ground's western-trained researchers, and overseen by Ingkerrekele Arntarnte-areme (Central Australia First Nations Governance Committee).

This approach ensured the process was grounded in community priorities and guided by cultural authority.

From shaping the questions to collecting data and analysing results, community researchers were at the centre. This represents a powerful model of First Nations data sovereignty—where communities are telling their own stories, on their own terms. As Community Researcher Veronica Doolan explains, "We're empowered to research and report the facts about ourselves, and then use this information in ways that's appropriate for us."

Children's Ground has embedded this community-led approach to evaluation since its inception. This latest evaluation continues that legacy—deepening how we understand progress, how we define success, and how we stay accountable to the long-term vision of Elders. It captures the strength and voice of community, and reflects the integrated, intergenerational change at the heart of the Children's Ground Approach.

Read the 2020-2022 Evaluation of Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground Central Australia) at: www.childrensground.org.au/reports



Key findings from 2020-2022 Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground Central Australia) Evaluation Report

1,415

people engaged in the CG Approach from 2020 to 2022, an increase from 978 in 2017 to 2019.

14% → 68%

A 57% increase in the percentage of children aged 0-5 years engaging in early years learning. At the beginning of Children's Ground, only 14% of children had previously engaged in early years learning. Now, 68% of children are engaged in early learning with Children's Ground.

73%

The proportion of children 0-8 years from Children's Ground communities who engaged with the CG Approach in learning, health, first language, Culture and family and community activities.

452

Children aged 0-8 years engaged in nutrition nearly doubled, with a 98% increase from 228 children in 2017 to 2019.

83

Number of local First Nations people employed between 2020 to 2022. 71% weren't employed when they started working with Children's Ground. Of those who had worked before, 83% had not worked in the past 12 months or more. 31% of staff had never worked in paid employment before Children's Ground.

111%

Increase in the number of people (all ages) engaged in cultural learning and wellbeing across Children's Ground communities since 2017 to 19, rising from 315 to 666 people.

87%

Proportion of people (n=23) in Children's Ground communities reporting that families are "walking alongside their children" (engaging with and supporting them).

197

Number of people engaged in First Nations community and regional governance and decision-making - an 84% increase from 107 people in 2017 to 2019.

Presenting at the International Indigenous Research Conference

In November, two First Nations Senior Community Researchers attended the International Indigenous Research Conference in Auckland. The conference highlighted the importance of Data Sovereignty with participants exploring how First Nations communities in New Zealand and the United States ensure control over their data and research narratives.

This resonated strongly with the Children's Ground's Approach and our ongoing efforts to continue increasing First Nations sovereignty in not only data, but also research and evaluation. This includes prioritising First Nations-led research and evaluation to ensure First Nations leaders, staff, families and communities are authentically sharing their stories and experiences and telling the story of how Children's Ground is progressing against the outcomes that communities collectively determine.

Historically, non-Indigenous researchers have often controlled data, research, evaluation and the narrative, but Children's Ground emphasises community ownership and genuine representation of First Nations perspectives and leadership.

Our staff presented the Children's Ground Approach, showcasing their unique research and evaluation principles and methods. Through a video and discussion, they illustrated how we undertake research through a First Nations lens, reflecting their commitment to First Nations leadership in knowledge creation.



First Nations-led research allows us to take control over our lives. We know our communities and our people. People are more comfortable to tell their story and understand what we're doing. We know who we are and where we are coming from.

We want to tell our story the way we want it to be told. We want to control our data and for our data to be our own. We're in the drivers seat for where we are now, and the direction we're moving into the future.

Amunda Gorey and Veronica Doolan
Aarrernte Research Officers

'Whose care – Our care' Medical Research Future Fund grant

Children's Ground is part of a collaboration being led by the ALIVE Mental Health Research Translation Centre who was successful in receiving a Medical Research Future Fund grant for five years (2024-2029). Titled 'Whose care – Our care', this research focuses on a collective response to the persistent structural inequalities that impact mental health and wellbeing of priority populations.

Our research team consists of Chief Investigators and Associate Investigators who are from or connected to communities leading Children's Ground, some with lived experience relevant to this research.

Through active partnerships across 25 established Mental Health Centres, Safe Spaces and Living Room sites for mental health, suicide prevention and social and emotional wellbeing, including Children's Ground as a First Nations-led culturally determined empowerment model, this research will implement participatory ecosystems to reduce inequities in priority populations.

The work will lead to the implementation of culturally evidenced tools for responsiveness in care and focus on connected and enduring care for health and wellbeing outcomes.

We look forward to this research beginning in 2025 as an opportunity to contribute evidence about the impact and effectiveness of the Children's Ground Approach into western academic contexts.



Promoting First Nations Sovereignty in Community Engaged Research

Children's Ground's Research & Evaluation team collaborated with members of the Remedy research project team to publish a SAGE article on Promoting First Nations Sovereignty in Community Engaged Research: Yarning and Relationship Building with Children's Ground in Central Australia.

The article explores how you can achieve First Nations sovereignty and human rights through research partnership building and yarning interviews using The Remedy Project's collaboration with Children's Ground as a research case study.

The case study describes how we worked together to co-lead a community case study within the international research project titled The Remedy Project: First Nations Music as a Determinant of Health. We share stories and experiences about researcher attributes, values, principles (First Nations and non-First Nations). The article will shape future researchers and their practices.

