

**Staging standpoint dialogue in tristate education:  
privileging Anuangu voices**

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## Abstract

Aboriginal education in remote areas of Australia continues to be a contested focus for policy and practice, with little debate that actively involves Aboriginal people themselves. This thesis attempts to redress this gap in a small way by in-depth conversations about education with Anangu in the tristate area of central Australia (the region where Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory meet). Here Aboriginal people live in relatively small, dispersed desert communities with close language and familial connections. Contact with Europeans is relatively recent, with provision of schooling moving from centralised mission-based schooling to decentralised community schools following the 1967 referendum. Anangu children are frequently positioned as deficient in mainstream educational achievement narratives within colonial and neo-colonial educational endeavours. This study seeks to inform Anangu education policy and practice from Anangu standpoints and to explore the potential for standpoint dialogue in negotiating alternatives in tristate education (Harding, 1992).

This thesis privileges Anangu standpoint accounts in relation to young people, education and the future. The series of interviews, held across several years and translated and presented with minimal editing, are predominantly held in local languages and demonstrate the priority of oral histories and stories as Indigenous genres for knowledge sharing. A textual standpoint dialogue is staged between Anangu participants and trusted Piranpa (non-Indigenous) education leaders whom Anangu participants identify, describing practice from the 1950s to the current day.

Through investigation of a number of historical sources, the background to colonial contact and approaches to provision of education in the tristate area in the twentieth century is provided which correlates with the Anangu standpoints given in the series of interviews. Diverse histories and interactions with colonialism and education shape points of difference between and among Anangu (Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara/Ngaanyatjarra) standpoints (Nakata, 2007a). The Anangu stories reflect how colonial interests are privileged in the historical interactions with cattle stations (including the removal of children), the Maralinga bomb, centralisation of populations to mission centres and sporadic engagement with mining interests.

This study found that deep conversations about education across Anangu and Piranpa standpoints have been difficult even where educators spoke local languages and developed close relationships with Anangu. Educators feel caught between professional imperatives for upward accountability and personal conviction of the need for reciprocal accountability to community priorities and demands. Significant points of epistemic differentiation between Western norms represented in educational policy and practices and Anangu lives underscore the importance of seeking venues for standpoint dialogue where Anangu voices are privileged in (re)shaping Anangu education provision. Implications for inducting educators into remote schools are also explored.

**Student Declaration**

**Doctor of Philosophy Declaration “I, Sam Osborne, declare that the PhD thesis entitled ‘Staging standpoint dialogue in tristate education: privileging Anangu voices’ is approved to exceed 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work”.**

**Signature****Date**

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my family. To you, Rebekah and all the kids, I hope this work is a positive investment into your lives and futures: David Ilyatjari, Jeremiah Kunyima, Jakob Tjatjinytja, Samekah Tinimayi, Kenny Wirkima and also Iwana Nevaeh, Ni-kiea, Lewin and Selina Douglas. This thesis is for Anangu everywhere as they work together with educators towards a better future for their children which honours who they are and who they have been.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## Chapter 1: Examining remote Indigenous education

Children must learn their father's [ways] first, through their parents first, their older brothers and older sisters must continually teach them. To learn their culture and once they're set up, the teacher might come and talk a little bit and they will understand from the teacher, 'Yes that is their story that they're telling' ... After the foundational knowledge; Anangu culture taught by the family. Like how your parents taught you through stories at a young age. They did that and then you always live without fear. And you're set.

*Gordon Inkatji (Chapter 6, this thesis)*

This study focuses on education in the tristate remote region of the Western Desert where the states of South Australia (SA) and Western Australia (WA) meet the Northern Territory (NT). The people of this region refer to themselves as Anangu (or Yarnangu in the Ngaanyatjarra/Ngaatjatjarra regions of WA). This word means 'person' and is the term used to refer to someone from within the language groups of Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Ngaatjatjarra, Ngaanyatjarra, Pintupi and Luritja. All of these communities are in the region of Australia that is considered to be 'very remote', as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (see ABS, 2011a) and shown below in yellow (Figure 1.1).

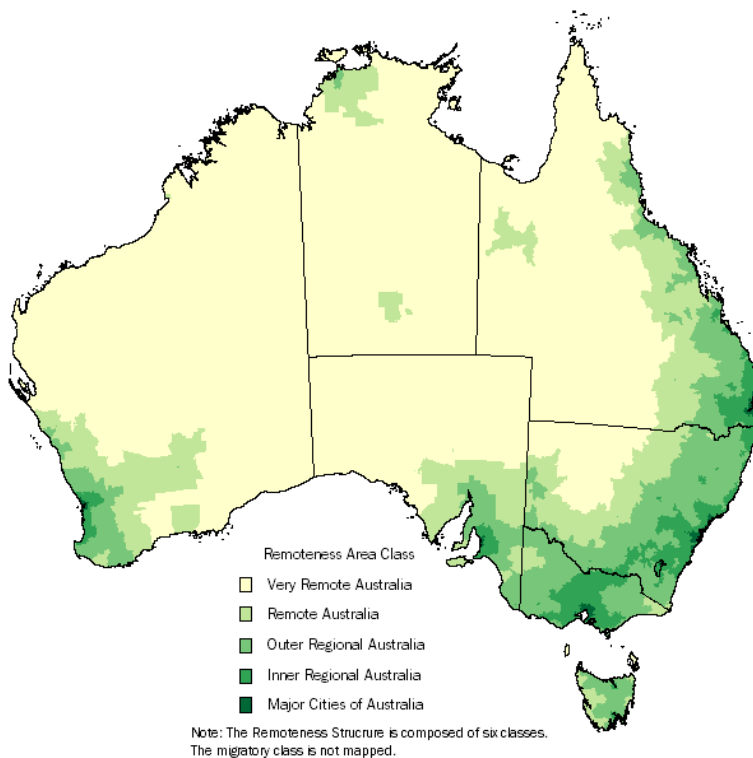


Figure 1.1: Map of Australia Illustrating the Remoteness Structure

Source: (ABS, 2006)

## Overview of the project

This project aims first to elicit Anangu narratives about schooling, traditional education and hopes for Anangu children into the future, secondly to explore non-Indigenous (Piranpa) educator responses and reflections on these narratives based on their time with Anangu, and thirdly to develop an understanding of the different standpoints on questions of education among Anangu and between Anangu and Piranpa. The term ‘standpoints’ is used here not in the sense of perspective, but to come to terms with the positionality of narrators through recognising and acknowledging ‘locations’ (Harding, 1992, p. 581) of power, race, class and gender. Standpoint theories reject the idea that the ‘values and interests that structure scientific institutions, practices, and conceptual schemes’ (Harding, 1992, p. 580) are somehow neutral or objective, and Harding (1992) argues that ‘[o]ne must start from *outside* them to gain a causal, critical view of them’ (p. 581, emphasis in original). Initially developed by feminist scholars, standpoint theory’s attention to ‘location’ (p. 581) and the context of knowledge claims that build evidence for ‘largely independently developed epistemologies’ (p. 581) have been taken up by Indigenous peoples (for Australian examples, see Foley, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Nakata, 1998).

This research seeks to privilege Anangu voices and perspectives in dialogue about education practice within the tristate area. Anangu standpoint accounts (Harding, 1992; Nakata, 2007a) describe meaningful learning and the building of productive lives in terms not limited to the domain of the local school or school system (see Kral & Falk, 2004; Osborne, 2013a). Through a series of conversations, Anangu participants reflect on their own experiences of learning and education and share narratives with a focus on young people, education and the future. Anangu participants include both men and women from a range of age groups and diverse Western education and life experiences. These accounts provide insights into the contextual layers that inform the lives of Anangu students as they arrive at their local classrooms, frequently under the tuition of Piranpa teachers who may have very little understanding or experience in accounting for the cultural and knowledge assets (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Zipin, 2013) that students bring to the daily interactions that occur between teachers and students (Delpit, 1993). Negotiating complex knowledge and cultural and social interactions is not easy, and many experienced and respected educators described their own sense of feeling ill-prepared for this task, as this study reveals.

This thesis positions Anangu standpoints as key sources for (re)shaping education provision in the complex environment of tristate schools. It does this first by privileging Anangu voices about education. Then Anangu participants referred me to highly regarded Piranpa educators who are trusted and considered to have been successful in taking account of Anangu standpoints in their work as educators. These educators reflected on the challenges, limitations and learnings from their experiences of working at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007a). Using these sets of voices, and working between the Indigenous genre of narrative and the academic/Piranpa genre of analysis, I

then stage a text-based dialogue between Anangu and Piranpa in response to themes derived from extensive Anangu narratives.

The questions that I address throughout the research are:

Main research question:

- A. What are the values, dreams and beliefs that Anangu hold in relation to young people, education and the future?

Sub-questions:

- B. How have committed educators, nominated by Anangu, taken account or been unaware of these positions in their work?
- C. What are the possibilities for standpoint dialogue in Anangu education that is open, honest, power-sensitive and ethically attuned?

An important outcome of the study is to provide resources to better inform educators and education policy and practice, in working from Anangu standpoint accounts. Documenting Anangu narratives and producing bilingual transcripts allows otherwise ‘unheard’ (Osborne, 2014a) or ‘silenced’ (Delpit, 1993) voices, aspirations and standpoint accounts, providing a basis for informed localised and systemic action for transforming education delivery in tristate communities.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of schooling and the tristate region through the lenses of population demographic and geographic information; an overview of tristate land tenure and administrative structures; anthropological and linguistic summaries of the region; and an outline of some key points of contextual differences between and among Anangu, other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Western philosophies, ideologies and culture. This provides the necessary background to the tristate area for non-locals.

I then give an overview of the history of Aboriginal education in Australia, and I describe this within the context of international experiences of Indigenous education, the history of schooling in the tristate region, the administrative and organisational structures of schooling in the tristate region, current debates surrounding Anangu education, my position as a researcher in the context of this study, and the significance of this study. I conclude by summarising the overall argument I will make through this thesis.

## **The social, geographical and cultural context of the tristate area**

### **Population information and administrative structures**

The tristate region described in this study covers around 500 000 km<sup>2</sup> (Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara, 2014; Central Land Council, 2013; Ngaanyatjarra Council, 2014a) which equates to around 6% of Australia (see Ngaanyatjarra Council, 2014a). The nearest centres of Alice Springs and Kalgoorlie are a significant distance from any tristate communities. Warburton, for example, is 1000 kilometres from Alice Springs and 900 kilometres from Kalgoorlie (Figure 1.2).

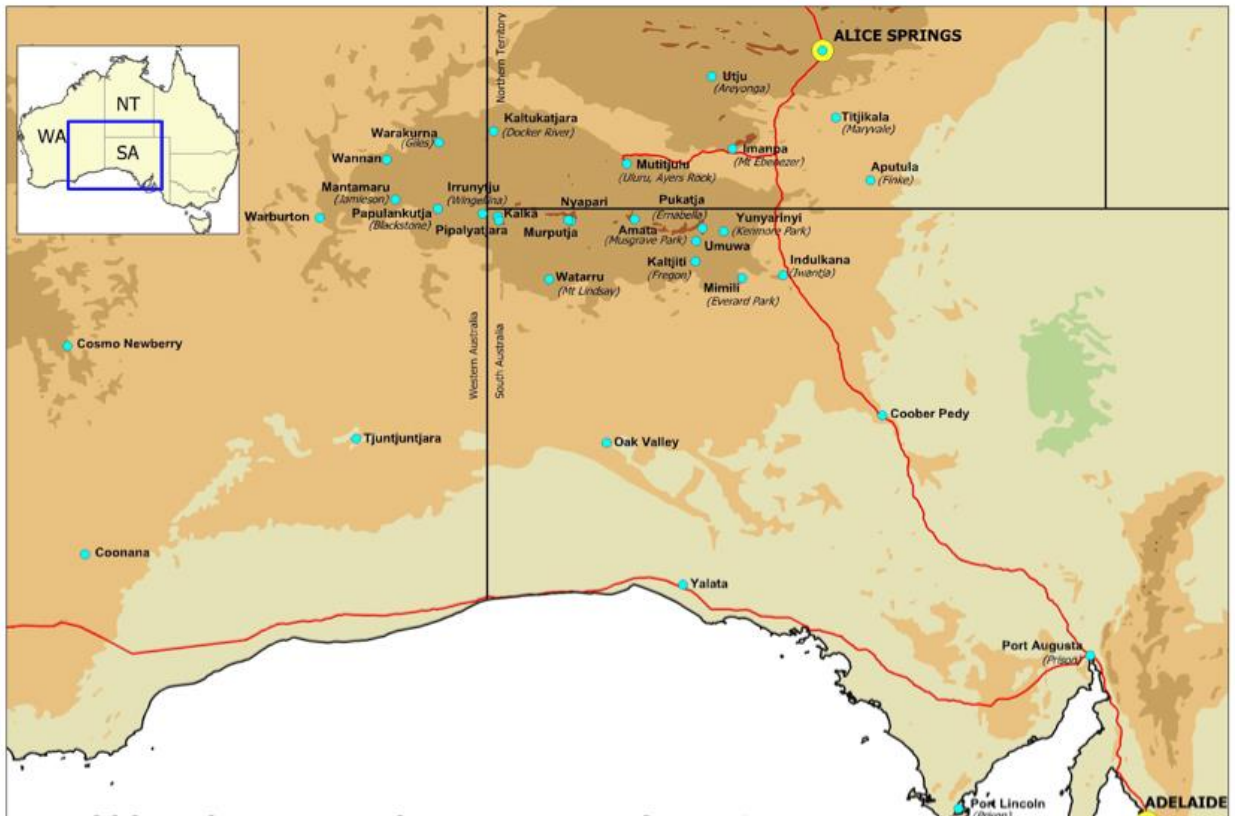


Figure 1.2: Tristate region map (Ara Irititja, 2014)

For this study, communities south of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands and Ngaanyatjarra Lands such as Coonana, Tjuntjuntjara, Yalata and Oak Valley have not been included, although they can be incorporated within other definitions of the tristate area. The Watarrka outstation communities between Imanpa and Urtju have been included, as has Kiwirrkurra in Western Australia, due to their current/historical inclusion in the tristate education jurisdictions. For reasons of historical population movements and language concentration, Finke has been included, but Titjikala has not.

According to 2011 ABS census data (ABS, 2012), the tristate region is home to 4841 Aboriginal people. This figure was obtained through ABS geographical structures using Indigenous Locations (ILOCs), which ‘generally represent small Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with a minimum population of 90 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander usual residents’ (ABS, 2011b, p. 6).

Using the geospatial maps provided within ABS Tablebuilder, ILOCs were identified to also include communities that sit on the fringes of the tristate area (such as Kiwirrkurra, Finke and the Watarrka outstations).

Population figures are shown below.

Table 1.1: Tristate population by State/Territory region

| State/Territory Region | Indigenous population | Non-Indigenous population | Total population |
|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| Southern NT*           | 1100                  | 412                       | 1512             |
| APY Lands SA           | 2105                  | 341                       | 2446             |
| Ngaanyatjarra Lands WA | 1280                  | 199                       | 1479             |
| Tristate region        | 4485                  | 952                       | 5437             |

Source: (ABS, 2012)

\*These figures include all ILOCs bounded within Imanpa (Mount Ebenezer), Kaḷtukatjara (Docker River), Kaḷtukatjara Outstations, Areyonga, Apatula (Finke), Apatula Homelands plus the Locality of Mutitjulu, but excluding the ILOC bounded as Mutitjulu-Uluṛu (which includes the resort township of Yulara).

These figures are not exact. Census data are problematic due to the logistical challenges of language differences, highly mobile populations and the remoteness of communities, in particular the smaller outstations. In separating the regions and allocating ILOCs, the ABS data place the resort township of Yulara under the broader Mutitjulu-Uluṛu grouping. This significantly elevates the population for Mutitjulu. To counter this, I have removed the Mutitjulu-Uluṛu ILOC and re-inserted the location of Mutitjulu community. In Western Australia, I have removed the population count of Laverton and the surrounding area as this is not included in my definition of the tristate region for the purposes of this study and incorporates mining and other populations.

The number of non-Indigenous people living in Southern NT is relatively high as it is not limited to the communities, but includes cattle stations such as Mulga Park, Curtin Springs, Mt Ebenezer, Eriḷḷunda, Victory Downs and so on. The APY Lands, covering the north-west region of South Australia, is probably the least problematic of the three jurisdictions as populations are calculated by a region that is limited to the communities. The APY website (2014) explains that non-Indigenous people make up around 15% of the overall population. This is probably the best guide to apply to the communities in the other two jurisdictions when estimating the ratio of local to non-local people in very remote Aboriginal communities within the tristate region.

Figure 1.3 shows the age distribution of the tristate region according to 2011 ABS census data.

Some key points are:

- Anḡangu populations are very young, with more than 60% of people under the age of 29.
- Non-Indigenous people (as per community regulations) tend to live in Anḡangu communities at the optimal ages for employment. Even accounting for the cattle station families in Southern NT, for example, far more non-Indigenous ‘empty nesters’ (people whose children are old enough to leave home) are living and working in communities than any other age group, where people would otherwise be raising families and supporting children through high school in metropolitan and rural communities.

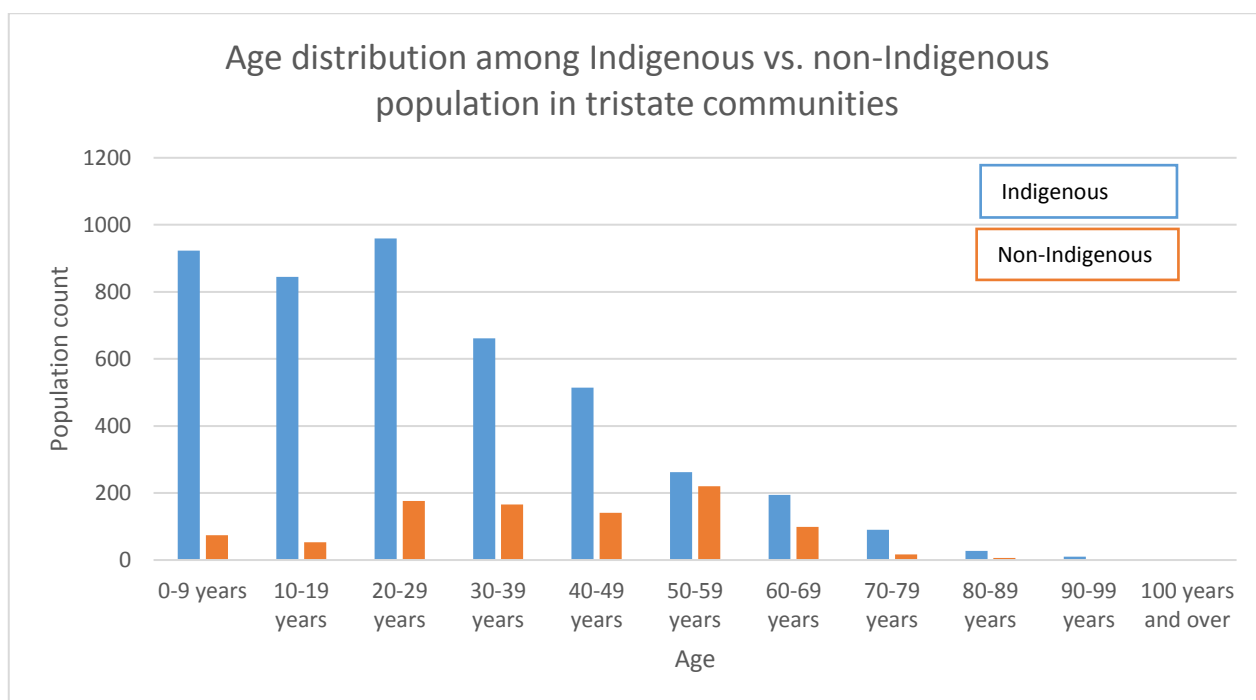


Figure 1.3: Graph showing age distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous population in the tristate region

Note: ABS, 2012 – see population inclusions and exclusions described in the note to Table 1.1 above.

- The notion of tristate communities as a ‘foreign land’ is evident in that non-Indigenous populations tend to raise children, retire and die elsewhere, whereas locals tend to remain in the community through all stages of their lives.
- A large percentage of the Anangu population are children or young people who have children, which may need to be taken into consideration in calculating unemployment rates, where the number of people available for work is proportionally less than populations in other areas.
- The weighting of children and young people in these communities indicates there will always be a strong demand for local schooling provision.

### Land tenure and administrative structures in the tristate region

The tristate region operates under three state jurisdictions and a series of land agreements. In 1990, a significant amount of work was done to investigate whether the region could be brought under a single education jurisdiction in recognition of familial and language connections, shared histories and difficulties working across state and territory borders (Tri-State Board of Management, 1990). Agreement could not be reached between the states and territory over jurisdictional matters of asset management and accountability, leaving the report’s recommendations unaddressed. The Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women’s Council (NPYWC) prioritised a model for working as a tristate region from its establishment in 1980 (see NPYWC, 2015) providing advocacy and service provision regionally and in local communities. The cross-border justice act (WA Attorney General, 2008) received judicial support to allow police to work across state and territory borders in the tristate area.

The APY Lands in South Australia operate under the *Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act 1981* (South Australian Government, 2013) and sit under the jurisdictional responsibility of the South Australian Government. The land title is administered through APY with assistance from the South Australian Government through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet – Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division. Services are delivered through an arm of APY as well as a range of externally located and funded organisations. Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) are in place at Sandy Bore (south of Mimili), Aparra-Makiri-Punti (1.1 million hectares stretching across the Amata region), Kalka-Piipalyatjara (to the far west of the APY Lands), Walalkara (to the south of Fregon) and Watarru (to the far south-west of the APY Lands). All of these areas are managed to protect endangered species of plants and animals through APY Land Management (Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara, 2014).

According to Ngaanyatjarra Shire (Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku, 2014a), the Ngaanyatjarra Lands covers ‘a vast area of Western Australia (250,000 km<sup>2</sup> or approximately 3% of mainland Australia)’ (para 1) including ‘sections of the Gibson Desert, Great Sandy Desert, Great Victoria Desert, and all of the Central Ranges that occur in Western Australia’ (para 4). Land tenure is not uniform: ‘Ngaanyatjarra Land Council holds some of this land as 99-year and 50-year leases and Aboriginal Reserve. The rest of the area is part of the Ngaanyatjarra Native Title determination (2005)’ (Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku, 2014a, para 6). Services are largely delivered through the Ngaanyatjarra Council as ‘the principal organisation in a large conglomerate of Ngaanyatjarra service delivery organisations’ (Ngaanyatjarra Council, 2014a, para 1).

One of the largest IPAs is located in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, covering 98 129 km<sup>2</sup>. South Australian and Western Australian communities have local incorporated bodies and local councils that enable them to operate with some local autonomy under the broader regional structure.

The southern region of the Northern Territory operates under a series of land agreements. The Central Land Council represents traditional owner interests as a ‘statutory authority operating under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* and a Native Title Representative Body under the *Native Title Act 1993*’ (Central Land Council, 2013, p. 6).

The MacDonnell Regional Council provides regional services and local infrastructure. In the south of the Northern Territory, communities tend to manage local interests through Aboriginal Corporations under the Office of Registered Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). Examples include Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation and Imanpa Development Association. The Central Land Council provides representation for land-related issues for these communities (see Central Land Council, 2013).

A series of land use agreements, leases and National Parks form a patchwork across the tristate region:

- In 1985, the Commonwealth handed back the land for the Uluru–Kata Tjuta region, and a 99-year lease was subsequently signed, establishing the region as a National Park under the Australian Government (Central Land Council, 2013; Lester, 1993). Currently, the Mutitjulu community are in negotiations with the Commonwealth to secure a sublease of the community area located within the park.
- In the Watarrka (Kings Canyon) region, an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) has been in place since 2005, and this is a National Park 99-year lease with the Northern Territory Government (Agreements Treaties and Negotiated Settlement Project, 2005; Central Land Council, 2013). Early in 2013 the title for the Watarrka National Park was handed back to the Traditional Owners, and a joint management plan was established.
- A series of pastoral leases continue to operate as cattle stations in the region (Curtin Springs, Mt Ebenezer, Mulga Park and Erldunda, among others).
- The Kaṯiṯi-Petermann Land Trust covers the far south-west of the Northern Territory, with a large portion of the region recently being declared as an IPA (see Central Land Council, 2015).
- Henbury Station was bought and destocked by RM Williams Agricultural Holdings for \$13 million in 2011, with \$9 million from the Australian Government, in an attempt to establish the world’s largest carbon farm. Traditional Owners sought to negotiate for a future ILUA, but the venture failed and was sold for around half the purchase price in 2014; a cattle operation has been re-established under the pastoral lease (ABC Rural, 2014; Central Land Council, 2013).
- Angas Downs (formerly a station situated between Imanpa and Kings Canyon) operates within an IPA.
- The township of Yulara (where the Ayers Rock Resort and airport are situated) was subject to pastoral leases in 1882 and 1896. According to the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (2014), native title was extinguished sometime during the period leading up to the completion of the resort’s construction in 1994. In 2006, compensation was sought on behalf of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Traditional Owners for the extinguishment of native title in the case *Jango v. Northern Territory of Australia* (see AIATSIS, 2014; Sansom, 2007). This case was lost on grounds that anthropological evidence failed to establish that ‘the applicants observed and acknowledged the traditional laws and customs of the Western Desert bloc as pleaded, and that the laws and customs were traditional in the required sense’ (AIATSIS, 2014, p. 1).

The legal complexities of managing diverse land tenure arrangements make the role of the land councils (Central Land Council, APY, Ngaanyatjarra Council) vital in providing legal, management and administrative support to represent traditional owner interests. There are



significant responsibilities and opportunities involved in managing such substantial tracts of land. IPAs generate employment for Anangu to work as rangers and ecological informants. There are also increasing demands on land councils to negotiate with mining interests on behalf of traditional owners as the drafting of various agreements requiring approval for activities such as exploration, sample drilling and planned construction currently occurs right across the region.

### **Remoteness and educational disadvantage**

‘Remoteness’ is often cited as a major cause of educational and social disadvantage among Aboriginal people because of the significant distance from cities, services and other communities. Most communities in the tristate area are accessed by long journeys on corrugated dirt roads, and a permit is required for non-locals to enter. Larger communities generally have a general store, a local school and medical clinic, but hospitals, banks, shops, specialist health and large-scale employment and economic opportunities are located many hundreds of kilometres away. A wide range of studies and statistics show that as remoteness increases, there is a widening gap between very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from other regions in Australia against measures of health, life expectancy, education and employment outcomes and incarceration rates (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008; Australian Indigenous Health *InfoNet*, 2014; Guenther, 2013; M. Long & North, 2009). Chondur et al. (2013) show that ‘chronic disease mortality increases with increasing relative remoteness’ (p. 117), while Long and North (2009) document the relationship between remoteness and correlating decreases in both student retention and ongoing post-school participation in employment and education. School attendance rates and National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) scores are also shown to decrease with remoteness (see Guenther, 2013; B. Wilson, 2014). Other reports give a far more fatalistic view, positioning very remote schools as simply having ‘failed’ (Forrest, 2014; Hughes & Hughes, 2012; B. Wilson, 2014).

Guenther (2013) points out that in the Northern Territory, non-Indigenous remote and very remote students achieve NAPLAN scores (National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy, see ACARA, 2014) on par with their Darwin-based peers, suggesting that, despite logistical and other challenges of access and equity, remoteness alone does not adequately explain the disparity between remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes and other Australian students in NAPLAN scores. The nature of very remote locations poses a number of logistical challenges (see Stafford-Smith & Huigen, 2009) but it is important to recognise that, in the very remote Aboriginal communities of Central Australia, the epistemological, ontological, axiological and cosmological distance between Anangu (for example) and Western philosophies and ideologies is a more significant influence in educational results being well behind mainstream Australian student attainment levels in English language literacy and numeracy testing.

Across the tristate area, the experience and competency of educators to take account of local language, history and epistemology is inconsistent. Educators who take the view that their students

are ‘behind’, ‘failing’ and, furthermore, destined to take their place in failed and non-viable communities (Forrest, 2014; Good to Great Schools Australia, 2014; Hughes & Hughes, 2012; Pearson, 2011; B. Wilson, 2014) tend to advocate a ‘back to basics’ (Delpit, 1993) approach to curriculum and education delivery in the hope that students may be able to leave their communities and ‘succeed’ (ABC, 2013, February 26). Another approach is to apply a strength-based paradigm and look to incorporate community assets (Moll et al., 1992; Zipin, 2013) of local languages, Anangu knowledges and community participation in pursuing a broader sense of education. This latter approach to remote schooling has been advocated by Chris Sarra (2011), for example, and, internationally, many Indigenous scholars insist that resisting colonial inscriptions of Indigenous students, their knowledge and communities as somehow deficient is a critical starting point for engaging in education as a tool for social justice and a more just reconciliation (Bishop, 2011; Corbiere, 2000; Garcia, 2011; Grande, 2004; D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014; L. Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012).

The debates about educational advantage and disadvantage (see Guenther, Bat, & Osborne, 2014), as well as notions of success and failure (Osborne & Guenther, 2013a) require careful reflection in relation to the local community context. High rates of teacher and principal turnover exacerbate inconsistency, pointing many educators back to national policies and narratives that paint very remote communities as deficient and in need of narrow and intensive remedial intervention (Delpit, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Milner, 2008). Anangu narrators contributing to this thesis do not describe themselves as disadvantaged or behind or in need of intervention to ensure parity of outcomes in mainstream test results (see also Guenther, 2015a). Instead, they make claims for recognition (Fraser, 2009), articulating the importance of their own identity, history and locally generated aspirations in continuing opposition to externally imagined and prescribed narratives of how things should be (D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014).

### **Anthropological and linguistic descriptions of the people of the tristate region**

Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Ngaatjatjarra and Ngaanyatjarra languages are closely related and intimately interconnected through familial relationships, shared responsibility to tracts of country, and ceremonial responsibilities. These languages are recognised as being part of the broader Western Desert family of languages, a term that was adopted and preferred by linguists and anthropologists from its earlier classification by Elkin as ‘Aluridja’ (see Berndt, 1959; Douglas, 1954; Elkin, 1938-1939). Other languages, including Pintupi, Luritja and Southern Arrernte (Pertame), have strong historical ties across the region, which have also firmed due to the last centuries’ colonial influences (see Duguid, 1963, 1972; Edwards, 1992; Hilliard, 1968; Rose, 1962; Wallace & Wallace, 1977). Goddard (1996) explains that:

The traditional similarity between the dialects has probably increased over the past hundred years due to an eastward movement of both Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people, brought about largely by European missionary and pastoralist activity. (p. viii).

Despite significant pressures resulting from colonialist expansion, Anangu relationships, mobility patterns and ceremonial connections to the land and to each other remain undefined by jurisdictional definitions such as state borders and regional shires. The incredible mobility of Western Desert people meant that family groups would periodically cross deserts as well as language and dialect regions to access food, water, relations and culturally significant sites (Edwards, 1988). The history chapter of this thesis (Chapter 4) further explores the environmentally responsive relationship Anangu maintained with the land that shaped pre-contact patterns of centralisation and decentralisation and defined Western Desert social structures, language connections and relationship to country that anthropologists recognise as distinct from other Aboriginal social structures and societies (Elkin, 1938-1939; Layton, 1986; Strehlow, 1965; Sutton, 2010; Tindale, 1937).

While anthropologists and linguists seem to broadly agree that the Western Desert can be defined as a distinct group of people, there is hardly agreement in defining elements of social organisation, how traditional ownership of land is established and so on. Early anthropological accounts are limited in that formal names for language groups were not used and so any term of reference to refer to one's own language is not fixed. The term 'Pitjantjatjara' became embedded from around the 1940s (Edwards, 1992) based on this language having '*pitjantja*' (the word for 'come' in its nominalised form). This distinguishes the language from 'Yankunytjatjara' which uses the term '*yankunytja*' (go) and '*ngalya-yangkunytja*' (go towards the speaker – that is, come) (Edwards, 1992; Goddard, 1996). Similar points of distinction are made around the use of a term in the Western Australian languages of 'Ngaanyatjarra' and 'Ngaatjatjarra', highlighting the word for 'here', or 'this one'. Seen in the context of these westerly languages, Pitjantjatjara language would be defined as 'Nyangatjatjara' (Glass & Hackett, 2003; Goddard, 1996). The term '*wirtjapakantja*' (run) that Tindale uses to describe a language group (Sutton, 2010) is simply a term the informant has used to distinguish themselves from other dialectic variations where other terms such as '*kutitjakantja*' and '*walaringkunytja*' (Goddard, 1996) are used. In Chapter 5, Sandra Armstrong describes her father's language from the Docker River region as 'Nyangatjatjara', making further distinctions between 'southerly' dialects of Pitjantjatjara, offering the term '*tipukatinytja*' (run) as evidence of further dialectic difference.

Anthropologists, linguists and other government-appointed visitors such as Tindale (1937), Elkin (1938-1939), Basedow (2008, a collection of his notes from 1903) and Mountford (1962, based on his 1933 expedition), even accounting for their varying levels of anthropological and linguistic prowess, were often quite in the dark about what they were observing and hearing, given the lack of existing field knowledge and agreed language conventions. They did not live in the region, and, at times, their informants were Arrernte, from the Alice Springs region. This is evident in Elkin's use of the term 'Aluridja', an Arrernte term describing Western Desert people. Early anthropologists and linguists were also working before a uniform orthography was established, so Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara written orthographies differ from writing conventions in Luritja, Sam Osborne – Anangu Voices – Chapter 1: Examining remote Indigenous education

Ngaanyatjarra and Ngaatjatjarra. Even with the gift of time and language proficiency, T. G. H. Strehlow's (see Strehlow, 1970) strongly Western Aranda-influenced world view puts limitations on how the field of anthropology might provide an accurate overall account of the Anangu world.

Western anthropology and institutions such as the legal system have struggled to come to terms with the complexity of Western Desert society and significant points of difference between Anangu and other Aboriginal peoples, including within central Australia. These tensions were brought to light in the 2006 case *Jango v. Northern Territory of Australia* (AIATSIS, 2014) where the case was made for Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara traditional owners to be compensated for the extinguishment of native title in the Yulara Resort and airport region. In preparing the case, anthropologists Sutton and Vaarzon-Morel documented up to 11 ways that Anangu establish ownership, which contrasted with work of earlier anthropologists such as Elkin and Tindale, as well as with anthropological evidence accepted by the courts, which suggested there was only one way that ownership was established, and that was through patrilineal, 'father-right' descent. Sutton and Vaarzon-Morel argued that, for Western Desert people, this model for inheriting land (as proposed by Elkin and Tindale, for example) did not adequately describe how one might establish inheritance or ownership of land, but instead, that:

(i) Each person in the Western Desert comes to land by way of one or more of 11 'pathways', which (among other things) include location of birth-place of self and/or kin at a site or along a Dreaming track, ties of cognatic kinship, long association with place, ritual knowledge, linguistic affiliation, assertion of connection and finding support for such an assertion;

(ii) further, the unit of land in which a person gains rights will not be a little block of land that can be recognised as an 'estate' but, rather:

(iii) the 'countries' or 'ngura' that people of the Western Desert claim are expanses associated with segments of the Dreaming tracks that criss-cross the desert landscape. (Sansom, 2007, p. 73)

The case was dismissed as the courts were unable to 'recognise' native title holders:

... whose rights to country were rooted in those traditional laws and customs that obtained when the Yulara lands were officially brought under the dominion of British authorities 'at sovereignty' (1824). (Sansom, 2007, p. 71)

Sansom (2007), an anthropologist with extensive experience in native title claims, apports blame for the legal failure to two areas: firstly, there is some criticism of the work of the anthropologists, and secondly, he argues that:

The anthropologists ... proposed what (following Myers 1986, 128–29) I shall refer to as the 'multiple pathways' model. Further, the anthropologists explicitly rejected an alternative model for land-holding in the Western Desert. (p. 73)

Sansom is quick to suggest that Sutton and Vaarzon-Morel are in error for not adopting the Elkin and earlier anthropologists' model but also recognises that more recent attempts by Myers (1986) and others are better able to account for complexity and what seems to be competing evidence in the context of a native title claim.

But his criticism of the legal argument is principally centred around the decision to work from Anangu accounts of their own lives, rather than from what earlier anthropologists and the courts have previously established as (supposedly) being the way things are. Sutton counters Sansom's argument in asking, 'Could not the same social institutions be described by one anthropologist as a "system" and by another as a "looser weave" without their disputing the ethnographic base account? (Sutton, 2003, p. 140). Here, Sutton argues for a more flexible approach to negotiating descriptions of Anangu society, but Sansom is clear in his assertion that in order to convince a court of who can be considered a traditional owner (*nguraritja*), the onus is on Anangu and their anthropological supporters to prove 'earlier anthropological investigations' to be wrong, concluding that:

Nobody has provided a reasoned and convincing account to explain why those earlier anthropological investigations (conducted during the period 1929–73), which consistently produced and re-affirmed a patrilineal model, must now be held to be unreliable or 'wrong', given that the ascription of error derives from more recent observations. (Sansom, 2007, pp. 78-79)

Around the time of Uluru/Kata Tjuta being handed back to Anangu by the Commonwealth Government in 1985, Layton, a British anthropologist, carried out extensive interviews with Anangu in the southern region of the Northern Territory (Layton 1986), documenting accounts of transfer of traditional custodianship of sites. His work supports Sutton and Vaarzon-Morel's assertion that Western Desert modes of land ownership and inheritance do not completely mirror patrilineal patterns, as was suggested by Elkin and Tindale, among others. To summarise this problem of anthropological authority and accuracy in Western Desert contexts, it is quite possible (although Sansom does not offer this possibility) that the particulars of the context may not be able to be easily 'conquered' by non-locals in an empirically defensible state; that complexities of desert life, of fluid relationships and rules for land inheritance and custodianship, of time and change remain poorly understood by non-Anangu, and, further, that Anangu conventions do not necessarily conform to more broadly accepted knowledge as understood within academic disciplines and various institutions.

## **A brief history of Aboriginal education in Australia and the international context**

### **Australian context**

The dominant thinking of early colonists was heavily influenced by notions of cultural superiority, later to be defined as 'Social Darwinism'. The view that Aboriginal people were at best 'noble savages' or, worse, simply 'savages' to be subjugated or eradicated was a marginal improvement

on the terra nullius view that established a basis for sovereign occupation. Bin-Sallik (2003) notes that, under competing views on ‘whether Aborigines could be educated’, a ‘Native Institution’ was established in 1814 by Governor Lachlan Macquarie ‘for the purpose of educating, Christianising and giving vocational training to Aboriginal children’ (p. 22).

Schooling for Aboriginal children in Australia has historically tended to mirror the prevailing ideologies and policy priorities of the day. In summarising the various (and at times, contradictory) approaches to Aboriginal education, Welch (1988, p. 208) contends that:

Black-white relations in Australia can be broadly divided into several periods, in education as much as in other areas of interaction ... [and] reflect the dominant legitimating ideologies of each period:

(1) initial white ignorance and disdain ... (2) legal and spatial separation ... (3) assimilation ... (4) integration ... and (5) self-determination, in which funding is still white-controlled.

Early views of racial superiority and racism found ‘apparent scientific respectability’ (Welch, 1988, p. 203) in the introduction of Darwin’s ideas that were popularised in terms of ‘survival of the fittest’. Aboriginal education, Welch (1988) argues, was widely about social exclusion (particularly from around 1850) but, where Aboriginal children were allowed access to education, the pervading suspicion of a limited ‘educability’ of the ‘savages’ expressed itself uniformly as the promotion of ‘white, bourgeois values and institutions which it was felt would raise Aboriginals from a state of savagery to something almost human’ (p. 209). Typically, this approach featured English-only language instruction, a civilisation and Christianisation agenda with a limited curriculum focus on ‘rudimentary skills only in keeping with the lowly social class which the colonised were to occupy’ (p. 207).

Running parallel to these historical policies, various sites of struggle, resistance and innovation in education practice occurred in attempts to prioritise Aboriginal epistemologies and values in spite of broader assimilative attitudes and policies. Mission schools that prioritised Aboriginal languages such as Teichelmann and Schürmann’s Kurna language school (opened in 1839 on the banks of the River Torrens, Adelaide, see Teichelmann & Schurmann, 1982 [1840]; University of Adelaide, 2014) and Pitjantjatjara language approach at the Ernabella School (opened in 1940) (see Duguid, 1963; Duguid, 1972; Edwards, 1992) were notable historical exceptions in their beliefs and practices, although the broader objectives of civilisation and Christianisation were no doubt motivations in their overall approach. Ernabella Mission founder, Dr Charles Duguid, outlined the following principles for the mission:

There was to be no compulsion nor imposition of our way of life on the Aborigines, nor deliberate interference with tribal custom ... only people trained in some particular skill should be on the mission staff and ... they must learn the tribal language. (Edwards, 1992, p. 8)

From the early 1900s to the 1970s, government policies ordered the removal of children, particularly those with lighter skin, from their families to be educated in mission and government institutions where education was seen as key to their assimilation and integration into white society (Haebich, 2011; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997). While access to schooling and employment may have been improved, the devastation and intergenerational trauma that individuals, families and communities suffered through this practice continue to be felt. In 2008, then Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made a formal apology to the children who had been removed under this policy, known as the ‘Stolen Generations’ (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997).

Policies and practices of disdain, separation, assimilation and integration preceded the 1967 referendum (which enabled the Commonwealth to provide funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; see Chapter 4) and the Labor Whitlam government of the early 1970s. The referendum gave powers to the Commonwealth to provide welfare benefits and funding for Aboriginal communities, heralding a policy era known as ‘self-determination’ (Cowlshaw, 1998). This policy environment led to population decentralisation in very remote regions (Edwards, 1988); local communities were established as incorporated entities, and local schools were soon established within these newly formed communities. Prior to this period, Aboriginal students were forced to accept curriculum that simply excluded them or caricatured them in colonial historical accounts of themselves. Their families also had little say in what should be taught or how it should be taught (see Bin-Sallik, 2003; Buckskin, 2009; Welch, 1988), but the Whitlam government instituted the National Aboriginal Consultative Group in 1974 and, in 1977, the National Aboriginal Education Committee to provide the Commonwealth with formal advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators as to the educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and how best to meet them (see Buckskin, 2009, pp. 84–85).

Partington and Beresford (2012) explain that self-determination policies did not necessarily shift Aboriginal peoples’ unequal power relationship with colonialism, resulting in this post-referendum policy period being described as ‘neo-colonial’ where ‘governments continu[e] to act as if they were colonial powers’ (p. 60). Cowlshaw (1998) confirms the observations by Partington and Beresford (2012) and Welch (1988) that finances and decision-making powers were still held by the state and highlights problems with the term ‘self-determination’ by arguing that the practice of ‘ventriloquism’ was adopted for the continued mobilisation of colonial power:

Government officials, pastoral advisers and accountants acted as ventriloquists in relaying to each other and to their superior officers the views and wishes of ‘the community’, which in fact originated in their own minds and were formulated in their own style. The phrase ‘the community’s wishes’ became a mantra for many purposes (Cowlshaw, 1998, p. 153).

Cowlshaw points to the continuation of long-standing assimilationist ideologies and practices, including systematic disregard for philosophical and cultural differences through rendering over

such concerns with new language adopted in the self-determination era. Cowlshaw argues that colonial control of Aboriginal interests continued despite attempts to adopt language that suggested otherwise, contributing to the failure of large-scale projects and, ultimately, support for self-determination policy and ideology.

Policy language of the 1990s moved to notions of ‘reconciliation’. A series of representative bodies were formed to address issues of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in decision-making (such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission [ATSIC] in 1989), and a series of important enquiries were undertaken to investigate inadequacies in the provision of education (such as the 1992 literacy strategy) and, more broadly, human rights concerns (such as the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991), the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (1997) and, initiated in 1999, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission Inquiry into Rural Education (2000)).

In 1996, the newly elected conservative Liberal/National coalition government under John Howard announced a shift from ‘symbolic’ reconciliation towards a focus on ‘practical reconciliation’ (Partington & Beresford, 2012). According to Partington and Beresford (2012), this shift in language:

... was meant to signify that the previous federal Labor Government’s emphasis on land rights, a formal process of reconciliation and self-determination was out of step with Liberal Party thinking about Indigenous affairs. The new Government wanted to focus on achieving improved outcomes for Aboriginal people in ways that did not conflict with their view that Aboriginal people should be accommodated into the mainstream of the nation and not be accorded ‘special’ rights. (p. 45)

Drawing on narratives for social, educational and welfare reform from prominent Aboriginal intellectuals such as Marcia Langton (ABC, 2013, February 26; Langton, 2009) and Noel Pearson (2011, 2014), with his focus on the ‘right to take responsibility’ (Pearson, 2003), the logic for education delivery moved through notions of intervention (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2007) to ‘Closing the Gap’ (see Abbott, 2015, February 11). In 2014, the policy priority for remote education moved further towards an economic rationalist position with a focus on welfare reform (Forrest, 2014), strengthening boarding school programs (Penfold, 2013, June 1-2; B. Wilson, 2014) and improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through Closing the Gap in attendance rates and scores in national English language literacy and numeracy testing (NAPLAN, see Abbott, 2015, February 11; ABC, 2014, August 18; ACARA, 2014). This positions remote schooling policy in a neo-colonial ‘time lag’ of sorts, with the language and logic of remote education delivery returning to a more interventionist and assimilative ‘catch-up’ ideology which was roundly criticised, in particular for its failure to engage and prioritise Indigenous voices and participation, as Buckskin (2009) recounts. This approach also consigns Indigenous parents and communities to be constantly voicing claims for recognition of the existence of alternative and



distinct languages, cultures and values within mainstream schooling and policy contexts that prioritise neoliberal dominant culture, norms and values.

Positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as ‘inferior’ or ‘behind’ and in need of lifting from their ‘lowly positions’ in order to contribute to the economic needs of the colonial power is part of the ideological, populist and policy context (Abbott, 2015, February 11; Forrest, 2014; Tudge, 2014; B. Wilson, 2014). This point is well made by Rigney and Hemming (2014) in the context of the Ngarrindjeri of South Australia:

The dislodging of the Ngarrindjeri political agenda with policies such as Closing the Gap and practical reconciliation weakens the possibilities for a truly transformative reconciliation that takes account of improving the socioeconomic position of Ngarrindjeri people and also addresses the broader Ngarrindjeri project. (p. 540–541)

Despite significant historical developments in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social, education and economic policy, much remains to be done towards a ‘truly transformative reconciliation’ that is both responsive to and respectful of the aspirations and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### **International context**

European colonisation of Australia occurred historically later than in Canada, South America, South Africa, North America and for the Sami people of the Arctic region, for example, yet there are themes that resonate globally as Indigenous lives collide with European colonialism and racism. In particular, social and educational exclusion of Indigenous peoples was a hallmark of underlying social and racial ideologies:

Indigenous and other local communities were rarely considered [to participate in education] in the early days of the establishment of these systems in colonies such as the Malay Peninsula, the Americas, Papua New Guinea, Canada, New Zealand, India or Australia. (Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 13)

Exclusionary practices transitioned to assimilationist approaches as European thought considered the question of ‘educability’ of the savages in the context of Social Darwinist ideas and the civilisation and Christianisation agenda:

Much education of both North American Indians and Australian Aborigines has been infected by assimilationist policies; by immersing pupils in white culture it was hoped that Indianness or Aboriginality could be bleached out and that these minorities could simply be transformed into honorary whites, albeit at the bottom of the economic pyramid. (Welch, 1988, p. 207)

The removal and institutionalisation of Indigenous children as a primary tool for civilisation, Christianisation and commodification through (low cost) labour-force participation was also widely implemented by colonial states globally. In Australia, these institutions were often described as missions, orphanages or state-run ‘homes’; however, ‘boarding schools’ in North America and

Canada were used for the same purpose: cultural destruction and assimilation as a means for dealing with ‘the Aboriginal problem’ (Biskup, 1975; Ellinghaus, 2003; Love, 1943; Wallace Adams, 1995). Wallace Adams’s (1995) book *Education for Extinction* directly challenges the colonialist narrative of the provision of ‘boarding school’ education in North America as a means of welfare, benevolence or advancement.

Welch (1988) describes ‘internal colonialism’ as a continuing global practice:

Such groups as North American Indians, black South Africans [26], Latin American Indians, and Australian Aborigines all fall readily into this category of nations who have failed to gain political or economic independence from their respective colonial powers. In other major respects, the situation of subordinate racial and ethnic groups, “is produced and maintained by the same mechanisms of cultural domination, political oppression, and economic exploitation” [27] which foster the dependency of Third World States. (p. 206)

Welch (1988) suggests that contradictions emerged historically that troubled both Rousseauian notions of the ‘noble savage’ and Social Darwinist ideology relegating Aboriginal people to a position of ‘lesser beings’ (p. 205). One such contradiction was at the heart of the motivation for Christian missionary participation in Aboriginal education and welfare endeavours. While examples of appalling treatment and racist ideology and practice at the hands of Christian missions and missionaries are well documented (see, for example, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997), Christian global moves to oppose the colonialist practice of slavery reinvigorated debates about racial equality.

William Wilberforce (1823), a man strongly motivated by his religious and social justice convictions, is recognised as being at the forefront of this social and political movement in Britain, finally achieving the abolition of slavery in 1833. Wilberforce also strongly advocated that to ‘renew society’, all children were to receive ‘regular education in reading, personal hygiene and religion’ (BBC, 2014). Christians who subscribed to Wilberforce’s view that ‘all are equal under God’ were confronted with the task of explaining the nature of engagement with the ‘natives’ of Australia, both in education and wider social contexts, where the idea of being equal with former African slaves seemed somehow more palatable than being equal with Aboriginal Australians. Welch (1988) draws on Van Den Berghe (1967) and Carnoy (1974) to argue that from around 1850, Australian colonialist attitudes to Aboriginal peoples missed the opportunity to refute racism following the French and American revolutions, instead moving to further the social and economic interests of the dominant culture through recategorisation:

Faced with the blatant contradiction between the treatment of slaves and colonial peoples and the official rhetoric of freedom and equality, Europeans and North Americans began to dichotomize humanity between men and submen (or the ‘civilized’ and the ‘savages’). (Van Den Berghe, 1967, pp. 17–18 in Welch, 1988, pp. 206)

Historical injustices of exclusion, racial and cultural assimilation and the ongoing denial of rights for Indigenous peoples has given rise to global calls for self-determination and social justice, with education being identified as a critical opportunity for the achievement of these goals. Indigenous scholars have called for the decolonisation of education, research and their associated institutions (Corbiere, 2000; Grande, 2004; Nakata, 2007b; L. Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012), but principally, the primary claim for justice in education and society is for the recognition and acceptance of Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, cosmologies, languages and axiologies in the broader education spaces and pedagogical approaches (Arbon, 2008; Battiste, 2002; Baydala, Placsko, Hampton, Bourassa, & McKay-McNabb, 2006; Bishop, 2011; Nakata, Nakata, Keech, & Bolt, 2012; S. Wilson, 2008). Critical race theorists also argue that children from minority cultures and poor communities are viewed as deficient or behind (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner, 2008) and their knowledge assets (Moll et al., 1992; Zipin, 2013) remain unwelcome in schools as education tends to apply a remedial interventionist lens on the assessment of their families and communities as lacking. Current global trends prioritising standardised testing and accountability regimes, where achieving against internationally compared literacy and numeracy measures has become politically salient and further marginalises students and communities who do not represent dominant society language, class and culture (Biesta, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Robinson & Aronica, 2009).

Political narratives about remote education occupy the spaces between populist opinion and policymaking, between the impulses of punitive measures and philanthropic catch-up modes as remote communities, families and education remain judged as ‘behind’ or simply, ‘failed’ (ABC, 2014, August 18; Forrest, 2014; Hughes & Hughes, 2012; B. Wilson, 2014). This is reflected in the language of Closing the Gap through the funding and large-scale implementation of truancy programs (Abbott, 2015, February 11), calls for welfare payments to be removed where children are not attending regularly (Forrest, 2014; Karvelis, 2014b; S. Martin, 2014a; Tudge, 2014) and reduced support for local provision of secondary education. Instead, significant government, corporate and philanthropic funds are redirected to place remote and very remote students in metropolitan boarding schools (ABC, 2013, February 26; AIEF, 2013; Wilson, 2014). This philanthropic desire to lend a ‘hand up’, coupled with hard line social welfare policy and action is not a new phenomenon, as reflected in Garth Boomer’s (1988) language and education conference paper ‘The helping hand strikes again?’