Full paper reference:

Gorey, A., Sunderland, N., Apps, K., Lorains, J., Bartleet, B., Gregg-Rowan, C., Anderson, P., Williams, G., Doolan, V., & Ingkerrekele Arntarntearreme, C., (2024). Promoting First Nations sovereignty in community-engaged research: Yarning and relationship building with Children's Ground in Central Australia. In Sage Research Methods: Diversifying and Decolonizing Research. SAGE Publications, Ltd., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529687088>



National leadership and systems reform

Historically, First Nations voices in community, who speak English as another language, are not heard in Government. We do not have the economic, cultural or political power. We want to change this. Through both our research and in our leadership development, we aim to empower our young people and adults in all arenas to share their voice. We are excited by the leadership shown across generations and that the future of Children's Ground will be in the hands of community for generations to come.

Leading First Nations Education Reform

M.K. Turner Report at Parliament House, Canberra.

In February, senior Leaders and educators from Children's Ground visited Canberra to formally launch the M.K. Turner Report at Parliament House and advocate for First Nations education reform.

The M.K. Turner Report is a landmark report co-designed with over 60 First Nations educators from Utyerre Apanpe, and supported by strong local and international evidence and the United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous People (UNDRIP). The report offers six recommendations and outcomes to Australian governments. The key recommendation is for governments to commit to the establishment of a new First Nations education system, governed by First Nations people.

In Canberra we held individual meetings with key parliamentarians and decision makers from the Department of Education, Productivity Commission, NIAA, Department of Health and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The visit culminated in an event at Parliament House hosted by the Hon. Marion Scrymgour, Member for Lingiari.

Our Elders and senior Leaders asked the Australian Government to work with us towards improving education outcomes for our First Nations children.

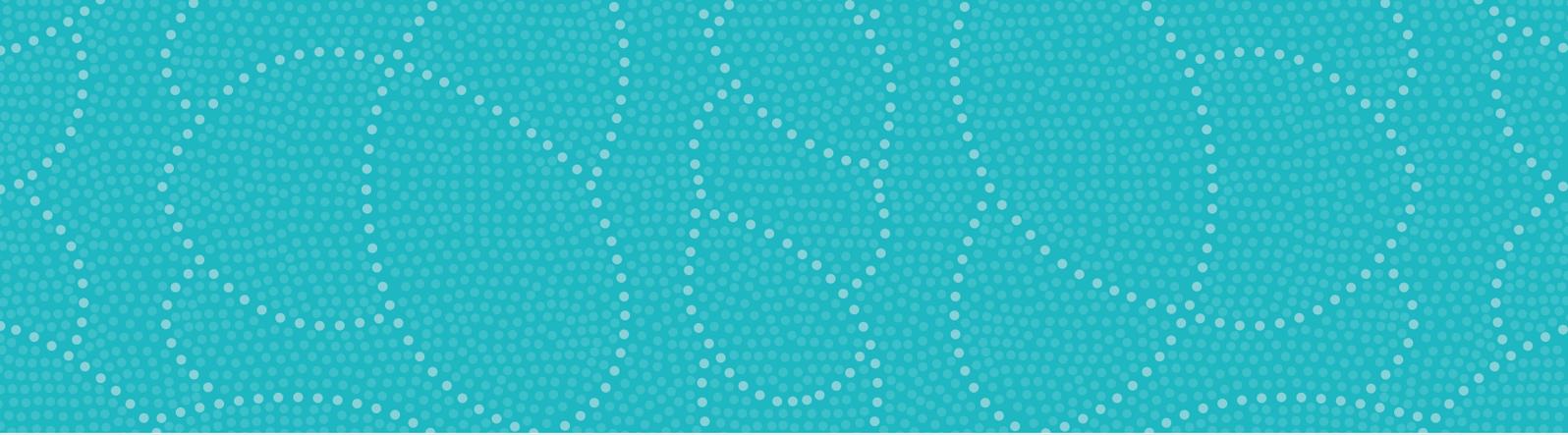
Accompanying the report was a public petition that

to date has been signed by nearly 83,000 people calling governments to implement a First Nations education system.

The ongoing advocacy, profiling and awareness raising of the M.K. Turner Report has been a critical step forward in our vision for systems reform.

In William Tilmouth's closing remarks at the Parliament House event, he said "our First Nations Education system will Close the Gap, will improve our productivity and will give us a voice. Education can transform a family in one generation. It will restore our dignity, our cultural authority and give our children agency and freedoms. We can create transformational change. We now need political commitment. Put education in our hands."





Utyerre Apanpe 2024

Children's Ground supported the sixth Utyerre Apanpe First Nations Education Forum held from 28 – 30 August 2024 in Mparntwe (Alice Springs).

In 2024 over 90 educators from a diversity of Nations attended the event, coming together to share their experience, knowledge and expertise.

Utyerre Apanpe is a national network of First Nations educators, working through cultural authority and educational standards.

The 2024 forum agenda focused on an implementation plan for the M.K. Turner Report – a blueprint for First Nations-led and designed education reform in Australia. The implementation plan will be delivered to Territory and Federal governments.

In conclusion to the Forum, the attending First Nations educators and senior leaders co-authored, signed and delivered a statement on the critical need for a national First Nations education system.

“Face us. Hear us. We have the solutions. Our ways have worked for over 65,000 years. Trust in us. We love and care for our children. We know our children. We know what we need to teach our children. And only our families and First Nations educators can do this teaching.”

The statement is an open-hearted invitation for all levels of government to work with First Nations people in collaboration to make the changes we know are needed.



Curfews in Mparntwe (Alice Springs)

In March, April and June 2024 the Northern Territory Government and Police Commissioner declared curfews in Mparntwe to combat unrest.

At this time, families were mourning the serious loss of a young person in a vehicle accident that impacted the community widely.

Primarily, the curfews were targeted at controlling the movements of children and young people. Some of our young people are lost and troubled. No one condones violence.

However this response was reactive and continued a failed policing strategy used by Government to address symptoms of long term endemic social, cultural and economic disadvantage and exclusion.

Our concern remains a lack of investment in the future of our children and young people. Locking up our children at record rates is not the solution. It is creating harm and is a serious breach of fundamental human rights.

As media and politicians focused on the problems of young people, Children's Ground witness the strength and dignity of our families and their incredible cultural leadership as they worked deeply to address the significant pain of tragedy and prevent violence.

Children's Ground community leaders want solutions and opportunities. There is a serious reality facing our young people and this can only be rectified by investing in their future. This requires comprehensive government investment into First Nations designed and led prevention, learning, health, Culture and wellbeing.



Apmerenge-ntyale Festival - From the Land

In August, Children's Ground brought new and old knowledge together at the Apmerenge-ntyale Festival: From the Land.

Presented with support from Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA) and the Northern Territory Government, the two-day festival at the Desert Knowledge Precinct in Mparntwe was a celebration of traditional knowledge, innovation, performance and culture.

Headline acts included Gomeri artist Kobie Dee, Warnindhilyagwa woman Emily Warramura, First Nations hip-hop supergroup 3%, Mparntwe's own Dem Arrernte Mape and more. The festival featured art and music workshops, panel discussions, cultural performances, kids' activities, markets and food.

Apmerenge-ntyale Festival was an incredible opportunity to connect, share and recognise the strength our people hold. We look forward to working with Mparntwe community to grow this powerful First Nations platform.



Governance

A dual governance structure: cultural and corporate governance.

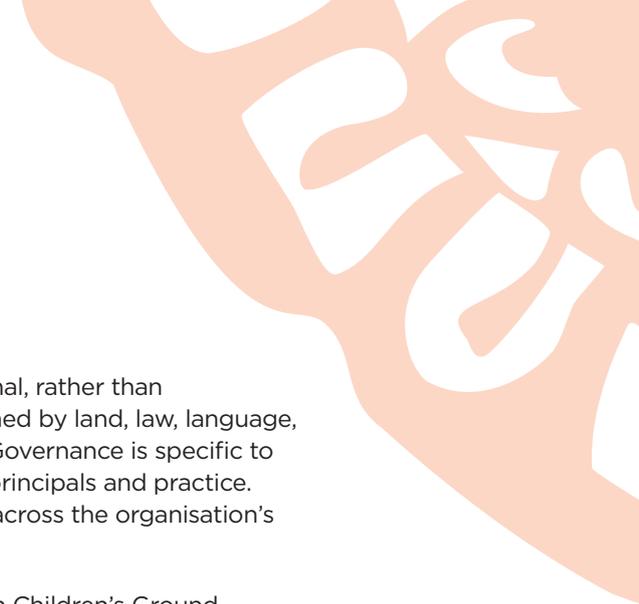
Balancing cultural and corporate governance ensures we have the cultural integrity, community leadership and organisational quality and standards to achieve real change.

Our Cultural Governance Committees have 100% First Nations membership. They represent each community and region, recognise the enduring customary laws from the land and provide both local and national leadership.

Our national Children's Ground Ltd. board has over 50% First Nations membership and directorship. It provides compliance, guidance and oversight of strategy in line with Western principles and practices.

First Nations governance and Western corporate governance are equally important.





First Nations Governance

First Nations Governance systems are complex, sophisticated and relational, rather than hierarchical, like western structures. They are collective and are underpinned by land, law, language, Culture, and relationships and kinship with each other. Our First Nations Governance is specific to each region and each community recognising First Nations Governance principals and practice. Members provide local leadership and ensure cultural integrity is upheld across the organisation’s dual governance system.

Our governance includes all First Nations people who have participated in Children’s Ground and our governance meetings. Here we are naming key Elders and senior cultural authorities and representatives of next generation leaders who have been instrumental to our local leadership and the integrity of our work in 2024. Please see our list of staff which includes a broader list of First Nations community members who have contributed to governance this year.

Central Australia

Ingkerrekele Arntarnte-areme *Everyone Being Responsible*

Alison Ferber	Freda Johnson
Amanda Turner	Harry Hayes
Angelina Hayes	Janella Ebatarinja
Bianca Turner	Laurence McLaughlan
Blanche Ebatarinja	Marita McMillan (Co-director)
Bradley Turner	Marlene Rubuntja
C Turner (Director of Apmerenge-ntyele)	Michael Gorey
Cassandra Neil	Mitchell Doolan
Cathy Turner	Nakita Ferber
Dorrie Campbell	Nanette Sharpe
Dulcie Sharpe	Natassia Gorey-Furber
Edmond Doolan	Susan Chalmers
Eva Hayes	Veronica Ross
Faye Ebatarinja	Veronica Turner (Co-director)
Felicity Hayes (Co-director)	William Lowah

Top End

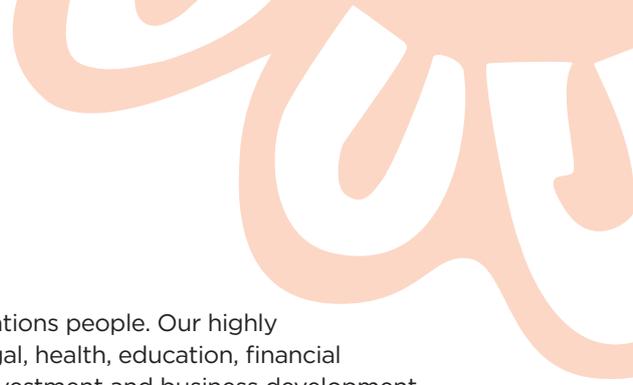
Karridjarrkre manborlh mankudji *Walking together on one path*

Marlkawo	
Alio Guymala	Kamah! Hunter
Angela Bangarr	Kaylene Djandjomerr
Annie Cameron	Kimberley Namarnyilk
Antonia Djandjomerr	Lee Nabarlambarl
Cecily Djandjomerr	Lindsay Whitehurst
Christianna Djandjomerr	Raymond Guymala
Christine Alangale	Roxanne Naborlhborlh
Djaykuk Djandjomerr	Shirley Djandjomerr
Duane Djandjomerr	Sonya Nango
Garramilla (Darwin)	
Jackie Treves	Phillip Goodman
Jacqueline Goodman	Talitha Goodman
Kathleen Thomsen	Tamika Lawford
Pauline Grant	

We are proud of our organisation. It is led by our families in our communities and we are making the change.