## **Schooling in the tristate area**

### **A short timeline history of schooling provision in the tristate region**

Sporadic contact between Anangu and Piranpa occurred across the tristate area between the late 1800s and the 1930s through the presence of explorers and ‘doggers’ (dingo scalp traders) and, later, emerging pastoral activity at the fringes of the region where rations were issued to Anangu. The establishment of missions at Warburton (Western Australia), Ernabella (South Australia) and a rations depot at Areyonga (Northern Territory) further influenced patterns of residence and subsistence from the land (Edwards, 1992) as medical services, schooling, church activities and

work programs were established at these centres between the 1930s and 1943 (Areyonga). The only schooling available in the tristate region during this period was centralised via the three missions at Ernabella, Areyonga and Warburton.

Following the 1967 referendum the Commonwealth provided funding to Aboriginal communities, and a series of incorporated communities and schools were built, which ushered in what Edwards (1988) describes as a period of ‘decentralisation’ of Anangu populations. Through the 1980s and 1990s, Commonwealth support to fund smaller ‘outstations’ encouraged further decentralisation as much smaller groups could live outside of larger community centres. In some cases, outstation schools were also established (for example, Murputja, Patjarr, Tjirrkarli, Lila and Ukaka, among others). In recent years, small-scale recentralisation has occurred as some of these outstation schools have been closed (Ukaka, Watarru, Patjarr, Tjirrkarli) due to lower enrolment and resident numbers. From 1997, Nyangatjatjara College, an Independent Aboriginal School<sup>1</sup>, has provided local secondary schooling at Imanpa, Docker River and Mutitjulu and in 2015 has taken on the Docker River Primary School, previously managed by the Northern Territory Government. Since the early 1980s, Wiltja has provided short- and longer term boarding facilities based in Adelaide where Anangu, among others, attend school within the larger Woodville High School and, more recently, Windsor Gardens High School campus. This is provided through the South Australian Government.

#### *Regional structures and affiliations*

Schools in the tristate area come under four educational jurisdictions: the three state and territory government departments and the Australian Government, which is the main administrator of Nyangatjatjara College, an Independent Aboriginal School.

Tristate schools located in Western Australia are organised as a ‘single school’ model. Historically, these schools have been included within the broader Goldfields Education Region, which has included Kiwirrkurra to the north-east. Ngaanyatjarra School (representing all campuses) does not have a separate governance structure but comes under the Ngaanyatjarra Shire for consultation and decision-making.

In South Australia, all APY Lands schools have their own governing council and are represented regionally through Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee, a not-for-profit corporation under the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). The district currently includes Yalata and Oak Valley to the south under a broader definition of Aboriginal Lands Schools. This includes the secondary boarding program (Wiltja), which is based in Adelaide and provides boarding for students from across the tristate region as well as other remote and rural communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Nyangatjatjara College is locally owned and governed and operates within the Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory (AISNT), which are separate from state/territory school systems. It is situated in the southern region of the Northern Territory. The College has its own Anangu governance structure under the Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal Corporation (also under ORIC), the College’s governing body.

In the south of the Northern Territory, schools were formerly organised through the Lasseter Group School structure. A remote schools service is provided centrally from Alice Springs. The outstation school at Lila has recently re-joined the Northern Territory Government system after being re-opened with the support of an independent school in Tasmania. There is no avenue for education governance, and full responsibility is allocated to the senior education department officer within the regional office structure.

### **Current debates for the Anangu education context?**

Current policies that relate to tristate education have been significantly narrowed through focus on two measures included in Closing the Gap: school attendance and achieving (minimal) benchmarks in literacy and numeracy standardised tests (Abbott, 2015, February 11). The Commonwealth's Remote School Attendance Scheme (RSAS) initiative employs local attendance officers to ensure children attend school, while the NT Government School Enrolment and Attendance Measure trial (Wright, Arnold, & Dandie, 2012) employs attendance officers and includes options for punitive measures, such as removal of parental welfare payments, when students do not meet attendance requirements. Progress in both programs has been patchy at best, leading to threats of punitive action where progress is slow (Karvelis, 2014a; S. Martin, 2014a). In 2014, the Wilson Review addressed Indigenous education in the Northern Territory (B. Wilson, 2014). For very remote schools, the most significant recommendations include the introduction of Direct Instruction (see Good to Great Schools Australia, 2014; Luke, 2014; Osborne, 2015a) as preferred pedagogy as well as reducing secondary provision in local communities by encouraging students, particularly in the senior years, to access schooling through boarding alternatives. These policies are consistent with the broader language and logic of Closing the Gap but also draw on historical ideologies such as assimilationist notions of 'rescuing' children from their families in order to ameliorate inevitable 'failure' and 'disadvantage' (Forrest, 2014; Good to Great Schools Australia, 2014; Penfold, 2013, June 1-2; Tudge, 2014). In 2014–15, this same language and logic has been adopted to argue for the closure of small homeland communities in Western Australia (Kagi, 2014; Powell & O'Connor, 2015).

Local language instruction has historically been a priority in some parts of the tristate region but does not currently have policy support (Disbray, 2014b; Graham, 1999; Nicholls, 2005), although local schools and communities continue to engage with local language in various ways. Aboriginal community schools such as Areyonga, Yuendumu and Yirrkala are well-known champions of bilingual education, regardless of state, territory and federal policy imperatives of the day.

Areyonga School, in the southern region of the NT, took their cause to the United Nations after an English-only policy was mandated for the first four hours of the day (Devlin, 2011; Simpson, Caffery, & McConvell, 2009) and continues to incorporate local language in their work. However, ongoing depictions of very remote Aboriginal schools as 'behind' and 'failing', coupled with the singular priority of Closing the Gap between Aboriginal and other Australians on the narrow measures of school attendance rates and NAPLAN scores (Abbott, 2015, February 11; D. Rigney

& Hemming, 2014), has all but silenced even the more resolutely defiant school sites where bilingual education has been strongly supported and deeply valued by the community. Funding is allocated to the headline policy priorities for current policy (RSAS, \$40M; Australian Indigenous Education Foundation – an elite private school boarding scholarship program – >\$32M, for example) but has dried up for language centres, local curriculum development initiatives, local Aboriginal teacher training programs (such as the Anangu Tertiary Education Program [AnTEP] through the University of South Australia and the program at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Teacher Education, NT) as well as for other curriculum areas such as the arts.

The role of local Aboriginal educators in very remote schools is also undergoing change and confusion. On the one hand, programs such as the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI, 2014) strongly argue that increasing the number of Indigenous teachers in schools will have multiple benefits for Indigenous students. On the other hand, this logic is undermined through the strength of current policy focus on educational ‘gaps’ and ‘standards’. Some education leaders argue that Anangu educators, for example, will disadvantage students in efforts to raise (NAPLAN) test scores because they speak English as second, third or fourth language. From this logic, poor modelling of Standard Australian English further disadvantages students, widening the gap between their results and the results for other Australian students. Such an argument assumes that the assets (Moll et al., 1992; Zipin, 2013) of language, cultural understanding, familial relationship and long-standing organisational involvement at the school are of little value or are unwelcome, as the priorities of attendance and NAPLAN benchmarks form new pinnacles of educational success in national policy narratives.

The introduction of national teacher standards (see AITSL, 2014) also presents new challenges for Anangu wishing to do undergraduate teacher training. Historically, these students could obtain a three-year degree and receive a registration allowing them to teach in Anangu schools, but not outside of the tristate region. Under this arrangement, many students were taking thirteen years or longer to complete this degree. The requirement to obtain a minimum four-year degree and to actively engage in schools outside of the tristate area heralds a significant shift in program delivery; the profile of potential future students; and the status of local languages, knowledge and curriculum priorities. A requirement to rank in the top 30% of national achievement (in English) further distances local educators from the possibility of entering and completing a teaching degree.

This issue raises questions about the perceived value of Indigenous knowledges (Nakata, 2007a) and the place of Aboriginal languages, cultures, histories and perspectives in the context of the broader Australian curriculum. This point has been the subject of recent national debate and political contest (see, for example, Ferrari, 2014) as some argue the need to prioritise Western knowledge and European accounts of Australian history in the context of an already ‘crowded curriculum’. University programs will need to carefully consider how they can provide relevant and accessible courses in the face of fewer students and less funding.

Very remote schools face significant challenges in attracting and retaining teachers. In the tristate area, teacher retention often sits below an average of 12 months (Guenther, 2015b). High teacher turnover puts significant strain on systems and school leaders but also works against educator capacity to ‘hear’ (Delpit, 1993; Osborne, 2014a) community voices and values in relation to the work of the school and then to frame a more contextually responsive approach, seeing beyond the immediacy of apparent chaos and crisis management (Guenther, 2015b; Osborne, 2013a). As principals and educators go about fulfilling their duties within an upward accountability environment (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), caught between constant and sometimes competing local community demands, they triage demands on their time; typically, the needs and demands that Anangu place on schools and educators are left until last. This leaves Anangu with a question I hear quite often, ‘Is there room for Anangu in Anangu education?’, reflecting a general perception that policy priorities have shifted towards the logic and imperatives of the institutions, effectively silencing Anangu voices and expectations in Anangu education.

### **Learning to hear: negotiating the distinct and unique context of Anangu education**

I remember when I got there, there was this caravan which wasn’t what the department had told me I was getting. I was getting a forty-foot fabulous thing which was actually twenty-three foot and was on a lean because one of the mountings had broken. Anyway, there was a grave nearby and when I asked whose it was, it was the previous female teacher. I asked, ‘How did she die?’ Apparently [of] old age at forty-three. Looking back, I can see how that could happen. (Piranpa educator, late 1970s)

Working in Anangu education to achieve ‘success’ in complex spaces of very remote education is not easy; it’s hard work. Positive gains can evaporate with turnover of staff, changes in community dynamics or any number of circumstances including the implementation of poor policy (or indeed, poorly implemented policy). Education, Biesta (2010) argues, is a complex space where success is not easily measured by matching inputs to corresponding and quantifiable outputs. In the global education context, he suggests that research-based claims of ‘what will work’ can only go as far as to confidently state ‘what worked’ (p. 41), as complexities and contextual uniqueness prevent the ability to rely on consistent, reproducible other factors in the scientific analysis of outcomes and results, yet these universalising tendencies of government education policy continue.

Drawing on Snowden’s (2011) Cynefin Framework, Guenther (2015b) describes remote education systems as spaces of complexity, bordering on chaos, where assumptions of simplicity and of causal relationships between inputs and outcomes continue to be frustrated. Piranpa educators working in Anangu education spaces need to resist simplistic assumptions and narratives and position themselves as contextually responsive learners to better account for the complex interactions of knowledge, culture and possible systemic chaos they may encounter (Guenther, 2015b; Nakata et al., 2012).

For Piranpa educators arriving in Anangu schools, it soon becomes apparent that significant points of philosophical and cultural difference exist between their lives and those of the students and

families and community who constitute the school community. This presents significant challenges in understanding what is happening minute by minute, let alone engaging in much deeper dialogue where topics such as social justice and the purpose of education, aspiration and notions of success might be negotiated from Anangu standpoints (see Burton & Osborne, 2014; Minutjukur & Osborne, 2014; Osborne & Guenther, 2013a). For principals in Anangu schools, a stringent upward-focused accountability environment (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) and the, at times, overwhelming demands from community, teachers and students negate opportunities to spend the careful and patient time required to begin to ‘hear’ these positions which are important in framing the work of Piranpa educators (see, for example Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richards, 2003; Delpit, 1993; Ma Rhea & Teasedale, 2000; Osborne, 2013a).

In *The trouble with hearing* (Osborne, 2014a), I describe the continuum of *kulini* (hearing), a process of moving from listening, to hearing, to understanding and beyond. This Pitjantjatjara language term is instructive in highlighting ‘knowledge layers’ that exist beyond ‘mere listening’:

In the sense of the Pitjantjatjara term *kulini* (listening), a deepening spiral exists as to the extent we can ‘hear’. The Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara dictionary (Goddard, 1996) states the English meanings as: listening, hearing, thinking, deciding, knowing, understanding, feeling, premonition (sixth sense). (p. 7–8)

Ma Rhea and Teasedale (2000) argue that ‘once one is given responsibility by the state for the leadership and management of Indigenous education, one needs to unthink one’s previous approach’ because of the ‘overarching valuing of western industrial scientific and technical knowledge over human lifeways knowledge that is so very deeply embedded in the modern education system’ (in Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 14). A deeper listening is required to negotiate the complex knowledge encounters of Anangu education contexts. Delpit (1993) calls this a ‘very special kind of listening’, requiring ‘not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds’ (p. 139).

Anangu narrators contributing to this thesis are careful to explain the historical context of their lives and the stories they share as a means of making sense of the present and the future. Engaging with local and regional Anangu histories is an important prerequisite for educator interaction in Anangu communities. Resisting populist and deficit narratives may be the single most important action remote educators can initially take to prepare space for new possibilities. Learning the art of ‘dislocation’ from one’s own ‘position’ (see Harding, 1992, p. 581) and the associated values and interests of the institutions they represent is important for Piranpa educators to engage at the complex and contested knowledge interface (see Nakata et al., 2012) in a more ‘power-sensitive’ (Haraway, 2004) manner. Nakata et al. (2012) argue that the academy can assist in how they bring pre-service educators to the interface: not armed with facts and knowledge, but with pedagogical tools for reflexivity and contextually responsive engagement with Indigenous knowledge and localised contexts.



## Positioning myself in the research

I grew up in Adelaide, attending urban schools, and my experience of the world was similar to many Australians in that I had very little understanding of or contact with Aboriginal people (see Moreton-Robinson, 2011). In school, I was surrounded by students from diverse European cultures, but somehow remained largely unaware of the cultures and communities of my classmates. As an adult I have come to appreciate the lost opportunity to learn from the diverse cultural, philosophical and knowledge landscape that surrounded me as a child, but was muted through a schooling experience that closely mirrored the dominant culture norms, philosophies and assumptions of my own upbringing.

In 1989 (as a year 8 student), I attended a children's/youth camp at Wamikata, a small outstation north of Ernabella that features a striking red sand hill surrounded by an impressive mountain range and expansive plains. The community at Ernabella was holding the camp and invited Allen Steel, a man who had spent many years at Amata and Ernabella, to bring some young people from Adelaide to join them. For me, this was an 'other worldly' experience (Glass, 1978; Sheppard, 2004). Much of the week was spent with the boys from Ernabella kicking a football, sitting around the fire talking, rock hole swimming, and hunting in between morning and evening meetings where Pitjantjatjara language singing and preaching rang out through the *ilykuwara* (witchetty bush – *Acacia kempeana*) thickets. I had a strong desire from this time to communicate and to relate, and it was obvious to me that I would need to learn the language.

From that time on, I received regular phone calls (often without money, where the caller has time only to say hello before they get disconnected) from the public phone box at Ernabella. I spent time with students who came to board in Adelaide for high school. I was constantly asking questions about the language, and my peers were keen and expert teachers. Each year, I attended the youth camps which were held at various communities and continued until 2001. Many years later I noticed my old phone number etched into a pole on the Ernabella phone box, which possibly explained the regular phone calls.

I studied three semesters of Pitjantjatjara language at the University of South Australia (UniSA) under Bill Edwards, Mona Tur, Sandra Ken and Mrs Kunmanara Ken. These were important opportunities to build on and formalise my growing understanding of Pitjantjatjara language, which I had only experienced in informal contexts before that, other than poring over the dictionary after having a phone conversation or driving some of my friends around Adelaide. In 1995, as a second year university student, I began teaching Pitjantjatjara language at Taperoo Primary School and continued teaching Pitjantjatjara language among other subjects in Adelaide schools until 2001.

In 1996 I spent a month on a student teacher placement at Ernabella. At that time, attendance was below 50% and the school was miserable in every sense; the facilities looked unloved and it seemed that nobody wanted to be there. I witnessed firsthand numerous examples of overt racism and a wide gap between the culture, practices and values of the school and those of the community.

In 1997 I married Rebekah Ken, whom I had known since their family moved to Adelaide from Amata in 1988. Rebekah's father is an Anangu man with strong ties from Wingellina (WA) to Ernabella (SA); he was born under a tree in 1947 at a shepherd's camp just north of Ernabella at a place called Wintjalangu. His parents hail from further west (Wingellina, Piipalyatjara and Amata) but came in to Ernabella in the 1940s, taking up work as shepherds in the outstations region north of Ernabella between Itjinpiri and Wamikata. Rebekah's mother, Sandra Ken, began her teaching career at Amata in 1968 and is a skilled linguist with continued involvement in Anangu education.

In 2002, Rebekah and I took our two children to live in Ernabella where I was appointed as a secondary teacher. This was an interesting time in that it was the latter end of an English-only policy period. I was fortunate to work under Tom Miller, a very experienced principal who prioritised students and the values and priorities of the community in schooling. In 2003 I took on the role of secondary coordinator, and in 2004–05 worked as the Deputy Principal before taking on the Principal position from 2006 to 2008.

When we arrived in 2002, Ernabella was in the grip of a petrol-sniffing epidemic, and the impact on the community, the students and the teachers was devastating, with common incidents of violence, self-harm and property damage. Men I had known as highly intelligent young people, full of potential, sharp wit and an incredible capacity to teach me, were reduced to zombie-like figures, lurking in the shadows of night around the fringes of the community. Some of these images were highly confronting: adult men, remembering me in friendly terms and wanting to talk, but staring blankly, almost past me, petrol can held firmly over their mouth and nose, at times dressed in rancid clothing, dribbling as they stood slipping in and out of coherent dialogue. Perhaps the most confronting image was that of a student of mine with a petrol can stuffed in the neck of her jumper, awkwardly trying to juggle the task of sniffing petrol from the can while pushing her mother in a wheelchair who, although physically incapacitated from the effects of petrol sniffing, held a petrol can to her face with both hands as her daughter pushed her all around town. If ever there was a time to decry a community and its people as a hopeless case, it may have been then. But I was fortunate to remember a time where these were young people with names, not simply 'petrol sniffers'. With the introduction of Opal fuel (a low aromatic, non-sniffable fuel) things changed. Petrol sniffing has never returned to the levels it was from the 1980s to the mid-2000s, but significant social concerns remain.

Over the seven years I worked at Ernabella, enrolments significantly increased, attendance improved markedly, the secondary program increased in size and retention rates were strong. The number of local educators and teachers increased and their work grew to be a critical part of the daily work of the school. Three students completed their SACE certificate at Ernabella during that time. Tom Miller was a strong believer in engaging all types of learners in school through open and creative approaches to schooling, and the curriculum began to diversify. Strong focus in areas such as ceramics, choir, circus and construction were established through partnerships and community

involvement and, despite there being regular chaos in one form or another, the classrooms were full and a far more disciplined and structured learning environment was evident. Even with these positive developments at the school, I was acutely aware that there were much bigger questions left unaddressed at the systemic and school level, questions like, ‘What are we educating for?’ and ‘What are the community aspirations and expectations that it is hoped schooling might enable?’ Despite the benefits I had of language skills, familial ties and long-standing relationships in the community, an environment of significant personal and professional demands (see Osborne, 2013a) and upward accountability (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) severely limited my capacity to engage Anangu standpoints on bigger questions such as the purpose of an Anangu education and education reform for contextually responsive practice.

In Chapter 3, I describe my role as a ‘broker’, of sorts. In my experience, it was impossible as a Piranpa educator to fully engage in community life where demand sharing and reciprocal obligation is the currency of honouring and maintaining relationships. Family and community requests place significant pressure on the spaces that Western professionals tend to separate as the ‘personal’ part of themselves as distinct from the ‘professional’, such as after hours, weekends and family or recreation time, as well as personal resources such as money, food and the use of private vehicles. I recall a time when a visiting team of education professionals had deeply upset a number of the staff, who then came to see me over the course of a weekend to seek advice or simply talk about the impact the visiting team’s actions had had on them. I provided the team with feedback, pointing out that their insensitive practice had robbed many of us of an entire weekend. The team leader replied, ‘That’s your job; that’s what you get paid for’. I decided to document the events of the next weekend: every time I received a phone call, visit or other interruption over the weekend simply because I was the principal in a remote community. This was possibly some sort of self-soothing exercise, but I wanted to have some form of evidence that could explain to urban-dwelling professionals the kinds of pressures remote principals face. I logged 55 entries, starting at 6 pm Friday night and finishing at 2 am Monday morning, when a former student came bursting through the back door and into our lounge room, shouting and asking for help to convince the police to approve overtime to respond to a domestic violence situation as their own requests had not been successful. These interactions included plumbers looking for keys on a Sunday morning, teachers dropping by to discuss school matters, relaying phone calls from boarding schools to families and visits from community members seeking assistance to resolve a brewing conflict.

In remote education discourse, there is often a spoken desire (from all corners) to educate or empower Aboriginal people to be ‘strong in two worlds: Anangu and Piranpa’ (or their contextual equivalents). While I agree that this is a worthy aim, my own experience highlighted to me some of the contradictions of being ‘fully’ professional, adhering to all of the demands and expectations of a remote teacher or principal, while continuing full participation in Anangu family and community life. I often explained to community members that because I work under Piranpa rules, social expectations and accountability structures, I simply cannot help (by giving the government car to

go shopping 45 km away on a Sunday, lending money from the school safe or by making myself available to ‘help’ everyone else all the time on weekends, for example.) This was almost always accepted as reasonable and fair, because after all, I *am* Piranpa. But how does this personal/professional dichotomy work for Anangu? In order to survive, in reality, something needs to give. Either the level of investment into the professional domain needs to be regulated around the level of social demands, or people need to start saying, ‘No, my professional work comes first’, thus buying into distinctly non-Anangu logic and values of what matters in the pursuit of a virtuous Anangu life (see Minutjukur & Osborne, 2014; Osborne, 2014a). Makinti Minutjukur describes it this way:

I (Makinti) have clearly outlined a passion and willingness to embrace the ‘witulya mulapa’ (genuine power) that (white) education offers, but want to strongly emphasize that this is not a case of ‘cut and run’. As Anangu, we have our own power that we wish to retain and this power is to be carried forward in the pursuit of the power that education offers. (Minutjukur & Osborne, 2014, p. 19)

My position affords me the luxury of being able to quickly engage with Anangu in a researcher capacity and to access stories and voices that are not easily heard, but this luxury also carries significant risks and limitations. I am not Anangu and cannot speak for Anangu experiences or knowledge; they are not mine to represent. I did not grow up in the social, cultural and philosophical context of Anangu lives and can never fully know the deeper aspects of Anangu language, culture, histories and cosmologies (see discussion on ‘kulini’ in Osborne, 2014a, pp. 7–8). Understanding these limitations and making them explicit is an important part of my ethical and methodological approach, which I will discuss more fully in Chapter 3.

In 2009, we moved to Alice Springs with our (by then) five children and I began this PhD thesis while working in consulting, research and interpreting roles, including working part time as a consultant for Central Australian Schools on the Dare to Lead project (Principals Australia Institute, 2015). In 2011 I took up a Senior Research Fellow position with UniSA working on the Remote Education Systems project within the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP, 2014). This work has allowed me to explore issues relevant to my own research within a team approach.

### **Significance and context of the study**

In this chapter, I have described the historical, geographical and cultural factors that position tristate schools as complex and relatively recent sites of Western education where distinct and unique conditions remain largely misunderstood by the broader policy context and by the non-local educators who engage at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007a). Rigney and Hemming (2014) describe spaces of unequal, colonial encounters as the ‘contact zone’:

... the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. (p. 544)

They also argue that current government policy focus on Closing the Gap is unsatisfactory in that the underlying assumptions and positioning fail to engage Indigenous interests, instead silencing ‘broader Ngarrindjeri interests’ through a campaign of quantitative measures that construct the ‘Aboriginal problem’ through statistical measures concerned with the disparity of Indigenous peoples compared to non-Indigenous people (p. 540) (see also, Wearne & Yunupingu, 2011).

This thesis prioritises ‘Anangu interests’ that are not easily ‘heard’ (Delpit, 1993; Osborne, 2014a) in the dialogue about young people, education and the future. The contact zone in tristate communities is a space that adopts power-laden, colonial approaches to the education of Aboriginal children in the bush. Over the past decade, policy and practice have been dominated by significant upward accountability (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), a narrowed curriculum, punitive approaches and fervency about the need for philanthropic catch-up (Boomer, 1988). There are currently few venues for Anangu to voice their own interests and priorities in education dialogue from outside the logic and ‘locations’ (Harding, 1992, p. 581) of power, epistemology and values of the established Western institutions. This thesis is a significant contribution to Anangu education and education research more broadly through recording Anangu narratives and standpoint accounts and staging text-based dialogue with experienced and trusted Piranpa educators. This process repositions the locus of power in education dialogue and provides opportunity to ‘start from outside’ (Harding, 1992, p. 581) the ‘values and interests that structure ... institutions’ (p. 580) in order to ‘gain a causal, critical view of them’ (p. 581). Through the work of this thesis, I hope to encourage further opportunities for (re)negotiating alternative understandings of education, employment and notions of a successful young person on Anangu terms.

This thesis engages a range of Anangu experiences, including vital yet rapidly disappearing pre-contact accounts of life and learning in an Anangu context. The bilingual transcripts produced as part of this study are important historical records that provide insight into family and community life. Producing the interviews as bilingual transcripts has been a significant undertaking but honours a reciprocal obligation to participate equally in the sharing of knowledge. I have included a brief summary of the life of my wife’s *tjamu* (grandfather) at Appendix 1 to describe the immense changes that have occurred between European contact, colonisation and the current day. For a few remaining Anangu, this has occurred in the space of a lifetime.

## **Overview of chapters**

The remainder of the thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter 2 frames the study by exploring both policy debates and scholarly literature on Aboriginal education in remote areas of Australia, which continues to be a contested focus for policy and practice, with little debate that actively involves Aboriginal people themselves. Anangu children are frequently positioned as deficient in mainstream educational achievement narratives within colonial and neo-colonial educational endeavours. This study seeks to inform Anangu education policy and practice from

Anangu standpoints and to explore the potential for standpoint dialogue in negotiating alternatives in tristate education.

Chapter 3 provides a rationale for a methodology that privileges Anangu standpoint accounts in relation to young people, education and the future, as a Piranpa educator who is also connected through family to Anangu of this region. Chapter 4 gives a historical overview of colonialism and the provision of education across the tristate area, particularly needed for non-locals to understand both the broad story being developed and the specific stories provided in the data chapters.

Chapters 5–9 feature a series of interviews, translated and presented with minimal editing, predominantly held in local languages which demonstrate the priority of oral histories and stories as Indigenous genres for knowledge sharing. In Chapter 10, a textual standpoint dialogue is staged between Anangu participants and trusted Piranpa education leaders whom Anangu participants identify, describing practice from the 1950s to the current day.

Diverse histories and interactions with colonialism and education shape points of difference between and among Anangu standpoints. The Anangu stories reflect how colonial interests are privileged in the historical interactions with cattle stations (including the removal of children), the Maralinga bomb, centralisation of populations to mission centres and sporadic engagement with mining interests.

This study finds that deep educational conversations across Anangu and Piranpa standpoints have been difficult even where educators spoke local languages and developed close relationships with Anangu. Educators feel caught between professional imperatives for upward accountability and personal conviction of the need for reciprocal accountability to community priorities and demands. Significant points of epistemic differentiation between Western norms represented in educational policy and practices and Anangu lives underscore the importance of seeking venues for standpoint dialogue where Anangu voices are privileged in (re)shaping Anangu education provision.

In Chapter 11, implications for educators, researchers and education systems are explored, including the need to re-examine the role and priority of Anangu educators in Anangu schools, considerations for the induction of Piranpa educators and collaboration with Anangu educators, the need to explore a more contextually responsive curriculum approach that prepares young people for post-school employment, and an argument for structuring education and research collaboration across the tristate area.

## Chapter 2: Framing the study

### Argument overview

When developing a conceptual framework for the study, I commenced with the work of Indigenous scholars, both in Australia and elsewhere, since there are limited available literatures specifically in relation to Anangu education. My argument rests on Indigenous knowledge and scholarship as a necessary and important starting point to establish claims for recognition of Indigenous knowledges by Western education scholars and policy makers (Nakata, 2007b; L. Rigney, 1999; Sarra, 2011); this can lead to a new basis for justice and reconciliation as desired education outcomes, rather than almost complete attention on narrow measures such as attendance and minimal literacy and numeracy benchmarks (D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014). Nakata's (2007a) concept of 'cultural interface' and Rigney and Hemming's (2014) 'contact zone' are useful in this study for conceptually dealing with the complex interactions that occur between Piranpa educators and Anangu students, educator colleagues and communities in tristate schooling.

Central to the thesis is the emerging Indigenous standpoint literature (Foley, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Nakata, 1998, 2007b), which draws on feminist standpoint traditions (Haraway, 2004; Harding, 1992), as standpoint theory offers pedagogical tools for negotiating the various standpoints within Anangu education dialogue. Critical race theory offers important insights for combating deficit narratives (Comber & Kamler, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Milner, 2008) that hegemonise remote education discourse, while power-sensitive standpoint dialogue (Haraway, 2004) is argued as critical for (re)shaping education delivery for justice and reconciliation in Anangu education.

Internationally, an emerging Indigenous scholarship argues for decolonial approaches to education and research methodologies in Indigenous contexts. These perspectives inform the stance in the thesis of privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenous education and research (Grande, 2009; Nakata, 2007b; L. Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012) as an act of resisting colonialism and pursuing more just outcomes. I explore the possibilities offered by standpoint theory, in particular Nakata's (2007a) concept of Indigenous standpoint, in arguing the need for sites for standpoint conversations, to speak across points of power and epistemic difference in 'democratic dialogue' (Harding, 1992, p. 582). This informs Chapter 10 where I stage a virtual (within the text) standpoint dialogue between Anangu narrators and trusted Piranpa educators, privileging Anangu voices in the dialogue by working from themes prioritised in Anangu narratives (Chapters 5–9).

### Literature review: politics, media and theoretical framing

#### A review of literature on Anangu education?

There is a limited body of academic literature to draw on within the unique cultural, linguistic and geographic context of tristate schooling. There are many reports and government-funded evaluations that tend towards a deficit view of very remote communities and schooling (Forrest, 2014; Hughes & Hughes, 2012; B. Wilson, 2014) and ignore or pay minimal attention to the voices

and claims of local communities who are the subject of these narratives and the object of subsequent policies and actions. Such reports tend to argue that punitive and narrow approaches are needed to address a limited range of outcomes in order to ameliorate 'inevitable' disadvantage and ultimately, 'failure' (see also, Good to Great Schools Australia, 2014; Hancock, Shepherd, Lawrence, & Zubrick, 2013; Jorgensen, 2012; O'Keefe, Olney, & Angus, 2012). As Welch (1988) points out, this logic has historically resulted in the redistribution of social inequity since the very early history of Aboriginal education in Australia. Colonial, top-down approaches to improving outcomes within a very narrow view of a 'good' education both limits the scope of what education can offer in very remote schooling, but also what it hopes to achieve (see, for example, Biesta, 2010; Guenther, 2013). These back-to-basics approaches have also generally failed to achieve the desired outcomes against the narrow measures of attendance and NAPLAN scores (Abbott, 2015, February 11; ABC, 2014, August 18; Guenther, 2013; Guenther, Bat, & Osborne, 2013; Tudge, 2014; B. Wilson, 2014).

While there are a number of historical and anthropological literatures relating to Western Desert peoples (which are highly problematic, see Nakata, 2007b), there are few available materials relating specifically to education. What can be gleaned often needs to be pieced together from archival sources such as Ara Irititja (2015) or searching through almost-forgotten cupboards in local school libraries and other centres such as regional offices, media organisations and language resource centres.

Government reports relating to education in the tristate area provide context for family and community participation in early childhood education (Department of Family and Community Services, 2002), the role of language in education delivery (NLLIA, 1996) and secondary education on the APY Lands (Lea, Tootell, Wolgemuth, Halkon, & Douglas, 2008).

The Tristate report of 1990 (Tri-State Board of Management, 1990) was a comprehensive plan for cross-border collaboration for education delivery in the tristate area. This report recommended a single jurisdiction approach across the three regions and incorporated a much wider definition of the tristate region than I have applied in this study, drawing in communities south of the Great Victoria Desert such as Yalata, Oak Valley and Tjuntjuntjara as well as the 'Luritja line' communities in the Northern Territory such as Kintore, Mt Liebig, Papunya and Haasts Bluff. This report was the result of a significant collaboration between educators, stakeholders and policymakers. Three contributors to the report suggest that the report's recommendations were ultimately not taken up because the three jurisdictions were unable to agree at the political level about the proposed accountability and delivery models (personal communication 2014). Other reports that discuss the role of education have investigated the wellbeing of children, specifically the sexual abuse of children in the APY Lands (Mulligan, 2008) and more broadly across the Northern Territory (P. Anderson & Wild, 2007), and there have been two significant reviews of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory (B. Wilson, 2014).



An emerging body of literature has sought to prioritise Anangu voices and experiences in education research and literature (Edwards, 1994, 1997; Eikelkamp, 2011). This is an approach I am contributing to through ongoing collaboration and publication with Anangu educators as well as the research undertaken for this thesis (Burton & Osborne, 2014; Minutjukur & Osborne, 2014; Osborne, Lester, Minutjukur, & Tjitayi, 2014; Tjitayi & Osborne, 2014). Kral (Kral, 2012; Kral & Falk, 2004; Kral & Schwab, 2012) highlights the strengths of Yarnangu young people, their love of learning and the value of exploring alternative approaches in the provision of education in the tristate area, with a particular focus on the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. This work explores conditions where young people are highly motivated and enthusiastically engage in both formal and informal learning contexts. The Remote Education Systems project (within the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation) (CRC-REP, 2014) has published a series of articles that focus on the demand side of education delivery (such as students, parents, communities and employers) with a strong focus on remote and very remote education, including the tristate area (Guenther, 2013; Guenther et al., 2013; Guenther & Boyle, 2013; Guenther, Osborne, Arnott, & McRae-Williams, 2015; Osborne, 2013a, 2013b, 2014b; Osborne & Guenther, 2013a, 2013b). Part of my work on this project has been to partner with Anangu educators and community in the research process to prioritise Anangu perspectives in highlighting important educational considerations for the tristate region (Burton & Osborne, 2014; Minutjukur & Osborne, 2014; Ninti One, 2012, 2013; Osborne, 2014a, 2015a; Osborne et al., 2014; Tjitayi & Osborne, 2014). This work shifts the focus from deficit paradigms and externally imagined ‘solutions’ to the ‘problem’ of Anangu education and redefines the debates in Anangu terms (Guenther, 2015a). Strong and repeated themes are the importance of language, culture, Anangu knowledge, family, ecological knowledge, wellbeing and instilling confidence in children for success in school and beyond, as well as the priority of meaningful work (see also Guenther, 2015c; Guenther, 2015d).

As I explain in more detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis, the tristate area (by the definition I have applied for this study) covers around 500 000 km<sup>2</sup>, which equates to around 6% of Australia’s land mass. This region is considered to be very remote (see ABS, 2011a) and populations are relatively small and widely dispersed. This, combined with a relatively recent contact history, limits engagement with broader education debates, policymaking and Indigenous scholarship concerning remote education. As a result, an emerging Indigenous scholarship in Australia (see, for example, Arbon, 2008; P. L. Ford, 2010; Langton, 2009; Nakata, 2007a; D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014; L. Rigney, 1999; Sarra, 2011; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009) represents diverse experiences from outside of the Western Desert context and world view. Simone Tur (Mona Tur’s daughter) (Tur, Blanch, & Wilson, 2010) and Karina Lester (Osborne et al., 2014) are Yankunytjatjara women working in Adelaide-based universities and, importantly, are exploring the Anangu education context from their positions as Anangu within the university sector.

Anangu predominantly speak English as a second, third or fourth language, and this provides another layer of difficulty in communicating important ideas across the school, community, policy

and Indigenous scholarship divide. In Australia, M. Yunupingu (1999) was a ground-breaking remote educator, cultural broker and scholar. He engaged academic debates and incorporated philosophical ideas, grounded in Yolngu epistemology, into practice, particularly through his role as principal at the Yirrkala School in Arnhem Land. His work prioritised Yolngu epistemology and language in remote education discourse, providing frameworks for understanding knowledge, education and aspiration in Yolngu terms. There is an absence of context-specific literature in this regard that can guide Piraṅpa educators in coming to terms with Anangu philosophies and experiences of the world to reposition education practice in tristate schools. Piraṅpa Educators are largely left to work it out for themselves, relying on the contacts and conversations they have with Anangu in the school and community, limited as they are by language and available time and tightly constrained by upward accountability (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) to systemic demands that largely direct the priorities and practice to which these educators adhere (Biesta, 2010; Osborne, 2013a, 2014a; Robinson & Aronica, 2009).

### **The political and media narratives in relation to very remote education**

An issue for discussing available literatures relating to very remote communities is that there is more written in the media than in scholarly analysis. Remote and very remote Australia have made headlines and captured the imagination of politicians of every persuasion over the last ten years. Media attention is almost exclusively focused on negative concerns, as shown in articles such as *Benefits threat for parents as truancy returns to APY Lands* (S. Martin, 2014a), *We have got to stop the abuse* (S. Martin, 2014b), *Language skills poor in 40% of APY children* (S. Martin, 2012) and *NAPLAN report: NT test scores stagnate, Minister calls for 'dramatic structural change' to education* (ABC, 2014, August 18). Here I emphasise such media coverage provides an important context for the study since they set the tone and context for much of the public debate and conceptual resources used in official education practice, providing a challenge to reformulating and rethinking Indigenous education. A number of reports have been commissioned which express the view that remote education has failed (see, for example Forrest, 2014; Gonski et al., 2012; Hughes & Hughes, 2012; Ladwig & Sarra, 2009; Lea et al., 2008; WA DET, 2009; B. Wilson, 2014). Reports investigating concerns in relation to the welfare of children, for example *The Little Children are Sacred* report in the Northern Territory (P. Anderson & Wild, 2007), *The Gordon Inquiry* in Western Australia (Gordon, Hallahan, & Henry, 2002) and the *Mulligan Report* in remote South Australia (Mulligan, 2008), also describe intergenerational failures of governmental policy, standards of family and institutional care and educational outcomes.

This general perception of entrenched social dysfunction and educational failure has resulted in uniformly applied policy actions such as the so-called Intervention in the Northern Territory (Northern Territory Emergency Response, currently known as Stronger Futures) among others. Large-scale social and welfare reforms (see Forrest, 2014) accompany a narrow focus on Closing the Gap (Abbott, 2015, February 11) between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children on the measures of school attendance and test scores on national standardised literacy and numeracy

testing (ACARA, 2014). This is addressed through truancy measures (SEAM and RSAS, see NESAs, 2015; Wright et al., 2012), and prioritising English language instruction featuring low-level, skills-focused pedagogies (Good to Great Schools Australia, 2014; Luke, 2014; B. Wilson, 2014). Boarding school has also become a policy priority for remote education, with local community secondary school provision being wound back in the Northern Territory (see B. Wilson, 2014). These approaches are championed in the public discourse by prominent Aboriginal leaders such as Noel Pearson (Pearson, 2003, 2011, 2014) and Marcia Langton (ABC, 2013, February 26; Langton, 2009).

Narrow and uniform policy approaches that prioritise standards and upward accountability models have been widely criticised by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars alike (Brennan & Zipin, 2008; Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2006; Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003; Sarra, 2011; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). Rigney and Hemming (2014), for example, claim that ‘[b]roader Ngarrindjeri interests are silenced by these quantitative [Closing the Gap] measures’ (p. 540), and further, that the ‘Ngarrindjeri political agenda’ is ‘dislodged’ and ‘the possibilities for a truly transformative reconciliation’ weakened with ‘policies such as Closing the Gap and practical reconciliation’ (pp. 540–541). International shifts towards prioritising similar standards and accountability models, such as is seen in the United States and the United Kingdom, have drawn similar criticism because of the approach’s inattention to issues of social injustice and unequal power (Biesta, 2010; Fabricant & Fine, 2012; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Robinson & Aronica, 2009).

Remote educators find themselves wedged between the system-directed logic of intervention and Closing the Gap and the kinds of claims that Rigney and Hemming (2014) argue can move Aboriginal students closer to a broader justice goal and a ‘truly transformative reconciliation’ (p. 541), where local Aboriginal interests and aspirations are both valued and pursued (see also, Appadurai, 2004; Pearson, 2014). Further, incompatible epistemic modes of knowledge negotiation leave principals and education leaders caught between an approach that privileges quantitative data and analysis and the preferred Indigenous methods of narrative and storytelling (L. Ford, 2005; Nakata, 1998; Smith, 2012; S. Wilson, 2008; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009).

Noel Pearson (2014), an Aboriginal leader from the Cape York region in Queensland, has been actively involved in advising current policies that prioritise punitive approaches and a narrow policy focus in remote schooling, but he also exemplifies the ambiguity and complexity that arises at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007a), where notions of justice, the future and success are not so easily negotiated between contested and (at times) competing social, economic and ideological positions. As an example, Pearson stands as a staunch advocate for boarding schools – to the point that schools he is involved with take no responsibility for education beyond primary school: children are expected and prepared to leave. And yet, there is a potential cost and danger of children leaving that Pearson (2006, p. 2) describes; as a solution, he proposes ‘orbits’ for young people who need to leave the community for education so as to ‘avoid economic integration

becoming a one-way ticket for the young away from their origins, a prospect that many parents and community elders dread’.

While he tends to inform narrow, simplistic and punitive state-led interventions that prioritise English language instruction and boarding school programs in remote education nationally (Nicholls, 2009), Pearson also understands the enormity and complexity of what is at stake for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the process of political conflict and struggle. In his quarterly essay (2014), he recounts the Tasmanian Aboriginal experience of calculated genocide in the 1800s, a process motivated by privileging European social and economic development, ‘validated’ by Darwinian notions of Tasmanian Aborigines as lesser beings and justified, almost romanticised, by British authors of the day. Pearson cites disturbing descriptions of Australian Aborigines by Wells and Trollope (2014, p. 9) and also cites well-known author Dickens: ‘I call him a savage ... and the world will be all the better when his place knows him no more’ (2014, p. 10). Pearson then relates such experiences of colonialism to the challenges facing Yolngu in the East Arnhem Land region of the Northern Territory, where in 2008, Galarrwuy Yunupingu presented a petition to then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd asking for constitutional recognition to protect rights to ‘Our way of life in all its diversity’, ‘property rights’, ‘economic independence’ and ‘control of our lives and responsibility for our children’s future’ (Pearson, 2014, p. 2).

Pearson describes the terrible risk of continued colonialist approaches in summarising the 2008 petition from Galarrwuy Yunupingu and the *dilak* elders:

It is no mere essay. It is an existential prayer. A prayer on behalf of a people fearing their future non-existence. Fear that the old trajectory of colonisation and its continuation in the new nation will lead to the disappearance of Yolngu from history. (Pearson, 2014, p. 2)

Pearson also describes the lack of national consensus in engaging the complex spaces between the binaries of development and cultural maintenance, but restates a strong self-determinationist stance where he argues, ‘The only path to closing socio-economic gaps is for indigenous Australians to become active agents in our own development’ (Pearson, 2014, p. 48).

While there are some Indigenous voices in the policy arena, much of the language of policy and its associated practices is not led by Indigenous people but rather continues old forms of colonial relationship and governance. This makes it important to foreground current debates among Indigenous scholars, particularly in relation to knowledge work and related educational and post-colony questions.

### **Indigenous scholarship and epistemology**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars such as Nakata (2007a), Rigney (1999), Arbon (2008) and Ford (2010) highlight that Indigenous epistemologies, cosmologies, ontologies and axiologies vastly differ and are (at times) diametrically opposed in their essence to the values and

neoliberal assumptions that underpin Western education and society more broadly (see Guenther, 2013).

Internationally, this point of difference is widely recognised by Indigenous academics such as Smith (2012), Bishop (2011), Wilson (2008), Grande (2009) and Corbiere (2000). In recognising the negative impact that the systematic emphasis on prioritising dominant Western philosophy and cultural norms has on Indigenous students, calls to decolonise research and education spaces are made by Indigenous scholars (L. Rigney, 1999; Smith, 1999) within the frame of the ‘anti-colonial critique’ (Nakata et al., 2012, p. 121). Nakata et al. (2012) describe negative experience of marginalisation through colonisation as common among ‘non-Western’ peoples in their interactions with Western society and education:

Decolonial theorists from Latin America now inform an international field of ‘decolonising thought’ and share ‘a view of coloniality as a fundamental problem’ (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p. 2). Across the globe Indigenous peoples, in common with other colonised populations, also assert a ‘definitive rejection of “being told” ... what we are, what our ranking is in relation to the ideal of *humanitas* and what we have to do to be recognised as such’ (Mignolo, 2009, p. 161). (Nakata et al., 2012, p. 123)

In recognising these calls for a definitive rejection of coloniality, Nakata et al. (2012) highlight the limitations of the anti-colonial critique in that:

Critique of the Western is not sufficient for the defence of Indigenous systems of thought or the re-building of Indigenous lives and communities. And so an imperative of decoloniality and a central task of Indigenous people, including scholars in this field, is ‘decolonial knowledge-making’ that reasserts and draws in concepts and meanings from Indigenous knowledge and systems of thought and experience of the colonial. (Nakata et al., 2012, p. 124)

They propose pedagogical tools for engaging at the ‘complex knowledge interface in Indigenous knowledge production’ (2012, p. 124). Within Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island regions, communities and families cannot be defined as a homogenous collective. Vastly differing geographies, histories, experiences of colonisation, languages, cultures and localised politics shape a diverse and complex contextual landscape. This positions nationalised policies and approaches that result in uniform reproduction of Western education models unlikely to succeed across the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities from the outset. Seeking to reject colonial positioning in education and society is not an end in itself, but an entrée to a broader awareness of the complexities of the knowledge and cultural interface and thus, Nakata et al. do not advocate the quick logic of ‘cause-effect’ or ‘problem-solution’ reasoning and its application to practice for Indigenous contexts as the way to traverse these complexities (2012, pp. 132–133).

So where do committed and enthusiastic educators begin, anchored as they are in their own non-Indigenous and often metropolitan-oriented experience of the world? More than ever, remote educators are faced with high-stakes upward accountability measures (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) and

system-led demands (see, for example, Guenther, 2013; Osborne, 2013a; Osborne et al., 2014) with increasing social and political complexity. ‘Rejecting coloniality’ (Mignolo, 2009) and engaging ‘the complex knowledge interface’ (Nakata et al., 2012) of Anangu schooling, education and community life require more than a commitment to the political language of ‘consultation’ and ‘talking to people’ (see Delpit, 1993). Instead, Nakata et al. argue the importance of engaging ‘the politics of knowledge production and ultimately the politics of their location and of social reproduction’ (2012, p. 135).

Currently, very remote schools are judged against national measures and standards such as attendance rates; NAPLAN results (ACARA, 2011); school completion rates; student retention; and transition to further training, education or employment. The overwhelming government policy and media view is that very remote schools are considered to be failing both in education terms and also against broader measures such as subsequent rates of employment (Forrest, 2014; Hughes & Hughes, 2012; Lea et al., 2008; M. Long & North, 2009; O’Keefe et al., 2012; Purdie & Buckley, 2010; Smee, 2013; B. Wilson, 2014). Despite focusing on a handful of policy interventions and actions (Abbott, 2015; ABC, 2013, February 26; Alice Springs News, 2011; Metherell, 2013; Osborne, 2014b), recent reviews of progress indicate that outcomes on these standardised measures have shown little improvement in very remote schools, including across schools in the tristate area (ABC, 2014, August 18; COAG Reform Council, 2013; Guenther, 2013; S. Martin, 2014a; Osborne et al., 2014).

Despite the strength of the deficit and failure narrative as a default position, many have argued that the logic and assumptions that underpin this narrative must be challenged and alternative understandings of ‘success’ highlighted and advocated for (Biesta, 2010; Bishop, 2011; Comber & Kamler, 2004; Delpit, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1991; Milner, 2008; Moll et al., 1992; Osborne & Guenther, 2013a; Osborne et al., 2014; Robinson & Aronica, 2009; Wearne & Yunupingu, 2011).

Nakata et al. (2012) describe historically power-laden engagement with colonialism for Torres Strait Islanders in that:

[Torres Strait] ... Islander analysis of the Islander position *vis-a-vis* the imposed colonial order was always limited by the inaccessibility of the underlying organisation of imposed ‘outside’ knowledge, its logic and practices. (p. 126)

They argue for ‘decolonial knowledge production’ (p. 129) as a process for ‘the re-building of Indigenous lives and communities’ (p. 124). Building on critique of colonialism and dominant discourse in Indigenous education, Nakata et al. (2012) call for students preparing to work in Indigenous contexts to recognise the:

... limits of current language and discourse for navigating the complexities of knowledge production Indigenous people now must engage in the quest to determine our futures knowingly to continue on. (p. 136)

This thesis seeks to contribute to a deeper appreciation of complexities and differences across tristate community contexts and to encourage dialogue and knowledge production as a means of resisting colonial approaches to education provision and renegotiating new possibilities through power-sensitive dialogue (see Haraway, 2004).

### **Critical race theory: combating deficit narratives**

Critical race theorists interrogate and challenge the various power dynamics that perpetuate dominant culture perspectives, values and, in particular, stereotypical views of minority students and their communities. Critical race theory tends to focus on North American education and therefore has limitations in the remote Australian Aboriginal education context; however, it is particularly useful in articulating and challenging the construction of deficit narratives of ‘the other’ (see, for example, Milner, 2008; Sarra, 2011; Smith, 2012). This tendency to see ‘other’ (non-dominant culture) communities as behind, lesser or somehow deficient (Comber & Kamler, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Milner, 2008) in the shaping of education provision is a shared experience and strongly influences education policy and discourse in tristate communities. Comber and Kamler (2004, p. 293) claim that ‘generations of teachers have been inducted into [these] counter-productive discourses’ and that ‘pervasive deficit discourses are still so dominant in classrooms and staffrooms’. Their finding is reflected in remote schooling discourse in Australia (B. Wilson, 2014). Constant revisiting of these discourses leads to reporting on this perceived deficit as ‘fact in media coverage of young people and schooling’ (p. 293). Further:

Panics, crises and ‘failures’ of individuals, groups, schools and states are produced by the very same discourses that constitute and blame certain groups in society as lacking and responsible for their lack. (Comber & Kamler, 2004, p. 293)

The deficit discourse loop Comber and Kamler describe is found in Australian remote education, where deficit discourse is perpetuated by educators (Good to Great Schools Australia, 2014; B. Wilson, 2014), substantiated by journalists (ABC, 2014, August 18; S. Martin, 2012) and subsequent blame attributed to the students’ families and communities by policymakers (Abbott, 2015, February 11; Forrest, 2014; S. Martin, 2014a; Tudge, 2014).

Drawing on the work of Moll (Moll et al., 1992) where teachers act as ethnographers to better understand the students’ ‘funds of knowledge’ and Thomson’s (2002) ‘idea that all children have “virtual schoolbags” that are full but only some children get the opportunity to make use of what’s inside during their school lives’ (p. 296), Comber and Kamler (2004) argue that educators are vital to student achievement, but remain relatively disconnected to research practice and knowledge production (see Ladson-Billings, 1991). The argument that educational outcomes are improved where dominant culture teachers are better attuned to the life-worlds and lived experiences of their students from ‘other’ experiences is strongly supported by the work of Russell Bishop, a Māori scholar focusing on Indigenous education in New Zealand (Bishop et al., 2003), and American scholars such as Delpit (1993), Ladson-Billings (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1999) and Milner (2008)

when examining the experiences of African-American children in urban and inner city schools. This is also strongly argued in Australian Indigenous education contexts by prominent Indigenous educator Chris Sarra (2011).

Milner (2008, p. 1574) concurs with Ladson-Billings (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1999) in arguing the need to reject representations of students of colour as ‘somehow deficit and lacking’ (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 219) but notes that a realistic discussion that is not romanticised is required, stating, ‘There are negative situations that deserve attention in urban schools’. Here, Milner argues that ‘difference or different from suburban, mostly White, middle-to-upper socio-economic status, does not necessarily mean deficit or deficient’ and urges educators to instead consider the question, ‘What are the assets that those in urban education bring into the learning environment?’ (pp. 1574–1575).