C Turner,
Children’s Ground First Nations language educator and Arrernte language custodian and teacher



Western Governance

The Children’s Ground Board of Directors consists of a majority of First Nations people. Our highly skilled board includes expertise in cultural knowledge and governance, legal, health, education, financial management, human rights, not for profit leadership, research, the arts, investment and business development.

Board Directors are highly qualified and experienced in their respective fields and have the commitment and passion required to lead Children’s Ground alongside our First Nations Governance structures.

William Tilmouth

Arrernte man, founding Chair of Children’s Ground, Board Chair and Co-Chair of Research Advisory Group.

Amunda Gorey

Arrernte woman, Board member and member of the People and Culture Subcommittee.

Resigned February 2024.

Dr Jordan Cory

Kamilaroi woman, BSc, MBBS, GDip Surgical Anatomy, 2020 Fulbright Future Scholar, MPH ‘21 Candidate, Harvard University. Member of the Research Advisory Group.

John Lochowiak:

Pitjantjatjara man, BA of Education, Board member.

Annalee Stearne

Nyungar woman, Post Grad Dip Public Health, Health Sciences; Grad Dip Secondary Education, Education; BA Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies. Member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

Joanne Willmott OAM

Wakka Wakka woman, activist and educational specialist.

Roxanne Naborlhborlh

Bolmo woman. Community and Cultural leader. Director of Malbak Aboriginal Corporation

Evelyn Schaber

BEd, BTeach, Arrernte woman, Senior Aboriginal Educator

Jane Vadivelloo

BSc, MPsy (Forensic), CEO, member of the Finance, Audit & Risk Subcommittee, member of the Partnerships, Investment and Communications Subcommittee.

Kon Karapanagiotidis OAM

LLB, BSW, BBSC, MED, MDevStuds – Board member, member of the Partnerships, Investment and Communications Subcommittee, and member of the People and Culture Subcommittee.

Amy Poynton

BA, MBA, Board member, Chair of the People and Culture Subcommittee, member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Subcommittee.

Josie Rizza

CA, BEc, GradDipAppFinInv, GAICD - Board member, member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Subcommittee and member of the Partnerships, Investment and Communications Subcommittee.

Clive Ringler

BEc, MCom, ASX Accredited Adviser, Level 1 & 2 – Board Deputy Chair, Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Subcommittee.

Board and subcommittee non-voting members

Mr Tony Lawler

BPharm, JP, Member of Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

Ms Cindy Wei

External member of the Partnerships, Investment and Communications Subcommittee.

There needs to be a massive systems change where control is relinquished back to communities...Children’s Ground work at the grass roots, led by communities and families, empowering them to take agency so that we can prevent harm to our children and strengthen our families...We are more than community controlled, we are community driven. We are accountable to the people that fund us and we are totally accountable to the people we serve.

William Tilmouth,
Founding Chair of Children’s Ground

Research Advisory Group

Our Research Advisory Group is made up of respected researchers and academics with extensive experience. They provide valuable guidance to monitoring and evaluation activities carried out by our Director of Research and Evaluation and community researchers in each site.

Our 25-year longitudinal evaluation enables us to build the evidence base to influence policy aimed at ending intergenerational disadvantage in the long term.

Our Research Advisors are:

Professor Fiona Arney

Director, Positive Futures Research and Arney Chong Consulting.

Professor Sally Brinkman

Professor of Education and Paediatric Epidemiology, University of South Australia.

Mr Matthew James

Senior Executive, Deputy CEO, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Dr Tim Moore

Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

Professor Sven Silburn

(ret. previously) Director, Centre for Child Development and Education, Menzies School of Health Research.

Associate Professor David Thomas

Head, Wellbeing and Preventable Chronic Disease, Menzies School of Health Research.

Dr Jordan Corey

Children's Ground Board Representative
BSc, MBBS, GDip Surgical Anatomy, MPH '21 Candidate, Harvard University, 2020 Fulbright Future Scholar, Director of Children's Ground Board.

William Tilmouth

Children's Ground Board Representative
Arrernte man, founding Chair of Children's Ground, Board Chair and Chair of Research Advisory Group.

Convenor

Jen Lorains

Director, Research and Evaluation - Children's Ground.

Our Elder and Patron

Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin AO

Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin is a Senior Wurundjeri Elder of the Kulin Nation.

Born in Healesville, Aunty Joy's family never left Wurundjeri land. She is the senior custodian of these lands and is the great-great niece of William Barak, Ngurungaeta of the Wurundjeri-Willam clan.

Aunty Joy has had numerous government appointments, including as a member of the Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria and of the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal.

In 2006, she was made an officer of the Order of Australia for her service to the community through significant contributions in the fields of social justice, land rights, equal opportunity, the arts and reconciliation.

We are honoured and proud of Aunty Joy's guidance, support and Eldership of Children's Ground over many years. We are honoured to work on her lands in Naarm.

Ambassadors

Children's Ground ambassadors use their voices and incredible talent to support our work, and platforms to grow our profile, further our reach and add weight to our advocacy and fundraising. Through their public position in the community, this fantastic group of people advocate for change for First Nations families.

We also recognise the countless other people, organisations and businesses of prominence who use their platforms to support Children's Ground and First Nations justice.

Our influencers, ambassadors and supporters are a key part of the Children's Ground family.



Dan Sultan

An Arrernte/Gurindji man, Dan Sultan is a musician, writer, performer, artist and six time ARIA Award winner. In 2024 he continued his support of Children's Ground during our End of Year Appeal and by sharing our approach with his online fanbase. It's a privilege to have Dan's ongoing support.



The Teskey Brothers

Internationally recognised musical duo The Teskey have won hearts representing Children's Ground on a global stage. They continue to be incredible supporters of our Approach, regularly advocating for our work at their live concerts.



Rachel Naninaaq Edwardson

Rachel Naninaaq Edwardson is an Iñupiaq filmmaker and educator whose work has been critically acclaimed in the US, Canada, Australia and Europe. Her *History of the Iñupiaq* documentary series is the first Native produced and directed documentary series in Alaska. Since 2007, Rachel has been an adviser and program designer of educational initiatives and reforms in Australia and Alaska.



Shane Howard

Shane Howard is one of Australia's most influential writers and singers and a proud Ambassador of Children's Ground. Shane continues to tour nationally, championing First Nations rights and environmental justice.



Corinne Grant

Corinne Grant is a practicing lawyer, author, accomplished emcee and performer. Corinne is a passionate defender of human rights, including the rights of First Nations people and those seeking asylum. She was a recipient of the John Gibson Memorial Award for Refugee Law while studying at the University of Melbourne.



Dr Jan Owen AM

Jan Owen is a social entrepreneur, innovator, influencer and author. In 2000, Jan was awarded membership to the Order of Australia for services to young people, including as CEO of the Foundation of Young Australians.

The Cat Empire

Australian icons The Cat Empire continue to be global Ambassadors for Children's Ground, a position they've held since 2019. Founding members Felix Riebl and Harry Angus are using their profiles and platforms to share the Children's Ground story.



Thank you to our team

Staff

Adam Grieve
Adrian McCann
Aengus Cassidy
Agnes Abbott
Aida Goodman
Aino Koskinen
Alanah Jack
Alice Cazalet
Alicia Williams
Alison Ferber
Allen Murphy
Amanda Turner
Amber Thompson
Amelia Turner
Amunda Gorey
Andrea Rogers
Andrena Webb
Andrew Davis
Andrina Williams
Angela Bangarr
Angelina Hayes
Anna Wilson
Annabelle Gray
Anneke Barnes
Annette Robinson
Annie Cameron
Antoinette Furber-Gorey
Ashley Webb
Bernadette Wheeler
Bessina Cameron
Bianca Turner
Bianca Vasiliadis
Blanche Ebatarinja
Bridgette Beer
Brigitte Johnson
Caisley Sinclair
Callisha Gregg-Rowan
Carol Turner
Caroline Holliday
Cassandra Neil
Cassie Oblowitz
Cathy Turner
Cecilia Schaber
Cecily Djandjomerr
Chantelle Glegg
Cherisse Buzzacott
Chloe Wallace
Christeanna Fly
Christian Lugnan
Christianna Djandjomerr
Christine Doolan
Christopher McMillan
Corey Lisle
Cristina Nobleza
Damon van der Schuit
David Blue
David Burfield
David Burfield-North
David Rankine
Debbie Smith
Deborah Wood
Desdemona Shee
Dianne Williams
Dom Mercuri
Donita Bloomfield
Donna Mulladad
Doris Bundy
Dorothea Campbell
Duane Djandjomerr
Dulcie Sharpe
Earl Hayes
Edmond Doolan
Emma Fulgenzi
Eric Petrick
Erin Reilly
Esau Lawrence
Esther Kenyon
Ethan Nabalwad
Evonne Papadopoulos
Farooq Yousaf
Faye Ebatarinja
Felicia Gomez
Felicity Hayes
Flint Djandjomerr
Frances Hoosan
Frazer McKinlay
Freda Johnson
Genise Williams
Geoffrey Barrett
Georgie Mattingley
Georgina Blue
Geraldine Bundy
Glenys Dodd
Grace Anthony
Grace Bidner
Grace Gorey
Graham Kenyon
Hannah Moffatt
Harvey Williams
Hayley Causer
Hayley Dally
Hayley Otter
Holly Cunningham
Howard Neal
Howard Veatupu
Hugo Cisterne
Isabella Rhodes
Jack Namarnyilk
Jacqueline Goodman
Jacqueline Treves
James Alberts
James Doolan
James Howden
Jamie Webb
Jane Shanthini Vadiveloo
Janella Ebatarinja
Jennifer Lorains
Jennifer Wallace
Jilaysha Tilmouth
Joanne Ferguson
Jocelyn Uibo
Joseph Wesley
Josephine Bundy
Julia Mitchell
Julie Hayes
Julie Owen
Justin Campbell
Jyoti Kulikowski
Kamahl Djandjomerr
Karen Gregory
Kate Borland
Kate Mugavin
Kathleen Bloomfield
Kathleen Thomsen
Kaye Namundja
Kaye Pedersen
Kaylene Djandjomerr
Keisha Nagurrurrba
Kelly Lee Hickey
Kerstin Wahlqvist
Kevin Bird
Kiann Kennedy
Kim Hopper
Kimberly Namarnyilk
Kylie MacFarlane
Lam-Vy Phan
Lance Turner
Laurel Milera
Lawrence McLaughlan
Lawrence Rice
Lawrence Treves
Leonie Sheedy
Leroy Petrick
Lillian Alexander
Lindsay Whitehurst
Lisa da Costa-Alves
Lisa Grieve
Lisa Stefanoff
Lorrelle Shadforth
Lucas King
Lucia Zimbardi
Lucy Elliot
Luke Roberts
Madeline Thiel
Maisie Rogers
Manjusha Sathianathan
Mar Janesse Parana Mendoza
Maria Ross
Marie Ross
Marisha Gibbs
Marita McMillan
Marlene Doolan
Maylene Nabarlambarl
Megan Hoosan
Megan Mundy
Melissa Kean
Melissa Ross
Michael Gorey
Michaeline Hayes
Milyika Scales
Mitchell Doolan
Monique Barlow
Monique Liddy
Nakita Ferber
Nanette Sharpe
Narelle Sese
Natassia Gorey-Furber
Nathan Agius
Nerida O'Loughlin
Oliver Hunter
Patricia Pearce
Patrick Curtain