Milner’s focus on the experiences of African-American students in urban education closely mirrors narratives of concerns and complexities in Australian remote schooling contexts. His findings summarise the work of successful teachers: high expectations and culturally responsive (Gay, 2000); culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994); providing students with ‘opportunities to develop and exert voice and perspective in the classroom’ and multiple chances for academic and social success (Ladson-Billings, 1994). These findings have strong correlations with the work of Australian scholars such as Lingard (Lingard et al., 2003), Zipin (2013) and Hayes (Hayes et al., 2006) and Indigenous scholars such as Sarra (2011), Nakata (2007b) and Rigney (1999). All of these voices reject the logic of deficit and catch-up approaches to judging ‘coloured’, Indigenous, remote, disabled, poor and non-English speaking students on the basis of ‘whitestream’ institutional norms, aspirations and their associated measures of ‘success’ (Milner, 2008, p. 1574).

Critical race theory can help to conceptualise alternative understandings of success in tristate schooling. Ladson-Billings (1994, p. 15), for example, argues that successful teachers engage in a ‘different route to ensure the growth and development of their students’. In summarising his earlier (2007) work, Milner offers insights that can assist teachers in tristate schools to see the importance of being aware of their own position and bias in education exchange and to re-position their thinking and language about Anangu students and their community outside of existing deficit narratives:

Successful teachers in urban schools envision life beyond their present situations; come to know themselves culturally, linguistically, gendered, racially, economically, and socially in relation to others; speak possibility and not destruction both inside and outside of the classroom regarding their students; care and demonstrate that care; and change their negative, deficit, counterproductive thinking in order to change their actions in the classrooms with students. (2008, p. 1574)

Of importance here is identifying the assumption that teachers can have influence and be ‘successful’ in working with students from outside the ‘culture of power’ (Delpit, 1993). Bishop’s findings are similar in New Zealand (Bishop et al., 2003) where Māori students identify teacher



capacity to understand, respect and build on the cultural positions and experiences of students as being one of the most significant factors contributing to their educational success. Education can play an important part in pursuing justice and reconciliation, but the foundational assumptions of rejecting deficit thinking are needed. Moll (Moll et al., 1992) describes the assets that students bring with them to school as ‘funds of knowledge’. Significant differences between Anangu and Pīranpa epistemologies and ontologies make it difficult for new people (such as teachers) to recognise and value these ‘other’ knowledges. Community relationships are vitally important to begin to gain an appreciation and a basis for recognition (Fraser, 2009) of these community assets (Moll et al., 1992; Zipin, 2013). ‘Learning local’ challenges the wisdom of universal logic and deficit discourse, shifting students and communities from notions of ‘other’ and shaping educators’ understanding of local community-generated values and aspirations (Moll et al., 1992; Osborne & Guenther, 2013a; Zipin, 2013). There are a number of resources and handbooks that can assist in orienting Pīranpa to the local context of Anangu communities (M. S. Bain, 1979, 2006; Eckert & Hudson, 2010; Hargrave, 1991).

### **Contact zone**

Martin Nakata (2007a) describes the space of cultural and epistemological engagement as the ‘cultural interface’. Nakata’s work explores the negotiation of complex spaces that exist between simplistic and binarised notions: black and white, us and them, Western and Indigenous knowledge, for example. More recently, Rigney and Hemming (2014) draw on the work of Pratt (1992) in adopting the language of the ‘contact zone’:

... the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. (Pratt, 1992, p. 6)

Drawing on Australian scholarship (Carter, 1992; Somerville & Perkins, 2003), Rigney and Hemming (2014, p. 544) argue for ‘the potential of using the “contact zone” as a conceptual framework for researching contemporary cross-cultural relations’. The language of the contact zone shifts the parameters of cultural interaction to include broader issues that face Indigenous peoples such as survival, the struggle for land and sea rights and the right to self-determination. These are important considerations within Anangu education if educators are to engage the priorities and the wider community context of students’ lives.

This study is an example of an attempt to engage in dialogue between Western educators and Aboriginal community members within the various complexities, ambiguities and limitations of the contact zone. Being a researcher who can apply Pitjantjatjara language skills enables me to position this work within the contact zone differently. Working from Anangu narratives and in local language offers alternative, more nuanced dialogue spaces where points of cultural, historical and epistemological difference within Anangu and broader Indigenous experiences can be explored.

## Standpoint theory

Standpoint theory articulates and incorporates knowledges generated from the margins of social and institutional power and it provides an important theoretical frame for this study. Harding (1992) explains:

While standpoint theory has been most thoroughly articulated in almost two decades of feminist writings, similar arguments appear in the knowledge and policy claims of postcolonials, people of third-world descent in the first world, lesbians and gays, criticisms of the class system, etc. (p. 581)

In this way, standpoint theory offers pedagogical tools for ‘less partial’ scientific practice. Positivist notions of science as unquestionably both objective and universal were increasingly challenged by feminist scholars in the 1970s and 1980s (Fox Keller, 1984; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1987, 1992; Hartsock, 1983). For example, Haraway (1988) argues that ‘studies of science and technology ... have made available a very strong social constructionist argument for all forms of knowledge claims, most certainly and especially scientific ones’ (p. 576). Seeing knowledge as situated (Haraway, 2004) within contexts shaped by various culture, power, gender, class and race positions is important in rejecting the notion that scientific study is somehow ‘neutral’ (Harding, 1992), objective (Haraway, 1988) and free of the influences of the observer’s inherent assumptions and philosophical beliefs that strongly shape the lens through which they observe the world around them. The ‘neutrality ideal’, Harding (1992) argues, ‘provides no resistance to the production of systematically distorted results of research’ (p. 568). Further, she explains that:

[The neutrality ideal] certifies as value-neutral, normal, natural, and therefore not political at all the existing scientific policies and practices through which powerful groups can gain the information and explanations that they need to advance their priorities. (Harding, 1992, pp. 568–569)

The struggle to produce scientific knowledge from the social margins of scientific institutions, then, is inherently political in firstly rejecting the ‘neutrality ideal’ where the ‘prevailing rules of scientific institutions and their intellectual traditions’ are implicitly prioritised and secondly, in ‘begin[ning] to discern the possibility of and requirements for a “strong objectivity” by more careful analysis of what is wrong with the neutrality ideal’ (Harding, 1992, p. 569). Harding further argues that detachment for the purpose of ‘objectivity’ in the social sciences is not ‘impersonality’ where the observer might ‘act as if s/he were not a social person, or to separate even more from those s/he studies’, but ‘instead, critically to distance from the assumptions that shape *his or her own* “spontaneous perceptions and convictions”’ (p. 571). She says that it is useless to ‘frame one’s research questions or to pursue them only within the priorities of [scientific] institutions, practices and conceptual schemes’ (pp. 580–581). Working from the ‘margins’ (p. 581) also enables the possibility for other areas of interest and enquiry to emerge, where the right to pose important

questions worthy of research and further exploration might move beyond the domain of the privileged and institutionally powerful.

Historical power-laden, institutional approaches to research and education in Indigenous communities have been challenged by Indigenous scholars as unequal and in need of ‘decolonising’ (Nakata, 2007; Smith, 1999). To this end, it is important that, as an ‘outside researcher’ (Foley, 2003) working in the Anangu community context, I am able to identify and critique ‘the widely shared values and interests of [my] own institutionally shaped research assumptions’ (p. 572). These ‘culture-wide assumptions ... are among the most difficult to identify [and] make their way into the research process and shape the claims that result’ (p. 578). Education and research for social justice (see, for example, Appadurai, 2004; Bishop, 2011; Lingard et al., 2003; Smith, 2012) is indeed a worthy goal, but Harding explains that the pursuit of the ‘strong objectivity’ she argues for is just a first step:

Listening carefully to what marginalized people say – with fairness, honesty, and detachment – and trying to understand their life worlds are crucial first steps in gaining less partial and distorted accounts of the entire social order; but these could not be the last step. (Harding, 1992, p. 583)

The notion of gaining ‘less partial’ perspective is crucial. In engaging a standpoint methodology, it is important that I understand the limitations of my own perspective, but work to gain and provide a ‘less partial and distorted account’ by being aware of and making explicit the broader assumptions and philosophical positions, both individual and of the institutions that I am located within. The language of Western institutions in describing Indigenous peoples and cultures has framed the nature of scientific engagement with Indigenous communities and research, frequently privileging Western epistemologies and working from an assumption of epistemic superiority. But as Nakata (2007a) explains, this relationship demands critique, and revisiting the use of language is important:

In the academy and on the ground, the talk of Indigenous knowledge systems, rather than of cultures, does bring Indigenous knowledge, its systems, its expressions, and traditions of practice into a different relation with Western science than was possible through the discipline of anthropology. (p. 8)

Appadurai (2006) also compares the use of ‘culture’ against ‘science’ or ‘economy’, calling for the ‘deparochialising’ of research as a means for realising democratic potential and enabling a more equal citizenship. The future-oriented nature of scientific inquiry embeds ‘keywords such as wants, needs, expectations, calculations’, and these ‘have become hardwired into the discourse of economics’. Here, ‘the cultural actor is a person of and from the past, and the economic actor, a person of the future’ (p. 60). He argues that ‘deep-seated images of the opposition of culture to economy’ (much like Pearson’s culture/development binary; see Pearson, 2014) need to be challenged and that:

In strengthening the capacity to aspire, conceived as a cultural capacity, especially among the poor, the future-oriented logic of development could find a natural ally, and the poor could find the resources required to contest and alter the conditions of their own poverty. (Appadurai, 2004, p. 59)

Standpoint theory points outside researchers to an awareness of the institutional assumptions they represent and, often implicitly, reproduce. For voices speaking from the margins, such as Indigenous peoples, a standpoint epistemological approach offers potential for their histories, epistemologies, aspirations and questions of interest to be included, even privileged, within dialogue concerning their knowledges, lives and scientifically generated truths ‘about them’ (see, for example Nakata, 2007b). But standpoints must be produced. Through a process of struggle, articulation and argument, less partial accounts of the ‘truth’ about Indigenous lives and experiences becomes possible.

Nakata (2007a) describes the process of seeking “‘to forge”, following Harding, a critical Indigenous standpoint’ (p. 11). Further, the term ‘standpoint’ in theory is not interchangeable with ‘perspective or viewpoint’ and the use of standpoint within theory is far more complex and contested than simply presenting ‘subjective narrative’ and drawing analysis from ‘the aggregation of stories from lived experience’ (p. 11). Drawing on Pohlhaus (2002), Nakata argues that ‘standpoint accounts ... depend on reflexivity and the distinction between experience and standpoint’ (p. 11):

Being ... [an Indigenous knower] does not yield a ready-made critical stance on the world, but rather the situation of ... [Indigenous knowers] provides the questions from which one must start in order to produce more objective knowledge ... Standpoint, then, does not refer “to a particular social position, but rather is an engagement with the kinds of questions found there”. (Pohlhaus, 2002, p. 287 in Nakata, 2007b, p. 11)

It is not enough to record stories and share experiences of Indigenous lives in order to engage Indigenous standpoint accounts; Nakata argues that an ‘Indigenous standpoint ... has to be produced’ (p. 11). He summarises standpoint theory as ‘a method of enquiry, a process for making more intelligible “the corpus of objectified knowledge about us” as it emerges and organises our lived realities’ (Nakata, 2007a, p. 12).

Standpoint theory has its critics. Its development ‘around different interpretations of other theories associated with Marxist approaches, poststructuralism, and postmodernism’ has drawn criticism with reference to “‘epistemic relativism”: the endless fragmentation across categories of difference’ (Nakata, 2007a, p. 12). However, in *Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines*, Nakata (2007b) explains the need to account for multiple voices and multiple Indigenous standpoints where ‘any new theoretical framework that attempts to include Islander standpoints must see the Interface as primarily a site of struggle over the meaning of our experience’ (p. 210). This ‘struggle over meaning also includes struggles over meaning between Islanders themselves’ (p. 211). Here Nakata highlights the range of factors that shape standpoints differently within the context of a

broader Islander standpoint account, including ‘gender, heritage, levels of education, access to different knowledge, geographical location, historical experience, religious affiliation, age, social roles, other beliefs and so on’ (p. 211).

Both Nakata (2007b) and Moreton-Robinson (2013) recognise the need to describe distinct Indigenous standpoint(s) within broader descriptions of standpoint theory and knowledge production. Moreton-Robinson (2013) explains that this is primarily as Indigenous people speak from a position as the embodiment of interconnection with their ‘respective countries’ where relationships to country through ‘creator and ancestral birth’ form the ‘basis of Indigenous sovereignty, which informs our standpoint as embodied socio-cultural and historically situated subjects of knowledge’ (p. 335). Moreton-Robinson argues the need for an Indigenous women’s standpoint theory, criticising Nakata’s work as being ‘gender blind’ (p. 338) in a perceived lack of attention to ‘the inextricable link between theory, politics and practice and the ability to generate a problematic from women’s embodied lived experience’ (p. 339). Despite these points of disagreement amongst Indigenous scholars, these debates point to important shared understandings, specifically, that singular, universal notions of Indigenous identity, knowledge and representation are inadequate, and that standpoint theory can be useful in assisting the articulation of diverse standpoints across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia.

Within the Anangu context, there exist different historical interactions with colonialism (such as Yankunytjatjara interaction with cattle stations, see Edwards, 1992), diverse geographies (where, for example, ‘sandhill’ people and ‘hills’ (rocky/mountainous regions) people are described as distinct groups within the Mann Ranges region, see Edwards, 1992; Tindale, 1935) and continued diverse modes of political and economic engagement through various land tenure arrangements, state and territory political arrangements and diverse economic opportunities. The points of difference within Anangu experience support Nakata and Moreton-Robinson’s argument for the need to move beyond singular notions of an Indigenous standpoint. Drawing on Nakata’s (2007b) descriptions of Islander struggle, I need to recognise that Anangu standpoint accounts are no more or no less ‘authentic’ than another. It is also important that I consider the context of diverse Anangu interactions with colonialism across intergenerational and geographical spaces. Additionally, Anangu communities continue to experience immense and rapid social change that dramatically shapes engagement at the ‘cultural interface’ (Nakata, 2007a). The speed of social and cultural change is further influenced by increasing access to mobile and digital technologies, improved roads and access to ‘outside’ social contexts, including increasing saturation of Pirrapa living in and visiting Anangu communities for the purpose of service delivery and so on. Moreton-Robinson (2013) describes these problematics as ‘intersecting oppressions’ that ‘situate us in different power relations and affect our different individual experiences under social, political, historical and material conditions that we share either consciously or unconsciously’ (p. 340).

It is important to draw a distinction here between standpoint accounts and *Tjukurpa* (dreaming/law). Sacred stories are told by entrusted Elders as an expression of Anangu culture, history and law. Anangu law (*Tjukurpa*) is eternal and unchanging. As personal, sacred and historical stories are shared and privileged within this thesis, standpoint dialogue is encouraged by way of ‘decolonial knowledge production’ (Nakata et al., 2012, p. 129), but Anangu epistemology, sacred stories and axiologies are not on trial to test the strength of these narratives as incontestable accounts of ‘the truth’ (see, for example, Nakata, 2007a, p. 12) on Western epistemological grounds. The diverse standpoint accounts told here shed light on the inadequacy of uniform, colonial representations of the ‘other’ (Sarra, 2011; Smith, 1999) and the problematic nature of universal, top-down neoliberal policy approaches in communities of significant epistemic difference, such as the tristate area.

In tristate education, in a situation of continuing unequal power, Anangu voices are positioned as subordinate in education dialogue. Decisions about the purpose of education and what type of instruction best suits Anangu children remain at the discretion of those least ‘attentive’ to the context of Anangu lives. With Indigenous Standpoint, the ‘accounts of relations that “knowers” located in more privileged social positions are not attentive to’ (Nakata, 2007a, p. 12) can lead to a ‘rational and reasoned’ argument that can be scrutinised and accounted for on the grounds that the argument develops into what Harding (1992) calls ‘strong objectivity’ (p. 11).

Working from Anangu standpoints, it is possible to ‘gain a causal, critical view’ of the institutions, their priorities and assumptions (Harding, 1992, p. 581) from epistemological, ontological, axiological and cosmological positions located at the margins of institutional logic and power. Adopting a standpoint methodology allows me to move beyond an account *about* Anangu lives and instead, work *from* Anangu accounts of their own lives and knowledge claims and to encourage a process of speaking back from the margins as similar language, struggles and values emerge between and among the various Anangu standpoints. Building the conceptual frame and language for the articulation of Anangu standpoints and values located at the margins of institutional ‘common sense’ offers potential for dialogue where Anangu standpoints can be brought to the attention of those who are least attentive to the existence of ‘other’ standpoints, yet hold the greatest power over what is best in the education of children from these communities.

### **Pursuing socially just education: the need for standpoint dialogue**

Social justice must always be considered from a perspective which is grounded in the daily lives of Indigenous Australians.

Social justice is about what you face when you get up in the morning.

It is awakening in a house with an adequate water supply, cooking facilities and sanitation.

It is the ability to nourish your children and send them to school where their education not only equips them for employment but reinforces their knowledge and appreciation of their cultural inheritance.

It is the prospect of genuine employment and good health; a life of choices and opportunities, free from discrimination. (Dodson, 1993)

Dodson describes here the act of addressing issues of social justice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in very pragmatic terms that might be found in current policy approaches such as Closing the Gap (see Abbott, 2015, February 11), but argues beyond the narrow frame of school attendance, minimal benchmark literacy and numeracy scores and employment to include the need for education to reinforce ‘their knowledge and appreciation of their cultural inheritance’. Further, employment, good health and opportunities, he argues, need to be ‘free from discrimination’. School programs that ensure children are fed and attending school, for example, can be important in ensuring school is welcoming and address basic wellbeing concerns, but fall short of addressing deeper issues of historical and continued unequal power where ‘indigenous peoples are still marginal and do not possess the power to transform history into justice’ (Smith, 1999, p. 35). The need for Australian education leaders to see social justice as critical to underpinning good classroom practice is also highlighted by Lingard et al. (2003, p. 49) in stating, ‘While good pedagogies and good assessment practices matter, they need to be supported by a broad system commitment to social justice’.

Simply adopting the language of culturally appropriate, ‘two way’ (Harris, 1990), social inclusion, or multiculturalism can also be inadequate in redressing historically power-laden engagement, as this language, unless unpacked, troubled and re-contextualised, can simply act as a thin veil for what Brennan and Zipin (2008) term the “‘nationally unifying” priority (and implied superiority) of Western culture’ (p. 104). Further, they argue that globally, Western education in its tendency towards unequal power distribution continues to marginalise Indigenous peoples, leading to sustained claims for ‘recognition’ (see also Fraser, 2009) rather than exploring the potential of the ‘redistribution’ (p. 102) of Indigenous knowledges and cultural claims. Delpit (1993) describes the implicit social and academic structures where the ‘culture of power’ is enacted in classrooms, but those from ‘within the culture of power’ are ‘frequently least aware of it’ (p. 122). This silencing of ‘other’ (Sarra, 2011; Smith, 1999) voices in education dialogue through a continued failure of educators to recognise alternative epistemologies and priorities consigns students from outside the ‘culture of power’ to a position of needing to ‘fight cultural hegemony’. ‘It is not they, the children who should change’, Delpit argues, ‘but the schools’ (p. 120).

The pursuit of socially just educational leadership in Anangu education requires Piranpa educators and leaders first to acknowledge that the culture of power that is implicitly redistributed in schools and classrooms exists and to recognise that historical inequities and injustices continue to limit the potential for transformation and justice in Anangu schools. Pragmatic approaches to pursuing

social justice priorities – such as encouraging regular school attendance, ensuring student safety and wellbeing, pedagogical considerations and a focus on transitions to employment – are important, but seeking opportunities to redress power inequities through the ‘recognition’ and ‘redistribution’ of Anangu language, knowledges and histories as well as broader Anangu cultural, educational and economic priorities is necessary for moving closer towards what Derrida terms the ‘impossibility’ of a ‘pure justice’ (in Brennan & Zipin, 2008, p. 112) and thus achieving a more just outcome. Boomer (1999) provides a useful perspective in describing ‘pragmatic radical’ teaching where educators must hold a sense of the utopian in the one hand while maintaining a strong hold on the pragmatic in the other in order to make some ground in progressing towards a justice goal. A singular focus on the pragmatic concerns of teaching within a skills or ‘catch up’ (Milner, 2008) mode redistributes ‘lesser’ social and academic codes (Delpit, 1993), whereas purely utopian ideals lack grounding in the pragmatic context of education where actions are required to realise positive change in the daily lives of students and their families.

Rigney and Hemming (2014) describe a similar struggle within the ‘contact zone’ where ‘Ngarrindjeri interests’ (p. 540), stated in somewhat utopian terms of ‘justice, cultural heritage, self-determination’ (p. 540) and so on are ‘denied recognition in the public Australian context’ and silenced by [the] quantitative measures [of Closing the Gap]’ (p. 540). Their use of the concept ‘contact zone’ issues a call for more nuanced and pragmatic engagement between the spaces of simplistic pragmatism and Derrida’s impossible pure justice (Derrida, in Brennan & Zipin, 2008, p. 112) on Ngarrindjeri terms.

### **Brokering the spaces of Anangu lives, schools, politics and Indigenous scholarship**

There is a need for ‘power-sensitive’ (Haraway, 2004, p. 93) dialogue to shift policy language, rhetoric and logic from a colonialist approach where policy and practice continue to privilege the powerful in their efforts to reach out to the ‘marginal other’ (Nakata, 2007b; Pearson, 2011; Sarra, 2011; Smith, 1999). As Pearson describes, a continuation of this trajectory ultimately empowers a journey to (Indigenous) ‘non-existence’ (Pearson, 2014, p. 2). Anangu are thus positioned to remain the object (Moreton-Robinson, 1998) of research practice, policy formation and subsequent actions as well as in broader academic and education discourse. Indigenous scholars consequently argue not merely for the consideration or incorporation of Indigenous perspectives in Indigenous research, but more importantly, for the privileging of Indigenous peoples as central in framing and pursuing questions of interest to Indigenous lives (see, for example, Baydala et al., 2006; Bishop, 2011; Nakata, 2007b; L. Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012; S. Wilson, 2008). Nakata (2007b) calls for a recognition of the tendency for Indigenous peoples to be objectified within research disciplines as a means of maintaining unequal power relations. He further argues that these disciplines need to be disrupted (‘savaged’, per the book’s title) in order to reposition power relationships between Indigenous peoples and anthropological pursuits of knowledge formation ‘about’ them.



In this thesis, I am attempting to privilege Anangu voices and epistemologies in standpoint dialogue. This requires venues for dialogue across points of power and epistemological difference, where voices might speak from the margins (Harding, 1992) and are heard (Delpit, 1993) on their own terms. I am brokering a virtual (within the text) conversation across historical, geographical, epistemological and professional differences where significant difference and diversity make standpoint conversation between Anangu, educators and school leaders, Indigenous scholarship, education systems and policymakers difficult. An upward accountability environment (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) and high levels of personal and professional demand on very remote school principals (Osborne, 2013a, 2014a) limit opportunities for local Piranpa education leaders to engage in deeper conversations about young people, education and the future across complex points of cultural, linguistic and epistemological difference.

This stance is further explored in Chapter 3, in the methodological framing of the study. From Anangu accounts, the concept of meaningful learning and the building of productive lives is by no means limited to the domain of the local school (see Kral & Falk, 2004; Osborne, 2013a). This thesis works between the contextual layers that inform the lives of Anangu students as they arrive in their local classrooms, frequently under the tuition of Piranpa (non-Indigenous) teachers who may have very limited understanding or experience to account for the cultural and knowledge positions that students bring to the daily exchanges that occur between teachers and students (see also, Delpit, 1993). An outcome of this thesis should be a resource to assist Piranpa educators in their attempts to ‘hear’ (Delpit, 1993; Osborne, 2014a) and to better understand Anangu lives, values and aspirations in their work as educators where implicit Western social and academic norms stand as an island of culture in very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. I also hope to encourage further standpoint dialogue among Anangu, between Anangu and other Indigenous voices and communities and between Anangu, educators and the institutions that provide education in tristate communities. Such outcomes will depend on the quality of the interactions and ‘dialogue’ that privilege Anangu, in line with the conceptual and ethical stance developed in this chapter.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Ethical and methodological considerations in Indigenous research

There are many difficulties in conducting research in remote Aboriginal communities, including the need to come to terms with historical and continuing issues of unequal power that are enacted in research relationships. Yet such research is necessary if Piranpa educators in remote Aṅangu schools are to better understand Aṅangu histories, philosophies, values and worldview in order to more effectively position themselves and their work towards a ‘more just’ (Brennan & Zipin, 2008, p. 112) education. A methodological approach needs to be constructed to reverse the historical and continuing colonialist approaches and attitudes whereby Aṅangu are constantly viewed in terms of deficit (for example, Comber & Kamler, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994; D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014; Smith, 2012). To pursue a more ‘power-sensitive’ (Haraway, 2004) research method, a careful consideration of my own position and assumptions, both personal and of the institutions I represent (see Harding, 1992), is needed. A ‘power-sensitive’ methodological approach requires me to privilege Aṅangu voices so that Piranpa educators and education leaders in tristate remote schools can learn to ‘hear’ (Delpit, 1993; Osborne, 2014a) diverse Aṅangu standpoint accounts in relation to their young people, education and the future differently. These privileged narratives can offer alternatives to the dominant voices and ideas that position Aṅangu young people as being in crisis and in need of rescue via large-scale, universalist interventions and where education is seen as a key battleground in such debates (Forrest, 2014; Hughes & Hughes, 2012; B. Wilson, 2014). This study aims to inform education practice across the tristate area through staging standpoint dialogue between Aṅangu and experienced and trusted Piranpa educators who are suggested by Aṅangu participants. The research questions, in alignment with a pro-Aṅangu ethical stance, need to find ways to address and foreground Aṅangu knowledges to educate Piranpa educators who come to work in remote schooling. These main question is:

- A. What are the values, dreams and beliefs that Aṅangu hold in relation to young people, education and the future?

And sub-questions:

- B. How have committed educators, nominated by Aṅangu, taken account or been unaware of these positions in their work?
- C. What are the possibilities for standpoint dialogue in Aṅangu education that is open, honest, power-sensitive and ethically attuned?

In addressing these questions, the study is designed to build close relationships with Aṅangu participants, in order to produce extended narratives about their experiences of learning and interactions with schooling and their dreams and beliefs about young people, education and the future. Historical background is then developed to help clarify the emerging Aṅangu narratives and position the reader to learn to ‘hear’ (Delpit, 1993; Osborne, 2014a) and better understand Aṅangu

experiences of education in the tristate area. Finally, following the nomination of key Anangu participants, Piranpa educators who have worked with Anangu are interviewed. These latter interviews are then staged as a textual ‘dialogue’ to address the common and diverse experiences and perspectives among Anangu interviewed. In the process, a number of standpoints among Anangu and between Anangu and Piranpa are identified.

Key issues needing methodological clarification and discussion to provide the rationale for this design include addressing issues of historically unequal power and voice in research and education dialogue, working across points of language, cultural and epistemological difference, and some of the pragmatic considerations for working in remote community contexts. This chapter examines the underlying ethical and methodological stances developed for this study. First, I provide an explanation of how I understand my own position and limitations in the Indigenous research space, with discussion that draws on Indigenous scholarship regarding these concerns. I then move to issues of language, translation and discourse analysis across diverse philosophical, cultural and linguistic differences. Finally, I describe the process and timing of the various stages of producing the study, including important tools and understandings for the remote research context.

### **Positioning myself within an Indigenous research context**

As discussed in Chapter 2, standpoint theorists, critical theorists and Indigenous scholars urge researchers and educators to consider the nature of their own position by way of gender, class, culture, religion and race and the associated institutional assumptions represented in research and education exchanges. These experientially derived lenses implicitly shape the way the ‘other’ is viewed (Bourdieu, 1999; Delpit, 1993; Haraway, 2004; Harding, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1999; Milner, 2008; Sarra, 2011; Smith, 2012). Qualitative research and the process of conducting an interview to gain a better understanding of the world is deeply anchored in the context of a ‘social relationship’ (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 608). Adams (2015) describes the need to understand the ‘entanglement’ (p. 1) of the historian and researcher working between research and personal relationship spaces and in the context of stories, in particular where Indigenous stories and European documentation of history straddle significantly different knowledge, political and power positions.

Bourdieu (1999) describes the effort ‘to gain knowledge [science] of our own presuppositions’ as a critical prerequisite to ‘the scientific investigation of presuppositions’ (p. 608). As a non-Indigenous, ‘outside’ (Foley, 2003, p. 46) researcher working in Indigenous research spaces, my own presuppositions demand investigation. To examine my own presuppositions, I turn first to what Indigenous scholars say about ‘outside’ researchers.

Indigenous scholars such as Nakata (2007b), Smith (2012) and Rigney (1999) describe at length the historical tendency for Indigenous research to be conducted by European researchers adopting an anthropological approach in their scrutinising of the ‘colonised other’ (Smith, 1999), where their own ideologies, contextual misunderstandings, inherent racism and institutional priorities shape the

focus and method of Indigenous research. This further marginalises Indigenous peoples in the development of what Nakata (2007a) describes as ‘that body of knowledge, both historical and ongoing, that is produced by others “about us”’ (p. 7). Appadurai (2006, p. 167) suggests that ‘research is normally seen as a high-end, technical activity, available by training and class background to specialists in education, the sciences and related professional fields’. Smith (1999) describes these historically power-laden practices as ‘exploitative’ and ultimately seeking to co-opt ‘Indigenous peoples ... into Western systems of knowledge’ (p. 42), thus further disempowering Indigenous interests and knowledge claims and, in turn, strengthening colonialist interests and authoritative knowledge claims through a process of ‘representation’, ‘comparison’ and ‘evaluation’ of the ‘colonised other’ (p. 43).

Smith (1999) argues that Indigenous research is necessarily about claims of (and on) power and justice:

It is because of this [historically unequal] relationship with power that we have been excluded, marginalised and ‘Othered’... In this sense history is not important for Indigenous peoples because a thousand accounts of ‘the truth’ will not alter the ‘fact’ that indigenous peoples are still marginal and do not possess the power to transform history into justice. (p. 35)

In this thesis, I hope to contribute to Anangu efforts to ‘transform history into justice’ (Smith, 1999, p. 35) by privileging Anangu voices in the retelling of significant historical accounts of Anangu lives, experiences and priorities. Prioritising Anangu accounts is critical in working towards a research method that has the potential to transform, rather than marginalise Anangu voices and lives in the research process. Privileging Anangu voices is an important ethical and methodological consideration in redressing historical and continuing unequal power interactions in Anangu communities and within education dialogue.

It is important that I recognise and acknowledge the limitations that my position and methodological approach afford me in seeking to engage Anangu voices and experiences in research, particularly as oral narrative accounts are transformed into transcripts and contribute to text-based dialogue (see Chapter 10). Historical accounts relating to Anangu are dominated by European (predominantly male) intellectuals, anthropologists, missionaries and adventurers describing their own experiences and convictions about Anangu through various modes of interaction and lengths of time in the field (Basedow, 2008; Duguid, 1963; Edwards, 1988; Elkin, 1938-1939; Finlayson, 1946; Glass, 1978; Hilliard, 1968; Mountford, 1976; Strehlow, 1965, 1971; Tindale, 1937; Wallace & Wallace, 1977). Over the last 20 years, researchers have begun to include Anangu voices in academic literature (Edwards, 1997; Kral, 2012; Osborne, 2013a, 2015a; Young, 2010) and prioritisation (Burton & Osborne, 2014; Eikelkamp, 2011; Minutjukur & Osborne, 2014; Osborne et al., 2014; Tjitayi & Osborne, 2014; Tur et al., 2010), reflecting a wider shift in attitudes to Indigenous research ethics and methods.

Representation of Indigenous voices by ‘outside’ researchers is problematic in that layers of meaning, complexity and context can be brushed over or missed; without consideration of one’s own position, outside researchers can be unaware of the limitations and partiality this creates in generating ‘objective knowledge’ (Harding, 1992). Foley (2003) explains:

Minority researchers ‘have noticed how the white skin of dominant researchers adds to the authoritative posture of European-descent ethnographers’ (Stanfield, 1994, p. 176), which must affect the validity and objectivity creating bias in the research outcomes. (p. 46)

Aileen Moreton-Robinson (1998, p. 276), in reviewing feminist representation of Aboriginal women, argues that ‘the methodology deployed by women anthropologists creates spurious representations which are challenged by the self-presentation of Aboriginal women’s autobiographical narratives’. She also highlights that anthropological methodology can create a “‘traditional” versus “contemporary” binary which is problematised by the conflation of “race” and “culture”’ (p. 276). As such, privileging Anangu accounts beyond merely garnishing my own meta-analysis, where Anangu can speak on their own terms, is an important ethical and methodological consideration in the work of this thesis.

In Anangu communities, my position is more complex than ‘outside researcher’, as I am located within ‘entanglements’ (Adams, 2015, p. 1) of long-standing relationships, family connections and Pitjantjatjara language proficiency. As discussed in Chapter 1, these familial relationships, language capacity and experience of living and working in the communities over many years ‘place’ (Harding, 1992) me within the Anangu cosmological frame of kin and reciprocal relationships and allow easier access to participants, stories and insights. However, this also comes with a double burden for ethical engagement, where I need to ensure that participants’ experience of the research process is both positive and empowering. ‘Entanglements’ of relationship and reciprocal obligation mean there are far more than professional concerns at stake for me if the research is felt to be exploitative or misrepresentative in any way.

Working between ‘outsider’ (Foley, 2003) research and Indigenous knowledge spaces comes with risks that are important to highlight here. In privileging Anangu accounts in education dialogue, there is a risk that educators and policymakers could take the view that such an approach is irrelevant to the pragmatic realities of the day to day challenges of remote schooling, or perhaps constitutes some form of romanticised and antiquated anthropological exercise. However, I am mindful that the knowledge, experiences and perspectives I am seeking to privilege are not my own to represent and therefore I need to prioritise Anangu accounts in the research by working in local language and providing minimally interrupted space for the sharing of stories. How I present Anangu voices through translation and analysis and move between the spaces of Anangu narrators, Piranpa educators, education systems and policymakers need careful consideration.

I have worked in Aboriginal education since 1995, and my work as a remote education leader (Secondary Coordinator, 2003; Deputy Principal, 2004–05; Principal, 2006–08) has afforded me a sense of insider membership to the remote educator and remote education leadership community. I have developed relationships with Anangu since my first trip in 1989 and, through family relationships, have also experienced an unusual level of access to Anangu lives, language and experiences. These experiences highlight to me the need for Piranpa educators to better understand Anangu histories, epistemology and ontology.

One of the limitations for Piranpa educators in taking account of Anangu voices in education dialogue is that of language. I have heard many rousing speeches where Anangu espouse – in English – the need to work together, ‘two-way’ and the like. This is a heartfelt and important sentiment but is over-simplified because of the limitations for many Anangu to explore these ideas further in time-constrained public forums and in English. Interviews in this study therefore were conducted in Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara language to allow Anangu to frame the dialogue in their own terms. This also allows deeper and more nuanced expressions of Anangu priorities and perspectives. Methodologically, working from local language accounts fulfils the claim that I am privileging Anangu voices in this study. But this work is not easy: the volume and depth of Anangu narratives recorded, transcribed and translated required significant time, language expertise and experience in the contexts of the narratives to complete. To draw on the skills of what is a small cohort of suitably skilled people and ask them to work for many months to produce these types of texts would have been extremely time consuming and expensive. I therefore produced the transcriptions and translations myself. Making these narratives available through translation and publication provides a level of insight and access to Anangu narratives and makes a unique contribution to Anangu education.

### **Collaborative brokerage**

The ‘cultural interface’ (Nakata, 2007a) is a useful conceptual framework for negotiating complex and contested knowledge interactions between Western and Indigenous knowledge spaces. Terms such as ‘cultural broker’ (Szasz, 1994), ‘knowledge broker’ (Hollins & Torres Guzman, 2005) or ‘translator’ (Jaivin, 2014) have been used to describe situations where individuals assist others in engaging across knowledge divides by way of their own intercultural knowledge or language expertise. For Anangu, negotiating the interface between Anangu and Piranpa culture, epistemology and language is a daily occurrence, whereas Piranpa visitors and newly arrived professionals require introduction to the interface; initially, this is only at a surface level. While I am drawing on my own experience and capacity to broker between Anangu and Piranpa spaces of culture, knowledge and language to undertake this research, the notion that any individual has the experience and capacity to be all things to all people and to facilitate deeper engagement across such diverse and nuanced spaces oversimplifies the nature of the cultural interface which Nakata (2007a) describes:

In this contested space between the two knowledge systems, the cultural interface (Nakata, 1998), things are not clearly black or white, Indigenous or Western. In this space are histories, politics, economics, multiple and interconnected discourses, social practices and knowledge technologies which condition how we all come to look at the world, how we come to know and understand our changing realities in the everyday, and how and what knowledge we operationalise in our daily lives. (p. 9)

I am arguing that a collaborative brokerage methodology is required in negotiating complex dialogue spaces such as are found in Anangu education. Collaborative brokerage recognises the existence of diverse Anangu and Piranpa standpoints and experiences and the continual negotiation and renegotiation that occur across points of cultural, knowledge and language difference. When I was conducting interviews with Anangu participants, collaborative brokerage was continually enacted. In some cases, family members sat with participants and mediated aspects of the sharing of stories by encouraging narrators to provide more detail in some stories or to mediate between me and the participant. In other cases, interviews occurred with no other supporters or family members present and, in these cases, collaborative brokerage took place as we both carefully chose language and concepts that we both felt confident could be engaged with.

Narrators often broker the listener into their own stories through providing background information or further explanation. For example, Sandra Armstrong began her narratives (Chapter 5) by keeping an arm's length from the listener by using generalist language and omitting certain specific details, which she then added to over the course of interviews spanning nearly two years by returning to foundational narratives with finer details, more specific language and drawing explicit connections between the narratives she shared and the questions that were specifically of interest to me. In this sense, Sandra patiently brokered me into a much deeper engagement with the narratives and the associated knowledge foundations which I was increasingly able to access as I became more familiar with the history, geography and context of the stories. This was not an easy task; particularly when working with older narrators, significant time and further research was sometimes required to identify small places, disused water points and old language that was used in only certain places.

Historically, a number of Piranpa educators learned local languages and were also able to participate in collaborative brokerage in Anangu schools and communities. From the 1990s (corresponding with policy shifts towards privileging English language instruction, see Devlin, 2011; Graham, 1999; Nicholls, 2005), fewer Piranpa educators have learned local languages and can competently collaborate in more nuanced language and knowledge negotiation processes. This situation highlights the importance of a methodological approach that draws on the skills, expertise and experience of remote educators who have invested their time in learning to negotiate language, knowledge and cultural spaces in Anangu education. This process requires the engagement of equally skilled Anangu collaborators with diverse experience and expertise across the interface. Collaborative brokerage models have the potential to generate new knowledge and materials that can contribute to education resources and inform educators and leaders working within significant

constraints and demands in Anangu schools. This thesis benefits from a collaborative brokerage process where pre-existing relationships and language proficiency make it possible for negotiation at a greater depth than is otherwise possible where dialogue in Anangu communities is constrained by limitations of language and shared understanding.

### **Research ethics in practice**

In Anangu society, divisions between personal and professional relationships are less distinct than in Western contexts, and participants may contribute to research activity on the basis of an existing personal relationship (Lieberman, 1980), rather than the relative merits or ethical considerations in the research. This requires me to consciously and explicitly place research-based relationships into a clearly defined space where the rules and obligations for researchers and participants are clearly defined, and prior informed consent is undertaken in a thorough and patient manner. This is a far more exhaustive process than pushing a form and a pen towards a participant as mere formality. There may be a temptation to take short cuts, particularly where the time and expense required to reach remote research locations puts pressure on research timelines and financial resources. In my situation, the need to maintain positive and trusting relationships in Anangu communities goes well beyond the life of a research project, and so I need to clearly explain what I am asking people to do across multiple conversations, in language and in both formal and informal contexts, as well as carefully working through plain English language participant consent forms prior to signing off. Conducting this thesis as a part-time student has allowed me engage in these conversations over many months, and in some cases, years, thus avoiding the kinds of pressures and ethical dilemmas that short-term, commercial or time-poor research projects encounter.

There are social norms and expectations in Anangu contexts that require careful consideration as to the kinds of agreements and commitments researchers make. The process of gaining institutional ethics approval and signing participant consent forms is one aspect of satisfying institutional expectations for ethical research, but engaging as a researcher in a social context where reciprocity ('ngapartji ngapartji', see Tur et al., 2010) and demand sharing (Peterson, 1993) are expected requires a far broader understanding of ethical research engagement in Anangu communities. Seeing myself as located within a certain epistemological and institutional frame (Harding, 1992; Smith, 1999) is an important starting point for exploring methodological alternatives that can assist me in achieving my stated aim to privilege Anangu voices in standpoint dialogue. I have also outlined my intention to adopt a 'justice-oriented' approach (Brennan & Zipin, 2008; D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014; Smith, 1999) through this thesis. This requires me to privilege Anangu voices through encouraging participants to speak from their own histories, cultural positions and priorities, and in their own language. I have consciously avoided constructing a set list of questions that draw participants into a channelled conversation that responds to the questions and assumptions of specific interest to me and the institutions I represent. Rather, I have attempted to provide an open space for dialogue where participants may speak on their own terms about matters of young people,



education and the future. These accounts inform the grounds for the virtual (text-based) dialogue held with experienced and trusted Pīranpa educators that can be seen in Chapter 10.

#### *Getting beyond gratuitous concurrence*

In Chapter 4, I describe Anangu as ‘environmentally responsive’. Traditionally, the availability of food and water dictated centralisation and decentralisation population movements and subsequently ordered social and cultural practice. Periods of relative isolation, when small family groups would travel widely to access food, water, cultural sites and perhaps other relations, were interspersed with large gatherings in more plentiful times when ceremonies were held and relations from neighbouring languages and regions could connect, intermarry and exchange membership of smaller family groups before shrinking resources once again necessitated population dispersal (see Edwards, 1992). Physical and other forms of conflict place small family groups at great risk and were therefore avoided. These social and environmental conditions across the Western Desert were observed by anthropologists and linguists (see, for example, Edwards, 2011; Elkin, 1938-1939; Liberman, 1980; Sutton, 2010; Tindale, 1937) as distinctive and unique in the shaping and construction of social relationships both within Western Desert language groups and regions and in the management of relationships with Pīranpa, in personal and professional contexts.

Drawing on Liberman’s (1980) work, Lauch (2010) describes the strong tendency for Indigenous peoples in Australia to manage these relationships positively through a process that Liberman called ‘gratuitous concurrence’. This is a process whereby ‘a person agrees with the questioner regardless of whether the questioner’s statement was true or false’ (p. 7), predominantly as a choice ‘to avoid having the conversation become adversarial’ (Liberman, 1980, p. 75). The Legal Services Commission of South Australia (2015) identifies gratuitous concurrence as a strongly Western Desert cultural practice, although recognises that this is not limited to ‘traditional’ Anangu contexts. The Commission describes gratuitous concurrence as ‘a cultural phenomenon ... [that] is used to build or define the relationship between the people who are speaking’. Further, it asserts that this practice ‘may indicate respect towards a person, cooperation between people, or acceptance of a particular situation’ (Legal Services Commission of South Australia, 2015).

Both Lauch (2010) and the Legal Services Commission of South Australia (2015) argue that gratuitous concurrence puts people in a ‘position of powerlessness when confronted by alien institutions and authority figures’. In the legal context this leaves people ‘disadvantaged due to a language barrier’, meaning that they ‘may adopt a strategy of always agreeing or saying what they think the person in authority wants them to say, regardless of the truth of the matter’ (Legal Services Commission of South Australia, 2015, p. 1).

The strongly relationship-centred context of Anangu society and the tendency towards gratuitous concurrence has implications for research practice where power-laden research tends to produce skewed accounts of Anangu knowledge and lives in the same way that legal testimony can be jeopardised. The Legal Commission of South Australia (2015) suggests considerations for a more-

just approach where gratuitous concurrence is practised, such as in research where ‘respect’, ‘cooperation’ and ‘acceptance’ (Gratuitous concurrence section, para 1) of each other’s position is necessary for a productive and more equal working relationship. Further, it describes useful alternatives for freeing communication spaces from gratuitous concurrence where ‘an indirect approach to seeking information is more appropriate’ as it ‘removes the necessity to respond to direct questions, or respond to questions with expected “yes” or “no” answers’ (Different ways of communicating section, para 1). Further, the Commission suggests that ‘silence’, ‘pause’ and ‘body language’ are ‘an important and normal part of communication and the exchange of information [in Anangu society]’ (Different ways of communicating section, para 1). Thus, it follows that a successful practitioner must:

... possess the virtues of patience and sympathetic understanding and must listen attentively to an Aboriginal person's story. The story and the telling of the story are essential aspects of Aboriginal culture. Stories are only revealed to people who can be entrusted with them. (Legal Services Commission of South Australia, 2015 Different ways of communicating section, para 1)

Elsewhere, I have provided examples of research practice where the practice of gratuitous concurrence can be adopted to validate ‘common sense’ assumptions of outsider research in remote community contexts (see Osborne, 2014a, 2015a). Participants anticipate researcher assumptions and attempt to mirror what they understand that the researchers ‘want to hear’. These supportive (complicit) responses can then be presented as ‘evidence’ of community wishes, demands or experiences. This process can be consciously or subconsciously ordered through the use of leading questions, foregrounding to questions or other subtle factors such as tone of voice or body language in the qualitative research process (see Bourdieu, 1999).

For this study, to avoid gratuitous concurrence, and to ensure collaborative and mutual brokerage of the conversation, much needs to be done outside of a formal interview situation. I have adopted an approach of lengthy foregrounding and extensive follow-up, where many conversations have occurred before, during and after formal recording of interviews to ensure that participants understand that I am not bringing a hidden agenda of ‘correct answers’ which I am hoping they can guess or somehow catch on to and then reproduce on record to validate my own views. In some cases, this on-going conversation has occurred across almost two years. Avoiding a list of pre-prepared questions and providing time to prepare allows a space for participants to establish their own priorities and narratives without interruption. Allowing time for reflection, silence and pause builds a sense of confidence that participants are in control of the narrative and can direct the conversation as they desire (Legal Services Commission of South Australia, 2015). This includes time between interviews for participants to consider and re-consider their views on various topics and allows for the revisiting of ideas where participants wish to do so.

Ethical research requires researchers to follow through on the commitments they make to communities and participants, to ensure that research demonstrates a more equal, ‘power-sensitive’

(Haraway, 2004) conversation and exchange, a reciprocal relationship in action where participation has tangible benefit to the researcher, the participants, their families and the wider community. I have invested significant time into transcribing in local language and translating all interviews into English to ensure that the histories, stories and stated aspirations for Anangu futures are made available to participants for them to store, use and share as desired. These stories can be stored on archives such as Ara Irititja (2015) and can contribute to text production at local schools or more widely. However, it is important to note that these stories remain the intellectual property of participants and their families; they will decide the purpose of and audience for their stories, recorded as audio and bilingual transcripts. In many cases, the stories recorded are far more extensive than is able to be shared within the context of this thesis.

The thesis was granted ethical clearance by the University of South Australia (where I first commenced this work) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC Application number 0000022593 and 0000030523, subsequently submitted to VU HREC for confirmation, received 17 February 2012). It is important to note here that Anangu participants were not offered confidentiality or anonymity as their knowledge is located within cultural, historical, geographic and social points of connection that inform the various standpoints. Nor would it have been possible since there are only a small number of people in the tristate area, and many of the stories would necessarily identify individuals. Moreover, a key point in privileging the Anangu voice in the thesis has been to make knowledge public and available.

Many of the narratives were unable to be shared in the data for this study due to limited space and the personal or restricted nature of knowledge and stories shared at various points. For most participants, transcripts and chapter drafts were provided and gone over together via telephone and email prior to publication, but for older narrators, specific visits were made to provide the final chapter drafts back to participants and their families and to go over the content of the stories. This process of checking is important to show that narratives are moving from the context of private conversation and into the public domain and to give narrators the opportunity to make changes as they see necessary. On one such trip, the narrator gathered the family around to share the stories with family members, including grandchildren who were the subject of some of the stories. They were highly interested and actively engaged, not having been aware of many of the historical stories or of the kinds of aspirations held for them by their grandparents. Providing these stories back to families as a resource fulfils my ethical obligation to ensure that through investing considerable time into producing transcripts, translation and supporting historical resources, participants, their families and communities benefit from the research and are fully informed and consenting to the process and the content of the research.

### **Narrative and Indigenous research**

Intrinsic in story telling is a focus on dialogue and conversations amongst ourselves as Indigenous people, to ourselves and for ourselves. Such approaches fit well with oral traditions which are still a reality in day-to-day lives. (Smith, 1999, p. 145)

Indigenous scholars (see, for example, P. L. Ford, 2010; K. Martin, 2003; L. Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012; Steinhauer, 2002; S. Wilson, 2008; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009) strongly argue for the use of narratives as an important and contextually relevant methodological approach in Indigenist (Indigenous research conducted by Indigenous researchers) and Indigenous research (see Guenther et al., 2015). Wilson (2008, p. 15) argues that this approach has enabled, ‘new Indigenous scholars’ to introduce ‘Indigenous beliefs, values and customs into the research process’ and ‘in turn has helped research to become much more culturally sensitive to Indigenous peoples’.

Working in Indigenous research spaces (Foley, 2003; Smith, 1999), I must consider the importance that Indigenous scholars place on the power of narrative to represent Indigenous knowledges in pursuing a ‘power-sensitive’ (Haraway, 2004) research method that might enable a ‘more just’ (Brennan & Zipin, 2008; D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014; Smith, 1999) research outcome.

Payi Linda Ford (2010) and Veronica Arbon (2008) are Northern Territory-based Indigenous scholars who, drawing on the work of Smith (1999) and Rigney (1999), argue the importance of narratives and Aboriginal language in Indigenous research practice. Ford writes, ‘Narratives can be used to describe the nature of the events studied at the interface’ and further, ‘these narratives have many similarities to the way knowledge is transmitted in *Tyikim* [Indigenous] oral knowledge systems’ (p. 22). Increasingly, the use of narratives in Indigenous research is argued as being both respectful and scientifically robust (Arbon, 2008; L. Ford, 2005; Smith, 1999; S. Wilson, 2008) as they engage systems of knowledge, language and deeper conceptual (epistemological, cosmological) realities of Indigenous lives that other methodological approaches fail to engage. Privileging narrative as a method of sharing knowledge in Indigenous research activity also acts to resist or reject anthropological approaches which have tended to claim ‘authoritative’ accounts of Indigenous knowledges and lives (see Nakata, 2007b; L. Rigney, 1999; Smith, 1999). Foley writes:

Science has constructed a version of Indigenous ‘reality’ embedded in a scientific discourse that has no Indigenous input, in a language that is non-Indigenous and for a non-Indigenous audience (Budby, 2001; Murphy, 2000; L. Rigney, 2000). (Foley, 2003, p. 44)

Repositioning the scientific discourse, epistemological foundations, language and intended audience (as well as beneficiaries) of Indigenous research responds to what Nakata et al. (2012) describe as the ‘anti-colonial critique’ (p. 121). Privileging Anangu standpoints and working in local language take account of the priority of narrative, as advocated by Indigenous scholarship, but there is a further requirement to recognise the types of narratives and knowledge accounts that are being shared in the research data.

### **Drawing distinctions among personal stories, standpoint accounts and *Tjukurpa***

Narrative is an important pedagogical tool of knowledge production and meaning making in Indigenous societies. Foley (2003) and Nakata (Nakata, 1998, 2007b) argue the need to establish an Indigenous, and indeed, Islander standpoint(s) theoretical position, but clarification of the context

of terms such as ‘narrative’, ‘stories’, ‘yarning’ and ‘standpoint’ is required in this qualitative methodological approach. The term ‘yarning’, for example, draws specifically on Indigenous concepts of language and communication to define a methodological approach to promote culturally appropriate research methods (see Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). In the Australian vernacular, however, it can mean ‘spinning a yarn’, an exaggerated or untrue, but entertaining story.

The stories I have collected for this thesis cover experiences formed by gender and from diverse locations, age groups, levels of cultural responsibility and authority as well as life experiences that participants share through their narratives. At certain points, participants refer to or partially retell *Tjukurpa* (sacred stories). They recount these within the context of a broader narrative or point that they want to communicate. I have not suggested to participants that I am attempting to record a collection of *Tjukurpa* accounts, but for some of the narrators, *Tjukurpa* provides important points of connection, explains the social context of the narrator and also describes a social and geographical location for the broader narrative (see, for example, where Yami refers to *Tjukurpa* (*Wapar* in Yankunytjatjara) as a way of locating sites of learning. The recorded *Tjukurpa* and ceremonial accounts have been provided back to narrators as bilingual transcripts but are not included in the thesis as they are not appropriate for a wider audience and should remain in the control and care of the narrators.

Older narrators emphasised historical accounts of their family, community and other significant regional histories and events as contextual background to explain their own experience of learning and growing up. These historical accounts are spoken authoritatively and with a tenor of accepted truth about them, even where they have been largely handed-down stories (see Sandra’s story of exodus from the desert in Chapter 5, for example). In contrast, personal stories share experiences and build meaning, but are not positioned as authoritative accounts of collective history and experience.

Personal stories need to be seen as distinct from *Tjukurpa* (sacred stories) but also from standpoint accounts, which, Nakata (2007a) explains:

... depend on reflexivity and the distinction between experience and standpoint ... An Indigenous standpoint, therefore, has to be produced. It is not a simple reflection of experience and it does not pre-exist in the everyday waiting to be brought to light. It is not any sort of hidden wisdom that Indigenous people possess. It is a distinct form of analysis, and is itself both a discursive construction and an intellectual device to persuade others and elevate what might not have been a focus of attention by others. (Nakata, 2007a, p. 11)

Nakata describes possibilities for Indigenous standpoint to ‘lay open a basis from which to launch a range of possible arguments for a range of possible purposes’. He argues the need for standpoint accounts to be ‘rational and reasoned’, ‘answer[ing] to the logic and assumptions on which they are built’, and that these arguments:

... cannot assert a claim to truth that is beyond the scrutiny of others on the basis that, as a member of the Indigenous community, what I say counts. It is more the case, that what is said must be able to be accounted for. (Nakata, 2007a, p. 11)

Nakata's distinction between 'accountable argument' (standpoint) and 'incontestable accounts of truth' (*Tjukurpa*) is important in the context of this study. Sacred stories and authoritative historical accounts provide context that position the narrator in standpoint dialogue, but do not constitute the argument. They also provide insights for Piranpa educators to better understand Anangu histories and values, but it is from these foundations that narrators argue for alternative engagements with education.

Through analysis of data collected from all participants, themes are identified and ordered according to the emphasis placed on each theme. Some anticipated themes were rarely addressed or were absent in the narratives, providing further material for reflection, which is provided in Chapters 10 and 11. Standpoint theories have provided conceptual and pedagogical tools for feminist and other 'marginal' (Harding, 1992) voices to speak back to the centre of institutional power across points of power difference, with a particular focus on gender, class, race and so on. Indigenous scholars in Australia have drawn on standpoint theories to develop the concept of an 'Indigenous standpoint' (Foley, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Nakata, 1998, 2007b) to account for differences in relation to cultures, languages, histories, geographies (for an articulation of the need for an Islander standpoint, see Nakata, 2007b) and gender (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). In Chapter 10, I stage a virtual (within the text) standpoint dialogue between and among Anangu as well as between Anangu and Piranpa voices, where Anangu voices are privileged to reorient education dialogue to the priorities, values and epistemological context of Anangu communities. As an 'outside' researcher, I must take a power-sensitive approach to redress historical and continuing unequal power in policy discourse and broader dialogue between governments and other institutions in Anangu communities. Through this process, I hope to encourage venues for deeper standpoint dialogue that can inform more nuanced and contextually responsive approaches to education in tristate communities.

### **Issues of language and discourse analysis**

Presenting the narratives that emerged from the interviews of Anangu and then staging text-based dialogue between Anangu and Piranpa educators brought out a number of challenges and limitations that need to be addressed methodologically. Having collected the Anangu interviews in language, transcription in Pitjantjatjara and then translation into English was necessary. Transcription and translation, however, are not straightforward.

Few remote educators have a strong contextual grounding in Anangu language(s), history, epistemology, ontology and cosmology, where understandings of the Anangu context are grown and sharpened through trusting and reciprocal relationships outside of a strictly professional domain to inform and shape attitudes and professional practice. In the current context of very remote teaching, induction can be non-existent, or limited largely to the priorities of the system,

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such as policy and accountability messages, (English language) literacy and numeracy programs, work health and safety imperatives, four-wheel drive vehicle training and so on. These are all important but tend to consume available opportunities for teacher preparation and development. The pragmatic realities of significant professional demands (see Osborne, 2013a, 2014a, 2015a) and upward accountability (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) leave little time for wider engagement with Anangu life. This thesis aims to inform educators from Anangu narratives, describing Anangu hopes for young people and education, as well as from accounts of trusted and respected Piranpa educators whom Anangu recommend, sharing from their decades of experience and engagement in Anangu communities and education. I have applied a methodological approach that allows Anangu and Piranpa educators to speak openly and address important questions on their own terms, but there are constraints that need to be accounted for in presenting oral narratives within written text. With regards to qualitative research practice, Bourdieu (1999) describes the loss of context and meaning that immediately occurs in the process of transcription alone through the inability to capture and adequately convey:

... everything that is at once hidden and disclosed, not only in the transcribed discussion but also in the pronunciation and intonation, everything transcription eradicates, from body language, gestures, demeanour, mimicry and looks, to silences, innuendos, and slips of the tongue. (p. 2)

In the context of an oral tradition such as exists in the Western Desert, significant layers of meaning are communicated through intonation, body language and gesture, and through the information that is shared or withheld in respect to the relationship between the narrator and the audience. As Bourdieu points out, transcription ‘eradicates’ important features of narratives – in this case, Anangu narratives.

A common feature of Anangu narrative is found in the iconic relationship between travelling long distances and the recounting of journeys, whether pertaining to stories from the dreaming (*Tjukurpa*) or personal experience. So much of Anangu experience involves travelling long distances, and the sense of distance is communicated through the use of a number of finely nuanced prosodic features (such as poetic meters, intonation patterns, rhyme, rhythm and so on). An example is found where the verb ‘to go’ (*ananyi*), used in its serial form (*ankula*) is repeated (for example, *ankula ankula ankula wirkanu* – went and went and went and arrived), giving a sense of a significant distance of travel. Additionally, the elongation of a vowel in lyrical fashion also lengthens a word and suggests an increased length in a journey (for example, *ankula ankulaaaaaa*). The use of body language and tone of voice – including lyrical ‘singsong’: onomatopoeic uses of the voice where at points it can be difficult to distinguish between narrative and song – add to a listener’s sense of relative distance, adventure, danger, excitement or struggle, much of which is lost immediately in the process of transcription.

Another iconic feature is the use of ‘pulmonic ingressive phonation’ (speech produced on a pulmonic ingressive airstream; that is, speaking while breathing in, see Eklund, 2008) which is commonly applied both in the re-telling of *Tjukurpa* and oral narrative recounts more generally and provides instructive markers to sections of the story. Pulmonic ingressive phonation in this case is far more nuanced than lowering the volume of speech to convey a sense of sensitivity in the content. It may be used in this way, but is also used to add other meanings implied in the language being used, such as engendering a sense of empathy for the subject of the story or increasing the sense of distance, exhaustion, grief, injustice and so on.

This range of narrative features are further dampened in the translation stage as many prosodic features of Indigenous narrative as well as distinct conceptual, epistemological, cultural and linguistic foundations that are almost impossible to translate adequately into English. I have attempted to convey some linguistic features such as elongated vowels and background information such as claps, body language, laughing and so on; however, the losses that Bourdieu (1999) describes in the space between narratives and transcription are substantial. Where pulmonic ingressive phonation has been used in the narrative shared in Chapters 5–9, I have marked them as ‘whispers’.

Bourdieu (1999) argues that ‘transcription already transforms the oral discussion decisively’ (p. 2) and further, that:

... even the most literal form of redaction (the simplest punctuation, the placing of a comma, for example, can determine the whole sense of a phrase) represents a translation or even an interpretation. (p. 621)

Issues of working between transcription and qualitative data are amplified as I work between the ‘knowledge systems’ (Nakata, 2007a, p. 8) of Anangu narrative and Western science, where the apparatus for interpretation of knowledge are located within epistemically ‘disparate’ (Nakata, 2007a, p. 8) systems. Drawing on Verran (2005) and Russell (2005), Nakata (2007a) explains that, ‘In their differences, Indigenous knowledge systems and Western scientific ones are considered so disparate as to be “incommensurable”’ (p. 8). Points of epistemic difference are reflected in the respective languages (Pitjantjatjara and English, for example) where concepts are often difficult to describe in the language of the ‘other’ and present significant challenges in deciding how best to negotiate understanding through translation. A basic example is found in the word ‘*tjukurpa*’. This is easily translated as ‘story’ in English, and there are times where this is the intended context of the word. But beyond that, it is a term that represents the complex system of Anangu law, creation (sometimes translated as ‘dreaming’ or ‘dreamtime’) and historical accounts as well as a ‘word’, both in the English sense of being part of a sentence, or ‘the Word’, as in the Bible. An example of how malleable this term and its application can be is found in the use of the word *tjukurpa* to describe physical features such as birthmarks, moles or distinctive patterns in hair colour that indicate the expression of a supernatural, predestined identity and connection, or ‘story’. These



features make up and shape who you are, determined since the beginning of time, from the dreaming. The cosmological, ontological and epistemological foundations of language render simplistic translations such as ‘story’ or ‘dreaming’ as virtually meaningless, and it is the task of the transcriber and translator to attempt to offer explanation and translation that might provide a bridge for enhanced mutual understanding. In the context of significant difference between Anangu and Pīranpa knowledge systems, translation requires negotiation beyond the mere exchange of words. A process of working between vibrant language that reflects different philosophies, assumptions and histories culminates in a comparatively muted tool: the bilingual transcript.

In her quarterly essay, Jaivin (2014) discusses at length the complexities and difficulties of working across languages where significant philosophical and cultural differences exist. She gives much attention to the myriad of attempts across the ages to translate ancient texts into English. Her descriptions of the vexatious nature of attempting to succinctly convey the essence of a phrase by Confucius resonated with me as I have attempted to work through the transcription and translation process between ancient philosophy and language and modern English. She draws on Grossman’s (2007) work to summarise the difficulties of translation:

A translation is not made with tracing paper. It is an act of critical interpretation. Let me insist on the obvious: Languages trail immense, individual histories behind them and no two languages, with all their accretions of tradition and culture, ever dovetail perfectly. They can be linked by translation, as a photograph can link movement and stasis, but it is disingenuous to assume that either translation or photography, or acting for that matter, is representational in any narrow sense of the term. Fidelity is our noble purpose but it does not have much, if anything, to do with what is called literal meaning. A translation can be faithful to tone and intention, to meaning. It can rarely be faithful to words or syntax, for these are peculiar to specific languages and are not transferable. (Grossman, 2007 in Jaivin, 2014, pp. 48–59)

The task of translation for this thesis has required me to account for diverse genres, language registers and purposes of the various narratives as an act of pursuing the ‘fidelity’ that Grossman describes. As I have said above, whether a narrative draws on personal stories, sacred stories or standpoint accounts also influences the language choices such as tenor, poetic rhythm and vocabulary. The interviews cover historical periods from creation, to the early twentieth century and on to present-day accounts. After the transcripts were completed, I worked on the translations twice, and in some cases, many more times to re-read for adherence to the original tenor and intent of the narratives. In some cases, I have needed to have other linguists or translators look over sections of the transcripts and have a discussion about how best to capture the essence of terminology or even the broader gist of a story as a way of clarifying my understanding and subsequent translation of the interviews. This includes contacting senior Anangu to discuss the use of ‘old language’ terms. As Jaivin (2014) notes, ‘Translators are used to working in the shadows’ (p. 1), but this relatively unseen element in the methodological process is a critical element in privileging Anangu voices in standpoint dialogue.

I have personally transcribed and translated all of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara language stories, and short sections are provided as examples of this process at Appendices 2a, 2b and 2c. This was a lengthy process that could have been expedited through a number of approaches. One approach could be to collaborate with an interpreter to reduce the painstaking hours dedicated to transcription and translation. However, Liamputtong (2010) points out that this method can further complicate the process of data collection, interpretation and analysis, and that ‘the translator makes her mark on the research, whether this is acknowledged or not’, where the choices of interpretation, language and even silences, as Temple explains, ‘makes her an analyst and cultural broker as much as a translator’ (Temple & Young, 2008, p. 101). It is important that I retain the core functions of language broker and analyst to maintain, as best as possible, the integrity, accuracy and consistency of the data. This approach also contributes to my ethical commitment to invest time to produce bilingual transcripts as a reciprocated contribution back to participants, their families and communities.

I have presented Anangu narratives in as complete a form as practicable to allow the narrators’ words to stand as closely as possible to the original themes, context and intent, understanding the limitations of transcription and translation described above. Soyini Madison (2008) explains that a “weaving” approach’ which is often used to ‘illuminate the *implications* of [the narrator’s] words and experiences’ (p. 393) faces criticisms where the researcher’s analysis can silence the subject’s narrative, and further, ‘The researcher’s analysis “upstages” the narrative, leaving the narrator’s actual words almost forgotten and their meanings as but whispers in the booming volume of the researcher’s interpretation’ (p. 393).

She goes on to describe other strong criticisms of dissection and large-scale analysis of narratives where ‘idiosyncratic interpretation ... distorts the interpretive report and expressions of the narrator’, ‘promotes theoretical jargon that renders the narrative analysis itself ineffectual’ and risks ‘obtuse repetition of what is already apparent and more powerfully articulated in the words of the narrator’ (p. 394).

To counter these concerns, she contends that:

A delicate balance of analysis can open deeper engagement with the narrative text and unravel contexts and connections within the undercurrents of the narrative universe, without the researcher acting as psychoanalyst, clairvoyant, or prophet. (Soyini Madison, 2008, p. 394)

To attempt to find a ‘delicate balance of analysis’, I provide substantial sections of the narratives provided by Anangu participants in a series of connected chapters and draw together a process of interpretation, analysis and dialogue with Piranpa educator accounts separately in Chapter 10. Wolcott (1994) describes the three connected yet distinct categories of description, analysis and interpretation that can be employed in the process of transforming observational data as well as the other ‘intangible’ aspects such as the ‘stuff in one’s head’ into ‘authoritative written accounts’ (p.

11). This requires me to provide some description of the context through observations made as well as drawing on prior background knowledge of the broader context the work is situated in. I then provide analysis through identifying the ‘essential features’ and the ‘systematic interrelationships among them’, and finally, through interpretation, address ‘processual questions of meanings and contexts, [such as] ... “what is to be made of it all?”’ (Wolcott, 1994, p. 12).

I have approached the task of interpretation and analysis on two fronts. Through working intimately with each transcript and translation, I have gathered the ‘essential features’ (Wolcott, 1994, p. 12) into themes of importance after summarising each transcript manually and also through a second process of coding each transcript according to its themes, using NVivo software. Two tables showing the frequency of themes referred to are located at Appendix 3. I then compared the manually and software-generated themes of importance and found a strong correlation between the main themes identified through both methods, although the software-generated analysis proved to be useful in highlighting absences of particular themes that were anticipated to be addressed by participants. While the Anangu narratives have been retained and shared in a form as close as possible to the original narratives, Piranpa educator interviews have been gathered according to themes and topics to assist the process of analysis and to form a collection of dialogic responses to themes of importance raised by the Anangu narrators.

### **Developing a historical context to education in the tristate area**

Because the shared narratives included accounts of the early days of mission and local community schooling, I have produced a history chapter (Chapter 4) to provide context for them. Key historians and anthropologists such as Gara (2003), Edwards (Edwards, 1992, 1997, 2000), Tindale (Tindale, 1933, 1935), Duguid (Duguid, 1963, 1972) and Mountford (1962) have recorded aspects of Anangu lives and history, primarily outside of the context of education. In Sandra’s narratives (Chapter 5), her recount of the events of 1945 – when a group of Anangu that included members of her family were pursued, arrested and subsequently incarcerated or assigned to a labour camp – led me to other sources of history, including police records (Northern Territory Archives Service, 2014), mission diaries (J. R. B. Love, 1945) and personal memoirs (Brown & Studdy-Clift, 1990). In Chapter 4, I use formal reports such as the Royal Commission into British nuclear testing in Australia (Australian Royal Commission, 1985), academic publications (Dunne-Breen, 2012) and non-academic publications (Walker, 2014) to provide context for the oral history accounts of the Maralinga testing.

These sources provide important records for understanding history in the tristate area and need to be included in the research, but they also represent colonial, ‘outsider’ (K. Martin, 2006) accounts of history and Anangu lives. Indigenous scholars such as Nakata (2007b) and Smith (1999) argue that these ‘outsider’ accounts of Indigenous peoples have historically been privileged over Indigenous peoples’ accounts of their own lives, ignoring the epistemological, cultural and language context of communities, their knowledge and histories. They call for Indigenous

knowledges, histories and voices to be prioritised in Indigenous research. I do not wish to valorise or redistribute power-laden and unjust approaches to coming to terms with Anangu histories, so I need to adopt a methodology that triangulates accounts by showing the conjunctures that allowed confirmation of certain details, such as dates and times, but working from the oral histories provided by Anangu as a guide for what to look for.

Adams (2015) works between Indigenous and colonial accounts of shared history, where significant epistemological differences shape how events are viewed, how various actions are understood or justified and how historical events are remembered into the future. The recounting of these events serves social, political and cultural purposes in both contexts, but colonial accounts of history tend to show little understanding or regard for Indigenous values and lives in enacting their role of serving the social and economic interests of the institutions they serve. These tensions and incongruences are seen in Chapter 5, where official police records provide more accurate descriptions of the quality of cattle and pasture – information that they relayed to pastoralists on return to Finke – than accounting for who was chained to the back of the camel. Constable Brown's historical records served a purpose, not in meting out justice so much as appeasing the interests of pastoralists. In his memoirs (Brown & Studdy-Clift, 1990), he recounts the arrest of Sandra's family as a testament to his own skills and cunning to avoid being hunted down in retribution by Burroonganoo [sic]. This story directly contradicts his records from 45 years earlier that record Burroonganoo as being part of the group tied by neck irons, handcuffs and chain to the string of camels, and therefore unable to exact revenge. From Sandra's perspective, this historical story is shared in the context of explaining how it is that the family came to live in the 'promised land' of Angas Downs, following a series of dramatic incidents that included exodus from the desert and apprehension in 1945 by Constable Brown and the trackers. It is Sandra's account that is of importance in sharing Anangu histories; the sourcing of other records needs to remain subservient to the narratives shared by Anangu. Piecing together narratives with other sources enabled me to construct a story of education in the tristate area that has previously not been available.

Relatively few historical records are available that document schooling and tristate education more broadly, and those that are available tend to be bounded by state and territory jurisdictions. Building a regional history of tristate schooling has required me to look outside of the typical sites of information such as departmental websites and the work of historians listed above. This process and the need for further research is explained in Chapter 4.

### **Pragmatic considerations in remote research**

There are a number of practical elements that need to be considered when working in very remote research contexts, which help explain both particular challenges for the outside researcher and the particular cultural and narrative context which form the basis for Anangu accounts.

### Flexibility and self-sufficiency

Working in very remote central Australian communities presents researchers with numerous pragmatic considerations. Firstly, there are the relatively vast distances that need to be covered to get to the various communities and destinations to meet with participants. To give an indication of these distances, Figure 3.1 shows a map of the region marked with each location a formal interview was held.

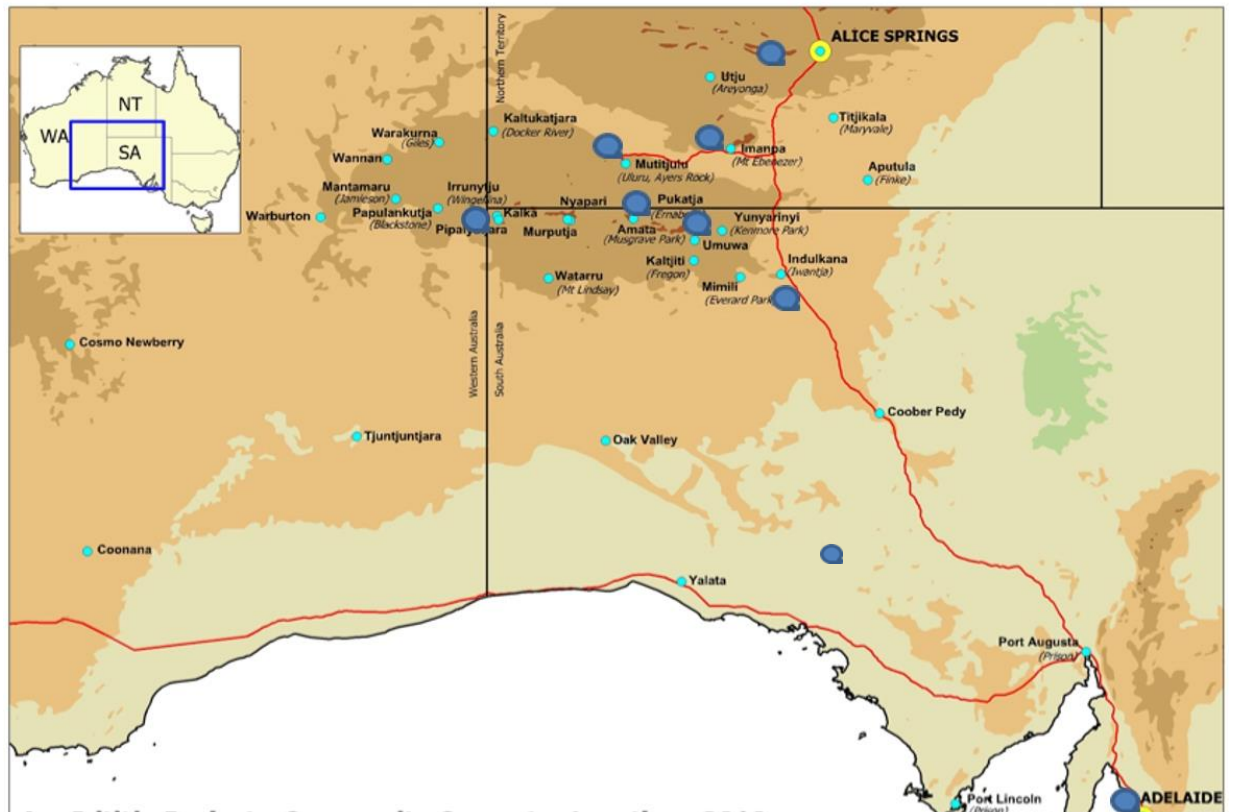


Figure 3.1: Tristate map showing interview locations

Source: (source: Aṛa Irititja, 2014)

Key: ● Denotes interview location

Scale: — = approx. 100 km

Once the Stuart and Lasseter Highways (indicated by red lines) have been left behind, the roads all consist of red, corrugated dirt without facilities such as mobile phone coverage, road houses or even other travellers. Larger communities provide access to fuel, general goods and health services. However, travelling these roads requires a broader understanding of the region, the conditions, cultural protocols and procedures of local government. Weather needs to be considered, as heavy rains make the roads impassable for a time. Each region has entry permit requirements; permits need to be obtained through the local land council authority. At times of men’s cultural ceremony, the roads are ‘closed’ to anyone else until the ceremony travelling party has passed through. This is particularly problematic, because these ceremonies have restrictions about who can share or obtain information, so it is a risky and complex process to ask carefully through third parties in indirect

ways where the men are, when they are moving, which roads they will access and when you might be able to access the roads; this is made even more difficult given the lack of access to mobile communication. Working in very remote communities requires researchers to use local knowledge and relationships, to be self-sufficient and not reliant on various levels of infrastructure. Along with the digital voice recorder, computer, notebook and pen, the researcher will need a swag and blankets, plenty of large water containers, extra spare tyres and fuel, and a well-stocked ‘tucker box’ to ensure the work can proceed and that he or she is still alive at the end of the trip.

#### *Community-based complexities*

Other cultural events and factors such as funerals, high levels of mobility and reciprocal obligations to family mean that a researcher’s time schedule may not be suitable, even if things have been pre-arranged and confirmed prior to making the trip to the community. Flexibility in this regard is crucial. This thesis has been conducted part-time, which has allowed a longer time period for data collection. Even given a flexible approach and long-running timeline to capture the conversations, at times interviews have had to take place in hospital, hostels, after hours where regional meetings are taking place, and sometimes in less than favourable conditions such as outdoors in a dust storm, enduring interruptions from packs of dogs, noisy cars and the general flow of community life. These conditions all need to be taken into account, and a patient and persistent approach is required to ensure that narrators can take the time they need to speak on their own terms. Researchers need to make time available for the important conversations to take place and need to revisit the narratives after allowing time for reflexive thinking where the narrator can build their argument. At the culmination of the research process, I have revisited or contacted each of the Anangu narrators to go carefully over their stories to ensure that they remain comfortable and confident with the work.

#### *Accounting for costs and longer timeframes*

Long distances, long timeframes and revisiting the work with Anangu narrators is a very costly exercise, and limited resources can dictate a more truncated methodological approach. It is important, wherever possible, to avoid tight research timelines where limited funding sources can influence researchers to adopt power-laden research methods that ultimately privilege the priorities of the institution and the broader academy. Leveraging existing relationships and expediting research through the manipulation of ‘gratuitous concurrence’ (Lieberman, 1980, see discussion in Chapter 2) may satisfy institutional timelines, formal ethical approvals and budget constraints, but they perpetuate unequal and unethical research practice that is comprehensively rejected by Indigenous scholars (Moreton-Robinson, 1998; Nakata, 2007b; Smith, 1999).

I collected data between early 2012 and early 2015, during a period when I was working in the field of remote education research, based largely across the tristate area, which allowed me to touch base continually with participants and their families and to build understanding and confidence in the work. I was also able to build on prior relationships arising from my time as a teacher and principal, as noted earlier. In Anangu communities, research relationships do not simply develop

through a shared love of scientific endeavour, nor is it satisfactory to rely on long-standing personal relationships to ensure participation. A research relationship of this kind needs to be produced, and continually co-produced. While existing relationships are important and can place researchers in the community context, the process of producing an ethical research relationship is intentional and requires researchers to provide clear information over formal and informal conversations. For this, and other studies, it requires far deeper explanation than the process of running through a participant consent form and signing off. In the Anangu context, ethical research practice begins with discussions about what research is and why institutions conduct research. It is important to engage in the process of discussing how this research can benefit the individual, their family and the wider community, as well as talking about the associated risks and potential issues, but these conversations unfold over time. A tick-box approach to commencing a research relationship lays a foundation only for the collection of data that are limited and responsive to the needs of the institution rather than the people involved. These are the kinds of interactions remote school principals, for example, are limited to but are required to undertake as part of broader systemic commitments to ‘data-informed’ practice. An example here is the requirement to conduct and report on a parent-satisfaction survey each year for the annual report. Such an approach is limited in its capacity to inform education practice and is one of the reasons I argue for venues for ‘power-sensitive’ (Haraway, 2004) standpoint dialogue to be sought as a basis for renegotiating a ‘more-just’ (Brennan & Zipin, 2008) provision of education in tristate schools.

In the process of this study, one participant agreed to participate wholeheartedly after I had spent 15 months of talking with the wider family, as well as the individual concerned, and waiting for them to reconnect and indicate their interest through asking further questions about the process, suggesting alternative processes for engagement in the research, and enquiring about the wider context of my work, the organisations I work with and the broader aims of the study. Two participants were assisted by family members to sit down with me and spend time explaining some of the negative experiences they have had with researchers and research practice (see Smith, 2012) as a way of clarifying the intent, motivation, methodological approach and audience of my work. The longer timelines and flexibility, as well as strong assurances that participants retain their own stories for their own families and communities and could withdraw at any time, resulted in all participants I approached ultimately agreeing to be involved. Commercial research and highly pressured research timelines work against a researcher’s ability to produce such patient, power-sensitive relationships and subsequent conversations, which has unfortunately contributed to negative experiences and a general reluctance to participate in research among many Anangu in the tristate region. This is not an insurmountable problem if researchers are prepared to work to prioritise the community context of participants over their own institutional demands.

The following table shows the timeframes for activities that have occurred in the production of this thesis.

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>2010</b> | November, thesis proposal confirmed   |
| <b>2011</b> | Ethics approval received (May)  |
| <b>2012</b> | Commence fieldwork with Anangu participants (Feb); ongoing work on transcripts and translations   |
| <b>2013</b> | Continue fieldwork with Anangu participants; ongoing work on transcripts and translations; publications: Guenther (2013), Osborne (2013a), Osborne (2013b), Osborne and Guenther (2013a) and Osborne and Guenther (2013b)   |
| <b>2014</b> | Continue fieldwork with Anangu participants, commence fieldwork with Piranpa educators (September); continue working on transcripts and historical, archival research; publications: Burton and Osborne (2014); Guenther, Disbray and Osborne (2014); Minutjukur and Osborne (2014); Osborne (2014a); Osborne (2014b); and Tjitayi and Osborne (2014)   |
| <b>2015</b> | Complete interviews with Piranpa educators; provide all finalised narratives and all associated digital, language transcriptions and translations to all Anangu participants; check back with all Anangu for release of narratives for wider distribution; publications: Osborne (2015a); Osborne (2015b); Guenther, Osborne et al. (2015); Guenther, Halsey and Osborne (2015); Guenther, Disbray & Osborne (2015) |

### *Who's managing whom? Ethical engagement and outsider researchers*

Institutional procedures for acquiring ethical approval to conduct research are important and necessary, but they are insufficient as evidence of ethical research practice in very remote community contexts. Indigenous researchers are at pains to point out the broader epistemological, ontological and cosmological contexts that outside researchers must engage, but have continued to pay little attention to or to which they remain seemingly unaware (see Nakata, 2007b; L. Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012). Karen Martin's (2006) thesis is highly instructive in this regard as it describes how researchers must also understand that they are 'managed' as visitors to the community, in the sense that communities have vast and constant experiences of managing relationships with outsiders, but researchers may be comparatively inexperienced in managing relationships with communities. In Alice Springs a few years back, a researcher was running through their agenda and participation consents with an elderly Alice Springs-based woman. Another woman advised from nearby in language, 'It's just "talk-talk", so make she pays you big money' (personal communication, 2010). In this case, there was big money available and everyone left satisfied, but in this type of research, the depth of the conversation is ultimately lacking. While the outside researcher may not realise that they were managed, even 'played', and communities become accustomed to research presenting an opportunity for low-level entrepreneurial engagement, the broader aims of research are often rendered impotent, or worse, provide a poorly constructed 'evidence base' for informing policy actions that are directed back on communities.

### *The challenge of revisiting language and places that time forgot*

The following examples help to explain why interviews could not be sent away to be returned as transcripts. The field of people with linguistic expertise and contextual experience is already small, and those in the field are mostly retired but still largely unavailable due to continued demands on their time and expertise. Older Anangu narrators emphasised oral histories within their narratives, and transcribing and translating these accounts became an important part of the thesis. One of the more challenging aspects of this process has been to locate and identify some of the sites mentioned in the narratives. Some narratives include pre- and early European contact accounts, and within these accounts sites are recalled, but these names may not have been in regular use for a



very long time, or the sites are very remote and unlikely to be visited outside of family and cultural contexts. At times it was difficult to understand the actual names, but even more difficult to locate the sites on maps or in the context of other larger or better known sites. Adding further difficulty, some sites, actions or even people were referred to in a contextualised version of English, but it was not necessarily clear that the word in question was not of Pitjantjatjara origin. Such words include *tinta matjura* (tender muster), *rikuuti* (recorder), *ankapa* (handcuffs) and *puul-pa* (bore sinker). Some of the sites mentioned were extremely remote wells or bores that have been reclaimed by the desert over time but are recalled as sites of certain events in the narratives. In many cases, I had to search diligently in a variety of records to discover the places, events and characters, as is discussed further in Chapter 4. This is not easy either, as many of the records taken by Europeans are so badly written – due to poor contextual literacy and perhaps lack of attention – that it can also be unclear which site these records refer to. Examples of this can be seen in Constable Brown’s official police records, which are contradicted and clarified in triangulation throughout Chapter 5. The appropriation of names of people and places into local language was also sometimes difficult in that a word might have been based on an English language term, but has been significantly altered and is therefore difficult to match to a record in English. For example, the name ‘De Conlay’ has been appropriated into the Anangu surname ‘Connolly’; when Anangu participants referred to Paddy De Conlay, they used the name Connolly. When they referred to the Central Australian tourism icon Jim Cotterill, they used the name ‘Jim Katali’. Tracking down ‘Angela Brokkenbrikenbrekkenburger’, for example, was a challenge, and eventually a former colleague who had worked in Anangu education in the late 1970s to early 1980s was able to help me to locate Angela Faulkenburg, who confirmed that for the sake of convenience, she was routinely referred to as *Kungka* (girl) in the community.

Some of the ‘old language’ used was also unfamiliar in that it relates to certain actions of hunting, cooking, birthing practices and so on that are highly specific to the context and era of the story, using language rarely heard in recent times. I made a methodological decision that wherever possible I would not interrupt the narrators, even if I was lost with certain details of location and characters. Attempts to locate these places with their correct names resulted in many hours of additional research to clarify and understand the context of the stories, as it may have been many months before I could see or could make contact with participants to clarify aspect of the transcripts. I consulted historical police records and hand-drawn maps through the Northern Territory Archives Service (2014), online archives such as Ara Irititja (2015), the Mountford Collection through the National Library of Australia and had many conversations in person and by email with fellow researchers, land council staff, historians, senior Anangu and people who have significant personal experience in tristate communities who could help me understand some of the places and players. I also consulted people from the cattle industry to help clarify some of the terms that were used and to provide some context to historical recollections of the industry in the region.

Terms such as Sandra's use of *mulyalpai* (lit. 'noser') needed to be read carefully in context; I was able to identify the 'noser' as a trombone by eliminating other musical instruments such as *rikuuti* (recorder). Where Sandra took a trip to a remote bore at 'Narituma', I was able to locate 'Narwietooma Station' as a station on the edge of the Tanami after consulting with a contact in the cattle industry. This showed me that, to my surprise, the teenage girl's stowaway trip in the story in Chapter 5 had taken her on a round trip of approximately 1000 kilometres. 'Pulata Puu' (the Pitjantjatjara name for the now disused English place name 'Bloodwood Bore') is another example of a term that is easily understood if you have a historical context for site names in the region, but otherwise presents a challenge.

## Chapter 4: Cows, bombs, mines and missions: A history of the centralising and decentralising influences on Anangu populations

### Brief overview

In this chapter I provide historical context for the establishment of Anangu communities and schools and describe historical factors that underpin various Anangu standpoints that are expressed in the course of this study in relation to young people, education and the future. These historical accounts are important as they directly impact the life experiences of participants in this study and help to understand the current schooling context.

### Life and learning before 'education'

When Anangu recount the origins of the land, its people, the stories and the law that binds them together, it often begins with '*Iriti kunyu*'. On the one hand, this can mean 'Long ago it is said', but it can also be used in the sense of, 'In the beginning'. The *Tjukurpa* (often translated as 'dreaming') determines both the curriculum and pedagogy for retaining and transmitting the sacred stories. Law, relationships, responsibilities and historical accounts of the vast regions are all connected through lines of story, including song. Stories recount the journeys and interactions of the ancestor beings as they lived, died and created the various land and celestial forms in the creation period. These stories cover thousands of kilometres and provide a social framework for the rules of engagement with neighbouring families, language groups and regions. *Tjukurpa* also provides vital knowledge for survival, such as locating water across vast desert landscapes. It provides a way of 'knowing' a place without having ever been there. These stories are recounted informally in the telling and retelling, as Gordon Inkatji recounts:

As a child living with my father and mother ... I would say, 'Tell me a story!' And they would both tell me a story and I would listen. I would listen and listen and listen and then fall asleep and they would finish. And in the morning, I'd get up after sleeping and say, 'Right, tell me that story!'

Gordon Inkatji (Chapter 6, this thesis)

These stories are also recounted and taught in more formal contexts through songs, dances and associated rituals of Anangu religious ceremonial life as larger groups come together for this purpose (Edwards, 1992; Sutton, 2010; Tindale, 1935). This is the preferred context for engaging with *Tjukurpa* in the sense of collective social adherence to law. Much teaching for survival, such as ecological knowledge – including about plant foods, bush medicine, fire management and the daily interactions with the spiritual beings of the land – is taught by family members as small family groups move through the country (Nganyinytja Ilyatjari, 1994; Tjilari, 1994, 2006).

Edwards (1992) explains the environmentally determined centralising and decentralising patterns that have marked Anangu life and various contexts for learning in familial and more formalised settings:

Limitations in the availability of water and food supplies normally placed restraints on the size of groups living together and on the length of time groups could remain in one area. Occasionally, exceptionally heavy rains enabled much larger groups to collect at a site for ritual, social and exchange purposes. These bands numbered approximately six to twenty people. As they met up with other groups there could be some exchange of membership between the groups. It is likely that use was made of the more ephemeral waters and surrounding resources following rain, with the groups falling back to the more permanent springs and soakages during dry spells. (pp. 3–5)

This pattern of travelling in small family groups, interspersed with periods of larger groups coming together, has shaped social and pedagogical contexts of learning. Through closely observing the daily practice of family members, children learn to interact with the environment and with other people, acquiring life-dependent ecological knowledge and social codes that are critical to desert life. Anangu adults provide opportunities for children to observe and learn, and children are expected to take this knowledge on. In Chapter 6 of this thesis, Gordon Inngatji recalls the persistent modelling his father provided to teach values of unconditional giving and the importance of family relationships. Gordon would watch from a distance and sulk, thinking, ‘He’s giving away my meat’. But after a time, he came to accept and actively adopt these values:

And because that love and care was present as a child, I also carry that love today and I don’t refuse others. I give food, I give meat, and I give money without refusing.  
(Chapter 6, this thesis)

Katrina Tjitayi (Chapter 7, this thesis) explains that a child (or adult) learner must be ‘open in spirit’ to take that knowledge in: ‘The things we say, our knowledge, our practices, they [the children] take them into their spirit and all of these things are held in their spirit’.

Environmentally responsive mobility and socialisation patterns across the Western Desert (Tindale, 1937, see below for further discussion) have shaped a unique social and pedagogical model, recognised by anthropologists as distinct from other Aboriginal cultures and social structures by way of language, identity, mobility patterns and relationship to desert landscapes (Douglas, 1959; Elkin, 1938-1939; Strehlow, 1965, 1970; Sutton, 2010; Tindale, 1972). Edwards (1992) explains that Anangu patterns of residence and ecological interaction necessarily reflect ‘degrees of variability and inconsistency’ (Sutton, 2010, p. 65) that the harsh desert environment dictates (see also Stafford-Smith & Huigen, 2009). These environmental and social factors led early anthropologists and linguists to apply a collective label to a region much wider than the tristate area, where interconnections of language and desert socialisation are strong and distinct. Elkin ascribed the Arandic term ‘Aluridja’ (Elkin, 1938-1939) to the people of the region as well as referring to the ‘Western Group’ (see Sutton, 2010, p. 48). The term ‘Western Desert’ was soon permanently adopted by linguists and anthropologists such as Tindale (1937) and Douglas (1954, 1959). Distinctive social and environmental factors distinguish Anangu not only from other Aboriginal peoples and geographies in Australia (for wider discussion on cultural and geographical diversity in Indigenous Australian contexts, see Nakata, 2007a; Rowse, 2012), but also markedly

from values and assumptions of dominant Australian culture (Osborne et al., 2014), and indeed neoliberal dominant cultures globally (M. S. Bain, 1979; Bishop, 2011; D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014; L. Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012).

### **Environmental and residential impacts of European colonisation**

Anangu populations have been heavily influenced in the last 100 years by encroachments of colonisation and economic development, such as the pastoral industry and establishment of missions and subsequent communities and outstations. Drought has always been a major influence on Anangu patterns of mobility and residence, and the sinking of bores and access to basic provisions such as flour, tea and sugar became increasingly vital for life. Further pressure on already-precious sources of water and food was caused by the introduction of herds of sheep, cattle, goats and the use of camels and horses by pastoralists and a range of other visitors (including release of unwanted domestic transport camels) (Basedow, 2008; Duguid, 1972; Mountford, 1962). Strehlow (1969) explains that in the beginning of the nineteenth century, stations to the far south-east of the tristate region bred ‘walers’: horses that were ‘highly sought after by the British Army, for their breeding and endurance qualities’ (see Todmorden Cattle Company, 2014 n.p.). Following successful trials of British tanks towards the end of World War I, these contracts were cancelled and the stock were shot or released, adding to the pressure on resources.

Vast populations of feral camels, horses and donkeys exist as hardy and adaptable creatures that have devastated native flora and fauna species in the tristate region. Despite culling and removal programs, the number of feral camels exceeds 300 000 (Ninti One, 2014). Tindale (1935) gives some sense of the ecological richness the tristate region was able to support, when he describes how in 1933, some 270 Anangu had gathered for an initiation ceremony at ‘Konapandi’ (sic – Kunapanti) to the south-west of the Musgrave Ranges:

After little more than a week it had become necessary for the womenfolk to travel distances of up to five miles in order to obtain sufficient supplies of vegetable foods and small mammals, such as malla (*Lagorchestes*), rabbit bandicoots (*Thalacomys*), marsupial moles (*Notoryctes typhlops*), and rabbits, to sustain all the members of the camp. (p. 200)

Many of them therefore spent the day digging out opossums from their burrows. On one fire alone no fewer than thirty of these animals were cooked. (p. 203)

All these native mammals, now rare or extinct across the region (see Copley, Baker, Nesbitt, & Foulkes, 2003, p. 203), had provided vital food supplies until relatively recently. Early expeditions by Gosse (1873), Giles (1874), Forrest (1874), and later by Carruthers (1892), Tindale (1933) and Finlayson (1946, 1961), recorded plentiful numbers of these native mammals, which gives some indication of the devastation the last century has brought to the tristate ecology.

While more sedentary residence among Anangu populations commenced soon after pastoralists began to take up station leases on the eastern fringe of the tristate region, many were still being

‘brought in’ from nomadic desert life as late as the 1970s (Ngaanyatjarra Council, 2014b). Depletion of water and food resources took a heavy toll in times of drought; very few Anangu outlasted the drought of the late 1950s and 1960s and were finally forced into mission and community centres such as Ernabella, Warburton, Ooldea and Finke.

### **Centralisation and decentralisation influences on Anangu populations**

It is important to note the political–economic imperatives that influenced historical trends and to recognise Commonwealth resourcing of communities as critical to their ongoing existence (see Rothwell, 2014). In broad terms, I categorise policy periods that influenced population trends into four phases:

- Centralisation (late 1800s – 1967)
- Decentralisation (1967 – late 1970s)
- Further decentralisation (smaller outstations, late 1970s – 1990s)
- Recentralisation (2003 – current).

From the late 1880s until 1967, government policies for engagement with Anangu focused on providing rations at centralised locations such as stations and missions. At various times government-appointed officers were employed to scour the region and ‘bring people in’, for example, during the atomic testing in the 1950s.

Edwards (1988) describes the ensuing period, from 1967, as returning to ‘country’ and establishment of incorporated communities and outstations as ‘Pitjantjatjara decentralisation’. He also documents a subsequent period, late 1970s to 1990s, when outstations and homelands were established. Since 2003, policy language and funding models have reduced support for repairs and maintenance of outstations and homelands, with more recent debates focusing on the prospect of closing smaller homelands and centres.

The language of ‘centralisation’ and ‘decentralisation’ indicates policy shifts from an approach of attracting people to resources provided centrally at missions and stations, to resourcing Anangu to return to dispersed sites and establish communities. However, this terminology should not be confused with long-established cycles, pre- and post-contact, of centralisation and decentralisation as water and food supplies flourished and then retreated again in drought (Edwards, 1992). It is also important to highlight the limitations of this terminology in that Anangu continued to move into, out from and between stations and mission centres, incorporating these sites and resources into a broader mobility pattern of their own choosing (Duguid, 1963, 1972; Edwards, 1992; Hilliard, 1968; Lester, 1993; J. Long, 1989; Mackett, 2007).

### **Explorers and doggers: early contact and pre-centralisation interactions**

Prior to establishment of centres such as stations and missions, small parties of explorers and dingo scalp traders (‘doggers’) made trips into the tristate area, leading to the earliest occasions of Anangu interaction with Europeans. William Gosse was the first explorer to travel through the

tristate region in 1873. On this trip, he ‘discovered’ and named the iconic sites of Ayers Rock (Uluru) and Mt Olga (Kata Tjuta). After a number of attempts to cross from Central Australia to the west coast of Australia, he retreated after failing to ‘penetrate the apparently waterless sandhills of the Gibson Desert’ (Gara, 2003, p. 1). Giles followed a few months after, in August 1873, attempting to pass Gosse. However, he too failed to negotiate the ‘horrors’ of the Central Australian deserts:

During an exploratory trip westwards from the Rawlinson Ranges in 1874, one of Giles’ men, Gibson, was lost in the desert that now bears his name. Giles wrote, ‘I called this terrible region ... Gibson’s Desert, after the first white victim to its horrors’. (Gara, 2003, p. 1)

Many signs of Aboriginal life, such as distant smoke, abandoned camps and so on were noted, but rarely did these early parties contact Aboriginal people, who held a great fear and distrust of the white explorers, their weapons and strange animals. The feeling was mutual: Gara (2003) reports the beliefs of Giles and Gosse that ‘Aboriginal people were “savages” and “cannibals” and ... [the explorers] had few reservations about using firearms against them’ (p. 2).

A number of expeditions followed, by ‘a variety of explorers, adventurers, prospectors and survey parties’ (Edwards, 1992, p. 6). They also adopted a relational approach of little contact, supported by low levels of trust from both Anangu and Pirdanpa, although many parties relied on Anangu assistance to locate water and so on. This pattern of infrequent contact changed dramatically by the turn of the twentieth century. Gara (2003) suggests this could be a result of rising resentment after the ‘continued appropriation of valuable water sources and the desecration of sacred sites’, or perhaps the ‘killings of Anangu during Henry Hill’s expedition in 1899–1900 ... sparked a number of attacks on subsequent prospecting parties’ (p. 4), resulting in a period of very few expeditions from around 1906.

Harsh desert conditions and great distances from city centres limited the size and potential firepower of these exploration parties, which remained at the mercy of the elements and the good graces of Anangu for their safety. If not for the limited water and food resources, it is quite possible that Anangu would have otherwise experienced a period of massacre and ‘clearing the land’ ahead of establishment of pastoral and mining interests, as was seen elsewhere across Australia.

Between 1912 and 1933, three water permits and pastoral leases were granted in the tristate area. During this time, these permits and leases provided ‘bases for dingo scalp trading, and pastoral development was limited’ (Edwards, 1992, p. 7). The ‘colonists’ bureaucratic reframing of dingo as ‘vermin’ (Young, 2010, p. 296), offering a bounty for dingo scalps in 1913, set in place the earliest forms of economic exchange: payment for labour and access to European goods such as food and clothing. By the 1920s, the Northern Territory and Western Australian governments had introduced a similar scheme (Young, 2010, p. 296):

After RM Williams made two dogging trips through the Mann, Musgrave, Rawlinson and Warburton ranges in 1928, returning to Oodnadatta with hundreds of scalps, he inspired other men working on the same pastoral station circuits north-west of Oodnadatta to do the same. (Williams 1998:62, in Young, 2010, pp. 94-95)

In providing access to desirable goods, the doggers soon found they had company on their journeys. Young (2010) describes Tindale's (1933) frustrations that doggers attracted such large groups, to the point that it became difficult for him, as an anthropologist, to attract any Anangu to travel with him as guides. Tindale (1933, p. 567) also claims that doggers employed 'propaganda' tactics to cause 'the natives' to fear the company of others such as anthropologists.

Both Gara (2003) and Scales (2007) observe that the doggers represented a new type of interaction with Anangu. Gara writes:

The doggers were different from the explorers and prospectors who preceded them. Most were experienced bushmen or pastoral workers, familiar with Aboriginal customs and languages. Many had Aboriginal wives, who were of great assistance in establishing trading networks with the local people. And unlike most explorers and prospectors who passed through the country just once, the doggers returned year after year to the same places to trade. (Gara, 2003, p. 7)

Scales (2007) praises the 'true bushman' and 'pioneering spirit' exemplified by doggers and their Aboriginal wives who traded scalps and negotiated the emerging space of intercultural collaboration across some 40 years in the region. He also notes serious concerns, particularly in relation to Paddy De Conlay (who features strongly in Sandra Armstrong's oral history narratives, Chapter 5 of this thesis):

CP Mountford mentions him in his 1940 diary, by reporting that it was rumoured he left out some poisoned rations. Paddy de Conlay's 'camel girl Leah' didn't know why he left a half bag of flour, tea and sugar, but two men and a boy later died after eating it. In 1940 he had to leave South Australia, because the authorities were investigating him for this murder ... He was again in trouble in late 1940 and was charged with Bert Kitto, the station owner, for the murder of 'Lollylegs' a Pitjantjatjara man from Ernabella. They were accused of tying 'Lollylegs' up with fencing wire and dragging him behind their truck. (Scales, 2007, p. 100)

Duguid (1972), who provided expert evidence to the court, claims that the two accused were acquitted due to deliberate sabotage by the Northern Territory police. Scales (2007) notes that De Conlay, Davis and others were renowned for their lacing of flour and treacle with strychnine as well as shooting Anangu, although charges have never been laid in regards to these observations.

Edwards (1992) describes the policy context and impact in this historical period:

Spasmodic contacts led occasionally to disputes, for example, over access to women, violence and killings of blacks and whites. In an attempt to provide some protection for the Aborigines, an area of 56,721 square kilometres was proclaimed as the North-West Aboriginal Reserve in 1921. However white settlement of the land east of the Reserve was encouraged by the granting of water permits and pastoral leases to the 'doggers' and others who could find adequate water supplies by digging wells. (p. 9)



Increasing concerns over frontier exploitation and violence strengthened the case for establishing a mission ‘buffer zone’ (see Edwards, 1992) from ‘unscrupulous whites’:

Visiting anthropologists, Elkin in 1930 and Tindale in 1933, the Hermannsburg missionaries, scout for the Presbyterian Mission Board JRB Love and Charles Duguid all expressed concern to the Aborigines Protection Board and the South Australian Government. (Young, 2010, p. 94)

It was hoped that such a buffer zone would be provided by the Ernabella Mission, which would effectively centralise the population in the region to ameliorate potential further mistreatment at the hands of the colonial expansion.

## **The centralising and decentralising influences on Anangu populations**

### **Cows: Pastoralism and Anangu**

The most easterly populations in the region (Yankunytjatjara, Luritja and Pertame – Southern Arrernte) were most affected by the establishment of cattle stations from the 1880s, following the first Europeans making their way through the central corridor from Adelaide and into the Northern Territory in the 1860s. Cattle stations became an established source of rations, water, (unpaid or low) wages, work and shelter, but did not provide schooling for Anangu children (see, for example, Patrol Officer John Bray's records 1951-1953, Mackett, 2007).