Pauline Grant
Peppi Drover
Philip Parsonson
Phillip Goodman
Priscilla Williams
Randall Goodman
Rastace Rangarira
Raymond Guymala
Raymond Reiff
Rebecca van Essen
Rebecca White
Renita Webb
Richie Nabarlambarl
Ricki-Lee Tilmouth
Riley Williams
Roberta Nabarlambarl
Rosario Young
Roslyn Forrester
Rosslyn Campbell
Roxanne Naborlhborlh
Roxanne Sharpe
Samantha Devaney
Samuel Campbell
Sarah Williams
Savannah Kelly
Sayuri Fonseka
Sebastian Galbirrbirr
Selone Djandjomerr
Shanice Frankish
Shannon McNamara
Shanton Nabarlambarl
Shaqualla Alum
Sharmika Bloomfield
Sharna Dakgalawuy
Sharon Tilmouth
Shaylee Rankine
Shaylene Carter
Sheldon Kernan
Shen Cristobal
Shirley Djandjomerr
Shirley Turner
Siale Faletau
Sian Nicol
Solomon Yabio
Sophie Aylward
Stacey Campton
Stacey Hughes
Stella McMillan

Stephanie Van Son
Stephen Iles
Susan Chalmers
Sylvia Campion
Talitha Goodman
Tamika Lawford
Tania Phillips
Tara Smith
Terracia Namarnyilk
Terrance Namarnyilk
Theresa Alice
Timothy Thomaidis
Tony Schaber
Tuaran Rosas
Vanessa Pannan
Veronica Doolan
Veronica Ross
Veronica Turner
Victoria Van Der Beek
Vienna Buramura
Vincent Haines
Vito Lucarelli
Vivienne Nabarlambarl
William Lowah
Yordanka Berg Blanc
Yuk-King Ida Lau
Zekiel Dempsey
Zephaniah Neil-Kunoth
Ziah Webb

Volunteers

Amanda Sutherland
Andres Rodriguez
Carolyn Pickett
Geoff Brooks
Lisl Dubsky
Naomi Salim
Phoebe Snep
Riordan Jones
Susan Lowes



Supporters and partners

Thank you to our fantastic supporters and partners who continue to make it possible for us to deliver the Children's Ground Approach including following organisations, departments and individuals and many others who provided financial support, in-kind support and supported Children's Ground this year. We extend enormous gratitude to you all.

Philanthropic and corporate partners

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ANZ Community Foundation
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John Auer
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Judy Avisar
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Mamoma Foundation
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Maureen Gearon Fund
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Michael Saadat
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Sage Foundation
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Social Research Centre, Life in Australia™
Spotlight Foundation
Stephen Farrell
Strangward Rzesniowiecki Family
Stuart Brown and Lisa Banks
Susan McKinnon Foundation
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Thankyou
The Alfred Edments Trust
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The Bowden Marstan Foundation
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Australian Government, Department of Industry, Science and Resources
Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Australian Government, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office for Women
Australian Government, Department of Social Services, Communities for Children
National Disability Insurance Scheme
National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)
Northern Territory Government Community Benefit Fund
Northern Territory Government, Department of Chief Minister
Northern Territory Government, Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities

Partner funders

Alive National Centre for Mental Health Research Translation
Batchelor Institute of Tertiary Education
HeartKids
RMIT

Bequests

We are grateful to have received gifts from the following legacy donors

Lynda Newgrain

Pro bono and in-kind support

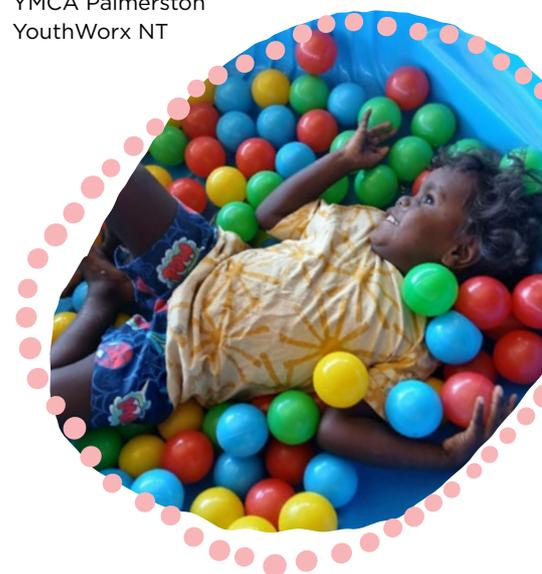
A&O Shearman
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Beci Orpin
Birth and Beyond
Bunnings
Catholic Care
CDC
Clayton Utz
Coles
Community Corrections
Cube Group
DECJUBA
Deckchair Cinema
DoTERRA Healing Hands Foundation
Early Childhood Australia
Fender
Goodman Foundation
HK Training & Consultancy
HoMie
Hydrasafe
Kentish Community Services
Lauriston Girls' School
Louise Dorrat
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Market Lane
MECCA M-POWER
Mineral+
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT)
NT Health
OzHarvest
Sara Moore
Sodii Hydration
The Smith Family
Thread Together
TOSSIT
University of Melbourne
Who Gives a Crap
Woodford Folk Festival

NT and national organisational partners

Supporting delivery in community

ABC
Akeyulerre Aboriginal Corporation
Alcoota School
Alice Springs Desert Festival
Alice Springs Desert Park
Alice Springs Language Centre
Alice Springs Telegraph Station
Alice Springs Town Council
Anglicare
Arrernte Language Centre
Australian Childhood Foundation
Blue Earth
Bonya School
Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
Central Desert Regional Council
Central Land Council
Centre for Appropriate Technology
Charles Darwin University
Connected Beginnings
Danila Dilba Health Service
Darwin High School
Deadly Heart Trek
Deckchair Cinema
Demed Aboriginal Corporation
Desert Knowledge Australia
Family Spirit
First Languages Australia
Food Bank
GIVEIT
Gunbalanya Health Centre
Gwalwa Daraniki Association
Healthy Living NT
HK Training and Consultancy
Howard Springs School
Indigenous Business Australia
Indigenous Community TV
Ingkerreke Services
Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation
Jabiru Health Centre
King's Narrative
Larapinta Child and Family Centre
Larrakia Nation
Legal Aid NT
Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation
Lutheran Community Care
Mala'la Health Service
Malak Primary School
Malbak Aboriginal Corporation
Mental Health Association of Central Australia

Mununda Primary School
MusicNT
NAAJA
Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara
Yankunytjatjara Women's Council
Ninti One
Northern Land Council
Northern Territory Community Health
NT Shelter
NT Writer's Centre
Olive Pink Botanical Gardens
Orange Sky
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College
Palmerston Youth Centre
Purple House
Rainbow Gateway
Red Hot Arts
Remedy Project
Right Tracks Program
Royal Darwin Hospital
Sanderson Middle School
Services Australia
Stronger Smarter Institute
Taminmin College
Tangentyere Council
The Salvation Army
Top End Women's Legal Service
Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation
Warddeken Land Management
Watch This Space
Wide Open Space Festival
Yarrenyty Arltere Artists
Yilli Rreung Housing Aboriginal Corporation
Yipirinya School
YMCA Palmerston
YouthWorx NT



Financials

Children's Ground Limited

ABN 74 154 403 086

Directors' Report

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

The Directors present their report on Children's Ground Limited for the financial year ended 31 December 2024.

(a) General information

Directors

The names of the directors in office at any time during, or since the end of, the year are:

Names	Position
William Roy Tilmouth	Chair
Kon Karapanagiotidis	Non-Executive Director
Clive William Ringler	Non-Executive Director
Josie Rizza	Non-Executive Director
Amy Poynton	Non-Executive Director
Amunda Gorey	Non-Executive Director Resigned February 2024
Jordan Cory	Non-Executive Director
John Lochowiak	Non-Executive Director
Annalee Stearne	Non-Executive Director
Joanne Willmott	Non-Executive Director
Jane Shanthini Vadiveloo	Chief Executive Officer
Evelyn Schaber	Non-Executive Director Joined January 2024
Roxanne Naborlhborh	Non-Executive Director Joined February 2024

All Directors have been in office since the start of the financial year to the date of this report unless otherwise stated.

Principal activities

The principal activities of Children's Ground Limited during the financial period was to deliver the Children's Ground Approach, led by communities to achieve long term equity and justice. Such activities included early years learning and care, child and family health and wellbeing (including nutrition, social and emotional wellbeing, maternal and child health, family health promotion, environmental health), community development, cultural and language revitalisation and development and employment and economic development services.

No significant changes in the nature of the Company's activity occurred during the financial year.

Financials

Children's Ground Limited

ABN 74 154 403 086

Directors' Report

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

(a) General information

Review of operations

The surplus of the Company amounted to \$ 1,065,463.

Children's Ground Limited ended the year with a surplus of \$1,065,463, following two years of losses. The 2023 financial loss was associated with the timing of our Federal Health Department funding, which was delayed by six months but contributed to our financial strength in 2024. Our financial goal in 2024 was to rectify previous year losses and to re-establish our financial principle of growing cash year on year to manage financial risk as the organisation grows. To achieve this objective, the organisation budgeted for a surplus in 2024. However, the actual year end surplus was higher than expected, predominantly due to the organisation experiencing recruitment lags which gave rise to salary savings. Recruitment challenges were experienced across the sector in the Northern Territory.

Financials

Children's Ground Limited

ABN 74 154 403 086

Directors' Report

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

Meetings of directors

During the financial year, 6 meetings of directors were held. Attendances by each director during the year were as follows:

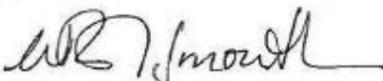
Directors' Meetings		
	Number eligible to attend	Number attended
William Roy Tilmouth	6	6
Kon Karapanagiotidis	6	2
Clive William Ringler	6	5
Josie Rizza	6	5
Jordan Cory	6	3
John Lochowiak	6	2
Jane Shanthini Vadiveloo	6	6
Amy Poynton	6	6
Evelyn Schaber	6	6
Amunda Gorey	-	-
Annalee Stearne	6	6
Joanne Willmott	6	4
Roxanne Naborlhborlh	6	4

Auditor's independence declaration

The auditor's independence declaration for the year ended 31 December 2024 has been received and can be found on page 7 of the financial report.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors:

Director: 

Director: ... 

Dated this ...seventeenth..... day ofApril..... 2025

Financials



Children's Ground Limited

ABN 74 154 403 086

Directors' Report

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, during the year ended 31 December 2024, there have been:

- (i) no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements as set out in Division 60.40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit; and
- (ii) no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.