Edwards (1992, p. 10) explains that, by the late 1950s, most Yankunytjatjara and some Pitjantjatjara people lived on cattle stations in the east of the region:

[Cattle stations], such as Granite Downs and Everard Park, had permanent populations of approximately 100 and 60 respectively. Others such as Kenmore Park, Victory Downs, De Rose Hill and Mt. Cavanagh had small permanent camps. (p. 10)

With the virtual absence of non-Aboriginal women in the region, many Piranpa (non-Aboriginal) men fathered Aboriginal children with varying levels of recognition and acceptance of these children (see Brown & Studdy-Clift, 1990). Stations were paid and resourced to administer rations to elderly Anangu and children, and to keep records of men, women and children living at the station (see Mackett, 2007). These reporting processes were also used to assist authorities in locating mixed-descent children for removal and institutionalisation. Although there is no evidence that Anangu children were removed from Ernabella Mission, many children were removed or relocated from stations and into institutional care under the assimilationist policies of the day. Lowitja O’Donaghue (De Rose Hill Station, see State Library of South Australia, 2014) and Bob Randall (Angas Downs, see Randall, 2003) are two of the more publicly recognised members of the ‘Stolen Generations’ (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997) from the region. Edwards (1992) explains:

Another result of increasing contact was the birth of children of mixed parentage. Under government policy police removed many of these children so that they could be brought up in mission homes in Oodnadatta and Quorn. (p. 7)

The term ‘Stolen Generations’ signifies the many thousands of Aboriginal children who were removed from parents and raised in missions and government institutions for the purpose of assimilation into, and labour provision for, the dominant culture. The history of this policy and subsequent damage experienced by these children was brought to national attention through *Bringing them home* report (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997). In 2008, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made a formal apology on behalf of the Australian Government (see Rudd, 2008) for these policies, which have caused intergenerational trauma that still affects descendants. The ‘Stolen Children’ may have experienced comparatively higher levels of education and employment than their relations who remained in the bush, but distance and disconnection from families, language and country, forced upon them by assimilationist policies, continue to cause emotional trauma and suffering. As described in the introductory chapter, similar approaches to assimilating Indigenous children into the dominant culture, in countries such as Canada and the USA, have yielded the similar intergenerational trauma that impacts health and wellbeing.

Establishment and expansion of pastoral leases have had a range of noticeable effects on people and their families today. In the case of stations such as Angas Downs in the Northern Territory, a large family and vibrant community developed, which became vital to the survival of many Anangu in the period before the establishment of communities in the 1960s – 1970s (see Edwards, 1988, 1992; Rose, 1962). In many cases, however, Anangu were exploited as a cheap labour source, or were seen as an unfortunate but necessary nuisance, or were completely excluded in the establishment of sheep and cattle industry in the region. Attitudes and actions of pastoralists in the region are recorded by anthropologists, historians, bush yarners and scholars such as Mountford (1962), Duguid (1963, 1972), Brown (Brown & Studdy-Clift, 1990) and Strelhow (1969).

Northern Territory Police Patrol Officer John Bray visited 28 stations in the Northern Territory between 1951 and 1953. His notes describe the nature of Aboriginal engagement with the various stations and provide useful insights into diverse approaches of the day. Bray faithfully records the ‘status’ of Aboriginal residents: employed or not, ‘H/C’ (Half-caste) or ‘F/B’ (Full Blood) and so on. This terminology is offensive in current Australian society, but was accepted in that time. At Angas Downs Station, Bray records (Mackett, 2007):

Angas Downs Station is situated on the usual trade route for aborigines between Areyonga and Ernabella. This means that groups of natives are passing to and fro throughout the year in numbers up to 100 – men, women and children. They usually sit down for a few days at Angas Downs and quite a few of them are attended for medical requirements. It is considered that quantities of necessities for this purpose should be supplied to the owners of Angas Downs. (n.p.)

Less than 75 kilometres to the west at Eralunda Station, Bray describes a vastly different picture of engagement and residence at the station’s ‘native camp’:

Two or three family groups and their relations, to all intents and purposes nomads, sit down at Eralunda for the greater part of their lives. The men, with one exception, are

able bodied, two of them convicted persons (Wongwi and Boola [sic]<sup>2</sup>) and the group exists by the sale of dingo scalps and very occasionally a week or two in work, plus gambling and the handouts they receive from Station employees. The Station refuses any responsibility for these people, they have been hunted away, at times, but always return. They are all in good health and the women are fat, even those with babies.  
(n.p.)

While there is some recorded evidence of murders and mistreatment of Anangu at the hands of pastoralists (see, for example, Duguid, 1972; Gara, 2003; Mountford, 1962; Scales, 2007; Young, 2010), off-the-record oral history discussions occurring in this thesis research suggest that Anangu experienced significantly higher incidences of rape, assault and murder than colonial historical accounts reveal. Historical police records show that police and Aboriginal trackers actively followed up even minor complaints from pastoralists, giving them significant practical and moral support in tensions and conflicts, as illustrated in a 1945 entry regarding an unscheduled visit to a station:

[The station owner] was pleased to see the arrival of the Police, and stated that a Police visit had an ameliorating effect on the aboriginals in the vicinity and that he hoped these patrols would continue. (Northern Territory Archives Service, 2014, p. 2)

Duguid (1972) agrees that police resources were predominantly directed to advance station, mining and other interests, but notes that some pastoralists and doggers were ‘nervous’ about, or opposed to, ‘challenge to their control of Aborigines’ (p. 144). In the main, policing acted as an asset to the colonial project in exacting justice upon Aboriginal people. Paddy De Conlay, for example, escaped punishment from numerous murder accusations; but when he called on police support after his underground store of rations was broken into, Constable Brown recalls, ‘The drastic plight Paddy De Conlay found himself in can be imagined ... This type of crime couldn’t be left unchallenged’. (This story is more fully explored in Chapter 5).

Stations provided much earlier contact experience for more easterly Anangu populations compared to their relations further west. Many Anangu families assimilated into pastoral life: in some circles, the period between the two World Wars, and even up to the time of the Wave Hill Walk-off (1966–75, north of the tristate region, this was a protest movement where Aboriginal station workers went on strike, resulting in a legal requirement for Aboriginal employees on stations to be paid wages comparable to non-Aboriginal workers), is referred to as a ‘golden age’ (McGrath, 1987, p. 3). While this may be a somewhat utopian view, life was less complex in many ways, without current challenges of petrol sniffing, alcohol abuse and suicide in Anangu communities (see Edwards, 2011). After the 1967 referendum, cattle stations in the region were all but abandoned by Anangu as they returned to country connected to more traditional associations and responsibilities. According to Edwards (1992), Anangu residence on and around cattle stations may have been more

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<sup>2</sup> Wongway and Bulla are current family names in the nearby Imanpa and Finke communities.

strongly influenced by pragmatism than idealism, given depleted resources and severe drought in the 1950s and 1960s. Yet many Anangu continue to embrace the cattleman's life on the land even following relocation, including dress, social customs and identities formed through this period. Very few Anangu live on active stations in the tristate area now, although small-time engagement with cattle continues through small-scale agistment and sporadic interactions with stations on pastoral leases.

### **Bombs: Maralinga and blue streak rockets**

Two major events affecting the region were the Maralinga atomic bomb testing that took place from 1952 to 1967 (southern regions of the SA tristate region) and the 'blue streak' rocket testing from the late 1950s (mainly affecting the north-western region of the WA tristate region). In the Maralinga case, people were 'cleared out' and displaced to make way for testing from the early 1950s. Walter MacDougall and Bob Macaulay were the two officers appointed to patrol the test sites, covering 1,035, 995 km<sup>2</sup> (400,000 sq. miles) with their truck and bring people in to mission centres as well as warn others of impending dangers of entering the Maralinga zone. Despite the area being declared 'abandoned', patrols regularly encountered people in transit within the prohibited zones. MacDougall and Macaulay's strategies to stop north/south travel through the testing zone had not reckoned on the volume of travel from far further west (Edwards, 2000; Macaulay, 1963).

MacDougall, in particular, is remembered as 'strenuously opposing' the testing on Aboriginal land (Edwards, 2000). Working across Aboriginal welfare departments from two states and the Northern Territory, in extreme and isolated conditions, was a task requiring expert bush navigation skills as well as ability to negotiate complex political and intercultural spaces. Edwards (2000) writes of MacDougall:

His concern for the welfare of Aboriginal people often led to conflict. One chief scientist wrote that, while MacDougall was sincere in protecting the interest of Aborigines, he lacked balance and placed 'the affairs of a handful of natives above those of the British Commonwealth of Nations.' No epitaph could be more fitting. (n.p.)

Despite little documented 'evidence', Anangu stories refer to many deaths on the fringes of the test site and complaints with eyes and breathing. Yami Lester (1993) described his loss of sight in the fall-out period and many others' health problems. Shannon Kantji (see Chapter 9) described his mother's panic as an imposing cloud from the Maralinga testing passed over them in the south-east of the tristate region. In fear of this strange cloud, she dug out a series of burrows and buried the children (including Shannon) until the cloud passed sometime later. Yankunytjatjara people such as Yami Lester and his mother Pingkayi provided eyewitness accounts to the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia (Australian Royal Commission, 1985), describing the thick black cloud that blocked out the sky and kept coming and coming, leaving a black, moist, sticky substance that covered ground, leaves and buildings:

Pingkayi said that within a day several people in the camp fell sick. Their eyes became sore and watery. They had intense stomach pains with diarrhea and vomiting. Skin rashes appeared on many of the people touched by the black substance. Yami Lester started vomiting and had diarrhea. His eyes were incredibly sore and weeping. (Walker, 2014 n.p.)

It is difficult to imagine a more comprehensively violent form of dispossession for those Anangu on the southern fringes of the tristate region and more widely dispersed throughout the Maralinga region. It took more than 25 years, but under the *Maralinga Tjarutja Land Rights Act 1984* (South Australian Government, 2014b), a huge area of land (10% of the South Australian land mass) was returned to Anangu from the region.

In Western Australia, Anangu (also referred to as Yarnangu in the Ngaanyatjarra/Ngaatjatjarra regions) were cleared out and brought in to mission and ration centres to make way for rocket weapons testing out of Woomera known as the Blue Streak project. The Ngaanyatjarra Council (2014d) describes removal of people from the north-western region of Ngaanyatjarra Lands from the late 1950s:

During the nuclear weapon testing era, Native Patrol Officers were employed by the Government to move the remaining nomadic Yarnangu from their country to Warburton Mission or other government settlements in the region in order to protect them from rocket debris from the “Blue Streak” research project. As a result some Yarnangu from this area were taken to Warburton Mission, and a few others were taken to missions at Jigalong and Balgo in WA and to the government settlement at Papunya in NT. (n.p.)

It was not until the 1970s that Yarnangu were able to return, and the Warakurna Community – on Yarnangu land – was incorporated in 1976. Pintupi people of the Gibson Desert region were removed and relocated to Warburton and other centres up until the 1960s as a protection from Blue Streak rocket debris. A small group of Pintupi moved to Patjarr when the small community was established as an outstation of Warburton in 1992 (see Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku, 2014b).

Ongoing struggle for compensation, so far unsuccessful, continues for Anangu exposed to nuclear radiation through the 1950s weapons testing programs (see Nicholson, 2014).

### **Mines**

Individuals and small groups pursuing small-time mining interests travelled around the tristate region beginning in the late 1800s (see Edwards, 1992; Gara, 2003). A series of expeditions between 1898 and 1908 (Hann, 1903, Hazlett, 1904, Frank George, 1905, see Gara, 2003, p. 6) found deposits of copper, nickel and gold, but remoteness and a series of Anangu spear attacks seemed to end such trips by 1905. Hazlett was the most persistent, conducting around 15 trips from Laverton to the Warburton, Jameson and Tomkinson ranges until the 1930s. Gara (2003) summarises this period:

At least 40 parties traversed the region between 1894 and 1916. Assuming that each expedition consisted, on average, of three men, it is likely that at least 120 white men

entered the region during that period, as well as a dozen or more Afghan camel-drivers and a handful of ‘foreign’ Aboriginal guides. (Gara, 2003, p. 7)

The ill-fated expedition of Harold Lasseter became the most famous of prospecting legends in the tristate area. After his failed attempt to locate a ‘reef of gold’ and his subsequent death, a number of would-be fortune seekers set off to find the reef, including the opportunistic Paddy De Conlay. The ‘national imaginary’ has certainly been inspired by this story of the ‘lost reef’, and it has become enmeshed with Anangu oral histories. Lasseter’s cave and final resting place are important sites for tourist pilgrimages to this day (Edwards, 1997; Gara, 2003).

Illegal small-to-medium mining interests established camps in the Ngaanyatjarra region by the 1950s (Edwards, 1992; Ngaanyatjarra Council, 2014c):

Nickel exploration and chrysoprase mining attracted several large companies including International Nickel and many illegal prospectors. Despite the establishment of the [Central Aboriginal] Reserve in 1922 to protect Yarnangu interests, by 1955 a large area from Mt Davies in SA to Jameson in WA had been excised from the Reserve to allow for exploration and mining. This was returned to the Reserve in 1972. (Ngaanyatjarra Council, 2014c n.p.)

With the onset of drought in the late 1950s and 1960s, the mining camps were abandoned. New materials and tools were eagerly acquired by Anangu and appropriated to support Anangu priorities and needs. Meagre infrastructure left over from small-time mining interests proved valuable to Anangu seeking to establish new communities:

In the late 1950s Southwestern Mining had their main headquarters and camp at Tollu, just south of the Blackstone Range. When the mining camp was abandoned, Yarnangu transported the remaining camp materials to the bore at Blackstone and thence began a new community. (Ngaanyatjarra Council, 2014b n.p.)

The Wingellina community was also shaped around early mining interests in the late 1950s:

Many people came to congregate around the Wingellina mining camps. Some Yarnangu were engaged in work and paid in rations. Others came to protect and live near local sites of significance, in particular those associated with the Papa (Dog) Dreaming, from exploration and mining activity ... Once the miners left, Yarnangu stayed and established a permanent community using the existing infrastructure (airstrips, shelters, windmills, etc.) left from the pre-existing mining camps ... The community became incorporated in 1976. (Ngaanyatjarra Council, 2014b n.p.)

Opal mining had small-scale beginnings in 1915. Mining towns and camps have since been established in the eastern south-east of the tristate region from Coober Pedy through to Mintabie and across to smaller sites such as Lambina (South Australian Government, 2014a). By 1917, the Trans-Australian Railway was completed, bringing construction workers and returned World War I soldiers to reside in their now-famous underground ‘dugouts’ to escape the fierce heat of the opal fields. The industry has experienced boom and bust cycles wherein:

[During] the Great Depression of the late 1930s and 1940s, opal prices plummeted and production almost came to a standstill ... [until] ... an Aboriginal woman named Tottie Bryant made a sensational opal find at the Eight Mile field in 1946, starting a new rush to the fields. (South Australian Government, 2014a n.p.)

During the 1960s, the industry greatly expanded due to Australia's influx of post-World War II European migrants, many of whom came to the region seeking their fortunes. Many European men married Aboriginal women: this story is integral to the history of one of the participants in this study (see Chapter 8).

Mintabie, a small opal mining town of 200–250 residents, sits within the APY Lands but is leased by the Government of South Australia. Larry O'Toole was first credited with discovering opals at Mintabie, but earlier records report Aboriginal people selling a relatively black opal in Coober Pedy, which must have been from the Mintabie region (Mineshaft, 2014). The Mintabie township was established at the same time as the land rights movement was forming to advocate for eventual signing of the *Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act 1981*. Mintabie is a constant source of tension, with a well-known history as a conduit for the supply of drugs and alcohol to otherwise dry Anangu communities.

Lambina is an opal field 58 kilometres north-east of Marla where, under a land agreement with the Yankunytjatjara/Antakirinya people, Anangu have first right to 'noodle' (search through) discard piles left by heavy machinery, but no permanent dwellings are allowed there (see *Opals Down Under*, 2014; Townsend, 2014). The Lambina community currently accommodates around 300 people.

Large scale mining projects are being negotiated with people of the Ngaanyatjarra region over a planned nickel mine at Wingellina (see *Agreements Treaties and Negotiated Settlement Project*, 2014). In the south of the Northern Territory, communities are being consulted about exploration for oil, gas and other mining ventures. Across the APY Lands, negotiations have been taking place about amendments to land rights (such as the 2004, 2005 amendments, see *The Anangu Lands Paper Tracker*, 2014) and improving infrastructure such as roads; and the Adelaide–Darwin railway has accompanied increased exploration, testing and negotiations throughout the tristate region (see, for example, Mignone, 2003).

### **Missions in the tristate region**

Ernabella (South Australia) and Warburton (Western Australia) were mission sites established – by the Presbyterian Church and United Aborigines Mission respectively – in the 1930s. Schooling and training for employment were considered vital to the work of the mission. Other sites where Anangu took up residence include Areyonga (Duguid, 1963), a rations outpost of the Lutheran Hermannsburg Mission, established for the Petermann Ranges people; Ooldea (Bates, 1938), a Lutheran mission on the northern edge of the Nullarbor Plain; and Hermannsburg Mission (see Strehlow, 1969), 130 kilometres west of Alice Springs. Despite Hermannsburg being a Western Aranda mission well north of the Pitjantjatjara language region, many Anangu, particularly in the Sam Osborne – Anangu Voices – Chapter 4: History

1940s, made the journey on foot via Areyonga and had short stays there before returning to Areyonga, Angas Downs, Ernabella and beyond (Tjilari, 1994). To the east, the police station, railway line, hotel and fettler's camp at Finke provided enough infrastructure to draw Anangu to Arrernte (Pertame) country on the sand-hilled fringe of the settlement (M. Bain, 2012a; Brown & Studdy-Clift, 1990).

### *Ernabella*

The Ernabella Mission was established in 1937 after Dr Charles Duguid lobbied the South Australian Government from 1935 for a 'buffer between the Aborigines and the encroaching white man' (Duguid, 1972, p. 115), having witnessed what he considered widespread abuse and exploitation of Aboriginal people across Central Australia (see also Edwards, 1988). Duguid was well positioned and used his networks across the Presbyterian Church, the medical profession, universities and governments to inform and lobby for action on a range of issues affecting Aboriginal people. Under Duguid's direction, Ernabella Mission staff were expected to learn Pitjantjatjara language. He also insisted on a number of practices not standard in other areas at the time, including supplements to add to the meagre rations issued by government, non-mandated engagement with Christian activities and schooling, and a respect for traditional practices, structuring hunting, family travel and ceremonial practices into the Ernabella Mission's approach. By 1939, Duguid was confident that the mission was superior to cattle stations for brokering the 'two worlds' Anangu faced, writing that:

Ernabella is the first buffer station in Australia deliberately planted between the old and the new civilisations. We are seeking to show the natives how much better off they are in their own country – free to roam at will – than sitting down at a cattle station in rags. (Duguid, quoted in Edwards, 1992, p. 8)

With meagre financial and material resources, the mission paid in rations for work in gardening, shepherding, shearing and construction, among other things, including trading rations for dingo scalps. Communities were established at Fregon and Amata in the 1960s to manage the large population increase at Ernabella.

Other important activity provided by the mission included the choir, arts, and of course schooling. The Ernabella Choir first emerged on the national scene after travelling to Adelaide on the back of a truck in 1954 to see Queen Elizabeth when she visited Australia (see Gordon Ingkatji's account, Chapter 6) and has since developed an international reputation through a series of tours across Australia as well as Fiji (see Edwards, 2008). Ernabella also has Australia's longest running Aboriginal art and craft centre, first managed by Win Hilliard (see Hilliard, 1968).

### *Warburton*

According to Edwards (1997), in 1927 Will Wade, of the United Aborigines Mission (UAM), accompanied by RM Williams, 'later famed as the bushman's outfitter' (p. 41), travelled west from



Oodnadatta to the Warburton Ranges in Western Australia, seeking a suitable site for a mission. This trip, says Edwards, made an ‘indelible impression on the Pitjantjatjara people’ (p. 41):

On a visit to Operinna Waterhole in the early 1960s, Jacky Tjupuru showed me a depression where he said Mr Wade had buried food for his return journey. He then began to sing a chorus which Mr Wade had taught them. On a visit to Pulpalnga sinkhole in Western Australia in 1980, a man pointed to a tree and said that Mr Wade had tied his camel to that tree. Andy Tjilari commenced his story, ‘Seeing an Aeroplane’, with his account of seeing Mr Wade and his camels when he was a young child. He recorded that the people, hearing Mr Wade frequently saying ‘Aliluya’ (Halleluia), gave him the name Alilulanya. (Edwards, 1997, p. 41)

Wade made several trips in the early 1930s from Mt Margaret (Western Australia) to the Warburton Ranges. Gara (2003) states that, ‘in 1933 [Wade] established the United Aborigines Mission station there’ (p. 7). Edwards (1997) documents a slightly different chronology, stating that Wade ‘made trips in 1933 and 1934 from Laverton in Western Australia to the Warburton area before obtaining permission to establish the mission station in 1935’ (p. 41).

Edwards notes marked philosophical differences between the UAM approach and that of the Ernabella Mission, stating that, at the Warburton Mission, ‘Aboriginal cultures and languages were largely denigrated’, and further that the ‘UAM mission philosophy was one of replacement [of local languages and cultures] rather than of adaptation’ (Edwards, 2011, p. 7). In spite of these positions, Wilf Douglas prominently documented (Douglas, 1964; 1959), learned and shared understanding of Western Desert dialects encountered through the Warburton Mission. In line with UAM policy, Douglas was forbidden to attend traditional rituals, but he was invited to attend a men’s ceremony in a 1962 visit to Ernabella where, says Edwards (2011), ‘Douglas impressed the people with his language ability’ (p. 7). In the 1950s, the Warburton Mission community came into collision with assimilationist policies of the day through what Haebich (2011) describes as ‘a new frontier of military and scientific intervention, notably the atomic tests that affected vast areas of the Central Reserves and incursions by international mining corporations’ (p. 1039). National debates and protests raged over the welfare of Yarnangu who were still in or moving through the Western Desert region, and a public awareness campaign run by filmmaker Bill Grayden and Aboriginal activist Pastor Doug Nicholls resulted in a cancellation of plans to remove ‘all school-age children to a mission hundreds of kilometres to the south to be educated and trained as workers for the local pastoral industry’ (Haebich, 2011, p. 1039).

### *Areyonga*

In 1940, Duguid and T. G. H Strehlow (see Duguid, 1963) travelled to the Petermann Ranges (Docker River area in the Northern Territory) to assess the validity of various accounts of people suffering in the face of prolonged drought. There was discussion as to whether a mission should be established at Docker River, but it was agreed that a rations station be set up close to Hermannsburg as an outpost of the Lutheran Mission there. By 1943, Areyonga community (as it came to be called) was established and a school opened. The Petermann Ranges people still relate

across the Docker River and Areyonga communities, with strong ties to Warakurna in Western Australia, Mutitjulu in the Northern Territory, and beyond. In its early years, the wide range of goods available through the store at Areyonga attracted Anangu from outside the Petermann Ranges to travel there (Edwards, 2011; Mackett, 2007; Young, 2010) This caused the Ernabella Mission to ensure that their trading terms provided close to full payment on scalps and offered access to an improved range of goods to attempt to slow the number of people leaving to access the goods on offer at Areyonga. This is confirmed in oral history accounts of Gordon Inngatji, Andy Tjilari (Tjilari, 2006) and Sandra Armstrong, who all journeyed to Areyonga and Hermannsburg in the 1940s and 1950s and recall experiences of attending school at these two sites.

The Lutheran Mission's approach to local languages, cultures and religion was similar to that of the UAM at Warburton, although Pastor FW Albrecht, who served for many years at Hermannsburg from 1926, 'graciously expressed his regret that the Lutherans had not followed some of the Ernabella policies', says (Edwards, 2011, p. 7). This was the beginning of 'a paradigm shift in the mission's attitude' (p. 7); Albrecht's son and successor, Paul, said:

It is my conviction that ultimately only Aboriginal Christians themselves in the light of God's Word can decide what to keep of their culture and what as Christians they must discard. If I am able to dialogue with them and help present the fullness of God's Word to them, then I believe I am helping them in this vital task. (Albrecht, 2002, p. 73, cited in Edwards, 2011, p.7)

### **Current church involvement in the tristate region**

The Lutheran Church, through the Finke River Mission, continues to support church activities in communities in the south of the Northern Territory. The Uniting Church (current representative of the Presbyterian Church in Australia) supports churches across the APY Lands and also at Finke. The UAM mission organisation did not affiliate directly with a singular church denomination; currently there is no singular church institution across the Ngaanyatjarra lands region, although, as in the rest of the tristate region, Anangu Christians maintain strong relationships in and outside of traditional denominational structures and affiliations.

### **Back on Country**

#### *The decentralisation of Anangu communities*

Communities outside of missions and well-established stations emerged between the 1960s and 1980s as government policies of the day enabled decentralisation of otherwise mission- and station-centred communities (Kiwirrkurra and Mutitjulu as late as the mid 1980s) (Edwards, 1988). A further decentralisation period followed with establishment of smaller homeland communities and outstations from the late 1970s into the late 1990s, until federal government funding dried up in 2005, with Minister Amanda Vanstone, as part of the Howard government, describing the homelands as 'cultural museums' and 'without a viable future' (see Eastley, 2005).

Centralisation had largely been provoked, particularly during drought, by provision of meagre rations to be distributed from missions and stations and corresponding degradation of resources

such as water, plant foods and game (see, for example, M. Bain, 2012b). Limited state-based funding was provided to centres such as the Ernabella Mission (Edwards, 2011), and, in pragmatic terms, a financial model or infrastructure simply did not exist for people to return to the deserts and still access food rations or financial assistance, as ‘prior to the 1967 referendum the Commonwealth government was not empowered to fund Aboriginal programs in the states’ (Edwards, 2011, p. 17).

The Ernabella Mission’s decision, in the early 1960s, to expand by establishing the Fregon and Amata communities was due to dwindling supplies of firewood and water and increasing population, as well as the building tensions as Musgrave Ranges people at Ernabella felt their position threatened by increased numbers of people from further west. Fregon and Amata began as modest cattle operations. Following the 1967 referendum, the federal government could provide funds to the states for Aboriginal communities and for old age pensions to Aboriginal people, based on two changes to include Aboriginal Australians in the constitution (see Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2015). This sparked significant movement in the region, as Anangu saw financial and infrastructure opportunities to live closer to familial and ancestral homelands, under Anangu control through community councils. Schools were built and resourced right from establishment of each community, opening between 1968 and 1985. In Fregon, a teaching team was sent from 1961, prior to community incorporation, to begin a school program (personal communication, 2014). Following establishment of the Musgrave Cattle Station (Amata) out of the Ernabella Mission in 1961, two Anangu community members re-purposed a rations shed to provide a schooling program before formal commencement of the Amata school and provision of qualified teachers in 1968 (personal communication, 2015). One of these ‘ration shed school’ teachers was Nganyinytja Ilyatjari, who had completed school at Ernabella and worked at Ernabella’s school, clinic and Art Centre (Hilliard, 1968).

### **Outstations – further decentralisation and recentralisation**

Edwards (1992, pp. 26-29) describes outstations as ‘satellite communities’ serving a range of purposes, including ‘to escape the pressures of the larger community, to establish a degree of independence and separate identity and to gain access to resources’ as well as for children of Aboriginal mothers, who were removed in the 1930s and 1940s, to return and ‘reclaim their Pitjantjatjara or Yankunytjatjara heritage’. After a series of outstations were established around Ernabella, this model was followed at Amata, Fregon, Mimili and Indulkana. Other small outstations near the opal-mining town of Mintabie are used ‘to protect sacred sites and to participate in mining activity’ (p. 29).

Where homelands or outstations successfully advocated their needs, schools were built in the 1980s and 1990s for small family groups (Kenmore Park, Murputja, Watarru, Patjarr, Lilla/Ukaka, Tjirrkarli, and others). The size and variable nature of these communities (for example, families

may leave a community to avoid conflict or for a number of years after a death) puts pressure on systems to justify resourcing these schools. In 2015, Watarru, Patjarr, Tjirrkarli and Ukaka schools remain closed. Minister Vanstone's rhetoric in 2005 about the 'viability' of communities, in strictly economic terms, has been echoed many times since and recently was strongly restated in the high-profile Forrest Review (2014) that addressed Indigenous employment and welfare. This winding back of financial support to maintain smaller outstations puts further fiscal pressure on smaller communities to justify retaining schools; periods of lower population can result in school closures in spite of tendencies for population numbers to vary.

In 2014 there were fierce debates between the Australian Government and the states of South Australia and Western Australia and the Northern Territory as to who should fund smaller Aboriginal outstation and homeland communities, with politicians threatening to close communities in SA and WA (see Perpetch & Vidot, 2014; Rothwell, 2014), forcing recentralisation. Western Australian Premier Colin Barnett has expressed the view that 'They are not viable ... it goes beyond water and power supplies ... What are the opportunities for young people? There is no work. There is no opportunity to succeed in life'. (see Harrison, 2014). This type of rhetoric highlights that, underneath the ebb and flow of historical approaches to policy and service provision in very remote communities, underlying motivations and power to shape policy action remain closely connected to dominant neoliberal assumptions about social, cultural and economic needs of Aboriginal people. This power relationship continues to shape how and where services, including schooling, will be provided for students in the tristate region (see, for example, Forrest, 2014; B. Wilson, 2014). In the Northern Territory, provision of senior secondary schooling has followed a recentralisation logic, pursuing Wilson Review (2014) recommendations, based on cost, that very remote secondary students should attend a boarding school or move to a larger centre in order to access 'quality' secondary schooling.

The maps below show the locations of many outstations across the tristate region. These satellite communities access schooling by attending the nearest larger community school; in many cases, schools provide a bus service to collect children where numbers permit. Murputja School (in the Western region of the APY Lands) is an exception in being located centrally between three homeland communities/outstations (Nyapari, Angatja and Kanpi), with no services outside of teacher housing and school buildings at Murputja. Children are brought in daily by bus for school.

That names and locations of all tristate outstations are not publicly available indicates the lack of corporate knowledge about conditions of these places and the complexities of working in a cross-jurisdictional context where state governments and land councils, for example, do not easily coordinate their information and policy priorities across state and territory borders and in very remote regions. These maps were made by the Central Land Council at my request. Given the enormous size of regions, and the small size of outstations, maps do not transfer readably to an A4 electronic document. Consequently, they are produced as A1 and I have focused on specific areas

to show more clearly the distribution of outstations. Many outstations may consist of a single house, and often the small solar kit (very few homelands and outstation have access to mains power) and the water are not working. Edwards (1992) reflects on such problems in the early years of the outstation movement; it is clearly an ongoing issue for sustainability and occupancy.

Since 2009 I have interpreted for Uluru–Kata Tjuta Traditional Owners meetings through the Central Land Council Community Development Unit. This forum allows Anangu to decide how they want to use modest royalties accrued as a percentage of the entry fee to the Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park (often referred to as ‘gate money’). While the group has supported a wide range of projects, the strong message continually voiced is that keeping water and power operational at outstations is of utmost importance for cultural maintenance, providing a space for respite and helping young people to heal with family away from pressures they may face in the larger communities.

These maps show the broader distribution of communities and homelands in the tristate region and the key provided is below:

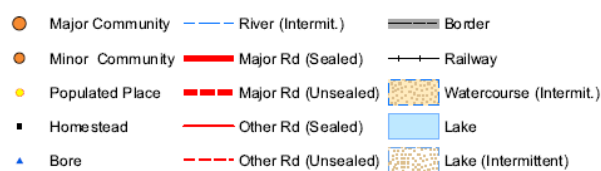


Figure 4.2: key to CLC tristate maps

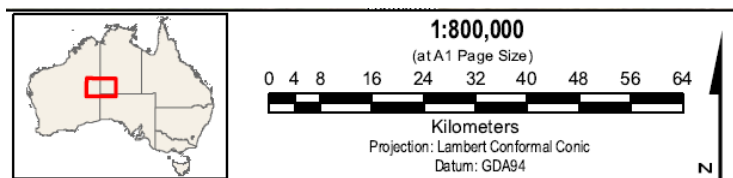


Figure 4.3: Image showing the full region depicted in CLC map 2014-274 (of which Figures 4.4 and 4.5 are part)

Source: (Central Land Council, 2014a)

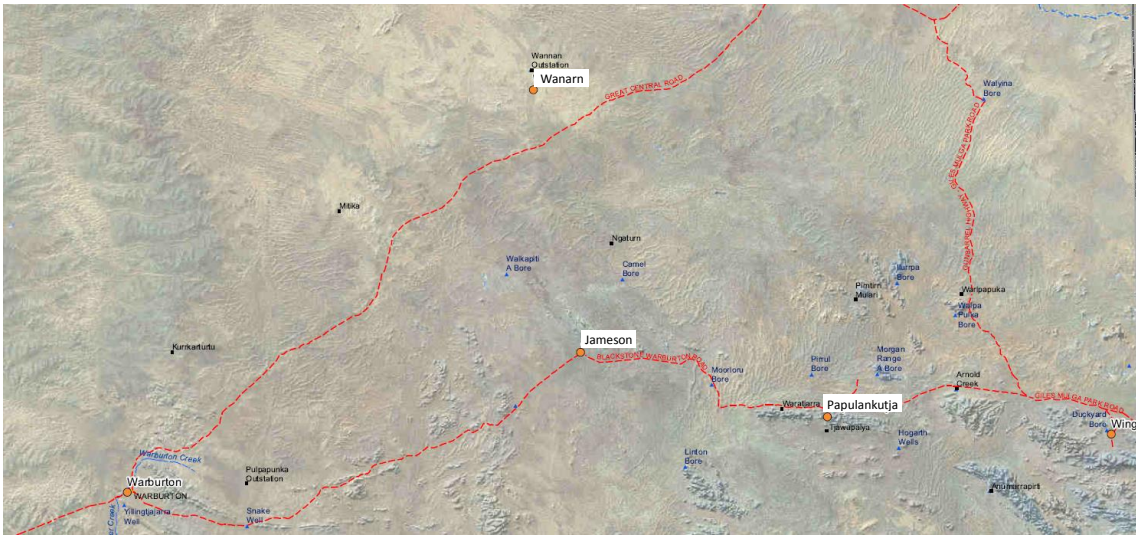


Figure 4.4: A section of CLC map 2014-274 showing some Ngaanyatjarra communities with surrounding 'Homesteads'

Source: (Central Land Council, 2014a)

Note: The vast distribution of Ngaanyatjarra lands communities limits the image size; it therefore does not incorporate Warakurna to the north-west and Kiwirrkurra (much further north).

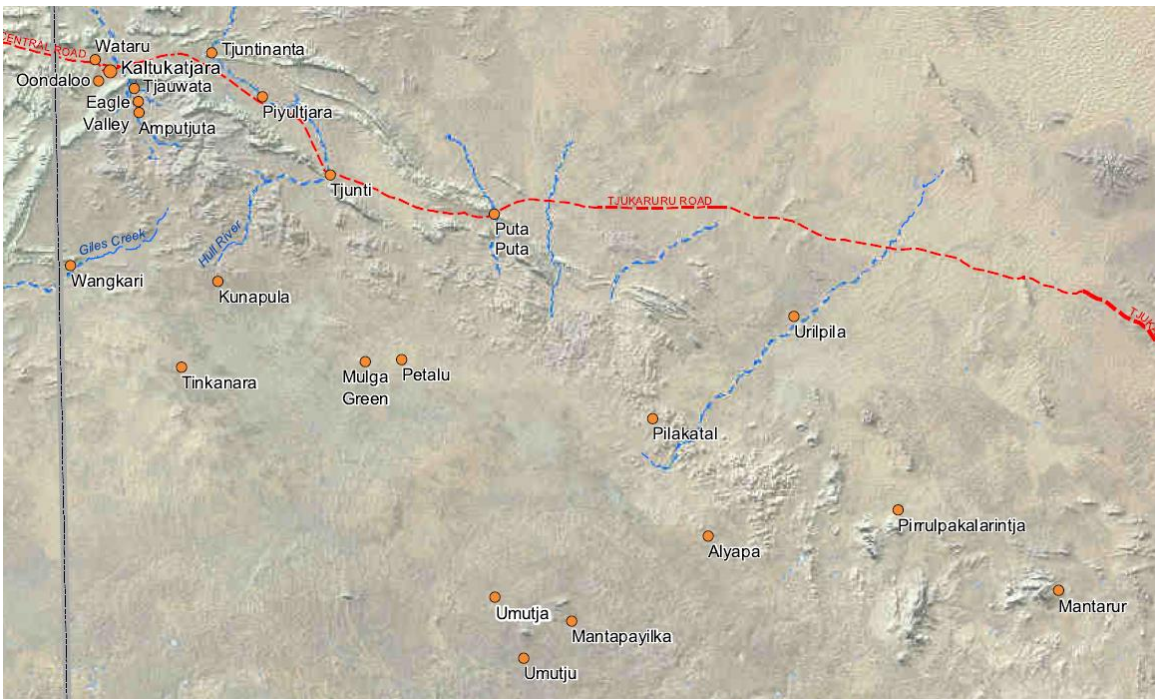


Figure 4.5: Section from CLC map 2014-274 showing the communities and outstations in the region between Docker River (Kaltukatjara) and Kata Tjuta

Source: (Central Land Council, 2014a)

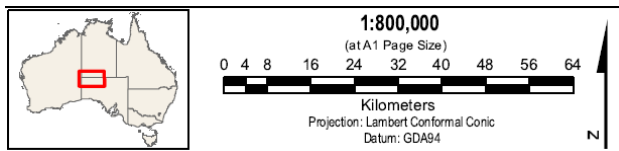


Figure 4.6: Image depicting the full region depicted in CLC map 2014-274a (of which Figure 4.7 is a part)

Source: (Central Land Council, 2014b)

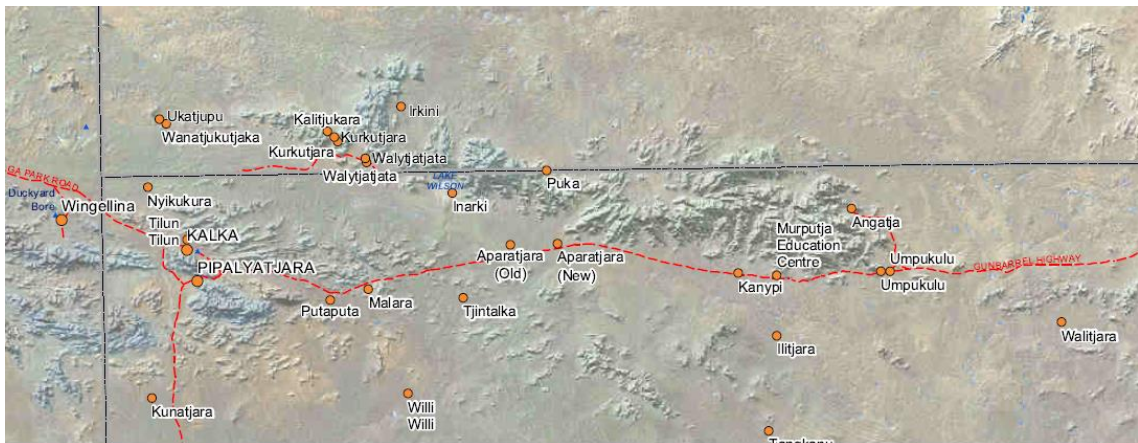


Figure 4.7: Section of CLC map 2014-274a showing the distribution of communities and outstations between the tristate corner and Amata

Source: (Central Land Council, 2014b)

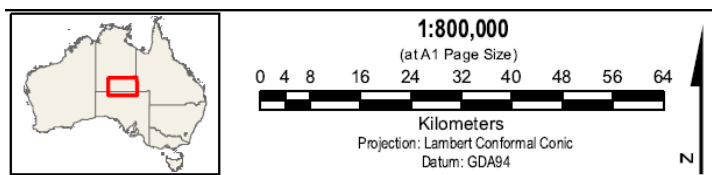


Figure 4.8: Image showing the broader region depicted in CLC map 2014-274b

Note: Figure 4.9 depicts a small southern section of the broader region depicted here

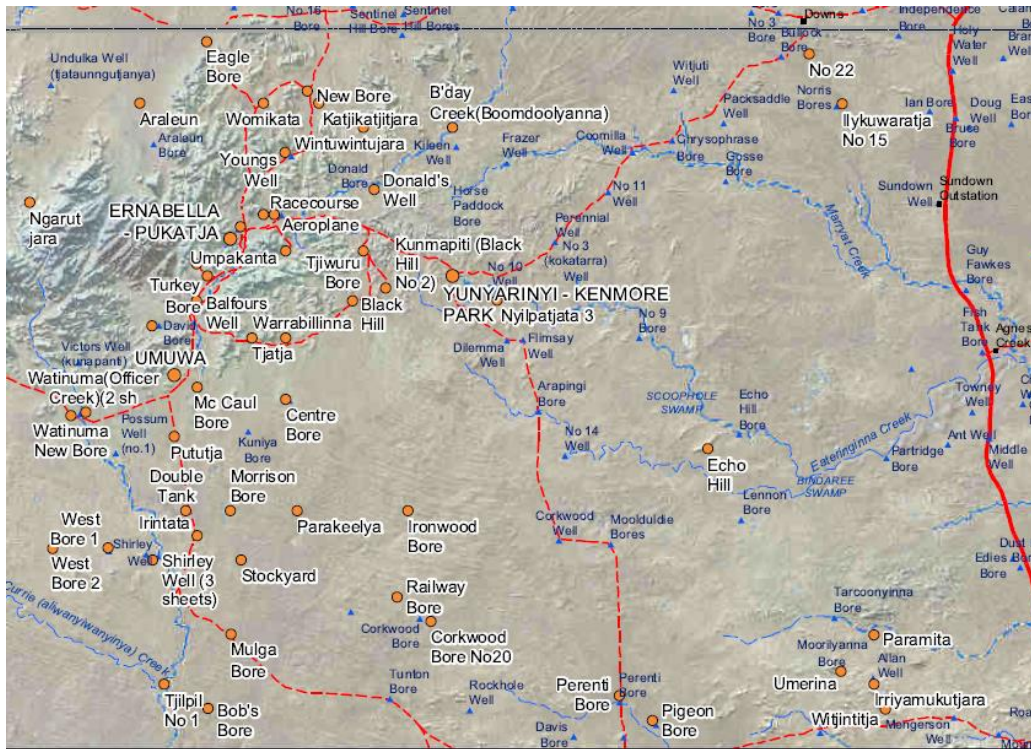


Figure 4.9: Section of CLC map 2014-274b showing the distribution of communities and outstations between the communities of Ernabella, Umuwa, Fregon and east to the Stuart Highway

Across the regions shown in these maps, some general points can be made about Anangu social-cultural ecology:

- People across regions, state borders and language groups are deeply connected to and by the same areas of country, often sharing responsibilities to these places.
- Despite language diversity, languages are connected and most Anangu can operate across a range of Western Desert languages and dialects.
- Anangu traditionally moved huge distances in very small groups in some of the world's most marginal country, and their cultural structures and protocols for living and interaction reflect this experience.
- First contact between Anangu and Pisanpa occurred from around the 1860s and as late as 1984, incorporating an extremely diverse range of experiences in contact and post-contact interactions.
- These connections to country, language and each other are continuing, and despite experiencing various forms of marginalisation, exclusion and assimilationist endeavour, Anangu ontologies, epistemologies, axiologies and cosmologies remain distinct from mainstream values and practices as well as from other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and experiences in other parts of the country.



## Schooling in the tristate region: a structural and historical overview

To give an overview of the status of Anangu schools in the tristate region, the table below draws on the *MySchool* website (a national database, ACARA, 2014) for information on recent enrolment figures and Index of Community Socio-Educational Disadvantage (ICSEA) scores. In total, there are 22 campuses in the region (including four closed facilities and three secondary-specific campuses) with a total of 1125 enrolments according to 2013 figures. This figure does not include preschool, childcare, tertiary and further education enrolments (such as students in the Anangu Tertiary Education Program [AnTEP]). It also excludes students enrolled in boarding schools such as Wiltja (Adelaide), Yirara (Alice Springs), Worawa (Melbourne) and other schools across the country.

The historical provision of schooling reflects the above discussion in regards to the economic, social and policy context where services were initially highly centralised (1930–1967), followed by an extended period of decentralisation from the late 1960s until the 1990s (Edwards, 1988) and, since 2000, an emergence of recentralisation trends.

Table 4.1: Table of tristate schools indicating their date of establishment, enrolment and social advantage ranking (ICSEA) as well as indicating the range of school years offered

| School                      | State | Current sector | History  | Enrolment | ICSEA * | Year Range |
|-----------------------------|-------|----------------|--|-----------|---------|------------|
| Amata                       | SA    | SA Govt.       | Est. 1968 after a small cattle project out of Ernabella Mission began in 1961 including a small rations shed converted to a school room by two Anangu educators  | 135       | 654     | R–12       |
| Areyonga                    | NT    | NT Govt.       | Est. as a rations outpost/school in 1943 by the Lutheran church and handed to NT Govt. in 1990   | 38        | 388     | P–7        |
| Blackstone                  | WA    | WA Govt.       | Est. 1976  | n/a       | n/a     | n/a        |
| Docker River Primary School | NT    | NT Govt.       | Est. 1968 as an NT Govt. school; transferred to Nyangatjatjara College 2015  | 38        | 666     | P–6        |
| Ernabella                   | SA    | SA Govt.       | Est. 1940 under the Presbyterian Mission (est. 1937) and handed over to SA Govt. in 1971   | 126       | 638     | R–12       |
| Finke                       | NT    | NT Govt.       | The Ghan railway line reached Finke in 1923 and a police station was established by the late 1930s. A fettler's camp joined the Wayside Inn (pub). A school was established from late 1950s. After the floods of 1973/74, the tracks were damaged so the track was shifted westwards, and Anangu moved off the sand dunes to build a community, now often referred to as 'Aputula' | 31        | 586     | P–7        |
| Fregon                      | SA    | SA Govt.       | Est. 1968 after a homeland cattle station was established out of Ernabella from 1961   | 55        | 630     | R–12       |
| Imanpa Primary School       | NT    | NT Govt.       | A silver bullet caravan school was run from Mt. Ebenezer in the late 1970s before the community and school were established in the 1980s   | 27        | 626     | T–6        |
| Indulkana                   | SA    | SA Govt.       | Est. 1971  | 92        | 453     | R–12       |
| Jameson†                    | WA    | WA Govt.       | Est. 1976  |           |         |            |

| School   | State | Current sector                      | History  | Enrol-ment | ICSEA * | Year Range |
|--|-------|-------------------------------------|--|------------|---------|------------|
| Kenmore Park   | SA    | SA Govt.                            | Est. 1990s   | 15         | 676     | R–12       |
| Kiwirrkurra  | WA    | WA Govt.                            | Est. 1982  |            |         |            |
| Lilla/Watarrka   | NT    | NTG                                 | Est. early 1990s, closed in 2000 but reopened a few years later. It was closed again in 2009. Re-opened as 'Watarrka' in 2011 as an independent school with support from Tasmania, re-joined NTG in 2013 | 13         | 646     | 1–6        |
| Mimili   | SA    | SA Govt.                            | Est. 1972, initially as a silver bullet caravan school   | 60         | 590     | R–12       |
| Murputja   | SA    | SA Govt.                            | Est. 1995  | 15         | 613     | R–12       |
| Mutitjulu Primary School   | NT    | NT Govt.                            | Est. 1985  | 28         | 656     | P–6        |
| Nyangatjatjara College <sup>†</sup><br>Mutitjulu,<br>Imanpa, Docker<br>River | NT    | Independent<br>Aboriginal<br>School | The Yulara Campus was opened in 1997 with local campuses opening in Mutitjulu (1998), Imanpa (1998) and Docker River (2000)  | 82         | 481     | 7–12       |
| Ngaanyatjarra<br>Lands School <sup>§</sup>                                   | WA    | WA Govt.                            | Various  | 312        | 619     | K–12       |
| Patjarr <sup>†</sup>   | WA    | WA Govt.                            | Est. 1995, closed 2010   | CLOSED     | –       | –          |
| Piipalyatjara  | SA    | SA Govt.                            | Est. 1976 as a 1 teacher, bush-shelter facility  | 58         | 647     | R–12       |
| Tjirrkarli <sup>†</sup>  | WA    | WA Govt.                            | Est. 1987, closed 2014   | n/a        | n/a     | n/a        |
| Tjukurla <sup>†</sup>  | WA    | WA Govt.                            | Est. 1986  | n/a        | n/a     | n/a        |
| Ukaka  | NT    | NT Govt.                            | Est. early 1990s and closed around 2008  | CLOSED     | –       | –          |
| Wanarn <sup>†</sup>  | WA    | WA Govt.                            | Est. 1989  | n/a        | n/a     | n/a        |
| Warakurna <sup>†</sup>   | WA    | WA Govt.                            | Est. 1976  | n/a        | n/a     | n/a        |
| Warburton <sup>†</sup>   | WA    | WA Govt.                            | UAM mission established schooling in 1934 and handed the community and school to the WA Govt. in 1973  | n/a        | n/a     | n/a        |
| Watarru  | SA    | SA Govt.                            | Est. 1999, closed 2012   | CLOSED     | –       | –          |
| Wingellina <sup>†</sup>  | WA    | WA Govt.                            | Est. 1976  | n/a        | n/a     | n/a        |

\* ICSEA = Index of Community Socio-Educational Disadvantage. Average national ICSEA value is 1000 (see ACARA, 2014).

<sup>†</sup> Local community campus of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School. Local information is recorded here; collective data are recorded under the entry 'Ngaanyatjarra Lands School'.

<sup>†</sup> Nyangatjatjara College is an Independent Aboriginal School that has a central campus at Yulara. Mutitjulu students are bussed into the Yulara campus daily, and local campuses operate secondary programs at Imanpa and Docker River.

<sup>§</sup> Ngaanyatjarra Lands Schools were gathered into a single school entity in 2007. Data are only available through MySchool website as the whole entity.

### **Anangu School history timeline**

The following chart depicts the timeline of the opening and closing of schools in the tristate region across the entire history of schooling in the region. This table shows a strong correlation between the establishment of schools and corresponding periods of centralisation, decentralisation, the outstation movement (further decentralisation), and recentralisation, as described above.

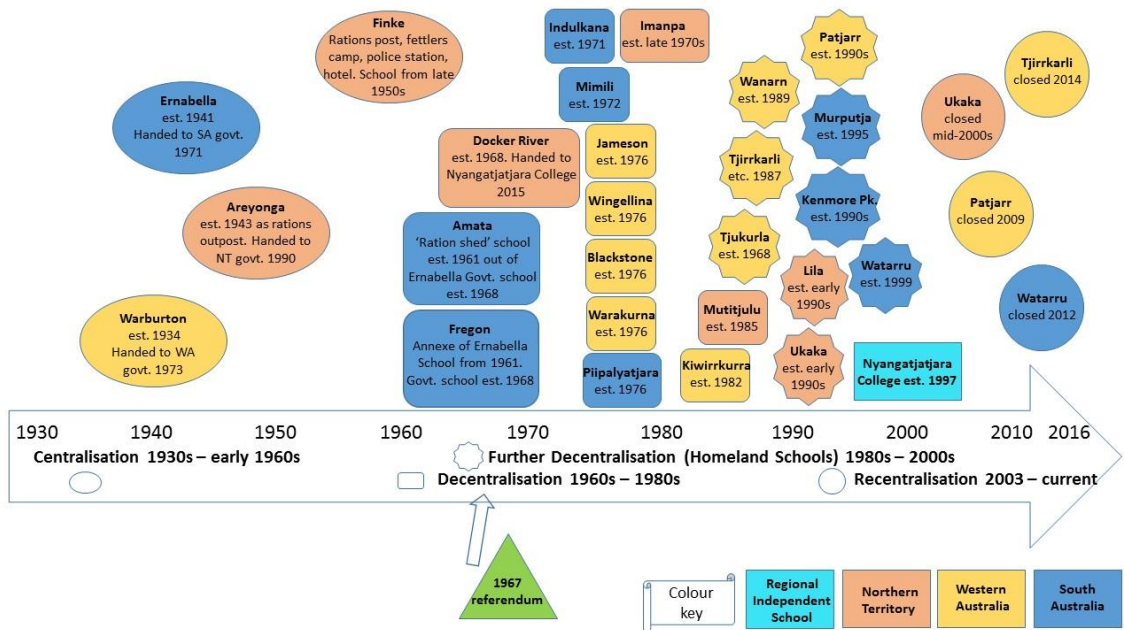


Figure 4.10: Historical timeline of the establishment and closing of tristate schools

\*Note that schools such as Tjuntjuntjara, Yalata, Oak Valley and Wiltja are considered to be Anangu Schools or part of the network but have been excluded here as they do not sit within the tristate region considered for this research. Communities such as Kintore, Mt Liebig, Papunya and Haasts Bluff (Northern Territory Pintupi/Luritja language communities) are also referred to as Anangu but are situated outside the region of this study. Kiwirrkurra is a closely linked Pintupi-speaking community but has been included, since it has historically been included in the Ngaanyatjarra Schools network as it is over the Western Australian border.

### Locating Anangu education within the historical and cultural context

Anangu experiences of schooling in the tristate region are directly linked to the histories described in this chapter. Older Anangu who grew up around cattle stations are unlikely to have attended school (Lester, 1993) or may have had short periods of schooling in an unfamiliar situation while visiting relations in the mission schools. Those older Anangu who lived around the missions and attended school often travelled to other regions and stayed with relations at other missions, experiencing periods of schooling in other states and territories. Anangu who were children in the 1960s or later tend to have experienced a more consistent engagement with the local school and may have also engaged with boarding school for brief periods (Burton & Osborne, 2014; Minutjukur & Osborne, 2014).

Approaches to issues such as the teaching of local language in schools have varied over time periods. There have also been differences between the states and territories in their policies. Attitudes to issues, for example, the importance of school attendance, have also varied over time. Ernabella, in a period viewed as very successful in relation to school attendance (1940s–1960s), had a policy that schooling was not compulsory and children were encouraged to travel with family as required for extended periods (see Edwards, 1992; Piranpa Teacher #2, 2014). In contrast, in 2014, Ernabella School’s attendance rates hit historical lows (46%) in spite of the Australian

Government's strong focus on employing truancy officers and the looming threat of parents losing welfare payments for their children's non-attendance at school (see S. Martin, 2014a).

### **Gaps in knowledge about Anangu schooling, in relation to this research**

A key difficulty for researching histories and current activities of remote schools is that, generally, very little information is available. It is hard to find and collate even basic historical information, particularly about early days of some of the smaller schools and communities. Even current information about schools and programs can be difficult to locate. Most useful information is available only through recollections in personal conversations. Indeed, high staff turnover and limited documenting of school activities can mean that memories are lost within a few short years, other than those held by local staff and community members who are often left out of processes such as organisational planning and the structuring of programs. I have consulted historical archives (Ara Irititja, 2014) and publicly available online databases, as well as locating and talking with people who can recall early histories of tristate schools and communities. There are still missing details and dates that will take further research outside of the scope of this study to build a more comprehensive understanding of the region's community and schooling history, as well as provide a current account of the status of various programs, outstation communities and so on. The Tristate report (Tri-State Board of Management, 1990) recommended bringing together schools across jurisdictions, so people could recognise and work with interconnections operating beyond state and territory borders, bureaucracies and organisational affiliations to create a single jurisdiction for the region. Unfortunately, the report failed to gain political support, but the logic of cross-border collaboration remains sound.

### **Looking ahead**

It is vitally important for educators to grasp community and schooling history to inform their practice and so that school programs and curricula are improved on the basis of historical successes as well as what has not worked. High teacher turnover results in schools with corporate amnesia, while leaving Anangu educators and wider community out of discussions and decision-making about important aspects of building a school program. Many children currently in Anangu schools will be largely unaware of the historical context of desert survival, centralisation and struggles for land rights, with implications for land ownership and future economic opportunities. Much policy rhetoric around remote education tends to focus on a sense of 'starting from zero' to invent 'the future'. However, learning from past history offers potential to open fresh and dynamic spaces for creating educational and economic opportunities. Simply being 'pro-Aboriginal' or having some background in Aboriginal education does not adequately prepare educators for success in the tristate region; there is still more contextual learning and unlearning (Ma Rhea & Teasedale, 2000) to be done in the 'foreign land' of the Western Desert.

This thesis stages a text-based 'dialogue' between Anangu and Pīranpa educators who have worked and learned lessons in this context, to inform new possibilities for the future of Anangu education. In order to do that, the following chapters share the stories from Anangu participants. I begin with

the Anangu contributions to ensure that I privilege Anangu voices in the ‘dialogue’ that follows. I share the narratives as fully as possible to highlight the original context of the stories. Part of my commitment to engaging in ethical research relationships entails ensuring that all interviews are recorded as bilingual transcripts and returned to the participants and their families to use as they wish for purposes of family history, contribution to broader community histories, and other possibilities such as local text production for school and community literacy texts. Some portions of the narratives are culturally sensitive or personal in nature; these are not included in the thesis but remain in the records for participants. Participants were asked to describe their own experiences of learning and growing up, as a way of establishing the various standpoints being represented, and of positioning the narrator in cultural, historical and community contexts. From there, participants were asked to reflect on their thoughts in relation to young people, education and the future.

The following five chapters present the lightly edited, translated agreed narratives from Anangu that emerged from the conversations. Chapter 10 then presents data from the nominated Piranpa educators’ interviews put into discussion with the main themes identified by Anangu.

## Chapter 5: Sandraku tjukurpa (Sandra's story)



Figure 5.1: Sandra Armstrong pictured at her Imanpa home, September 2015

### Background and overview

Sandra (Tjampawa) Armstrong was born in 1942. Her mother was a Ngaanyatjarra woman from Western Australia, and her father was from the Petermann Ranges area around Docker River and Warakurna near the Northern Territory/Western Australian border due west of Uluru/Kata Tjuta. After spending short periods of time as a child at Ernabella, Areyonga and Hermannsburg, she settled into life as an early teenager at Angas Downs Station, a thriving station in the 1950s and '60s (see Mackett, 2007; Rose, 1962) run by the Liddle family. This station was also a key site in the early days of tourism to Uluru and Kata Tjuta, and Sandra and her family worked at the station working with the cattle as well as baking bread and washing clothes, among other things. The cattle station is no longer in operation and the land is now under an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) agreement. Sandra was instrumental in establishing the community of Imanpa, just to the east of Angas Downs, and has raised a family there. She has worked with the community council, the school and police and held an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) regional representative position from the 1990s. She advocated strongly for young people to attend secondary school without having to leave the community and until recently has served on the Nyangatjatjara College board (Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal Corporation) since its opening in 1997; in her speech at the official opening, she said:

We are ... talking about getting a school here, in the middle, to overcome this aching for home. We think this is good and right. As our children get bigger and older they will have a school to go to. One that will be there for our children and our grandchildren's children. (Armstrong, 1997)

Sandra continues to paint and maintains an active interest in local and regional politics, but most noticeable is her determination to one day see her family return to Angas Downs and to be active in running the IPA program.

Over a series of interviews, Sandra draws heavily on historical narratives of her family's exodus from the desert and the early years of attending school at Ernabella and Areyonga and, finally, settling in to life and work on Angas Downs Station before her involvement in the formation of Imanpa community and, later, Nyangatjatjara College. These narratives give context to Sandra's later stories of the importance of education and what education should prepare her grandchildren for, as they locate her in terms of language, identity and belonging and explain her strong self-determinist stand in advocating for taking up economic opportunities on Angas Downs for future generations.

Her recollections of the family's apprehension and arrest for the theft of Paddy De Conlay's rations in 1945 provides a striking account of an era of early historical interactions with colonialism and the law less than three years after the family's first contact with Europeans. This story alone deserves further research in future work, as other written accounts of this incident will provide important background information, highlight the injustice and explicit racism in early colonial history in the region and demonstrate the incredible accuracy and attention to detail intergenerational oral histories contain.

Sandra's accounts also provide important insights about early interactions between Anangu and Western schooling systems, which are particularly rare because few children attended school from stations in the region without being removed by the state, as can be seen from the accounts of Yami Lester and Shannon Kantji in Chapter 9. Further, her oral history accounts cover the transition period following the 1967 referendum and the so-called era of 'self-determination' (Edwards, 1988; Partington & Beresford, 2012; Welch, 1988) when people left station and mission centres to form incorporated communities, leading to the establishment of community schools in the tristate area.

Sandra's unyielding commitment to country, Anangu law and culture, education and future generations of her family are palpable, and her stated and restated hope for the future is that education might enable her grandchildren to find their voice and pick up the mantle of leading economic engagement on country (Angas Downs). I have included some historical photographs from the Mountford collection to provide context to the stories. The pictures feature places and events from around the time of the oral history accounts but in some cases have been provided for general information and interest.

## **The early days**

### **Exodus from the west; born on the run**

Yes, I was apparently born near Irrunytju [Wingellina, Western Australia]. That place is my uncle's, my mother's and all of their area; it's a windy place, Irrunytju. They were camped near Mt Davies, kind of to the west, at sacred places, poor things!

They camped at that place and apparently my grandfather, an old man, was keeping his distance from all of my grandmother's relations who were there from many different places. I was

apparently born at that place and my grandfather knew what was going on and went and enquired of my grandmother (this is my mother's father, my mother's parents). They all knew what was happening; she [my mother] was pregnant.

And he couldn't see [my mother] and asked, 'What's happened to my daughter? Has the baby been born? What is the baby?' They were both talking together, husband and wife, 'What is the baby?' 'A girl!' And becoming afraid he was speaking [softly] so the other elders, the old men wouldn't hear him. They were both talking together and thinking, 'No, bury [the baby], go now and bury the baby'. And they were both fighting over it. My grandmother was apparently arguing, 'No, don't do that, you know, when I grow old, [she] can spot goannas and bush tomatoes as well when I am an old woman and give them to me to help me and also show us where the game is when we are travelling [by foot]'.

And he apparently said, 'No, it's a very sacred place, uncle's and everyone's, your father in law's and the others'; it's a sacred place, Irrunytju. In the night, they must both take [the baby], husband and wife.'

And apparently, a woman finally [inaudible] to them both and my grandmother [spoke to] my mother as I lay smeared with the fat [this is a part of Anangu birthing practices], 'This man is afraid of everyone. He says you should take [the baby] straight away, tonight. Go and tell my mother-in-law. Her three children are there; they're adults. My oldest big sister, my older brother and my other older sister'.

Apparently they were constantly killing small ones. Of course, having become pregnant, without being able to carry the load of the various tools and without having your arms free, then you couldn't get meat [food]. My mother apparently finished many of her babies off, and my younger sister and I were the last two. They said, 'No, it's ok, tell them to take [the baby] in the night'.



Figure 5.2: Aboriginal child asleep in a wooden dish, central Australia

Source: (Mountford, 1940s-a)



They both spoke so the others couldn't hear, so they wouldn't see. This was so that others wouldn't refuse. And they both (my parents), husband and wife both joined up and left.

They left Mount Davies behind, past Piipalyatjara, went past Puta Puta and apparently they both hid somewhere along the Mann Ranges and slept. Perhaps they finally slept the next day.

We went right through the night. They were probably going really fast, poor things. We stopped and got up the next day and having gone through Amata and the other places, we went all the way to Ernabella, arriving after (probably) three trips.

### **Capture and exile; the epic tale of Paddy De Conlay's rations**

*This section is a continuation of the previous section as a seamless narrative. I have inserted supporting research and information throughout to build on the available information from a range of other sources. Sandra is three years old at the time of these events, but her recollections held through family accounts are remarkably accurate in many cases, they are more fulsome and accurate than written records such as the Finke and Alice Springs police records (Northern Territory Archives Service, 2014), Constable Ron Brown's memoirs (Brown & Studdy-Clift, 1990) and the diary records of JRB Love (1945), superintendent of the Ernabella Mission in 1945.*

*Please note that some of the terminology used in these records is offensive, and the use of language and descriptions of Aboriginal people reflect the norms and values of a historical period in Central Australia. It is understood that these terms are offensive in current contexts.*

We were living there at Ernabella. My parents both stayed for a while and then left, obviously because other relations were going to Areyonga. That was the reason they were travelling to Areyonga and they went through that way, right around from Ernabella and came this way [towards Yulara where this interview was held] and were camping there along the way.

Apparently I was born with bad knees and would lie down [a lot]. And my older brother and also my older sister would chew food the way a crow does [for me], and I learned to eat food, tea and sugar, and apparently they broke in and stole [food] at Anilalya. Mr De Conlay<sup>3</sup> was living there.

The girls broke in and got bread, flour, tea and sugar as well at Mt Conner, you know there was the underground [storage]. The house was above [the ground]; Paddy De Conlay had his clothes there and the food was maybe [in] a store room.

Yes, that was that whitefella and, having married a number of Aboriginal women, he eventually reconciled [with Anangu] to some degree, and De Conlay's son, Bob De Conlay, was there, a

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<sup>3</sup> NT police records (Northern Territory Archives Service, 2014) show numerous spellings of this name. I have used 'De Conlay' as the preferred spelling for the transcript. Dianna Young (2010) explains that through descendants of Paddy De Conlay, the name has been appropriated by Anangu and is still used today as the name 'Connolly'.

young man, and he was in love with my older sister after seeing her beautiful face. Bob De Conlay was Paddy De Conlay's son from the Anangu woman: Tinimayi's [son].

But Mrs De Conlay had no kids, the white Mrs De Conlay. And the second one was also [known as] Mrs De Conlay: Tinimayi De Conlay. Her two sons were there, but the white woman Mrs De Conlay had no children.

And they [my relations] would join together to come through to the west and stay a while at Ernabella, and Makinti's mother's family was looking after them. She [Makinti's mother] was probably an older child then, but this was when I was a baby. They brought me in from the west.

All three, those who took on the enormous task of bringing me this way, have all passed away. So, you know, we were lucky there, Makinti's aunty. They were all older girls together. Apparently they stole those things at Mt Conner and of course, Makinti's father. They were probably approaching their teenage years and my second older sister was also probably approaching her teenage years, like, big girls with emerging adolescent bodies and small breasts.

He was living with two wives. Mrs De Conlay, a white woman, and my aunty, Tinimayi, with both of them. The white woman didn't have any children but only the Aboriginal woman's two sons were living there: Bob De Conlay and Wally De Conlay. He had them there and the police rang and called the Finke police, and they all left with camels.

*[In his memoirs (Brown & Studdy-Clift, 1990), Constable Ron Brown describes De Conlay as a 'real battler' and how 'Before the breaking in, he had been away droving for a few weeks to earn himself some "carry on" money'. On his return to his 'lonely abode' [see notes below where Scales (2007) explains that De Conlay broke the laws in relation to 'consorting', confirming Sandra's account that he had at least one Anangu wife] he discovered 'to his dismay that some Western Aborigines had raided his home'. And further, 'These were not our usual type of Aborigines, much more uncivilized and wild'. Brown then describes Sandra's father as 'a strong, virile native with authority absolute over the whole camp of fifty or more natives'. And tellingly, 'The drastic plight Paddy De Conlay found himself in can be imagined ... This type of crime couldn't be left unchallenged. (p. 82)]*

They searched and searched and searched the bush that's out that way, near Mantarur, just a little over the other side. There's Mantarur, Ilytjipi and Pirurpa Kaaŋarinytja [lit. the stretched gecko] and the others there.

He [was] at that place. They went into hiding. They went and hid, but they were travelling unaware [of the police], and the policeman went and searched towards this way, searching this way with camels and apparently had arrived at Angas Downs. And they requested a horse. They requested two horses and two police trackers were there.

The old man, whose son is living at Indulkana at the moment, they used to live out at Finke and Kulgera, apparently he was there as a police tracker and he came with a police tracker and Patiki.

Patiki, along with that old man police tracker who lived at Kulgera. Old man Pompey. And apparently they were following the kids' tracks.

They followed, and picked up the horse, two fine horses, and along the way they tracked [and located] the spot where the group had shot a bullock on the way through Watarrka [King's Canyon] and the [place where] Makinti Minutjukur's [relations] had also eaten food, Pantjiti and the others. They would travel as family. And so they ate there and left. And they were followed and apprehended by the other [trackers]: Makinti's grandfather and grandmother, Mungkupuyi and the others.

*[This group was most probably apprehended by the other trackers who continued searching after the initial arrests by Constable Brown and tracker Mick. This account matches the account of Maalya Teamay, Makinti's uncle, and Pantjiti, Maalya's older sister, but the accounts in the official police records and in Constable Brown's memoirs are unclear, reflecting Brown's lack of interest in accurately documenting who was in police custody. In the next section, the account appears to return to the group, including Sandra and her family.]*

They finally took them all from there and picked them up at Itjimpi after tracking them. They were lighting fires at Itjimpi, the other side of Mantarur. Apparently a child lit [the fire], an older child. And she lit that spinifex grass, hoping to throw them off the track from Mantarur. They had picked up the horses and were on horses and they [the trackers] were following with the camels, and because of that, they were hoping to turn back, but no, the fire gave them away.



Figure 5.3: Camel string with Aboriginal smoke signals in the background, near Uluru, Northern Territory

Source: (Mountford, 1940s-b)

The rising smoke. And the trackers saw from the sand hills, moving around those sand hills they [said], 'Hey! There's a fire burning'. They had horses and rushed across, but couldn't see [any people]. It was the Angas Downs horses they took from the station, the old Angas Downs Station; Billy Liddle's two fine horses ... they finally spotted them and [were thinking], 'I wonder who it is

here?’ The two trackers called out and ran along and that rifle: crack! crack!; of course, they shot into the open.

And everyone was thinking, ‘Oh no! All that time we thought they weren’t there’. They were listening and listening, and my second oldest brother apparently climbed a tree; maybe it was a prickly wattle. It has the small yellow honey (sap/resin) in those mulgas and is really bushy; we would eat them as kids.

One of them hid but the others were frightened half to death, and once they had recovered [calmed down], they were put in handcuffs and chained together by the neck; the front one wasn’t bound by the hands. They were all put in neck chains. There were older girls there; they grabbed everyone, but my mother was lucky because she had me as a baby, and she was safe, but they tied everyone [else] up in a line to a camel. They tied everyone in a line, and the man with the rifle led the horse at the rear.

They took them to Finke. They delivered them [to Finke] and took the men. They left the grandmothers behind [in Finke] and gave them prison work, like looking after the goats, and took [the men] to Alice Springs jail. They kept them and kept them and kept them and then brought them back and dropped them off. And now everything was ready to bring them back on the train the next day.



Figure 5.4: The police station at Finke, Northern Territory, ca. 1946

Source: (Mountford, 1946j)

They all came back from the jail, but after that they encountered a problem, poor things; the [Finke] men were getting ready for [cultural ceremony] business. It was all of Makinti’s aunty’s family and they were thinking when they arrived, ‘Hey? Their hair [is tied in a manner that is in preparation for ceremonial business]’. They were moving around with those goats as shepherds, but those men living at Finke were evil and dangerous; the older people living there, they caused harm and would always look for ways to hurt others, and the men were assaulting people [lit. ‘laying them out’].

The men were assaulting people and noisily harassing them, and they became very afraid and [said], ‘No, let’s go in the night’. And apparently Pantjiti and the others, my older sister Kitty and

the others, including two babies, they – that old man that passed away, my brother in law, poor thing – they all became afraid and [said], ‘No, let’s go in the night’. And that’s what happened; they left that night with the prisoners who had been brought back. They probably didn’t know that country, they had no idea.

They went around the other way to avoid detection, and they travelled and travelled and travelled, on and on until it became day, and then they slept and Makinti’s last father was born, Pantjiti’s younger brother [Maalya Teamay]. One baby was born and I had grown into an older child and was a toddler by then. I was walking when Maalya was born. And they all arrived at Angas Downs Station, the old station, and after a few things, they turned for Ernabella, with Maalya as a baby. Apparently as a baby, I was walking around, asking after my relations and they told me, ‘Aunty took them to that place called Areyonga’. And my parents went with the family to Areyonga.

### **Other records and accounts of the story**

*Constable Brown was the police officer posted at the Finke Police Station and recounts receiving De Conlay’s report of stolen food and other items in his book of memoirs, stating, ‘This type of crime [breaking, entering and larceny] couldn’t be left unchallenged’ (Brown & Studdy-Clift, 1990, p. 82). NT Police records show that this incident was first reported to them on August 14, 1945 and was pursued by Constable Brown who had travelled from Finke on July 19 to Ernabella with Aboriginal trackers ‘Mick’ and ‘Pompey’ and camels. They are joined on July 21 by Constable Lorenzo from the SA police, who comes up from Oodnadatta and meets them at Abminga Station, which is to the north-east of Marla (near Dalhousie/Bloods Creek). They are also joined by Constable Huddy from Alice Springs, who appears by the time they gather at Ernabella. Along the way they attend to various complaints by station owners and attend to ‘Aborigine licenses & dog licenses’ as well as questioning a Mr. Fred Davis who was taking camels stolen from Aboriginal people at Finke and was using them to ‘remove Aboriginal boys to Andado Station’ [some 200 km to the north-east of where he is found by the patrol]. Both Davis and De Conlay are reported in Mountford’s notes of his 1940 field trip as being responsible for mass killings of Anangu both by shooting and poisoning of rations some five years before the incident recorded here (see Duguid, 1972; Gara, 2003; Mountford, 1962; Scales, 2007; Young, 2010). Unfortunately, Brown’s colleagues and predecessors felt that **this** type of crime **could** be left unchallenged.*

*Camping at Itjinpiri (just north of Ernabella) on their way to Mt. Conner to follow up the De Conlay complaint, on August 7, 1945, the police records describe how Constable Lorenzo accidentally shot Constable Huddy in the leg. This left Constable Brown, Trackers Mick and Abo Pompey and two other Anangu men, Mick and Tommy, to carry out the search. The police records of this search detail distances travelled each day and what they did and saw. Each day in the police records is ended with the sentence ‘Tracker George at Finke’, although the relevance of this is unclear.*

*Constable Lorenzo leaves Ernabella on the mail truck and returns to Oodnadatta on the afternoon of August 7. Constable Brown returns to Ernabella with the community truck at 4 pm on August 9 and arrives at 5 pm on August 11 to 'News of Japanese seeking surrender'.*

*The region from Ernabella to the place of arrest Sandra described as 'Itjimpi', 'Mantarur' and 'Pirurpa Kaalarinytja' is the ranges referred to as Stevenson's Peak and Butler's Dome in the NT police records. This region covers a large distance from north/north-west of Ernabella through to west of Kata Tjuta in the Northern Territory – records of locations and distances travelled by the police and trackers can be found and cross-checked with Sandra's account (see Northern Territory Archives Service, 2014). The records are typed but also amended in sections by the constable (perhaps on return to Finke) with handwritten notes and edits. This transcript includes both the typed and handwritten entries.*

Monday August 13<sup>th</sup> Constable Brown, Trackers Mick and Abo Pompey left Ernabella per camels with Aborigines Mick and Tommy who knew waterholes, and abos. responsible for breaking into DeConclays [sic] store. They travelled 14 miles and camped, observing 'smoke signals west'.



Figure 5.5: Two Aboriginal children on a boulder, one of the Kungkarangkalpa women, Musgrave Ranges, South Australia ca. 1940s

Source: (Mountford, 1940s-c)

Note: The children overlook the 'Alalka' site mentioned.



Figure 5.6: Camels from Eringa Station at Abminga, South Australia, ca. 1946, 1 [picture]

Source: (Mountford, 1946c)

Tuesday August 14<sup>th</sup> Const. Brown and patrol continued past Adulka [sic. – 'Alalka'] rock hole, where 14 Abos. from the mission were contacted. No culprits among them.

Carried on in north-westerly direction Mt. Connor [sic] just visible in east.... Distance travelled 25 miles. Smoke signals noticed continually throughout the day in the east. Country passed through abundant in dry grass, mulga and gidgee. Old car tracks still visible in places, apparently made by Coulthard, and Briscoe 9 years ago, when they visited Piltardi [sic – Piltati] [100 miles west of Ayers Rock]. Piltardi is reputed to have a permanent reservoir of many thousands of gallons of water half way up its face inside a cave, and it is situated in the Petermann Ranges.

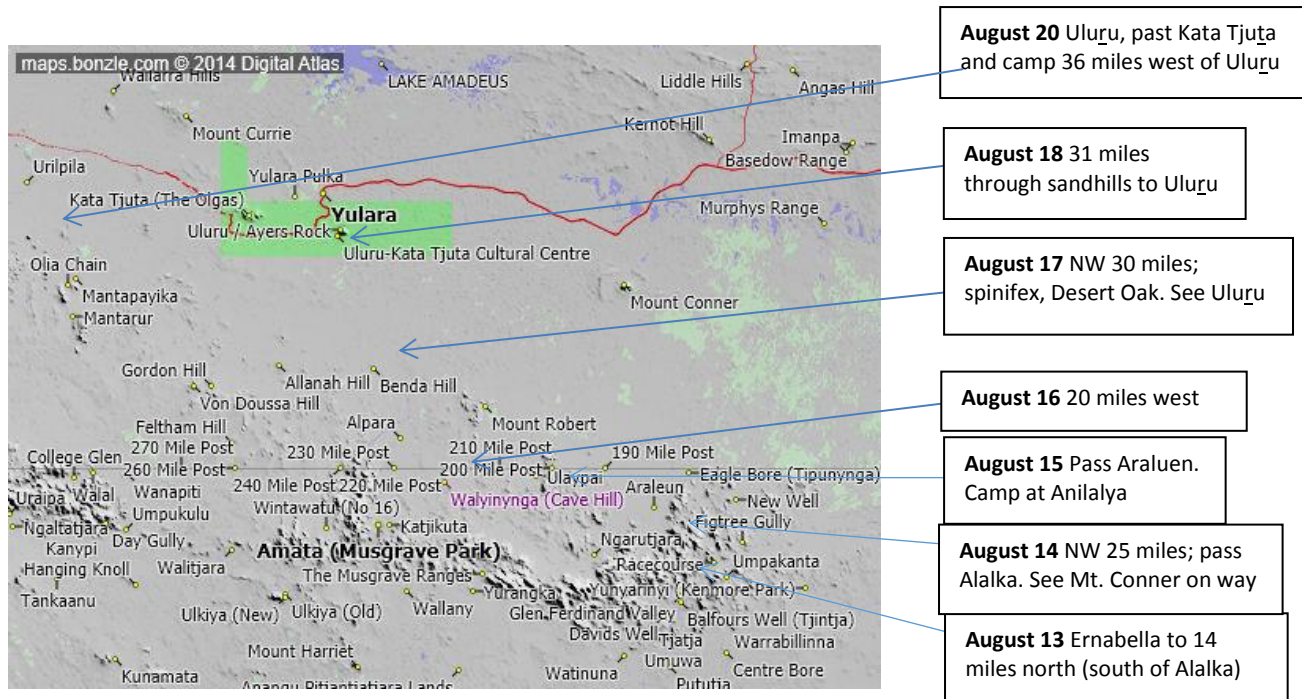


Figure 5.7: Map showing the progress of Constable Brown's patrol August 13–20, 1945.

Wednesday August 15<sup>th</sup> Patrol travelled in S.W. direction, crossed Orrleoy [sic. Araluen?] Crk, dinner camp at Calpi [sic Kapi?] waterhole (permanent water). Camped night at Unielulla [sic – prob. Anilalya] waterhole (permanent). Distance travelled 23 miles. Tracker Mick and Abo Tommy separated from main patrol in searching all waterholes between patrol and Mt. Connor [sic]. Tracker George at Station. (Finke).

Thursday August 16<sup>th</sup> Patrol continued in a westerly direction covering a number of rock and waterholed [sic], passing through heavy Mulga and rough country. Travelled only about 20 miles in 11 hours. In afternoon came on a recently occupied aboriginal camp. Followed tracks for about 8 miles until they were washed out in rocky hills by heavy storm which fell this morning. Tracker George at Finke.

Friday August 17<sup>th</sup> Patrol left Range of hills in a north westerly direction, noticed Ayers Rock in far distance. Traversed spinifex and oak desert. Feed very poor, but odd patches of parakalia [sic parakeelya] about. Distance travelled 30 miles. Tracker George at Finke.

Saturday August 18<sup>th</sup> Patrolled through sandhill country. Arrived at Ayers Rock at 5.00 p.m. thence circled rock in search of tracks. Distance travelled 31 miles. Tracker George at Finke.

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> August At Ayers Rock. Tracker Mick and Abo Tommy rejoined patrol at about 11 am having searched all likely spots between Ayers Rock and Mt. Connors [sic]. Tracker Mick encountered Abo. Harry (said to have been mixed up in murder of Alick last Xmas). Tracker George at Finke.

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> August Constable Brown with Tracker Mick and two Abos. Mick and Tommy, left Ayers Rock with 5 camels at 8. a.m. (Abo Pompey remained at Ayers Rock to tend remainder of camels and gear). Patrolled to Mt. Olga in search of tracks, none to be seen. Watered camels and left in a westerly direction, traversing spinifex desert country with light mulga scrub. Large rock seen in west with a peak at north end, thought to be Stevenson's Peak. Camped at 3 p.m. having travelled 36 miles in 11 hours. Wild life rare. Tracker George at Finke.

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> August Patrol left camp at 8 a.m. travelled all day without break, camped at 6 p.m. at Butlers Dome where there was a soakage, though water stagnant and likely to go dry. Old tracks found at Butlers Dome which Abos say are the tracks of the same mob who broke into DeConlays. Distance travelled 35 miles. Tracker George at Finke.

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> August Patrol travelled in a southerly direction from Butler's Dome for about 6 miles then commenced to encircle same. Abos. discovered fresh tracks which they identify as belonging to the father of the girl "Cunjipy" [sic. Kanytjupai] who is alleged to be one of the offenders who broke into DeConlays. Camped until sunset, then patrolled on foot around hills until 9 p.m. for about 9 miles. Seen Abo fire about 9 miles south. Patrol advanced to within 1 ½ miles, and camped to raid camp in daylight. Tracker George at Finke.

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> August Patrol left at 5 a.m. to seek Aboriginal camp per foot travelled 8 miles by foot. Took charge of Bronco Bill, Wangupay and daughter chatanoogi choo choo + 2 children Ada and Sambo for further questioning, as these two were either witnesses or a party to the breaking of De Conlays ration store. Returned to camp at 10am, left per camel at 11am. Tracker Mick and abo Tommy and another further south west in search of other offenders. Constable Brown and Abo. Mick returned towards Ayers Rock. Tracker George at Finke.

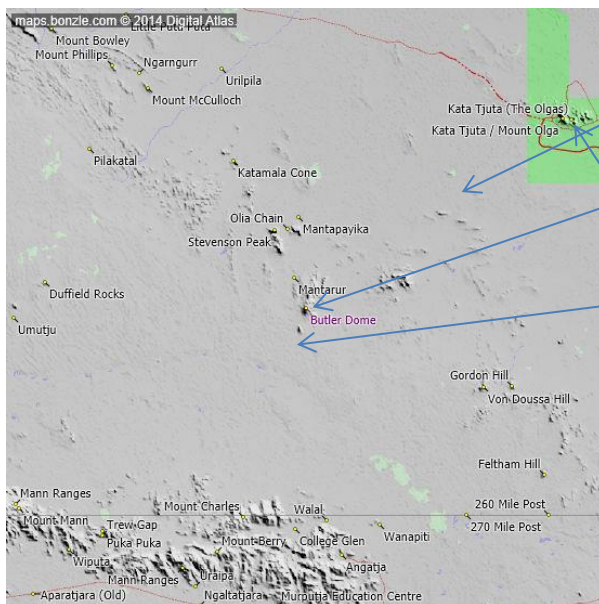
Friday 24<sup>th</sup> August Constable Brown, Abo. Mick and 3 prisoners travelled to Mt Olga. Abos had no water all day. Tracker George at Finke. Tracker Mick and Abo Johnny travelling in West direction detained Abos Willie, Ammunya & Panchiti.

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August Const. Brown. Abo. Mick and 2 children returned to Ayers Rock. Tracker Mick continuing search for offenders. Abo Pompey tending remainder of camels at Ayers Rock. Tracker George at Finke. Tracker Mick & Abo Tommy & prisoners Willie, Ammunya [Amanyi] & Panchiti [Pantjiti].<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Willie and Amanyi are Pantjiti's parents. Maalya (Pantjiti's younger brother) is certain that at this point, Alec and one other sibling were also taken. This is absolutely plausible as the route was via Ernabella. It is likely that the Rev. Love (also as recounted by Maalya) convinced the trackers and the family to leave others at the mission. I spoke with Pantjiti and she recalled breaking away from Sandra's family and doubling back to Ernabella where the trackers apprehended the family. She explained that she and her brother Alec were both taken back from the trackers (as per police records) by Rev. Love and that the parents were walked to Finke in chains but the children stayed at Ernabella.





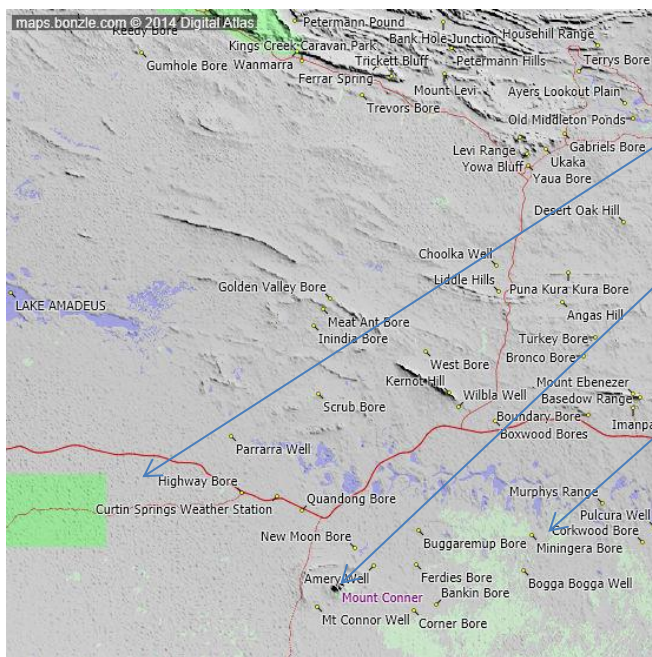
**August 20** Uluru, past Kata Tjuta and camp 36 miles west of Uluru. See Stevenson's Peak

**August 21** 35 miles. Camp at Butlers Dome. Tracks sighted.

**August 22** 6 miles south – advance camp 10-15 miles through the night. Prepare raid

**August 23/24** Police record 2 individuals they have arrested and return to their camp before returning to Kata Tjuta the following day. The prisoners went without water.

Figure 5.8: Map showing sites of Constable Brown's pursuit and apprehension of Sandra's family August 20-24



**August 26** Brown, Pompey and Mick and 3 prisoners and 2 children head from Uluru towards Atila-nya (Mt. Conner).

**August 27/28** travel 37 miles arrive Mt Conner. Question prisoners. Repair water containers.

**August 29** Party travel with prisoners 32 miles to the east

Figure 5.9: Map showing the journey back to Finke August 26–29

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> August Const. Brown, Abo Pompey and Abo Mick and 3 prisoners and 2 children left Ayers Rock in a south easterly direction towards Mt. Connor [sic]. Lit spinifex en route to get compass bearing from smoke, shortly afterwards the wind sprung up and flames looked like overtaking us. Changed direction to south west and got out of danger. Fire still going late at night. Distance travelled 35 miles, country traversed today only spinifex. As we were departing from Ayers rock today, one of the canteen camels played up, breaking the surcingle, and throwing the two canteens off, causing damage to same. Not much water lost. Tracker George at Finke. Tkr Mick & Abo Tommy en route with 3 Abo prisoners.

Monday 27 August Const. Brown with patrol and prisoners to Mt Connor [sic]. Distance 37 miles. Tracker George at Finke. Tkr Mick & Abo Tommy en route with 3 Abo prisoners.

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> August Const. Brown and patrol prisoners at Mt Connors [sic]. Questioned prisoners and soldered two canteens, and generally adjusted and repaired gear. Tracker George at Finke.

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> August Const. Brown, patrol, and prisoners left Mt. Connor [sic], passed Mygoora Well [sic]. Camped 4 miles east of the well. Distance travelled 32 miles. Tracker George at Station. Tkr Mick & Abo Tommy en route with 3 Abo prisoners.

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> August Patrol continued via Pulcura well. Distance 35 miles. Passed through heavy mulga country with good grass, sandhills and salt lakes. Cattle encountered in fair condition. Number of kangaroos present. Tracker George at Finke. Tkr Mick & Abo Tommy en route with 3 Abo prisoners.

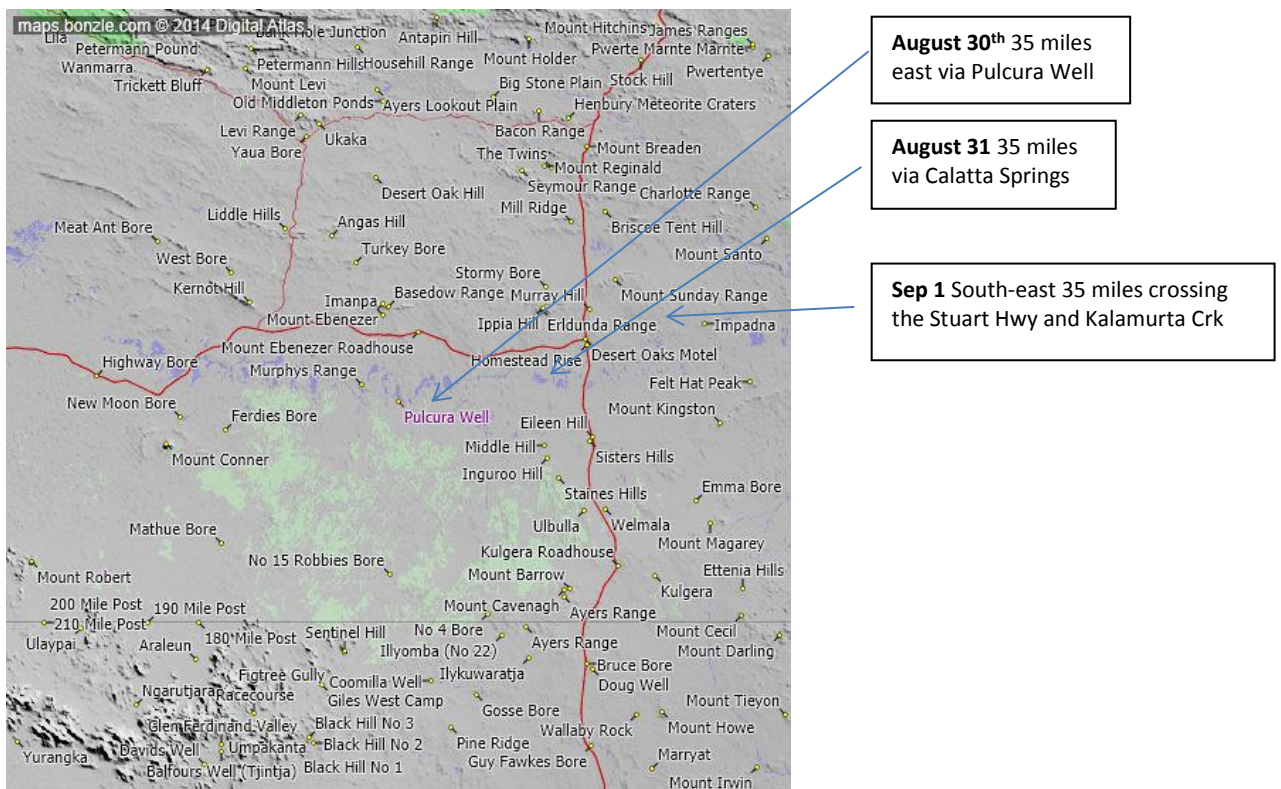


Figure 5.10: Map showing the journey to Finke August 30 – September 1

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> August Patrol continued via Calata [sic. Calatta] Springs, good country, stock in excellent condition. Distance 35 miles. Tracker George at Finke. Tkr Mick & Abo Tommy with 3 Abo prisoners en route.

Saturday September 1<sup>st</sup> Patrol continued in a south-easterly direction crossed Cullamutta Creek [sic. Kalamurta Creek] and Alice Springs Road from Kulgera and Adnante [sic. Adnanta (Water Station)]. Distance 35 miles. Tracker George at Finke. Tkr Mick & Abo Tommy with 3 Abo prisoners en route to Finke.

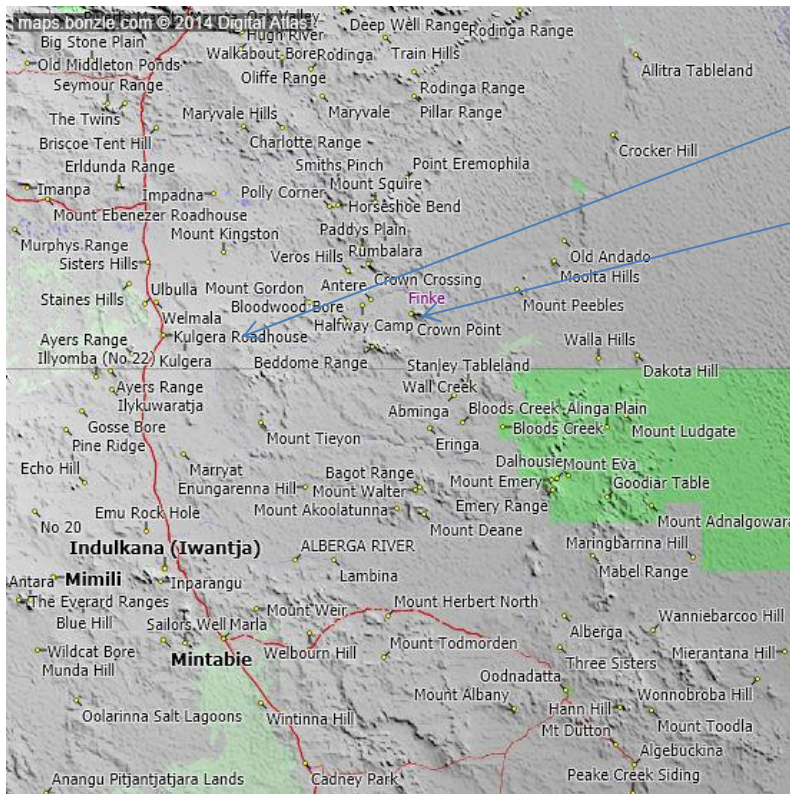


Figure 5.11: Ted Colson checking the engine of a truck with three women seated in the tray, central Australia, ca. 1946 [picture]  
Source: (Mountford, 1946m)



Figure 5.12: Jack Russell's Adnanta Water Station, near Finke, Northern Territory, ca. 1946  
Source: (Mountford, 1946g)

Sunday September 2nd Patrol continued 15 miles to Adnente [sic] where Mr R. Coulthard who was travelling to Finke by car was contacted. Const Brown and 3 prisoners continued to the Finke with Mr. Coulthard, by car. Abos. Pompey and Mick carried on with the camels. Distance covered by car 75 miles. Trkr George at Finke. Trkr Mick endeavouring to locate other offenders near West Australian Border. Tracker Mick & Abo Johnny en route with detained Abos Willie & Ammunya & Panchiti. Tracker Mick & Abo Johnny detained Abo Harry today.



**Sep 2** travel 15 miles to 'Adnente' [Adnanta Water Station] where R. Coulthard then drives Brown and 3 prisoners 75 miles to Finke.

Figure 5.13: Map shows location of final leg to Finke September 2, 1945

Monday September 3rd Const. Brown at Finke with 3 Abo. prisoners. Trackers Pompey and Mick en route Adnante to Finke with camels. Tracker Mick on duty somewhere between Butler Dome and Ernabella. Sent wire "Superintendent of Police Alice Springs, "RETURNED LAST EVENING WITH THREE ABO PRISONERS.

WILL SET BRIDGLAND WIRE TIME SUITABLE CONTACT HIM RAILWAY PHONE.” BROWN. Wire received, “WILL CALL YOU RAILWAY PHONE TOMORROW TUESDAY 3 P.M.” BRIDGLAND. Tracker George at Station. Rev. Love Ernabella mission PREVENTED Tkr Mick from taking Abo Panchiti from Ernabella. Tkr Mick & Abo Pompey with prisoners Harry, Willie & Ammunya en route Finke.



Figure 5.14: Looking north across Ernabella, Reverend Love's house in the foreground, South Australia  
Source: Mountford, 1946a



Figure 5.15: Aboriginal woman carrying a baby, Ernabella, South Australia  
Source: Mountford, 1946a

Tuesday September 4th Const. Brown at Finke and prisoners at Finke. Abos Pompey arrived Finke with camels. Tracker Mick endeavouring to locate other offenders near Western Australian Border. Sent wire “R. COULTHARD KULGERA PLEASE ADVISE WHEN TRACKER PASSES KULGERA” BROWN. Tracker George at Finke. Tracker Mick & Abo Johnny with prisoners Harry, Willie & Ammunya. Tracker Mick detained Abo Panchita [Pantjiti] between Ernabella mission & Lindavale Station<sup>5</sup> today.

Wednesday 5th Sept Constable Brown to Alice Springs, Abo Pompey with prisoners & Abo witnesses Burungoo, Wungupay, Innaunna & 2 Abo children Ada & Sambo. Trkr Mick & Abo Pompey en route Finke with prisoners & witnesses Harry, Willie, Ammunya & Panchita. Tkr Geo [sic.] at Finke.

Thurs 6th Sept to Sunday 9th Sept Const Brown at Alice Springs. Tkr Geo [sic.] at Finke. Tkr Mick & Abo Tommy en route Finke with 4 prisoners.

Mond. 10th Const Brown at AS. Tkr Mick & Abo Tommy arrived at Finke. Tkr Geo at Finke. Tkr Mick & 4 prisoners left for Alice Springs.

Tues 11th Sept Const B. at A.S. Tkr Geo at Finke. Tkr Mick & 4 prisoners left for Alice Springs.

<sup>5</sup> An old map hand drawn up by Brown (held in the Alice Springs office of the Northern Territory Archives service) shows Lindavale being a small station/homeland north of Ernabella en route to Mt Conner. This is not the Lyndavale Station close to Alice Springs.

12/9/45 to 17/9/45 Const B & Tkr Mick at A.S. Tkr Geo at Finke.

Monday 17th September Constable Brown returned from A.S. to Finke with Tracker Mick, witnesses Wungupay, Irudunna, Ammunya, Punchita & children Ada & another girl. Witnesses in unlawful possession case where Abo's [sic.] Burrungoonu, Harry Echarra & Willie were sentenced to 3 months imprisonment at Alice Springs on 14/9/45 for having property in their possession reasonably thought to have been unlawfully obtained from P. De Conlay's store at Mt Connor [sic] on or about 30/3/45. Tracker Geo at Police Station. Const Brown with [?] Abo witnesses and Tracker Mick leaving on train for Finke. Const. Huddy conveyed Const. Brown & Trackers & witnesses to train.

Figure 5.16: Alice Springs gaol and gaoler's residence, Northern Territory

Source: (Mountford, 1946b)



Figure 5.17: Portrait of Tom standing in front of a car on a railway flatbed, Abminga, South Australia

Source: (Mountford, 1946k)

Note: Most likely to be 'Abo Tommy' named in Constable Brown's team



*The police records available through the Northern Territory Archives Service do not state when the men were released and returned to Finke. The only record of a train journey from Alice Springs to Finke in the police records around three months from the date of incarceration is this:*

Tuesday 11th December Const Brown general duties. Tkr Pompey fatigues. Tkr George en route Renner's Rock from Police A.S. Memos re patrol and Alice Springs for Race duty. At about 10pm Const Brown heard four shots discharged from vicinity of train leaving Finke. On making inquiry learnt that shots narrowly missed Abo's [sic.] in nearby camp and that several soldiers were on trains conveying vehicles. Some soldiers, according to C. Kittle, Roadmaster, had been discharging firearms since leaving Rumbalara.

Wednesday 12th December 'Const Brown gen duties Tkr Pompey fatigues Tkr Geo. en route Renner Rock per camels. SENT WIRES TO: "Sgt Bridgland, A.S. – When train number 350 leaving 10pm Tuesday. Four shots thought revolver discharged from train less than ¼ mile from siding narrowly missing Aboriginals camped nearby – stop – thought the soldiers conveying trucks responsible – Brown. To Denataff, A.S: Appreciate immediate despatch Aboriginal rations – stop – very short flour, Brown.

*There are no records of any follow up or consequences for the behaviour of the soldiers other than sending the wire to Alice Springs. No action is requested other than to send more rations, as per entry.*

*Ushma Scales (2007) gives an overview, presented below, on Paddy De Conlay's life that gives some context leading up to the 1945 incident described in this story. In particular, the stark contrast in experience of the justice system of the day highlights deep inequities and racism in the period of colonial expansion across Central Australia. This historical context is important to understand, as policies and attitudes to justice, for example, stand upon these relatively recent historical foundations and continue to shape broader opinions about Aboriginal people, the purpose of education and so on based on distinctly colonial attitudes which remain axiomatic in many spaces of government, big business and education bureaucracy:*

(Paddy) Owen de Conlay

Also known as Owen Hawkins, he lived in various places in north-western South Australia around Ernabella during the 1930s. C.P. Mountford mentions him in his 1940 diary, by reporting that it was rumoured he left out some poisoned rations. Paddy de Conlay's 'camel girl Leah' didn't know why he left a half bag of flour, tea and sugar, but two men and a boy later died after eating it.

In 1940 he had to leave South Australia, because the authorities were investigating him for this murder. Also two pieces of South Australian Legislation had made it impossible to continue his wild life. The Consorting Act, making it illegal to live with an aboriginal female, was passed in South Australia in 1939, and the formal registration of Doggers meant you had to have a good reputation to obtain a government doggers licence. Paddy de Conlay went to Mt Cavanagh Station as head stockman. The station is in the southern Northern Territory on the border with South Australia.

He was again in trouble in late 1940 and was charged with Bert Kitto, the station owner, for the murder of 'Lollylegs' a Pitjantjatjara man from Ernabella. They were accused of tying 'Lollylegs' up with fencing wire and dragging him behind their truck. A court case in Alice Springs found them not guilty. This episode in the recent history of Anangu is vividly recalled in their oral history.

He later established a small ‘run’ near Mount Conner in southwest Northern Territory in 1941. He stayed there for around six years. (p. 100)

*Constable Ron Brown’s memoirs conflict with the police records he took in 1945. In his memoirs, he recounts this story under the heading ‘The time I almost got speared’, claiming that Sandra’s father ‘Burroonganoo’ was tracking the group with the intent to spear him and the trackers and release the prisoners, but his plan was thwarted when Brown suspected the group were playing tricks and attempting to force him to camp at Mt. Currie, the alleged site of the planned spearing. According to Brown’s police record entries, ‘Burrungoonu’ was one of the prisoners in neck chains who was delivered to the Alice Springs jail and sentenced to three months prison (see above). Nonetheless, Brown’s account provides dramatic recollections of the trip, including running out of water and narrowly surviving an enormous bushfire which appears to have been accidentally started by one of the prisoners who carried a firestick along the journey.*

### **Going to school at Ernabella**

As I got older, maybe I was six years old, I went to school. I attended regularly, and at school they were kind of mad [crazy]. At Ernabella, they went to school naked with Mr [Ron] Trudinger, but with the missionaries, Mr David Trudinger [at Hermannsburg], they went to school with clothes.

Yes, [Ron was] at Ernabella, but it was cruel having [the children] naked. They’re both brothers. But it was cruel for the naked [children] and we went [to school at Hermannsburg] with clothes on. I went to both of them, with that old man [Ron] after going and seeing family on holidays [at Ernabella]. It was embarrassing to go [to school] without clothes. And I was wailing about having to go to school at Ernabella, but my mother was threatening me and following me to get me [to go to school], but I was constantly racing off well away [from her], poor thing!



Figure 5.18: Groups of Aboriginals at Ernabella, South Australia

Source: (Mountford, 1946f)



Figure 5.19: Pitjantjatjara children at Ernabella, South Australia

Source: (Mountford, 1946i)

I took off [at top speed]. My older brother Watji-Watji from Docker River, he took us [to school], [but] there were two kids missing, and my cousin, he’s my older brother – we, Anangu, say ‘kuṭa’ – older brother, he was searching and following us with a stick ready to hit me [saying], ‘Go, go, go!’

[to school]. Without Mum there, [he was] thinking to stick with me, standing in a clearing through the bushes and they would both cry, Amanyi and all of us. Amanyi is now an old woman.<sup>6</sup>

That was Kilpatja and my big older sister and Amanyi and me; the three of us were pretty wild. We went and stayed at Ernabella and I was watching and said, ‘Hey? Those big older girls were going in the shower naked in the freezing cold early morning!’



Figure 5.20: Seven Aboriginal children, Ernabella, South Australia  
Source: (Mountford, 1946l)



Figure 5.21: Eight Aboriginal children, one holding a wooden bowl, standing on rocks, Ernabella, South Australia  
Source: (Mountford, 1946d)

And they took both of us with our older sister, the three of us. Amanyi obviously lived with all of the others and she went and stayed at the bore [a homeland – possibly Young’s Well] with her relations. And we stayed at Wamikata; we’d stay at Itjinpiri and all of those places there [homelands to the north of Ernabella where Peter Ken and the family managed shepherd camps in the 1940s – Sandra stayed with Paniny, Peter and Wanynga’s eldest daughter on a short stay in Amata in the late 1960s/early 1970s] and they [would say], ‘Come to school!’ But I would say, ‘No, I’m afraid at Ernabella and \$\*\*# [uses a sensitive swear word], he [Mr Trudinger] has the kids naked’. [Whispered – see notes on ingressive pulmonic phonation in the methodology chapter of this thesis.] The older teenage girls ... the bore was there [to hose off] all of the teenage girls; they all lived at Ernabella and they grew up naked with Mr Trudinger.