Saward Dawson



Matthew Crouch
Partner

Blackburn

Dated: 17 April 2025

Financials

Children's Ground Limited

ABN 74 154 403 086

Statement of Income and Expenditures and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Revenue	2	14,262,835	11,945,988
Employee benefits expense		(9,922,447)	(9,055,129)
Professional fees		(472,466)	(184,478)
Depreciation and amortisation expense		(415,575)	(360,516)
Motor Vehicle Expenses		(344,326)	(392,323)
Client Support Consumables		(286,395)	(593,065)
Travel and accommodation		(252,500)	(395,485)
Computer expenses		(225,451)	(131,868)
Client Service Support		(192,648)	(134,305)
Utilities and cleaning		(168,848)	(141,834)
Repairs and maintenance		(162,752)	(69,532)
Advertising and Promotion		(106,935)	(136,347)
Printing and stationery		(63,465)	(49,735)
Rent	3	(55,210)	(69,144)
Insurance		(48,994)	(54,070)
Telephone and fax		(44,971)	(35,035)
Asset Purchases < \$1,000		(44,374)	(80,257)
Training and development		(32,324)	(43,813)
Interest expense on lease liability		(20,772)	(20,015)
Other Expenses		(336,919)	(317,307)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		1,065,463	(318,270)
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year		1,065,463	(318,270)

Notes 3 and 4 provide a breakdown of more details on expenses.

Refer to page 2 for the directors' review of operations note.

Financials

Children's Ground Limited

ABN 74 154 403 086

Statement of Financial Position

As at 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	5	5,990,209	4,278,098
Trade and other receivables	6	251,335	134,330
Inventories		34,168	36,381
Other assets	7	170,277	116,839
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		6,445,989	4,565,648
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Right of use asset	8	218,862	258,364
Property, plant and equipment	9	2,123,912	1,852,490
Intangible assets	10	49,631	32,444
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		2,392,405	2,143,298
TOTAL ASSETS		8,838,394	6,708,946
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liability	8	57,746	48,131
Trade and other payables	11	649,993	519,639
Other liabilities	12	2,107,235	1,239,210
Employee benefits	13	621,245	566,629
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		3,436,219	2,373,609
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liability	8	190,490	222,459
Employee benefits	13	150,246	116,902
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		340,736	339,361
TOTAL LIABILITIES		3,776,955	2,712,970
NET ASSETS		5,061,439	3,995,976
EQUITY			
Retained surplus		5,061,439	3,995,976
TOTAL EQUITY		5,061,439	3,995,976

Financials

Children's Ground Limited

ABN 74 154 403 086

Statement of Changes in Equity

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

2024

	Retained Earnings	Total
	\$	\$
Balance at 1 January 2024	3,995,976	3,995,976
Surplus for the year	1,065,463	1,065,463
Balance at 31 December 2024	<u>5,061,439</u>	<u>5,061,439</u>

2023

	Retained Earnings	Total
	\$	\$
Balance at 1 January 2023	4,314,246	4,314,246
Deficit for the year	(318,270)	(318,270)
Balance at 31 December 2023	<u>3,995,976</u>	<u>3,995,976</u>

Financials

Children's Ground Limited

ABN 74 154 403 086

Statement of Cash Flows

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

	2024	2023
Note	\$	\$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:		
Donations, grants and other income received	15,398,381	11,876,625
Interest received	173,343	108,998
Interest paid	(20,772)	(20,015)
Payments to suppliers and employees	(13,251,805)	(11,803,151)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	16 <u>2,299,147</u>	<u>162,457</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:		
Donations received for purchase of property	100,000	-
Payment for intangible asset	(34,205)	(12,342)
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(606,652)	(368,180)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities	<u>(540,857)</u>	<u>(380,522)</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES:		
Payment of lease liabilities	<u>(46,179)</u>	<u>(44,985)</u>
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	<u>(46,179)</u>	<u>(44,985)</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held	1,712,111	(263,050)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	<u>4,278,098</u>	<u>4,541,148</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	5 <u><u>5,990,209</u></u>	<u><u>4,278,098</u></u>

Financials

Children's Ground Limited

ABN 74 154 403 086

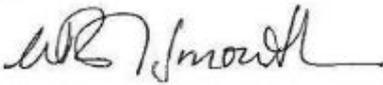
Directors' Declaration

In accordance with a resolution of the Directors of Children's Ground Limited, the directors declare that, in the directors' opinion:

1. The financial statements and notes, as set out on pages 8 - 33, satisfy the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and:
 - a. comply with Australian Accounting Standards applicable to the entity; and
 - b. give a true and fair view of the financial position of the registered entity as at 31 December 2024 and of its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the Company is able to pay all of its debts, as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is signed in accordance with subsection 60.15(2) of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2022*.

Director 

Director 

Dated 17/04/2025

Financials



Children's Ground Limited
ABN 74 154 403 068

Report of the Independent Auditor on the Summary Financial Statements

Opinion

The summary financial statements, which comprise the summary statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2024, the summary Statement of Income and Expenditure and Other Comprehensive Income, summary Statement of Changes in Equity for the year then ended, summary Statement of Cash Flows and Directors' Declaration, are derived from the audited financial report of Children's Ground Limited for the year ended 31 December 2024.

In our opinion, the accompanying summary financial statements are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial report.

Summary Financial Statements

The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by the Australian Accounting Standards and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*. Reading the summary financial statements and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial report and the auditor's report thereon. The summary financial statements and the audited financial report do not reflect the effects of events that occurred subsequent to the date of our report on the audited financial report.

The Audited Financial Report and Our Report Thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial report in our report dated 17 April 2025.

Board's Responsibility for the Summary Financial Statements

The board is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the summary financial statements.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summary financial statements are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial report based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Auditing Standard ASA 810 *Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements*.


Saward Dawson



Matthew Crouch
Partner

Blackburn
Dated: 2 May 2025

100 Albert St, Blackburn VIC 3130
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awarddawson.com.au



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+61 447 903 084

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