*[Note: In Ernabella, older people regularly recount the ‘good old days’ with fondness when they went to school naked every day and use this as a bragging tool to urge their grandchildren to go to school. Sandra’s experience at Hermannsburg and Areyonga where children wore clothes is possibly the basis for her protestation and a point of difference from other children’s experience where many had only attended school at Ernabella. Duguid explains that this was a policy he [Duguid] insisted on for health reasons to combat diseases such as tuberculosis (see Duguid, 1963, 1972).]*

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<sup>6</sup> Amanyi has since died in 2014.



And so I only attended school for some of the time and when we went to school we'd nervously go in the shower naked, in the cold. [He] would hose us down in the cold shower. Mr Trudinger was kind of cruel in thinking of not having clothes [for school] and you know, he took the tops back [off the students] if they put them on. And we left and were staying there and went to school, a government school [most likely referring to Areyonga]. And after that, when I was older, we finally came to Angas Downs and I was learning on the job and we lived there. I went with my son [or great grandfather: relationship term *katja*]. Other girls left, but no, [I] didn't go. They went off and got married and headed off west and disappeared, but I was alone.

## **Schooling and life at Areyonga**

### **Perils and imperatives: making the journey to school**

We used to go long distances from here [Angas Downs] for school. We would both travel without a second thought. There were family here from Ernabella and when they travelled, they would visit different places and in turn would come to Areyonga. A whitefella there – whose name I've forgotten – worked for the government and he would come and take us for school and find us when we would hide out at the station, all of those younger children, but we were able to see who was on board for school and we would get in with our family and go. Government officials came, and if any children on the bush stations were continually missing school, they'd come and talk [to the families] about taking them to school. The government came and took them to school, but sometimes we'd hide, and they said, 'Your mother and father won't receive any rations', and when they said that, we became afraid and we'd think, 'I'm going to school. I've been there before', and I went there willingly.

We would stay for a very long time at school and our holidays were eight weeks; a really long time, and then we would come back. And my mother and father would stay over there [points to some distance from the building towards the hill to the north at Angas Downs where this interview is held]. Sometimes many relations would gather there and we would come in last. So many people were staying here: a whole lot of people, around 400 Anangu. They would come on cultural business and we were camping there [points to an area far from the group of buildings where we are sitting], over there at the windmill that's still there, at Angas Downs Station. We would travel to Areyonga through here; yes, just here, there's that short cut. You go through Tempe Downs and arrive at the point where the ranges narrow and walk in to Areyonga.

My father was still blind but my mother encouraged me, 'Go for school to your older sister, your older brother and the others'. Others would also encourage me when I stayed at Angas Downs for long stretches and [an Anangu man] would sometimes take us. Sometimes he took us by himself, my [aunty] mother, my older [cousin] sister and there was me and young Kawiny who was Tjuki's. We were taken on a horse and having brought us this way, we slept along the way and after that we arrived at Tempe Downs Station and after staying for a short time at Tempe Downs, he took us on one horse. And at Antatjara, Middleton Ponds, he started getting feelings [ideas] and getting

worked up. He had a partner but my older sister, she was an older child, Theresa's mother. Theresa's mother and I were school students.

But Kawiny was young and stayed with her mother but he got funny and he wanted to sleep with my mother, but my older sister, Theresa's mother realised, 'Mum, let's go. He's horny, let's go. We need to go'. And truly I rolled up my swag and went and hid. My father was at Angas Downs and we were headed home. We went into hiding and slept and that man gathered [the horse and gear] and came this way, unable to find us. 'They're not here, where did they get to?' And we slept in hiding and my older sister, Theresa's mother said, 'We're not going with you, go back. Mum's going to beat you, you're a sleaze. We're leaving'. We'd gotten close to Wallara Range.

He was listening quietly and we rolled up our gear, around two blankets and two swags in a bag like a soldier's kit bag. And I was a grown child, like an early adolescent, and my younger sister, the one being carried, was young, being carried like this. And we left, but that man was following us. 'No, go away, both of us with our mother will beat you.' He was saying, 'You'll get tired soon'. 'No, we're not tired, we're leaving.' That's what my older sister was doing; she was aggressive like her mother, and I was telling her off, 'Let's go, we're going to Dad. Our father is there'. But she said, 'No!' She was turning back and following, going and swearing, 'Go away! Turn around and get lost'. This happened far from home, travelling home for the holidays.

### **In the classroom**

At Areyonga, they would camp in the ceremonial camp and we would go out for the weekends, leaving Friday afternoons, staying Saturday and returning for school on Sunday afternoons. And because of that, I was fine going to school, but the children teased me. I'd think, 'The teacher's looking, but once they're over there and not paying attention, standing away and writing, I'll stab you [right here] in the classroom'. And the teacher would write and get distracted and I'd finally get up and stab [them] with my pencil. And her [arm] grew swollen and went different colours and the parents were thinking, 'What happened to this child? What is it that's swelling up there?'

But she wouldn't say anything, she was afraid of me. [I'd say] 'If you say anything to your parents, I'll hurt you more'. And she would get frightened – she was a bit of a wimp – and they took her to the white nurse and [she] asked, 'What happened? Who did this to you? Did they stab you with a pencil?'

I'd keep an eye on them and they'd watch me. And I'd watch for the teacher to move away and I'd say, 'I'll stab you with this pencil in a minute; I'll stab you with this pencil straight out'. And every time I'd write and write and if I saw the kids were teasing me, I'd quickly do my writing and go outside to the toilet. And my dog would sit by itself outside and when I'd go [the teacher would ask], 'Where's Tjampawa, where's Tjampawa [Sandra's Pitjantjatjara name]?'

'She went to the toilet.' And after seeing a long time had passed, sometimes they'd lock me out and I'd knock on the door, 'Open up, open up!' And they'd all laugh at me. Maybe I was some sort of class clown [*panipaka* – lit. 'funny bugger'] to them and they'd tease me, the boys and the girls.

[Finally the teacher would intervene] 'Alright, you're not doing your work, so you can't go out. Only the good children are going to have recess, so you can stay in the lock-up.' They'd lock me up and put me in the cupboard. I'd stand there and stand there and stand there and finally the children would come in with their recess and I would only get tea and two biscuits. [The teacher would say] 'You're a total lazy bugger when it comes to your work. Since you're being lazy you can sit there.' We'd also go out for softball and basketball. I did some good work there but the kids teased me; they'd laugh at me. [And I'd say] 'Hey? Am I a funny bugger to you all? You wait, I'll flog you in a minute.'

### **Feeling like an outsider**

The kids were afraid of me at Areyonga. There was a boy with white hair, we'd tell him off. 'Hey, this kid's swearing at the children and then following the girls around; this is no good, following the girls around.' We'd follow the women around to pick at the food they'd gathered, foods like *unmuta* [native cress] which they'd gather with other foods and then meticulously dig a hole and lay it on fresh grasses inside the hole and then with the grasses, cup it within the soil and enclose it within a bark shell and cook it on the fire, somewhat like an oven.

Leaving the fire, they would go for more and we would go to follow the women and pilfer whatever they would throw [our way] and we'd be disgusted with the white-haired kid as he'd follow the girls around getting fresh. They'd follow me around and swear at me, separately, they'd swear [and I'd say] 'I'll hit him'. He was about my age and I was unyielding. And [I'd say], 'Hey! You're a dog, go to the boys, go to all the other randy ones! And if you keep following me I'll be reporting you to the senior women'. And Mrs [inaudible] saw and thought, 'Hey? Some kid's finished off all the food, this kid ate it, the Ngaanyatjarra kid' [because of my mother being Ngaanyatjarra]. But we said, 'No, that randy kid's been following the girls around'.

[Laughs] She'd stand there, listen and say nothing. She probably thought, 'Oh right, she [Sandra] probably comes to hang around and get food'. She wouldn't say anything. And I'd say, 'Yes, come here! I'm standing here waiting and I'm not afraid of the police'. And she'd bite her tongue [a facial gesture with the tongue out made by Anangu children that indicates you're about to hit someone] and come across ready to hit [me]. I'd beat [them] senseless and she would hit me [too]. And other kids were there and when Sunday afternoon came around, we'd go off [back to Areyonga] for school and once we arrived, they'd leave me alone. [People in Areyonga would say] 'Have a decent shower, where have you been?'

'Oh, we've been out at Tjaalta.' Tjaalta is ten miles from Areyonga, which we walked, at the old aerodrome.

### **Going to church at Areyonga**

When I was at the school, all of the older children attended the Sunday service, and there were many people there, and the pastor would put all of the girls up the front with his wife and would keep an eye on us. ‘Just focus on heavenly things.’ If you’re playing up, she’d hit you. She’d hit you and say, ‘Watch the minister’. The minister would go quiet and [she’d] jump in between [his talking] if we said something or distracted him by talking, she would stand up, come over to the girls and hit them, ‘Listen! Listen to the minister!’

We were learning how to behave the right way, and if you were naughty, the pastor would get up and give you a hiding. The pastor’s wife and [Pastor] Kalesky would watch and when there was fighting [with us] also and say, ‘Come here, you two’, and hit us [claps twice], hit us [claps twice]. ‘Go to work! You can chop firewood!’ His wife would talk to us and we would chop wood. We’d cry and split the wood into small logs, small enough to fit into the chip heaters for the showers. They would teach us all those things and we’d cry and put them on the wood pile; we were naughty and we thought, ‘I see, that woman is aggressive; it’s his wife, poor thing!’ Yes, through the service too, if you teased, they’d belt you.

I used to go to school, [then I came to Angas Downs] and was working. I attended school a little bit but after that I spent a long time learning on the cattle station. But I had a teacher for Bible studies. Because we hadn’t spent much time in school, I [and the others] didn’t know much. At Angas Downs, I would teach the catechisms. I have many students from that time. They were all baptised, all of the children also, and I would learn. I was learning through the church; and I was learning with Pastor Kalesky. The old man Pastor Kalesky taught us with books, and I would come to school and explain it to the students, by reading and explaining it.

And my younger sister, Patty, Milyika and others were there. Both of them at Ernabella, they taught those Pitjantjatjara Bible catechisms. I didn’t know how to read Pitjantjatjara but I could easily read and speak in Aranda which we were learning in: Aranda, Western Aranda. I had learned some Western Aranda from my time growing up in Aranda country at Ntaria [Hermannsburg] and also at Areyonga. Everyone knows Aranda; they were teaching all of the children here, my students, in Western Aranda. We would also read the Bible studies in Aranda, also in Pitjantjatjara and in English and I knew that [Aranda]. I was always taking them to teach them in the church; I’d take them and do reading on a regular basis.

My pastor worked with three communities; he enjoyed it. The three students were Yvonne Rasalind, Kunpiri Pipei and me. The pastor would send out mail with our names on it, write the various things down and send the letter. ‘Read this, this, this and this.’ And I was able to read [and look up] the various chapters as well. And I’d open it and teach in Aranda to Anangu. I’d teach it all in Aranda and teach through to the point of baptism. They were all Christians and we were the Angas Downs church. And then [they] took our church to Titjikala. And my alcoholic older sister and the others were learning there and [they said], ‘You’re a bad man! Where did you take our

church? Who took it?' Our church was the Seven Signs church, poor thing! The men cut, chopped and knocked down the big building – the seven signs is in the Bible, but that was the name of our church.

It was Anangu [who dismantled and took away the church] because they were Christians and they were returning to their country, many were leaving, some to [establish] Amata, going to Wingellina; others were going to Docker River; everyone left. And there were just a few of us left; everyone left. And there was only our family left there, my father, mother, me ... my family. But other families had learned to drink and went to Ebenezer. There was obviously alcohol at Ebenezer and I was living in a dry community and I thought about it and thought, '\$\*\*# the others are all living [there]'. That's why Maalya's wife and I ran away.

## **Life after school**

### **Finding work and finding a husband**

My mother apparently really wanted to be a good shepherd and [for me] to not have a husband. And the two of us, Auluri and I, we both lived there. And she said 'Hey! Let's sneak off to town without anyone knowing'. I was working, but I prepared my bag and folded my clothes, and having gotten everything ready, I was afraid that my mother would hit me. Jack Cotterill used to bring those tourists through Kings Canyon and used all of the roads. As teenage girls, we were also fixing the airstrip for no pay whatsoever. We did it for no wages; for food, clothes, tea and sugar for our tea, poor things!

We'd leave Bessie behind so we didn't exhaust her. We were constantly sneaking off from the work. She was afraid of her mother and stepfather and she'd stay with them both. I would do all sorts of things like a man. For Mr and Mrs Liddle, I would carry heavy things and bag everything. I would join with the men and lead bullocks and ride horses. It was great learning all of those things. Out there, I learned all of those skills until I became worn out. I was tired and thinking, 'Hey! My granddaughters are all married and I'm always here; why is that?' I was thinking, 'I'll sneak off'. And I snuck off and stayed in Alice Springs for a while and then was looking for a husband, this one's [referring to a granddaughter sitting nearby] grandfather. He was out at that place Narwietooma [Station], near Papunya, west of Alice Springs, near Ankata [the site of the bearded dragon].

There were many of them working on stations with cattle, and I went, not for any real reason. I went there and we were arguing [over husbands]; my younger sister had been taken as a wife of this one's [again referring to grandchild sitting nearby] younger grandfather. I was a young woman. The man was there as a bore [sinker], poor thing! I was looking for him. I searched and searched and saw him and [thought], 'This is probably where he's staying'. His family were watching over him, the Swan family side. I was looking; I searched and searched and searched and I saw him. 'Oh, here they are hiding out!' Of course, I wanted to marry him. I took him as my husband but this

one's younger grandfather, Armstrong, was talking, watching, taking [him away] and his older sister and I both had a fight at mission block. I dropped her and laid her out on the street.

This one's grandmother! [Laughs] Goodness me! I hit her! [Still laughing] I was really strong; of course I had all sorts of whitefella and men's jobs, so I was really strong. I hit her and after that I worked carting water on the transport trucks. So from there I went back to work. They had been looking everywhere for me and took me back to the community at Angas Downs. My mother and the others, they were sitting up awake, awaiting our return; we'd both snuck the one man into my house and left him there. The other girl had arrived in the early stages of pregnancy; she was pregnant with twins. But not me. I had never been pregnant. I came and was working and that granddaughter was looking [for me], mopping and doing various other things, and her mother and my mother arrived with sticks because others had gone and told them, 'Those two have both gone off and grabbed a husband!'

And her mother came in intending to hit her, and she said, 'No, it's not me. It's this one's. Hell, the one working inside there'. And my husband became embarrassed; he wasn't used to all of this because he lived to the east, only living at Henbury and Erldunda stations. 'He's hers, the one working there, not mine!' She was with his older brother, this one's grandfather, living with the twins. She was just starting to show at that point; they weren't born yet.

They were there for ages, there all night and came and asked [my mother spoke Ngaanyatjarra, a different language], 'Whose man is that?' And I was laughing and I [exclaimed], 'Hey?' [She] nearly hit me and I was grabbing the stick. 'Just stop it! Do you want me to never have a husband? Go away.' The three of them stayed there for ages, and one of them was still looking for another man. That old man, who's now my husband, was sitting there in the house, but he was starting to think he might go away from Angas Downs. 'Hey, let's just leave it', [he said] and he moved to Mt Ebenezer. He was at Ebenezer and I was working there and I began to wonder, 'What will we do?' We used to go to Amata and we would collect our food from there at Amata. I went and I was looking at the work as they were working and I was thinking, 'Why are we going such a long way? We should develop our own community'. At that time, there were those other communities: Docker River, Wingellina, no, not Wingellina at that point. Blackstone and the others weren't there, Warakurna and the others. They were still living in the bush. Docker River was a new settlement and Amata was a new settlement.

[The period Sandra describes can be no earlier than 1961 and could be up to 1975, as WA communities began to form in 1976.]

Of course, they had separated from Ernabella to [establish] Fregon and the others. And your [referring to Sam Osborne] father-in-law as well as everyone else went [to Amata] and we'd see Paniny and the others there with the children, older children. So I went with my husband and [they] gave us work. My husband knew how to work with cattle from way back and he worked [with the cattle] and I worked with visitors, like police or anyone who came to the community; I would work

with them. I also worked with the cattle; we nearly both got some cattle, but that government employee was there, and it was my husband who was a worker and would clean everything as well, run the cattle, and the man said, 'Will you stay? You can take on some cattle'. But I was feeling homesick; I didn't really know that place. [I said] 'Hey, no, let's go, I'm getting homesick because this is their place [not ours].' So we both got a car after working and working and we snuck off and left.

I was working in the community and I worked a very long time at the station, and we helped with all of the bullock work when there weren't enough boys to work with the bullocks; Tjuki and the others, Tjuki and his brother [whispered: old Barney, our big brother], there were only a handful of them and I would only go to the tender muster, [they'd] take [the cattle] from here to Finke. And each of them stayed with their own wives, and the children grew as they drove and drove and drove the cattle on foot when they went droving and then they'd climb [on to a truck] over there [at the Finke end of the drove].

And after that time ... that was good work for me; they couldn't send me for holidays and I wasn't worried about it. It was fine, no, it was great with all of the other girls who lived there as company during the ration times. And we worked on building the airstrip without food [wages], you know, we lived on rations and Bessie and I would cook food for all of the workers. We'd make all sorts of good things: cake and all sorts of [other] things. We'd also [sometimes] mix in chilli and also quandong into the pudding. And we would store the food for rations, and they would both get them at the store and I worked like a man helping with the heavy loads. I'd carry big bags of flour and also sugar and put them in this store; there's a garage there now on the other side of it. I'd also ride the horses. The horses were there and we'd get on. I wasn't a musterer, I was a bullock tiller [inaudible] and [they'd] take me to help out. He'd do it without saying anything and I'd think, 'Hell, there's hardly anyone here but here's the charts and the brands for me [to work on]'. But [they'd] call me, 'C'mon Sandra, this is your horse'. And I wouldn't get frightened.

I would work towing with the rope using the Land Rover; Tjuki and the others would work with rope and they'd grab [the bullock's] neck and I would quickly pull the rope and draw it backwards. They'd bring [them] here into this yard, lead them in and grab and drop them, knocking them over. Other children would have the branding press and the earmarks and they'd heat the branding iron in the fire and brand [the bullocks] and the kids would climb up and go [out]. And [the bullocks] would thrash their legs around and get up, take off and fly around; the little female calves, just very young, poor things! I was there keeping the tension on the ropes.

### **Settling down**

We both went and were living at Angas Downs and then finally moved and then we were living at Imanpa. And Maalya's wife had the twins. [Whispered] Elsie Wanatjura had twins [also]. And welfare took the older two; it was only here that they were secretly taking children away. They were taking away many children, and then Wanatjura's grown-up son; she lost her son.

They were looking after that one child, [whispered] apparently the older twin pushed [him] over. The toilet was [an] open [pit] toilet. The kids were standing around and those two boys were looking and the kids said, ‘No, he pushed [him] in [the toilet]’.

And Sid Coulthard raced over there and jumped in too late, and the excrement was full and, poor thing, at Jay Creek, the poor thing, one of the twins, poor thing, he pushed him down there, poor thing.



Figure 5.22: Eight unidentified Aboriginal men standing near a truck at Jay Creek, Northern Territory

Source: (Mountford, 1946e)

Elsie became pregnant at Angas Downs when both of us were working there and the twins were born and I used to look after them in the house, in a separate camp. And our bus driver used to come in the old days, Sun Down [Sun Downer tour bus service], for Ayers Rock here, that whitefella Bill Hand, we both had work in the kitchen, all sorts of work. We were looking after the twins but after that devastating sadness, they had to be happy and so they took him [somewhere else].

And we weren't there, I'm not really sure, perhaps we were at Indulkana, when [he] pushed him over. They were given the names Todd and Giles, you know the rivers there. Arthur Liddle named them, [whispered] the twins, Giles and Todd. It was the older brother that pushed him in at Jay Creek; they were about 4 or 5 years old.

Apparently they were open pit toilets and they were sorting out the seats for the whitefella toilets, but they hadn't got round to [putting a seat on] one of their toilets and when the workers were distracted, the kids had been hanging around there for a while, and then [it happened] at some point during that time.

### **Establishing Imanpa Community**

I'd become experienced at working with the cattle and we went to see my husband's side of the family. This was when I saw the [school] caravans in the community. The silver bullet caravans; they're still there at Docker River.



They brought the caravans here [to Angas Downs] but all of the Anangu were beginning to disperse to their own country, thinking to return to various sites for cultural reasons, and they were leaving. There were people at Wingellina [at the nickel mine fringe camp, see Chapter 4]; there was probably a bore there for them and Docker River people, and others were leaving for Amata, which was a new settlement. There were many new [communities] at that time: Fregon, Amata, Wingellina, Blackstone and the others; Warakurna and others were somewhat later, but the main ones people were living at were Fregon, Amata and other people were also living at the homelands, and we were the only ones [left] living at the station.

When we were at Ebenezer, we would hear [stories], ‘Hey, there’s a settlement at Amata and a settlement at Docker River’, but we were forever going on the road to Amata; of course, ‘sit-down money’ [welfare benefits] and the pension had been established. And that got me thinking, ‘Hey, we should do that in our own country’. That’s what I was thinking about. You know, it was around 1970. Before that cyclone [Cyclone Tracy] had hit in town [Darwin]. And after that, of course, after the cyclone struck, there were sheets of iron there that had been gathered. And from that time, we were sitting and thinking and I’d come to realise, ‘Hey, the school has the kids at Ebenezer in a caravan’. And I’d think, ‘[Let’s] write down [a plan] ourselves and from there, we can establish our own community’. And that old man from the government was thinking about the [future of] the children, about this child [referring to Margaret Wood, who was a child there at the time]. Perhaps [he was thinking], ‘If I were to leave her behind and go, what would happen to her [MW] after that?’ That’s what he was thinking and was asking me, ‘What do you all think? Do you want to live here at the station at Ebenezer or do you want [to live at] Perentie Bore [Imanpa]?’

‘We want to live at Perentie Bore.’ Perentie Bore is where the hill forms the women’s windbreak. But the whitefellas were looking at the water; apparently that water always had a large amount of dust; you can’t drain them [the tanks], and that’s what we were drinking. We’d drink that water, and no, we didn’t die! I’d pour diesel in and start the generator and we’d crank it over. The government was routinely inspecting the water, when the dirt, like dust would be lying [in the tank]. And that’s where we were living; we’d go there after school. And others were down [there]. And over there was that community office. I was on the hill, that desert area, but the sandhills were immense and surrounded [the office area].

And from that time, they would use me in two ways, that whitefella manager. He came as a young man when he was engaged to his wife [to be]. He lived [on the] high ground where that windmill is. For the nurse, the clinic had a house, but he lived in the creek in that tent. And Tjuki and I would go [visiting]; we were their really good friends. We’d go and sit down there; we’d sit and sit and talk about things, boil a cup of tea and drink it and go. I had a small Kingswood car and we’d both go visiting them. I was at the school as a bilingual teacher at Imanpa; that old school’s there now, at that place. Yes, two teachers [worked there] and they’d start their generator, and the other teacher. Yes, he was such a great teacher and would collect food with the mail and sell that food

which they'd buy from the Uniting Church at the time through the Reverend Jim Downing. And Yami [Lester] was there from the start [of IAD] and was working as an interpreter from Pitjantjatjara to English and recording this in books for whitefellas to see [read] and [there'd be] Pitjantjatjara language here and English here, that's the way he would do it. Reverend [Downing] and Yami together. They were there but our [minister] came from the Lutheran [church], old Paul Albrecht and Pastor Kalesky. They've both died but they were wonderful ministers, poor things! He didn't have books, [but was] working with the food. And after that time, I was going to that school and teaching the children, and after that the teacher finished up, and then after that Angela [Faulkenberg] was there with Ian White. They started at Yirara and finally took up the position [at Imanpa]. They were enrolling [students] in Yirara, in the College. I was working in the school and had a good understanding of English, which I learned from the roadhouse and station. I learned from here. They asked me [to work as a teacher] but I had never learned properly in school and I was working part time in the community. And I learned here and from that time, Langford sunk those two bores up there and finally they made a pipeline, the young fellas, Philip Wikilyi and the others, Timmy and those guys. Yes, they worked, but I didn't nag them, I only worked in the office and oversaw the pays and looked at the timesheets and they had the attitude, 'No, it's great [work]'. And another whitefella did the payroll for them. They earned big money; they'd get around \$500 or \$800 or \$1000, the good workers.

They would dig [trenches] and lay the pipes. All of those guys are old men now. They were working for good wages. From that point, as the work of the office expanded, they appointed me as chairperson. And I was still working at the school; I always had two roles. I took all of the students to Alice Springs – it was the younger ones, Maria and the others – and they were staying with me; my older brother slept in the college, and after that they began to learn the recorder. Angela Faulkenberg was the main recorder teacher. Angela worked as a teacher at Imanpa and Paul was a teacher at Yirara, Angela's husband. And he came here and saw that girl and [they] formed a relationship. That's why he'd say [to Yirara when doing student collections], 'No, I'll take the Imanpa kids!' He'd bring the Imanpa students on the plane and he made a friend there! But he passed away, poor thing! And after that time, from meeting at the school here, they both left and were married in Adelaide. She was a very knowledgeable woman.

And we took a trip: me, Angela and Ian May. And he was living at his father's place and his parents would watch him when he was speaking Pitjantjatjara [and they listened and listened]; when the children would speak, they'd speak through him and they'd both listen intently: [said in low whisper/growling tone] 'Hey, our child is fluent in Pitjantjatjara language', and they'd both look at each other. [Voice returns to normal tone] We took [the students] to Alice Springs [to perform on] the recorder. There were so many [children] there. There were so many Aboriginal children, [from] Santa Teresa, Papunya, Ti-Tree and Imanpa. Tjunku, Maria and Betty went, because they were so clever [on the recorder]. They practised it for so long and from there they

performed in Alice Springs, just near the casino lawns. And they beat the others there, Imanpa and Ti-Tree did. And when we heard that [we decided], ‘Right, let’s take them to town [Darwin]!’ And so Ti-Tree and Imanpa became the two, but the other communities found it difficult to learn [music easily].

We took them and we ended up at the big eisteddfod; there were twelve white schools there! They came in from the different places and they had all sorts of instruments they would play, even a thing they’d slide [*mulyani* – lit. ‘nosing’: motions with a slide of a trombone action]. And they went and played their recorder. When I arrived, I was talking [to them], but [they said], ‘No, my [instrument] is so small, I don’t want to play! Let them stand up there’. From the lawn I was talking to my small son, my second son. [Whispered – My second son who I lost; he was a good player, both he and Maria and the others.]

[Returns to normal voice] Angela would do that ‘talking with her hands’ [conducting].

You know, in the old days the Ernabella choir would do that with us when we’d stand like that: so here’s the bass, soprano, all those altos and only communicate [talk] with the hands and bring them [in], soften them like that, the older women. [This section is to describe conducting.]

They beat the others in Alice Springs. Well, at that [Darwin] event, they finished off all of the other twelve white schools and Imanpa went for a big feast! And they had an ENORMOUS feast as winners.

### **The need for a secondary school in the southern NT region**

I had taken my son on a number of occasions to look at schools. After taking him to Yirara a number of times and having gone [to Darwin] with the primary school, we visited Kormilda College. We were looking and thinking, ‘Hey, there are so many Aboriginal students in the school, working’. And I was beginning to get that idea, during [the time I was in] ATSIC, when the ATSIC region was Ampiyara. We used to be in the Ampiyara region before, but they changed it again and there was the Papunya region, and Alice Springs region was separate. I was working there for a long time on all sorts of business like housing and business development; we did lots of things. And I was working there and was also involved with the school and I’d think, ‘How is it that their schools are so beautiful and we have nothing?’ And we would talk at ATSIC when Alison Anderson was the commissioner and I told her privately about the things I’d seen and that I’d been thinking about an idea: ‘Maybe I’ll start a college in the desert’.

So I spoke at the beginning of the meeting and other Aboriginal people were there and people from different language groups would fall silent. And I addressed this at the meeting as part of the agenda, ‘Hey, I want to build a school, a high school in the desert’. But they said to me, ‘How will you do this? You have no understanding of this at all!’ But I said, ‘Hey, you need to listen! We support YOU. And we want you to listen; this is my idea and what I want to see’. But they’d say, ‘No, you can’t do it! Not you, you’ve got nothing, no English, you poor thing! But will we only give [funding/support] to you?’

[But I said] ‘You’re town-based and you get everything, will we only support you? I’m trying to see this [idea come to fruition]. You can’t stop me!’ We were supported and advised by a man, and from that money we were chucking in for instalments along the way through our Imanpa community manager. A new lawyer, a young fella was there; he went and married his wife who was originally from Canberra, and that woman didn’t want to go and live with Anangu. [In highly dramatic tones] And she would cry when she saw you if you went in the office! And her husband would ask, ‘Why are you like this?’

She was there one and a half years and she probably said to her husband, ‘I can’t live here with Aboriginal people’. And he told me about it privately; I was the chair. ‘I’m sorry, it’s only my wife who is feeling uncomfortable living in a different place.’ And I was thinking, ‘How? You should have married a good person, someone who cares about Anangu. She’s a city slicker that you’ve got. But you’ve married her and now you’re going to lose your job’. And he said, ‘Yes! She loves me, and I’m married [they were newly married], and I can’t resolve it. I might as well go. I can’t just go and get another wife; I’m married’ [lit. ‘got this one through a wedding’]. And I was thinking, ‘No, that’s ok’, but they were both getting ready to go and I advertised [for a replacement] through the teacher, who was my really good friend; we worked together through the school. I said to him, ‘Send an advertisement out so that anyone can see it [whispers: to come here] to Imanpa’. And he was sending it out to many places and one man was working at Yalata, and he saw the Imanpa job advertised [and thought], ‘That’s great!’ And he sent that application in and we invited him there [to Imanpa] to tell his story about how he works.

This was the point when there was no college. We were still talking about it during the ATSI time. I was in ATSI for thirteen years, and we were visiting places like Kormilda and others. And finally [they] attended with me and I was introducing [them], but the commissioner was not too pleased.

‘What’s [wrong] with you? I invited him but what will you do once you’re rich? What will happen to you?’ And I [said] to her, ‘Should we only look at one person? Once you’ve done everything [for] yourself, done your business, you can’t live in Paradise’.

I really got stuck into her and the others, ‘You can’t go rich [into heaven]’, and she fell silent. I wanted to look after Anangu, to help them write in books, to speak proper English; that’s what I want. ‘So how is it that we’re all expected to only support you all of the time? You’re a really wealthy woman.’ And other people, Warlpiri as well, would watch me and I’d speak up and I continued to speak up for the college. [Whispered] I was continually speaking [up about it] and our adviser would straighten out [the plans]. He was a Christian; he listened to Jesus’ words. We’d both go to his work, Tjuki and I, and we’d eat dinner and also read the Bible.

[Sandra’s relation Margaret Wood is sitting nearby and adds:]

MW: That's great, having a love for Anangu, living with Anangu, inviting Anangu home to eat. Through good friendships like this, you keep the community a great place, not living separately, seeing and ignoring Anangu and just doing your job and being completely separate, no ... Together, it's good when we share the work because there's a relationship and we need to work in a reciprocal way [laughs]. That's true! From long ago and right now that's absolutely the way it should be done.

SA: And now I was looking at them and was saying, 'The community is the boss, and you can't have conversations and develop relationships from the office on your own. They're watching and you can't do it being by yourself. Look at the community; they are the bosses'. This is what I was telling them all. I spoke some good English because I was learning the Bible earlier through the minister, and I would teach the congregation and they were all baptised at this place. This is what I was talking about [earlier]. And so, as we were thinking about it [I said to ATSIC], 'Will everyone be pleased with you after you've [only] looked after yourselves and your own family?'

*A cross-reference for this period can be found where Sandra is quoted in the booklet for the Official Opening and Dedication of the College in 1997. The quote is taken from 1995 and captures the argument she was making in her advocacy for the establishment of a secondary school on country:*

Nyangatjatjara College Official Opening and Dedication, Saturday 9 August 1997

"Our office is talking about getting a school here, in the middle, to overcome this aching for home. We think it is good and right. As our children get bigger and older they will have a school to go to. One that will be there for our grandchildren and our grandchildren's children. We're getting this growing. We were talking in 1991 and now it's happening and we're happy making this high school."

Sandra Armstrong

## **Looking forward, looking back; reflections and visions for the future**

### **A mother from the west and a father from the north; implications for residence, language and identity**

My mother would tell stories [about] the people who lived out west and would say, 'We left so many good things behind [at] my home and settled in different country'. And I would say, 'Which is your home? Where is your country?'

'My home is *Tiwa*'; she spoke a different language; she was Ngaanyatjarra. And she would say, 'I left my younger sister Winnie and we raced off to a different place'. And I was always thinking, 'Hey? She speaks a different language'. Of course, her younger siblings are still alive, and my younger siblings [cousins], they're so intelligent; they speak English, translate, and they're all doing all sorts of work. One of my daughters, through the second oldest grandmother [all of

Sandra's grandmother's sisters would be referred to as grandmothers] has done a range of studies to be a [school] principal and she's finished it. She has curly hair like the Imanpa-based relations, and she's very knowledgeable. I have family at Papulankuntja [Blackstone], Warakurna, and Jameson, Warburton and Wingellina. My father's country is in the Docker River area. He's not Ngaanyatjarra, he's Nyangatjatjara, a different language. Of course, to the south is Pitjantjatjara.

My mother was very knowledgeable, greatly so, and she would tell me the stories for that side [west towards and including the Ngaanyatjarra region]. My mother got homesick for [her] country and I asked her, 'Why are you so homesick for your country? Do you want to go back?'

'*Uwa, kutipitjakun? Kutipitjakitjana Pintirikutu.*' This is how she spoke in her language.

'*Kutipitja-pitjala ngurra tjantu-kutu.*' This is how she spoke and I'd say, 'No, you can't go now, you're talking about places with crummy names, this country is no good!' She'd spoken about those places and she'd say, 'We're living in no-good country, living in other people's country, Arrernte country. I want to go back to my own country'. [These are] all Arrernte places. 'I want to go back to my relations and live in my country.' After talking about it and talking about it, she snuck off; she went and she left her family behind. She took her parents and my younger sister, the youngest one, since she had grown, having raised her to the age of a young teenager she took her, but I was still living [at Angas Downs] by myself.

A while ago, we went to Blackstone in Western Australia, and our accommodation was separate at One Hill for us to go in and stay, my deceased brother's home. My relations are looking after the place, and they came and camped with us and made a space for us to stay, together at my younger brother's place, and it was a really good place to stay. And my kids, their grandparents were wanting to talk to their grandchildren and [they said], 'It's a different language!' They were laughing. [Whispers in low/growling tones] 'Hey? What are they saying?' [Voice returns] I took my two granddaughters. They were saying [whispers again in low, slow, tones], 'It's a different language'. And one of the other grandchildren asked quietly, 'Hey? Whose grandmother [are they]? These relations speak a different language'. They were talking and laughing. 'Apparently it's a different language and I can't understand.' But I understand; my mother spoke [that language]. But my grandchildren don't speak it, they only speak my father's side.

Pitjantjatjara is my language, and Pitjantjatjara is their language, but I'm 'Nyangatjatjara'. My father's language has *tipukatinytja* and *pitjiyinkunytja*. That's why I made the college name Nyangatjatjara College. Pitjantjatjara is the Ernabella side; [they say] *wirtjapakantja* [run] and those other words. But *wirtjapakantja* is their language, not my language. My father's word is *tipukatinytja*, my grandmother's. '*Tipukati tipukatiku, punkalkun!*' [Jump down, jump down, you'll fall!] In Pitjantjatjara, it's '*Wararakati wararakati punkantjakutawara*'. That's different, a little bit different between the Nyangatjatjara and Pitjantjatjara peoples.

We grew up at Areyonga and Angas Downs and I would press in on my mother, 'Mum, you speak a different language, from that [Ngaanyatjarra] side but we speak the same as everyone here, like

Dad and my family, and me too. But where are you from?’ I would ask her as a young child. ‘You have a different language.’

‘Yes. I’m from the west.’ Apparently my father would look at her and after taking her on as a wife, he saw two others, Mum’s younger sisters and he [thought], ‘They are all so beautiful, perhaps I will take on three wives’. But the two others were older girls and already had boyfriends there around the time I was born. And apparently my father was thinking, ‘Is it ok for me to have all three of you?’ And apparently my mum was excited but the younger two were thinking, ‘Eek! How will we live [together] as three [sisters] from the same mother?’ And apparently the second and third sisters were thinking, ‘No, let’s get out of here. We’re not living, the three of us with one man’. He wanted to take all three of them, so the two younger sisters travelled halfway and then ran away and both hid from him. He was so upset, having wanted to marry the three of them, and took my mother right up to the Northern Territory because he was a Northern Territory man. And it stayed that way because of that and they both [the younger sisters] ran away in secret. [Mum] saw her family again when the younger sister was still alive but the second sister had died.

### **Seeing a deeper purpose in life and learning**

I have a strong sense of what’s important because I see it from the present, looking back, thinking about my mother’s father and mother’s mother. From their history and from [the] Irrunytju [experience]. Apparently my mother finished off many [babies] so that she could work without having the burden of a baby, so that she would be able to hunt together with her husband, with two children, three children. Before I was born, after becoming pregnant, she would apparently put the baby in a rabbit burrow and leave the baby there, blocking it off with branches. Of course in drought time you had to kill for yourself and cook it to eat, even the older two or three children had to do this [to survive]. So how is it that I was saved? That’s what I think about. In here [tapping her Bible]. God was watching over those children as they were placed in the burrows alive, put in the hole without being silenced, corralled in with branches and left there. And they would cry and cry and [eventually] die of starvation. She was making big trouble, but her husband refused to hit [discipline] her. They would talk with each other and he would leave in silence. And I would think about this continually.

When I was school age I would think about it when my mother talked about it. ‘How many of your kids did you lose, Mum?’ I’d ask her as a young child.

‘I put many there in [burrows] after getting pregnant.’

‘Why? To eat them?’ I would ask. I was slightly crazy in asking, ‘Why? Was it so you could eat them?’

‘No.’

I would always think, ‘Oh, truly, Jesus saved me’. Now I speak without fear with whitefellas, I speak with government [representatives] and I was thinking, ‘Yes, perhaps I will set up a college and I’ll work for [the good of] my grandchildren’.

### **Intergenerational narratives about education**

I say to my children and my grandchildren, ‘You learn when the pastor speaks and you should listen when church leaders speak and don’t misbehave. If you muck up there, you won’t know what to do when the devil speaks [to you]. And that one child, Mingkiri, she understands because she’s clever; she’s clever and she holds on to all of the stories. I talk to them about church and I talk to them about school, and I teach them good things like when you get an education and grow up you can work with this and that. Like I was a police officer for a while, three years at Imanpa, and I looked after the school and I took the recorder group to Darwin when they beat those twelve white schools.

School and this [pointing to the Bible] straightens them out for them to stand on their own. To do things for themselves, to understand for themselves. This [Bible] continues to guide their thinking, to understand how I worked; they’re watching me because I have two languages. I learned this from the [Western] Aranda mob, I learned a lot and I have two other languages in my family.

I’m not sure why my parents pushed me to go to school. Maybe God changed their thinking for the better. I learned a little bit at Areyonga School; it was obviously a government school and we were interested and we went happily, and after staying there and attending the school, we’d go back to the family as relations travelled at that time in the spring.

We thought about education from a different angle; it was for going to where the food was and also they would force us [to go] and to attend a good school and do good things, but I came to the view, ‘Oh, there’s good food to eat at school also and it’s good to learn’.

Apparently my mother had a strong story and since the time of coming out from Wingellina, perhaps she had a strong sense of what education was for. I did a lot of learning as a child and I used to think about it this way on my own, ‘Yes, my grandfather said I should be killed, but my grandmother loved me and maybe there’s a story in that’.

### **Getting to school; growing responsible and autonomous children**

I look after a granddaughter who is still young, she’s still learning. And I say to her, ‘You know, as the older sister [perhaps her younger sister isn’t really ‘with it’], and with your mother racing off for wine, following her husband and both getting stuck in Alice Springs, you need to think as the older sister’. I tell her, ‘You go ahead and do it. I might be still asleep, worn out, you do something; you need to have breakfast and just go. And wash, have a shower, change your clothes and go to school’. She’s clever. She listens, and when she gets ready in my room, I wake her up in time for school and she gets up and serves up the weet-bix and her younger sister says, ‘No, I want bacon and eggs and spaghetti’. She listens and when her younger sister says what she wants, she gives it



to her and they eat, and I see [what she does]. They both go to the shower and having changed, comb their hair and [I say], 'You two go [to school]!'

I'm very active working with [looking after] them. Their father is living here [in Alice Springs, where this particular interview was held] at the moment. He took their mother there and threw her away, but sometimes he thinks, 'My wife might cheat on me after I've treated her badly'. And I say to my son, 'You need to look after your child properly, for school, and you can go back because they love you. The father's important, they don't have a mother'. I speak up for them through their father and he talks to his partner. I say, 'You need to think, do you love them [the kids]? Or do you want to stay with someone else? I'm worrying about the girls'.

My older granddaughter is at Papunya. I ring her up and talk to the other relations too because my spirit is with her. She's so knowledgeable. She knows how to drive, fix the tyres; she can work, do anything. She's learned everything from me. Once she told me about her boyfriend, I told her, 'Where are you? You bring your boyfriend to me'. He was trying to take her with him and I told him, 'No. You come here'. He's a drinker and maybe a fighter and whatever else. And I don't like all of that, I don't like him [and I said to my granddaughter], 'You've got to find a good man'. This is the approach I use to stop violence.

#### **Young people, education and the future; what this means for my family**

Thinking and looking at the future and continuing to talk to them, my grandchildren can prepare for the future at Nyangatjatjara College here. I'm committed to the understanding that from generation to generation, they should be running their own business and that they would stay here even after I've left them. I could go any time in the future, but God is waiting for me, having built the community for the future, worked so hard and sorted things out to leave it for the next generation.

Other grandchildren of mine have been educated here [in Alice Springs]. Their carers went for a holiday and we were getting together as a family and I said to the carer, 'You go on the holiday and they will go later. I've set up a college, Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal College, so that you won't hold on to them forever and keep them separated [from us]. They've learned your side here, they know about education and they've got experience and they want to run things. They can manage things by themselves while they're waiting, at Imanpa'.

They can run their own business, not just lean on the government's shoulder. They can do work experience to run things for themselves, not having the government constantly pushing, 'Do this, do that', but others need to make this happen for their own generation, not having [government] interfere and take over the operation at Angas Downs. I want to see them work hard running their own business and to be happy, to be satisfied and to live in good country.

#### **A desire for self-determination, unity and unselfishness**

I want my grandchildren to understand and see through the things they've been taught, to step back and see their own [culture/selves]. Into the future, forever, not for white people to lead them. That's what I want. I talk to them. This is the way I think, 'You must always, once you've found your

voice and speak out, not be greedy and race ahead of all of them, because some don't know how to read and write, and I'm still speaking from the things of God. You're so smart and you need to look at your Bible and do the reading because we don't ever want others to come and greedily take us off [leading us astray like they have before]'. Let her go and stand back. Wait and stand and watch. 'Oh, right. Maybe they're doing some good things.' That's what I want. To run their own business. To be strong, to be loving and to come together and straighten things out. Like with this, in Philippians chapter 4: Once you're standing on your own [two feet], don't get greedy and run others down; here it is [reads from Philippians 4]: 'Appeal for steadfastness and unity'. It's talking about that.

I questioned my daughter. I was saying, 'You're constantly in conflict, on and on and you can't love when you're fighting and always angry. The Lord loves them too; them and you'. And she was thinking about that. 'You've got to stop fighting and yelling and doing wrong things. Come together and look at the Bible'; it goes on to say this:

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends.'

The women kept fighting, two women, swearing.

<sup>2</sup> I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

<sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

God's book, in the Bible. In the book, the women were also in conflict, fighting with each other, but God has written people's names in His book and they will live together forever.

### **Chapter summary**

Sandra's lifetime covers a unique segment of Australian history: pre-contact through family accounts, through to early mission, schooling and cattle station experiences; she took on a range of employment, community leadership, corporation governance and political representative roles. She has a dream that envisions the core elements of Anangu identity: belonging, language, land and culture as a foundation for economic and political engagement for generations to come. She sees education as critical in achieving these goals, together with a strong moral and ethical code which is to be acquired by remembering important family members, their histories, sacrifices and strengths and a strong adherence to biblical study and principles. Although they have not been included for wider public access in this thesis, she also recounted a series of stories of the importance of uncompromising observance of ceremonial law in positioning herself (and others) to speak authoritatively and confidently on important issues relating to language, land and culture as well as broader social and community issues.

The values of independence, self-determination, social responsibility and intergenerational teaching are woven across geographical and historical accounts. A particular feature of these stories is the circular nature of the narratives where Sandra opens with recounting the circumstances of her birth and subsequent desert exodus. One of her final accounts revisits that same story in much finer detail to explain the details of her birth, survival, desert exodus and relocation in terms of a journey to the Promised Land of Angas Downs. What is initially implied through arms-length storytelling early in the narratives is made more explicit for the listener in the retelling and explaining the circumstances of her birth as the critical experience that endows her with a sense of divine appointment and purpose as she tirelessly advocates for her grandchildren to remain connected to the stories, country, history and economic potential of Angas Downs.

Her deeply held beliefs, expressed throughout this chapter, are powerfully shaped through a lifetime of interactions and, at times, skirmishes with colonialism within the context of desert survival and its associated values. These values contrast and, at times, challenge many of the colonial, metro-centric assumptions that inform remote education in the current political and ideological climate. Sandra's accounts describe foundational Anangu values within a broader context of immense and almost unimaginable change – all in the space of a lifetime.

## Chapter 6: The stories of Gordon Inkatji

### Background and overview

Gordon Inkatji is a highly respected senior Anangu man. He was born in approximately 1930 at Aparatjara between Kanypi and Piipalyatjara at the western end of the Mann Ranges in the far north-west of South Australia. His father's traditional country was the Kangaroo (Maḷu) totemic region near Mt Davies. His family settled at Ernabella Mission, which was established by the Presbyterian Church in the Musgrave Ranges in 1937. Gordon Inkatji was one of the first children to attend the mission school which opened in 1940.

He was instrumental in the early days of the Ernabella Mission, working in the office and store and becoming involved in teaching Pitjantjatjara language to staff, in translation work and in the early production of Pitjantjatjara language literature. When Pitjantjatjara Language Summer Schools commenced at the University of Adelaide in 1968, Gordon worked as a teacher in them. When the Pitjantjatjara language was introduced into courses at Torrens College of Advanced Education in the 1970s, he was involved in course preparation and teaching. Gordon was actively involved in the Ernabella Mission and school vernacular language program and was a foundation member of the Ernabella Choir.

Gordon was a member of the choir that went in 1954 to Adelaide to see Queen Elizabeth and again in 1956 when they sang in the presence of the Duke of Edinburgh at the opening of the John Flynn Church in Alice Springs. Other tours included Melbourne, Adelaide and several provincial centres in 1966, Fiji and Sydney in 1979 and Sydney in 1984. He has been largely responsible for a resurgence of interest in the choir in recent years, training and conducting the choir on visits to Alice Springs, and sharing this role during its visit to Adelaide in 2004 for the Adelaide Festival of the Arts and in 2016 for the WOMADelaide Festival. These lifelong achievements were recognised when he was awarded Fellow of the University of South Australia in 2005.

Gordon lives at David's Well (Puntitja), a small homeland between Ernabella and Umuwa on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, and late in his life, he has taken up painting as an artist within the Ernabella Arts Centre. Gordon has maintained his knowledge and responsibilities as a man of authority in Pitjantjatjara social and cultural life and continues to teach *Tjukurpa* (Anangu law) through stories and song to young men so that they can retain Anangu stories and sacred knowledge into the future.

Gordon begins with stories of growing up learning in an Anangu education context before contact with Europeans and before schooling. His strongest influence is his father, who taught through persistent modelling of the values he wanted Gordon to come to accept and adopt of his own choosing. He recalls his first memory of meeting a whitefella as the family came in to Ernabella to exchange a dingo scalp for a bag of rations and describes the commencement of the Ernabella Mission (1937) and subsequent school (1940), which he attended.

The stories move from recollections of his own experiences of growing up learning, whether in the family, cultural or formal schooling context, to one of instructing and warning his children and grandchildren of the dangers of abandoning the important narratives that inform a virtuous and happy life, concluding with recent examples of teaching young people and collaborating with Piranpa in a shared teaching context. The continuing thread is the message that a prosperous future stands on a strong understanding and observance of Anangu law, a disciplined life and an emulation of the lives of Elders who have exemplified a virtuous Anangu life, of which love and unconditional giving are hallmarks. Gordon constantly reminds us through these narratives that learning is a matter of life or death, and each one of us must ultimately choose our fate.

Gordon is a teacher through and through, whether in formal employment contexts, such as his times in Adelaide and Alice Springs, or his ongoing tireless work of teaching men and guiding entire ceremonial song cycles at various times as well as directing the Ernabella choir. He is undeterred in his lifelong commitment to this work, as he sees the acceptance and adoption of Anangu values as a matter of life and death; to ignore the wisdom of experience is to choose destruction and to threaten the future of Anangu law and the stories (*Tjukurpa*) that carry Anangu histories and vital codes for survival in a changing world. In 2015, Gordon stands almost peerless in his knowledge, experience and ability to articulate the importance of knowledge transmission. He understands the pedagogies, patience and care required to break through to young people living in an era of immense change, cultural confusion and newly emerging social challenges, unseen in the relatively short history of Anangu interaction with European colonialism. There are many other stories that Gordon recorded through this process that have not been included here.

## **Learning as family; family as foundation**

### **Learning by watching; stories, survival and unconditional giving**

Yes, I'm talking about the things I learned about a long time ago as a child living with my father and mother. As a young child, I would love it when my mother and father told stories. They would both tell stories and we didn't play, we'd just stay with our mother and father. And I would say, 'Tell me a story!' And they would both tell me a story and I would listen. I would listen and listen and listen and then fall asleep and they would finish. And in the morning, I'd get up after sleeping and say, 'Right, tell me that story!' And they'd say, 'No, leave it for night time'.

And in the morning they'd say, 'No'. And so I'd leave it. Off we'd go and I was watching my father and mother. My father was carrying a big lot of meat; he'd carry it wrapped on his head and would cook it. And others would come and sit down and I would see this and think, 'Hey, why did they all come and they've taken my father's meat, for the three of us?' And without saying anything, I'd watch from a distance and after everything was done, we would sit down next to the meat.

And I would pick it up and I would eat some and Dad would give out the meat to the others as I watched, thinking, 'Hey, he's giving the meat to total strangers! Who are these people he's giving

it to?’ And my father would give to his younger brothers and sisters, men and women. And in this way, he would give away meat – that I thought should be for me – so that everyone would be happy.

And I was thinking about them, ‘They should give them some meat later; they’re both giving it away. They should put some away for me, put some up out of the way and I can have some meat in the morning and tomorrow during the day, but now I’ll go to sleep and get up tomorrow with no meat!’

I’d think wrongly. And he gave us some meat and later would say, ‘This is my younger brother and sister, and this is my younger brother and sister and I’m giving to my younger brothers and sisters’. And I thought, ‘Oh, right!’

‘And I also really care about their children; all of their children.’

And I joined up with them and would travel with them and played and when the meat was brought, we would race over there and sit down and their father would give me some meat, my proper relations would.

And so after that I took the relationships seriously and thought, ‘Oh, I was wrong to feel so terribly about my relations and to tell them off, but these are my family’. And I finally developed a love for them. My oldest sister would really care about everyone and she would give some meat, a bit of other food; meat, everything, we’d give without saying no to others. I was watching my second oldest sister and my older brother.

They both would give a little, and sometimes they wouldn’t; they’d falsely say they didn’t have anything. But my oldest sister would give without saying no. And I would think, ‘Right, maybe she really cares about others, all of these people, but those two are resentful, so I think I might follow the example of my oldest sister’. And I give to others because I want to; I care about them.

And because that love and care was present as a child, I also carry that love today and I don’t refuse others. I give food, I give meat, and I give money without refusing. When I have a little bit, I say, ‘Yes, I have a little bit’, and I give. But maybe I help everyone because I care and our way of caring is there and we are singlehandedly modelling caring for everyone and showing compassion so that people can be happy.

And so that got me thinking and I would care about everyone. I live by myself and come and say, ‘Morning!’ to everyone and they respond by saying, ‘Morning!’ afterwards. ‘Yes, I’m really happy today’, I say.

‘Yes, we’re all really pleased for you!’

And we have a laugh. And, you know I really love everyone; I really love them, all the Anangu and I took this to heart through the modelling I observed from my parents.

I was going for spears with my father and I was learning about spears, spear throwers and animals, how to cook meat, extracting sinew, preparing the meat and opening the stomach; my father was teaching me. And I learned and learned and finally understood how to do it properly. And because of that, I teach all of my sons; I teach my grandsons. It needs to be done this way, doing the stomach and everything else. It's said that there are [spirit] men around and they make camp and when they befriend you, they can kill you, but if we do this kangaroo preparation really well, [they think] 'Oh, they know how to do it properly'. And so I'm teaching about all of this for fear of that happening. I talk like this so we can live together healthy and they're all learning about working with the meat as well.

Yes, I was learning about spears and to cook the meat, to give it a try. And, of course, we didn't have rifles; we would spear the animals and eat the meat. The euros [hills kangaroos] are extremely fast and we would throw the spear towards the nose, throwing in anticipation and the euro moves across and the spear goes in, spearing it in the trunk and as he drops afterwards, the euro is still going. Red kangaroos too and we would spear them. Of course, with a rifle, you just shoot toward the nose anyway like that and you shoot the nose and it pushes him across and kills the kangaroo. I was learning about all of these things from watching.

### **Learning to love**

Yes, from the time we were children, we were watching and they would go and get the spears from the hills, climb high into the hills and having cut the spear shafts, they were making big fires and straightening the shafts, attaching a covering, affixing the thrower extension to the spear, affixing the barb, affixing the spinifex gum and they would spear animals. And we would be watching and we'd listen and when we were older, we'd say, 'Let's cut spear shafts!' And so we were working on the shafts and sharpening them up and once they were sharp, we'd go and spear rabbits. We started with the rabbits learning with the older men by watching them and then we learned to cook in the fire and they'd teach us and say, 'This is the way you open the stomach'. And they'd teach us properly about the stomach and drawing out the intestines and throwing away the unclean parts. It was from this learning and learning and learning that we mastered it and we only learned through that good foundation. But you all need to also learn through this good foundation in the way that we did and separating the parts of the animal in the right way, open the stomach and cook it and do it properly, not the wrong way.

Yes, you know, I was really watching as a child and my father would take meat and give it to us and when we'd eaten, I would be happy, but sometimes my father would go with other men and cook all of the meat together in a separate group and my mother would go for rabbits and take the meat fairly late [to be cooked]. A man who is a younger father would give me meat and also give some to my mother and I would say, 'Go and tell him!' having watched what was happening [with my dad and the meat], 'Hey, dad's taking a lot of meat!' And so I would rush over and get the tail and go around saying, 'Dad gave us meat before you!'

And he'd be thinking, 'Oh, my younger brother apparently gave them meat'. And because of that, he would call him over first, because my younger father had already given us meat. He would give him his share and he would see other relations and was giving them meat, because he used to carry Kukika around as a child on his shoulders – Kukika is referred to as '*pinintja*' [someone he'd carried on his shoulders] – and so he said, 'Hey! Kukika, come here!' And I said, 'No! Don't do that! That's my meat! What am I going to eat?'

But he said, 'Come here and get the meat!' He was still saying that, refusing to listen to me. And then he came this way and collected some meat and sat down. My mother told me, 'Listen! He carried this woman on his shoulders, Kukika, and she is his proper younger sister'. And I said, 'Oh, right!' And I was thinking, 'Wow, he really cares about all of the relations and is giving them meat. He is giving bread as well, everyone was giving; they're givers'. You take meat to one person and they all give and all of us eat; there was an enormous love for each other in the old days.

And they all had that love and lived content; it was a genuine love. But [these days] they've all ceased that love, but through the love that I developed as a child, I still give with that love; I give money, I give meat, I give bread; we go together and after we've cooked meat, I give the meat out and take it to everyone and they all eat and are happy. And that love was learned from a long time ago from the things I observed as a child.

### **Learning through stories, learning through song**

*SO: You have so many songs that you hold in your memory; Pitjantjatjara song cycles, choir songs. You know so many songs. How do you keep your brain working?*

GI: Yes! [Laughs] Yes, from my wonderful upbringing. I would continually ask my mother to tell me stories and I would be reflecting and thinking and thinking and learning and learning. Sometimes I would fall asleep as the stories were being told and almost at dawn I'd say, 'Mum, tell that story again!' And she said, 'We don't tell stories in the daytime, only at night'. So I'd say, 'Ok'. And off I'd go and play and play and come back and ask her and they would finish off the story and tell others.

Again, I'd listen as the men told stories from a distance sharing their news and stories as they would in the mornings and evenings [this is a cultural practice known as *alpiri wangkanyi*] and so from listening and listening I understood and learned their stories. Also, from the stories [*tjukurpa*] they shared in the old days, I would listen as they also sang the songs and I would sing confidently through hearing the songs. And because of that, I would sing loudly with them because I had such a good memory. I wasn't shy to do this and they would sing songs and tell stories and they would all say, 'Yes, yes!' And so I would tell the stories and finish them off and then start again and tell other stories.

They would tell stories on and on and another would tell their stories back across this way and would listen as the man spoke or when another woman spoke. We listened, and through this process I was gathering knowledge and understanding, and I listened and listened and even now I



have retained all of this. I have many stories and of course I listen as others tell their stories. It's not just Anangu stories that I share, but I also listen to whitefella stories carefully so I can remember them and I share them with other Anangu. They taught us so well and our relations taught us so well from a whole range of things: to sing secular and sacred music, to sing the *ngintaka* [perentie] song cycle, along with all of them.

So, having learned, I have custodianship [of the songs] and my brother is probably similar; we have both retained all of these stories from a long time ago through the song cycles, and I've retained this knowledge through the instruction I received from my mother and father.

### **Family as foundation**

*SO: Thinking about schools, how do whitefellas, schools, teachers, people like me talk to Anangu about what's important? You're talking to me now about learning and teaching and what's important and you're talking about learning through working with kangaroos, through stories and the dreaming, through the law, songs and bush skills. So, how does a white teacher help Anangu kids to grow up to be strong and to be knowledgeable? Obviously, we teach from our side; to speak English, writing, reading and all of those things, but it's all learning.*

Yes, they come after but children must learn their father's [ways] first, through their parents first, their older brothers and older sisters must continually teach them. To learn their culture and once they're set up, the teacher might come and talk a little bit and they will understand from the teacher, 'Yes, that is their story that they're telling'. So what sort of story? It might be really important and they might really enjoy that story and will go and continue to learn, learning and understanding that they're learning from knowledge that belongs to the teacher. From there, searching for their parent's stories, 'No, they teach me with the real [true] things with my parents'.

Yes, but the teacher can be involved after this, that's absolutely fine. After the foundational knowledge; Anangu culture taught by the family. Like how your parents taught you through stories at a young age. They did that and then you always live without fear. And you're set.

### **Choir, learning and life in the early days of the Ernabella Mission**

#### **Arriving at Ernabella**

I came in the very early days and I was here and I saw when there was only one white person here. There were no buildings, no school, no church, nothing at all; there wasn't a hospital either. And we came and we didn't camp at Ernabella; we were staying out at that place Tjunpunpingka, and we stayed there and slept and came here and we went and saw that whitefella when he was the only one there. And with a dingo scalp they got a parcel of food that he was giving out in carry bags.

And so we went and slept at Itjinpiri, slept at Alalka, slept at Tjulytju Waninytja and slept at Wana Umpani. And after sleeping at Alyaringku, we were staying at Ngarutjara<sup>7</sup>; we arrived there and slept. We lived out at Ngarutjara [Mt Woodroffe].

### **Ernabella School begins**

And after that, a teacher arrived, Ron Trudinger, a very long time ago, and he was a young man and he collected all of us children for school and we came and attended school. It was outside, there was no building, and he would talk and was teaching us and we were learning from our own language, from Pitjantjatjara language. He was teaching our Pitjantjatjara language to us and we were learning Pitjantjatjara and we learned various other things afterwards, much later.

Well, many arrived and after that, in 1937, many whitefellas arrived and from that time, there were a whole lot of people living at Ernabella. And from that time, they were building a hospital for sick people to stay in. And after that they were building a store. The goods were to be stored in the manse and the manse was there with a small store. And so from then, there was food there and the hospital might have been built after that and the patients were lying in the hospital.

And after that the school was built in 1940. We attended school in that building and many of us as children gathered and joined together and were attending at that school; various groups and from different areas attended and were learning. And some time after that we were going to Wintjalangu. We were taking rakes, taking shovels without a car and we were taking bags and we went and this side of Wintjalangu we raked small stones into piles and would leave them in their piles. These were to build Ron Trudinger's house. And so he built a small house and after that it was joined to the school and extended and developed next to the school. From then on, we attended school in the school building, and after teaching he would sleep in the house next to the school building. Later on, when we had grown up, Mr Trudinger was teaching us songs and we were learning songs; of course, we were singing church hymns and we were constantly practising. We learned and learned and learned and then he wanted to share the gospel with the men and the young men, and he was sharing the gospel and teaching all of the songs. They were also singing regularly as he was teaching every Wednesday evening.

The older men and also the young men and now they're all old men, but they were teaching the younger men. In school, we only attended in the mornings and finished at lunch time. We would go hunting for rabbits and we were eating all sorts of those different bush foods – wild gooseberry, bush tomatoes as well – and so we'd go and still be fairly close. And so this was the way we grew up and I attended school all the time right through growing up even as young pre-initiates, we would all attend naked [laughs].

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<sup>7</sup> I have adopted the Pitjantjatjara spelling of this homeland, although it is often spelled using a Pintupi/Ngaanyatjarra orthography.

### **Moving into adulthood and work**

And after that we would surround and spear bush turkeys, all of the men and from that time, we were staying out in the bush and not attending school. And they were taking us [for initiation] and from that time we were young men and so from that time we started to learn about work. And we were doing all sorts of different work. We would collect sand from the salt pans and bring it back and we built that overhead tank and we made the bricks. We had three cement mixers. And so we were doing all sorts of interesting work and then we loaded wheelbarrow loads and would take them to the church without a vehicle. Then we would put them in a line and there were three Anangu men doing that work, two whitefellas and Kuki [Peter Nyangu] all by himself and he was learning on houses having worked on building the church. Kuki worked completely on his own and we would put the bricks out; we did the sand, made the cement and laid the bricks out and would bring them back when they were dry, deliver them and send them up by rope.

We did a little bit of work on the church standing on top when it was close and they did the climbing up and building up as it rose. And so the church they built was a big building and I think when the building was finished off and we'd filled in all of the gaps, they all came up from Adelaide to open the church.

### **Learning choral singing and the Ernabella Choir**

And we were learning to preach. Ron Trudinger was continually training me. And I was learning to sing tenor and we were being taught in school and we were learning from singing and singing and singing and it was later that we learned tenor, initially the girls were singing soprano and tenor and we were only learning the bass parts. The men and the younger men [sang bass] but later I changed [to tenor] and they put the girls into soprano and alto parts. And we sorted out, I was a tenor and they were singing bass and they were learning and we sang and sang in a strong voice.

And after that, the year 1966, maybe I'm saying the wrong year [actual date was 1954], from all that we had learned, we went on a choir trip to Adelaide to see Queen Elizabeth, the time that they both came to Adelaide, and we performed in Adelaide. We were the first to go to Adelaide and then we returned later. He [Mr Trudinger] left and we later re-started the choir after that [with Rev. Bill Edwards].

[In 19]66 we went on a choir trip. We learned choral singing through school, but later began a formal choir and then toured regularly to Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and having returned from these tours, having mastered the choir, we then toured Fiji and performed there in 1979 having completed this series of tours. Now the choir members who are those experts are sick and are living in Aged Care, others have passed away, others have grown old, and today there are three of us left: Barney Wangin [since deceased, 2014], Andy Tjilari [since deceased, 2015] and me. The others who are younger have also joined us in becoming old men.

Right from early on, it was at the top of the blackboard and he [Mr Trudinger] was writing the musical notes up and we were learning them; [he was] teaching tenor, teaching bass, teaching alto

and because of that, we learned all of the parts as he taught them. He was always putting the parts up on the board and teaching us.

Bill Edwards was teaching us at Ernabella from the time he arrived when Ron Trudinger left, he was the choir master. And he was teaching and once we had learned our songs, [he] was travelling from there with me and was telling me to take the choir. And so from that time, I looked after the choir and we rehearsed from here [Ernabella] and we would travel in the car and Bill Edwards joined us to take the choir as we arrived in Adelaide for the recent Adelaide festival. [Gordon also led the Ernabella Choir as they sang at Bill Edwards' funeral in Adelaide, August 2015.]

And so only here at Ernabella, I sing, teach and look after the choir and then take them to Sydney, Melbourne and also to Adelaide. That's all that I was doing. At times I was conducting in Adelaide when Mr Edwards was there and he would just get up and make some comments [in between songs]. After Mr Edwards left for Adelaide and it was my turn to be the choir master and they both suggested [I should take choir] for the children also. I liked the idea that maybe when the children were grown up and became men they could stand with the others [in the adult choir]. They all need to learn choir at school to prepare everyone for [the adult] choir. And once they're experienced at choral singing, we can all be equal members, the mothers and the fathers also.

### **Life as a child at Ernabella and Areyonga; an age of innocence**

We would see girls at school when we were all children; boys, but together with the girls. We'd carry [each other] around on our backs, go hunting, go out to get bush foods and eat together in the bush as family; we had no concept of anything else, no understanding. The girls didn't know anything else and we had no idea of any other life; we were satisfied. And we were all family; we would come this way and other family would have food, other relations would go that way, others would head off [a different way], different relations, there were so many relations. They'd go off in family groups, travelling along this creek. And we would only take Nura, Nura Rupert ... just one. And they would take one boy, Barry. And they would both climb gum trees like these ones where the budgerigars live in the hollows [laughs]. And they would kill the budgies by striking them and throw them [down], following on and following on and following on, [tree after tree] they'd go on and on collecting them and keep them; so many, and then they'd go again. They'd climb down and keep going. But we didn't climb the trees, we were too afraid and didn't do it. And they'd both make the climb and tell us [what was in the hollows] when they'd climbed up there. We looked after two [children]: a boy and girl.

Nura is a relation; we were related to everybody there. And when the kangaroos had built up in number we would have ceremonial business with the pre-initiates who were going into their initiation process. The men would go to various places with the ceremonial party. They'd put the pre-initiates [in a separated camp] with the dogs and we would go there from school [to stay with them] close to here, close areas in these hills. And we would drive the kangaroos into a closed space and spear them; we would cook the whole lot. We did everything together as family. Yes,

they'd call people over, 'Come! We're cooking here'. And everyone [would eat], and the children [too]. And because of that, we had lived such a good life we didn't know how not to give as children.

We didn't touch the girls. No, that story [or experience] was kind of left hidden until such time as it was told to us. But everything was good for us, but one boy [at Areyonga] [laughs] ... we were just young [lit. small genitals], older boys still living in the company of our mothers. He lined us up into rows one morning, 'The leaders stand here', and again lined us up together with the girls [laughs]. [We] stood there, straight, in even lines. And he said, 'Listen, you like this one; you love this one, they're your girlfriend'. [Laughs] But we couldn't understand. [Laughs] That was the first time we'd started [thinking about adult relationships], and the older boys [pre-initiates] were spying on us. No, we didn't hang around with the girls [laughs], but just that one boy was hassling us to get a girlfriend.

We went to Areyonga later [because of] the vast array of food but everybody at Ernabella lived with one [food source – (limited rations?)]. When a person was by themselves, we would constantly go with a relation to take them meat, but that one kid would hassle us about girlfriends, and so I kind of kept a bit of a distance from him.

*[In the 1940s, Areyonga was recognised for providing more options for rations through the store, and this became an issue for the sustainability of the population at Ernabella as families would walk to Areyonga and stay there. This drove Ernabella Mission to provide close to full payment on dingo scalps and improve the range of goods available at their store in an attempt to break the doggers' trading advantage and encourage families to stay at Ernabella (see Duguid, 1963, 1972; Edwards, 1992; J. R. B. Love, 1945; Young, 2010). This gives some context to Sandra's accounts in Chapter 5 in explaining the journey her family took in 1945 and why narrators such as Sandra, Gordon and Andy Tjilari (see Edwards, 1994; Osborne, 2013a) attended school at Ernabella, Areyonga and Hermannsburg in the 1940s.]*

## **Talking to the next generation**

### **Young people and the future**

Young people need to consider the example of the lives of the older generation, and having reflected on the strength of these stories, they will be ok and will create good stories, but, you know, some of the older generation have resisted and chosen sub-standard lives; they hear the *Tjukurpa* [law, dreaming] and don't keep it; it is lost.

They need to learn [from this] and consider all future options and think, 'What will I do?' The younger generation needs to follow the actions [and example] of the previous generations; these young ones can be like us. We've been looking after [our important] beautiful things and now I have grown old and will finish, but who will take over the teaching and who will tell the stories? Who will?

Who will look after all of the stories and share them with everybody when we've gone? After we've looked after the important stories maybe we'll die sometime soon and all of the stories will end. Others don't take account of the dreaming; they don't live with virtue, don't get along and everything will be mixed up the wrong way with harmful things and they will think about those damaging things. To avoid this happening, we must continue to teach them. I've been teaching, and maybe the younger generation will think back [to the past], but they must also look ahead to have a good future.

### **Resisting annihilation**

When the grandchildren, the daughters and the children are there, I say, 'Right, come and sit down and I will sit with you all and talk to you'. And they come and sit down and they wriggle around and I say, 'No, stop wriggling and listen and I will tell you a story'. I was explaining a story and saying, 'Hey, are you thinking about living the right way and are you thinking about continually protecting and caring for others? In the future, when you're better and you've learned, will you all look after them and each other? But listen! Sometimes I watch movies, cowboy movies. I watch and I think about how the cowboys and the Indians fight; sometimes it's only one cowboy. The cowboy has those strong bullets, powerful pistols, but the Indian has the spear and the rifle and because of that, the cowboy shoots and kills the Indians'. And I watch and come and talk to them late in the afternoon. 'Listen, I was watching a movie today, two, cowboys and Indians. Listen, I want to talk to you all. This is what I was watching: I was watching a movie with cowboys and Indians and the Indians have spears and rifles but [the cowboys] have those guns with the powerful bullets, short guns [pistols] but they are very powerful and they shoot them all and destroy them [the Indians]. They die.

'In the same way, you might think the wrong way and sniff petrol. And from the petrol, it's just like the cowboy's bullets, strong. The petrol is so strong and it kills Anangu. I'm talking to you so this doesn't happen. They killed the Indians, those big, strong bullets, and I'm thinking these things might kill you and finish you all; you will be destroyed. But stay on the right track, like me or like my older brother or like others and you will grow to be old men, but otherwise your generation, you will all die young.'

I was talking like this to my children and they have learned, they've learned and learned and now they know. My two daughters are keeping strong from listening to my stories, both of them, but two others resist and they are in a bad way. There were others also who got stuck in the wrong things and I really tried but couldn't change them. I was looking after them and giving things to them and really talking strongly to them, teaching them along the way. But it all seems to have finished now and they've stopped getting involved in those bad things and they say, 'No, we're really good now. We're eating well and we're not thinking about those other things'. That's what they said and I was so pleased when I heard them say that.

### **Teaching the next generation**

I must continue to teach the children. When someone asks me to teach them, you know, I don't agree straight away; I don't believe them straight up. They might say to me, 'Will you come [and teach me]?' [And I say] 'Yes, he's good. Yes, I'm going.' But when someone else says [asks], I don't say yes. I think about it, [otherwise] I'll mistakenly say yes; maybe there are other considerations, and I think long and hard about it so that [they] take their learning seriously and I spend a very long time reflecting on it and finally decide, 'Aha, maybe this person is speaking truly to us'. We [explain] it to them in this way, 'They're telling important stories from their significant life experience'. But if I agree [to teach/share] too hastily, my time is wasted and I will die achieving nothing, having rushed.

Remember, 'Jesus spoke to the rich man' ... I'm just telling the story, you know it. He was a rich man and he went to Jesus and ate lunch with him. After eating lunch, he had a great discussion with Jesus and from the things they'd discussed after lunch, Jesus was telling a story and he thought, 'I've heard this story as a child, so why do I need to reconsider this now as a man?' He had been neglecting [to follow these ways]. 'Oh, he's referring to me', but (Jesus) said to him, 'As you know, you've become wealthy from other people. If you're serious about following me, give it back. Give it back; give and give and give and give and when you've finished, follow me. But you will be rewarded by my father in heaven'. But he wasn't happy about it. He said, 'No, I observed all of these things since I was a child'. He left in a sullen state. And he was, as you know, a rich man with many coats.

I recently took one man out, my grandson. I was teaching and saying, 'Say it again'. And it wasn't right and I said, 'Whoa, whoa, whoa! Say it right! Always say it absolutely right. And say it and say and say it. Don't say it's substandard or feel sorry or declare it to be wrong, fix it! And only once your words are right, can you hear it and learn'. And I also think about the musical aspects. I'm thinking about the music and thinking that I was learning the music but sitting in the smoke and practising, but with just my voice, a long time ago ... as a child.

Yes, I'm travelling around for them to learn. 'I live alone, but you are my true grandson, and will you come to me and learn?' And they reply, 'Yes. I was thinking that you weren't interested but here I'll listen to you'. I have many (students), they know the stories and tell them so well, those storytellers, and they come and I talk and explain. I don't get tired when I'm helping and teaching, and we get it perfected and I will live on. Yes, for those things, I will live on but that younger generation will end.

*SO: How long does it take for one of those grandsons to learn (to sing) and become an expert?*

GI: Yes here, I don't rush the teaching; I will stay there a long time ... a long time. You know, everything is good from being there through the whole process; it doesn't ruin it. But maybe not for others, [they] don't come to me, and I have so many stories that will end, and after that, those other stories won't be told, nothing. Others don't ask, but I'm ready to take them on and they can be like

me: with people, having a love for people. And after your love that comes through God is there, your love becomes great and you must care for people with that love. That's the way it is, like me. And with my two older sisters and my mother, my father, my aunty and my younger brothers and sisters, the two mothers: Anmanari and Lanki. They are of course, my relations, my aunty's daughter. My father accommodated [prepared a camp for] them, looking after his mother. And the three of them lived together in love. My father, my mother, and others with my aunty. He'd make another fire: two fires. And they were here, the ones that lived with my father and they, the other relations, would sleep over there. And here was my aunty and the ones that would sleep here were the two girls and all of these [exemplified] genuine love. And I was learning from that love through them. And [through] that love being there, reflecting and thinking this way, they gave with absolute love.

People ask me, 'No food? I don't have any food'. When they don't have much food and a visitor says that, I say, 'That's ok, I'll give [what food I have to you], but maybe I will collect [food] from someone else later on'. Like when I've emptied all of my food out giving to visitors. I help. I think, 'Why do they go there and they'll be there over lunch; it's so hot today, but I'll help them'. [Perhaps the visitors are camping outside.] It's not just a once off, they all know me [as someone who will help]. Yes.

He's really grown up [learning] from me, and now I'm teaching him with kangaroos, to open the stomach, placing the tail, to cook [the kangaroo], cutting the two legs, putting the tail in the fire, leaving it in the fire to cook, teaching the entire process. He's a grown child. I instruct him, 'Always do it this way'.

### **The importance of repetition and supporting learners with difficulties**

If teachers only teach or explain things once, from a first attempt, they can't teach. But by explaining again (at length) and finishing, going again, they'll finally understand. They get it. But from the first time I speak, they think about it, and I speak, and they'll continue to reflect on that [from] when I start [teaching]. And from that time, once they've got the hang of it, they really understand.

*[Whispering, Gordon asks me to turn the recorder off for the next section to explain some background context of a grandson he is teaching and how suffering a brain injury has affected his ability to learn.]*

As you know, it's not easy. I begin with the first section but he doesn't get it immediately and so I show him maybe ten times. He was learning it and then going over it again and then he realised, 'Yes, that's good'. He had learned the first part and understood it. Knowing the second section, 'Yes, that's good'; hearing it correctly and then section three in that way; section four, it's good, and I say, 'Yes, no that's good now! It's all yours. Your understanding is good. If you're heading off, don't talk to others [about this], just continue to reflect on it yourself'. And after he perfected and perfected and perfected the story, it's straightened in his mind; it must always remain in his



head. If I'm speaking [about these things] and they 'shhht' [makes a 'shooting through' sound] shoot through, well, you won't understand. But slowly, carefully, continually reflect and after reflecting and reflecting, [you might ask] 'Is that ok?'

'Yes, that's good. Just like that.'

But I was saying, 'Yes, ok, you're going. That's fine'. But I was saddened in the early evening, deeply saddened [laughs]. It was the first time that he needed so many attempts to get it.

### **Learning and obedience as a matter of life and death**

Sometimes, young children don't listen to their parents. They misbehave, cry and the parents don't discipline [lit. hit] them [claps three times]. I disciplined [lit. hit] [my] children and they learned. But if you don't discipline young children, they behave like babies. Others say, 'Eeeeh! This isn't a baby!' But afterwards I say, 'If they keep on disobeying you, they will die straight away; he's dead quick'. But if they can't show (teach) them, sometimes I talk and talk and talk and talk and talk and then take them.

Maybe I'll tell them the same story in turn and they can understand. And so I talk to them and I say, [whispers] 'See that? They're watching'. [Talking voice returns]. 'Yes.' And they need to rethink and think from a different perspective, 'Ah yes, that's true. That's what's happening'. [Whispers] 'Sit there without speaking.' [They're] thinking, 'Oh right, that story is so great, it will wake us up, revive us'. That's how they speak. They realise, 'He's saying that to us so we can live'. I say, 'Which one of you wants to die?' And there's none.

'And who wants to live?' And they all raise their hand.

And I said, 'Are you all being truthful? You know, you all really can't go off and not listen to someone. If someone awakens your thinking (consciousness), you need to always listen, they're speaking to bring you to life, for us to live a story (*tjukurpa*) of life'. I'm rebuking them so that they can always be awake to these things, saying, 'Do you want to be like me? Responsive and living a long life as an old person like me?'

'Yes'.

And I say, 'Whoa! They spoke to you and you gave us a "yes" straight away but you didn't listen to them. So don't just say "yes". Listen, think about it. You will wrongly say "yes" and you'll hurt me later'.

This is the way that I think; I don't speak straight away. They realise, 'Through their own experiences and understanding they're really helping us and bringing a great awareness [life] to our thinking. They're speaking and we take heed of their example. From their previous life experiences, elders will strive to constantly live that [virtuous] life'.

This is how I speak, how I think.

*[The following story relates to a situation where imported synthetic marijuana had been sold across the communities and resulted in serious medical emergencies.]*

A while back I spoke at Amata, ‘Hey, the policemen said that this marijuana has been made up and is poison’. And I was thinking it was true and I went there and scolded the men, scolded the women, and because of that they came and sat down at the house, waiting for the women. And I said, ‘Hey, come here all of you’. And they all came, all of them, the whole lot. And I said, ‘As the police were just saying, this marijuana has been made overseas and it’s poisonous. And from there, it’s been brought this way and has entered Australia. Apparently some (Anangu) men have used it and it’s very nearly killed them almost in an instant. And there isn’t any medicine for it’. And I said, ‘Are you listening there?’ And after that, I later said, ‘I love you all’.

‘Who are the young fellas here?’ And they [responded], ‘No ... no one’. They all had partners, spouses. And I [said], ‘Who is married?’ And they all raised their hands. And I was asking, ‘And who has two children? Who is a grandparent? Who has lots of children?’ Everybody [raised their hands]. And I said, ‘And do you love your children or despise them?’

And they [replied], ‘No, we love them’.

‘And will you stop [using] this marijuana?’ And it got a little quiet. And I said, ‘You’re sitting there not saying anything. You love them but you will lose your children. You might die and that child will grow up after that time and your wife will take on another husband’. And it became silent. They listened; and [it] stopped now, because of that.

In the earlier days, people would climb [into vehicles] and travel around; the young people from Amata in the church and those like that from Fregon, they’d meet at Fregon and the same way at Ernabella. And after they had done that, maybe when they started, only when they were all doing that, they were thin, skinny [healthy]. But they [seem to have] disappeared and it’s [just] us at church. They’ve become somewhat forgetful again and they’re not having church. I don’t know why.

I talk to my grandson, I taught him good things. ‘And you disobeyed me. You sing good songs, play for church, and play good songs, but you are continually rejecting God and you rejected me.’ And in the afternoon I said to him, ‘Truly’. And speaking to him seriously, ‘You need to listen’. And he is now saying, ‘Yes, I’m listening’. But I [said], ‘No, you’re speaking and then listening’.

‘Listening, I’m listening!’

‘No, you’re lying. If I’m listening, I don’t speak. I listen silently. And we’re both [referring to another uncle also talking to the young man] telling you good stories.’

## **Sharing the teaching; working with Piranpa**

### **Teaching Piranpa**

Anangu and Piranpa also want me to come, and [they] listen when I speak, and they want to teach the children from the things that I say. Piranpa ask me, ‘Is it ok for me to come and ask you later

and you can tell me some great stories?’ And I said, ‘Yes’. But they didn’t come. And this is the only time I’ve told [these stories].

I went a long time ago – of course, a bit later in the picture – to Alice Springs and was working on Pitjantjatjara language programs together with Jim Downing so they would speak absolutely correctly. But after that, I came back to Ernabella and again he came and took me to Alice Springs. Another man came up from Adelaide [Wilf Douglas] and then he wanted to work with me on a program in Adelaide [University] using the knowledge and experience I had. And so I did a little bit of talking and I went to Adelaide from Alice Springs; they sent me on the train.

*[One of the Piranpa educators interviewed in the thesis recalled completing an intensive language course at Adelaide University in the 1960s run by Wilf Douglas and Gordon. This story was recalled with great affection, in particular because some very experienced people such as the Ernabella Mission worker and Maralinga patrol officer Walter McDougall (see Edwards, 2000) attended the class. They had picked up some very bad language habits and were surprised that much of their language use was wrong and were also frustrated at the proposition of trying to relearn, a memory that is shared here by Gordon.]*

And so I got off the train at Adelaide and that man also collected me, and from then I went to the university every morning and I saw thirty-eight people sitting there. They came and were learning. These were people who were preparing to work in our communities: policemen, government employees, welfare workers, lawyers, girls as well, teachers also came and were learning, thirty-eight people. I was doing a lot of modelling and correcting them when they said things wrong. They really learned and learned some excellent things. I returned and held some classes in the school but later, some others were teaching some other Pitjantjatjara and I heard about it and I saw one of those large posters with the Pitjantjatjara they put on there.

And I opened the book and looked and I read it and I was saying, ‘Hey! They’re saying this all wrong, it’s all wrong!’ And I began putting in different words, proper language, our correct language from the old days. And from there, they produced another document with all of the corrections. So now the current group is finally learning the right things, but previously and along the way, they were speaking the wrong way. After all of that, I also worked on the Bible, the ‘Tjukurpa Pulka’ [the important *Tjukurpa*] and now Anangu all have the Pitjantjatjara Bible.

### **School attendance, boarding schools and post-school futures**

SO: You know even this morning I’m looking outside here, and all of the young children aren’t at school. You were talking earlier about singing; you have to practise and practise and practise and practise and then you get it. And it’s the same for school things, you need to be there.

GI: Sometimes I go to the school and talk and show them things, and they listen and the teachers listen and they say that they would like to learn. ‘Yes, yes, yes, yes.’ And I go back and share my stories again ... and again. But I share and I’ve learned to listen to the whitefellas [teachers] and listen to the mothers both [evenly].

Yes, if you're not attending school, you don't learn that story, you don't learn [it] at all. But of course, I liked school, I really loved it and we attended that school; I didn't go off and miss school; we'd go out after school and then I worked. The teacher taught me through all sorts of work like working the soil, working for food and I worked in the garden. From that experience I knew what to do, and having set the garden up in the sun, I made a huge garden. I was learning those things as a child, from school, and we were learning all sorts of jobs in school. When I grew up, I made my own decision that I wanted to work.

But they go to school sometimes and have a positive experience with all of the good things there, and the teachers do a great job teaching them, but all of them come back from finishing boarding school and don't have anything to do with work and don't have anything to do with school, with anything. And they're finished all over again. And I think, 'Why do they do that? They're not attending school here and they're not working; they should come and get involved here from their education, the things they've experienced and the things they've learned. And in the future, they need to help their parents and the whole family, when various people come and talk. And sometimes their father can't understand, their mother can't understand but their sons and daughters can use their knowledge of English to help and interpret for each other (both sides)'. That's what I'm thinking.

### **Learning to sing through repetition, self-discipline and teaching together**

Learning to sing is a difficult process. Yes, I have to sing over and over and over and over, tirelessly, and of course, I get a very sore throat. My throat gets sore and I get tired but I keep teaching and I think, 'Yes, good'. Now you have a try. And I [makes a sound as though trying to force a sound out of his throat and shakes his hand to indicate that nothing is coming out]. That's the way I learnt. Going over and over and over and over it for one [song]. Yes, I might teach one [song] and then it's done, it's finished. And it's really good, 'Yes, great!' and we celebrate. And they say, 'Go again from the first part, [it's still] not very good'. And from there, we work through each section [verse?] two, three, four, five and arriving at verse five. And they go on and on and on and on and on and on [over the verses, which are similar]. And after listening and listening, we go on from there and keep going and see, 'No, it's ok. It's good'. It really is.

'Leave the younger ones [kids], don't talk to others, and if you want to, sit by yourself and say [practise] it, think about it and revise it so that you don't lose it. Yes, that's what I do. I go and sit there alone, I talk as if there's someone else there, listen, speak and learn. And I close my eyes and speak and listen properly, I tune out other distractions and I listen carefully. Yes, I was taught that this was the best way to go, the one best way.'

I had an old red hymn book, the original one. The teacher looked after them and gave them out. I liked singing and would call out, 'Hey, here I am, give me a book to sing from here!' And I learned to be the tenor teacher and [I would say], 'Hey, this [way] [in a high 'sing-song' voice] high---- a little ----- high----'. Like that. So I was learning those parts and continued going and learning.

Eventually I realised that I was continually learning and maybe I need to be teaching the others. And at that time we didn't know (all of the parts). The tenors and I didn't understand bass, alto, soprano, just our own parts and the singing in unison.

But from the previous things I'd learned, I'd lead the choir a bit and the others would follow and we would work it out and get it right together. Following the hymn book you can learn from the music. That was the way I learned from the music when I was living in Adelaide.

And I was teaching choir from that time after learning to read the music, breathing this way, [singing notes] mmm – mmm – mmm – mmm – mmm, a little bit like this.

Yes, and of course, you [Sam Osborne] would teach the choir and you'd been learning music and we were also teaching there [at Ernabella School]. You would teach and I would wait [for you, supporting] through my previous experience [with the choir]. But I didn't join in, I'd listen and you would talk with our children and organise them. Remember how you were telling good stories about choir and I would stand and sing together with you conducting the children's choir and then [you'd] listen and I would say, 'Listen! What he's saying is that you always need to listen without talking and then you'll understand [what to do]'. In that way, we'd stand, two tenors and I'd speak and watch you, and I'd say, 'Watch! I don't sing by watching the choir, I watch and listen, watching the mouth of the conductor. See how the teacher is opening up his mouth and singing, standing straight and also singing softly and beautifully, so continue to watch both of those things'. I'd say, 'So continue to watch now without looking there at what all of the other children are doing; let's all continue to watch. The teachers will be watching [and checking] us, not just one [person], but watching the men, watching the girls, watching all of us'. That's how the teachers teach choir. And because of that, it was so good there with you. Sometimes I take the choir. Yes. I was learning many things.

We can work with teachers and young people both in this context and in the classroom; out bush, in the school. Not out bush, but being separate [from the others], talking [to them] and teaching and when they learn it again, it becomes clear at that point and we all take turns in speaking. Anangu were saying to me there, 'Hey, they know what they're doing; we should invite them [to work with us]'. That's what they were saying. They would come to me when I would go [to work with the choir] and I'd go and help.

*SO: And in 2006 you came to the school and you were sitting in my office and remember you said to me, 'You should help me teach the kids' choir because I learned through the choir and I want to teach the children. Will you help me?' And so I said, 'Yes, you come back tomorrow and I'll call all of the children together and you can talk about the choir', and in 2007 we all went together to Adelaide.*

GI: Yes, and I came and really supported the trip. I was teaching in the school and after I had sung, we all sang again on this hill here<sup>8</sup> and the children were singing and when we joined together, we sang with such gusto, and later the community and the older community members arrived to see us and hear us.

Yes, and we went that time and I saw my grandson and granddaughter when I was in Adelaide. They came and we sang and after that we sang together with the children. I was standing with the children and leading the tenor part; I was singing tenor and the children were learning tenor. And around three of the men were teaching bass, and the women were teaching soprano and alto. The children were learning all of the parts and because of that we were singing beautifully. Yes, I was thinking, 'Wow, they are singing beautifully and I taught them to sing with such strength and joy, and I was listening as they sang their parts so beautifully and I was thinking that maybe when we've gone, perhaps they will continue the choir for a long time to come'.

And I was thinking I might train someone else up to sit beside me and learn to take on the role of choir master, and when I'm finished I'll just sit and listen and watch. That's what I've been thinking, and I've been training one Elder, Graeme, and we've been working together and he helps with the tenor parts and looking after the choir.

Yes, I remember the time I was speaking to them. Through my own experiences, I listened to my mother and father and my older sister and older brother and I would decide to live a good way and that's what I would do and still do. Because of that, I was sharing those stories, 'Listen, when you sing, you should do everything well and decide on how you will live your life into the future. You will live a really good life and continue to sing and will be strong and learn important things and you will have compassion for others and from living with integrity, you will be in good standing. And you will be overjoyed when your parents hear you sing so beautifully through the wonderful things that are happening'.

### **A shared message; guiding with patience**

Sometimes I sit with whitefellas and listen. And they talk with me and so I reflect on my story and also our shared stories and take them and tell them as a shared and equal story, talking with those who don't think [about these things]. And they listen and later they are encouraged from hearing the story. Yes, the whitefella's story is good; the Anangu story is good. It's not just an Anangu story; others hear them and I'm sharing these stories from my own experience and reflection and they're important stories. At the moment, I'm telling others not to touch people's things, like if they see someone's things left lying here.

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<sup>8</sup> Gordon is referring to a twilight concert held on the hill behind the school as a last performance to the community before the bus left early the next morning to take the choir to Adelaide. A photo of this performance is seen on the cover of the 2007 recordings CD of the children's choir.

But they'll come and touch [interfere with, take] other people's things secretly. They are obedient to the wrong way. 'No, that's not ok. Leave other people's things where they are. LOOK ... BUT DON'T TOUCH! And if you want [something, then ask], whose is this? I really want this.'

'No [that's ok], take it!'

'This is the right way. But don't break in secretly; don't go into people's houses, don't break into the store. You see something and you like it, how is it that you want to break in and steal it?' I ask, 'How?' And they listen. 'You've got friends; and I've got friends too. But your friends are continually exposing you to the wrong stories and you'll end up destroying yourself if you get involved in that.' And it's good that they continually tell me about what's going on and I patiently listen to them supportively. That's what I talk about with them.

### **Sharing the teaching**

Sometimes two of us take the young fellas, and I'm there, [with those] two teachers, at Amata and at Ernabella. He's 'Kunmanara'<sup>9</sup>, Andrew Groome. And there's another and they are both teachers.

He says to me, 'I'm taking the young fellas to Mt Woodroffe. Are you coming, or who can?'

'Yes, I'm coming'.

I also go to my older brother with the children and with the men. With the men, the young fellas, the children, the boys there at Ngarutjara.

Once we get together, before we sit down, I [say] to others, 'Hey! I can sit [camp] comfortably when the fire is burning properly'. And my older brother tells a story there. And he [notices and says], 'These two [young fellas] are far away from everyone else. Why is that?'

And they reply, 'It's fine to go a bit further away (separate from the group) like that and learn'.

And I say, 'Really?'

[In mock compliance – my brother knows what's going on and says] 'Wow. Really?'

And they say, 'Yeah'.

And he says to us all, 'Stand like this. [By standing close] you learn to divide and share [meat] in the bush. You learn. We came to help you all, both of these teachers and both of us. They are both white teachers and we're both Anangu teachers. [We're here] to straighten you mob out. Hey! [It goes quiet.] You all don't do the right things'.

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<sup>9</sup> Kunmanara is a name or term used when a person's name is no longer able to be spoken after the death of a family relation. In this case, this name is not spoken after the recent death of my wife's first cousin. Andrew and his colleague are not school teachers, but their role in child protection and mental health requires them to engage young people in learning. In this case, they have adopted a shared teaching approach through a camp at a homeland with Gordon and Peter Nyangu who died in late 2013, a year after this interview took place.

We both speak to them and when they go out for rabbits, we say, ‘Listen. It’s night time ... it’s dark, but watch out for tree roots and be aware of snakes in the dark’. And they go out to get rabbits in the night and at Ngarutjara we both say, ‘Be careful and keep an eye out for snakes and keep a cautious eye out for the wooden stakes<sup>10</sup>. The wood will pierce your feet and if it pierces you around here, it will kill you and also the long pieces that stick up above [the ground]. You’ll chase the rabbits and it will go into your feet and we don’t want that to happen. Watch for wood [splinters], watch for snakes; two things.

They all come back happily and [report], ‘Hey, there wasn’t anything there. There were no snakes and no wooden splinters. We had a great time in the clearings getting the rabbits’. Yes, and I say, ‘No, that’s great that you’re looking out for all those things, excellent!’ They were learning those things, learning and learning at Ngarutjara. Sometimes we both take them close [to here], near Balfour’s Well and teach them, sit them down and talk to them. And Andrew is my *malpa* [this term is used in the sense of friend, companion and colleague].

He speaks, I speak, he speaks and [we] clarify and straighten out the story later as I speak and he speaks. There are others from Amata, good teachers for the men and the children, they teach [them]. Teaching them proactively so that when the children grow up and they become men they can listen and understand obediently. They are both great teachers. White teachers. They both have this thinking [approach], they talk with us and they both work with us – same story. It’s learning together.

### **Chapter summary**

Gordon articulates pedagogies and narratives for survival and success in an Anangu context. If there were a phrase to summarise his beliefs about learning, it could read: ‘To learn is to live’.

Gordon describes learning and education experiences ranging from pre-contact accounts, learning in a familial context on country, through to very recent collaborations with Piranpa educators. He states and re-states an unwavering commitment to the values of self-discipline, unconditional giving, love, obedience, learning and the observance of values and ethics which are both culturally and biblically derived.

These stories depict a persistent and patient teacher who models an uncompromising commitment to high expectations and excellence. Gordon places utmost importance on the integrity, self-discipline and character of the learner; whether it is learning to sing, sharing meat or engaging in a respectful learning relationship with a school teacher, this theme consistently emerges. These accounts also provide unique insights into Anangu ontologies and epistemologies and provide a language and positioning for educators to enter into critical conversations about education and the future with Anangu young people.

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<sup>10</sup> Mulga stumps have long, hard roots that can stick out of the ground and easily pierce tyres and pierce a bare foot like a knife blade.



While Gordon demonstrates a complete commitment to teachers and schooling throughout these accounts, the absence of typical Western education narratives about the importance of attendance, achievement against national standards and closing gaps, for example, is instructive. These accounts are supportive of Western education, but are in no way assimilative in describing the kind of future that education might enable young people to take hold of. Instead, these accounts support the view that education for survival in tristate schools must challenge young people to see the importance of their own cultural identities and histories, and then, having determined to emulate the many examples of resilient and virtuous Elders, they will have tools and weapons for survival and success in any context. This education should be used to help the rest of the family as they negotiate intercultural engagement.

## Chapter 7: The stories of Katrina Tjitayi

### Background and overview

Katrina Tjitayi is a career educator with unique and perceptive insights into the lives, feelings and spirit of Anangu children as they engage with schooling. She studied through the University of South Australia (UniSA) Anangu Teacher Education Program (AnTEP) and, after graduating in the late 1990s, began teaching at Fregon Anangu School. Since that time, she has taken on the role of Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC) Director and has since won the role of School Improvement Coordinator for the APY lands. This is a principal-level position within the SA Department of Education. She has strong family connections from Nyapari, Fregon and Ernabella, where she currently lives and works. Katrina's mother still provides active mentoring and advice to various education programs and was an instrumental educator in the early days of schooling at Ernabella. An intergenerational whole-of-family commitment to schooling and education is apparent, as Katrina's sister is a committed and gifted career teacher, and Katrina's daughter will graduate from high school in 2015.

Katrina was instrumental in developing the MindMatters program into a series of Pitjantjatjara language resources to be taught by Anangu educators and also developed the Keeping Safe (child protection) curriculum for Anangu Schools. She has made a number of important public presentations on education, and recent publications include the Sidney Myer Rural Lecture (Osborne et al., 2014), *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* (Tjitayi & Osborne, 2014) and a chapter in Ute Eikelkamp's book *Growing Up in Central Australia* (Eikelkamp, 2011).

Katrina focuses her narratives on children and learning. She begins with reflections on learning in the Anangu context and the importance of cultural knowledge transmission that happens within families. She then reflects on some positive observations in early childhood education where children are engaging with education and the wider world through songs, digital technology and exposure to other life experiences.

The next section contains a series of reflections on broader education debates such as the purpose of schooling and issues of poor outcomes and the associated narratives of failure and deficit. It is important to highlight that the stories about education outcomes and the importance of transitions to employment were shared while a former colleague, now the District Director for the Aboriginal Lands in South Australia, was sitting in. This raises the possibility of 'gratuitous concurrence' (Lieberman, 1980 and see Chapter 2), an Indigenous cultural tendency to anticipate and mirror the values and opinions of others as a way of affirming relationships. I am confident that the stories Katrina shared in this interview reflect her own thoughts and views, but it is likely that narratives of data deficit, system failure and so on were shared in reflection of the work Katrina has shared with this former colleague, as these issues have not been raised in any other conversations or interviews.

Finally, Katrina shares a series of observations of children's learning interactions in the classroom. She re-states the importance of confidence, repetition, giving students time and creating a program that is interesting and meets students' learning needs.

## **Learning in our Spirit; little ones learning**

### **Teaching my grandchildren**

For the children to learn, we sometimes take them out bush to learn our ways. We took a grandchild of mine and I'm teaching him and so he was going around gathering bush tomatoes. And having returned, he said, 'Hey? She's doing something with the soil!' [Katrina makes the sound of rubbing hands together] I was cleaning the bush tomatoes with the soil and he asked, 'What's that for?' And I told him, 'You do it like this so that you don't get a sore tummy, and then you burn the discarded skin'. And seeing this, I had an idea from my own learning; I saw things like this when my mother did them.

I did these things without my mother so that my grandson could see me. I'm reflecting on the fact that we don't write things like this in books. It's only there in our spirits to learn; it's inside our spirit. And that child has taken it and is learning in his spirit, and perhaps in the future he'll go out and do this sort of thing, and as the bush tomatoes are being gathered, he'll see it and think back, 'Hey? That's what my grandmother was doing a long time ago, just like that'. When we get the bush tomatoes we need to always be teaching these kinds of things to the younger generation.

And so I began reflecting on this idea that our children really don't go outside and walk around with books. The things we say, our knowledge, our practices – they take them into their spirit and all of these things are kept totally in their spirit. In the old days, my mother, my grandmother and we all used to think, 'Hey, before I lose my grandmother, I need to keep learning her ways, learning our culture. How can we keep learning from her?'

We don't write these things down; it's in us, going right into our spirits and staying there. It's all there; it's there all the time, it's our knowledge. And so now we've started that process of taking the children out bush and teaching them. When a child sees this and learns these sorts of things and internally, when it resides in their spirit, they go out bush and they think, 'Yes, that plant is *kampurarpa* [desert raisin]'. And he will go on knowing this. 'No, after collecting the bush tomato, you clean the fruit with the soil.'

Other Anangu tell me off, saying, 'No, don't do that! He needs to be at home so he doesn't wreck everything!' But I thought about it and said, 'No, I'm taking him so I can teach him. By sitting at home, he won't know all of our ways'. He goes and he learns all sorts of other things too. He's taking hold of these things from a very early age. And so it's stuck there in his spirit, totally sticking, so that our knowledge will be there forever. Maybe they were thinking that [he should stay home] so he wouldn't grab the bush tomatoes and ruin the fruit. But we went out only to get *kampurarpa* and the kids didn't ruin it. But I took him; I had a different approach: 'No, I'm taking him to teach him'.

He can learn and go out bush all the time – go for bush foods, animals, not stay here all the time in the community. But others, maybe having never learned, won't know; they'll always be sitting there at home. And so I was taking him out every weekend. Sometimes we went to gather *kampurarpa* and again the others went out and he wanted to go. 'Hey, can I go to get *kampurarpa*?' And he knew all of the things they do and so he collected a dish and got it all ready; water, he'd been watching when go out with water, and so he collected the water and the dish.

### **Early childhood education**

Through this approach, the children are really learning about our culture, and perhaps the school is seeing this and learning. I was watching a young child. To begin with, there was only preschool. And maybe these [very young] children only learned at home in the Anangu way. And I've seen a huge difference here as children have attended childcare and learned all sorts of different things, really well.

The young child sings all of these songs in English and after closely observing her, I realised, 'These children are learning here from a very young age'. They're not middle-aged or older children, these children are learning from a very young age through childcare. From long ago, they have learned from their mothers taking them out bush, but here they come to childcare and are learning all of these Western things, important things: looking at books, DVDs, singing songs. I saw that it was so important and she will learn from such a young age. We were probably looked after in preschool, but it wasn't enough, but look at what childcare is doing. I saw it [and thought], 'Oh, so that's where it's from! All of this learning is from this young age. Maybe we should be teaching the really young children earlier, through the things we teach at home. Their childcare has started, and there's all of that important learning happening there'.

And so I was reflecting on those observations, as they were talking about getting started in the early years, and I sat down and was seeing a picture. I was seeing that child at home and noticing, 'Hey, this child's doing all of these things: singing songs, doing actions, and she probably doesn't even see a toilet seat [like at childcare]. She's got no idea! And after learning [to use the toilet] at childcare, she can do it'. I saw this and thought, 'This is really amazing, the things this child is doing that she has learned there [at childcare]'. And at home, these children have learned these things already and they're so confident, at school, in the childcare; they're confident. That learning gives them a strong sense of confidence wherever they go.

They will be taking on challenges with confidence in the future, but without the learning, you can't do it. If you can't take on the challenges, [you might say] 'No, if I touch it, I'll do it wrong and the kids will laugh at me; people will laugh and I don't want that to happen'. She was so confident, singing so confidently, and we started to laugh when she sang so beautifully. She sang everything and finished the songs, she was doing the actions, saying the ABCs perfectly, and it caused me to see a picture: maybe because she's learned these things at such a young age, she was able to turn on the toys (iPads) with complete confidence.

And I was thinking about that early years zero to three group and that they will learn so much there. As you know, we probably don't have all of those things in our houses like Piranpa do: books, computers, all of those things. But there is a chance there and the children should attend to be able to watch things on video. Maybe in our houses we only have DVDs, video, but not books, no posters, not all of those other things. But they are really learning those things there [at childcare].

A very long time ago, the mothers, with the grandparents, had high levels of expertise. They grew up and knew about the animals; they had great expertise with plant foods and to raise honest children; they knew how to keep them strong. But these days, many children are too afraid to learn because they don't have any understanding, inside, they don't understand and so they have no confidence and they're unable to learn. I see this constantly, in looking at my family and that young child.

I saw an Anangu colleague's granddaughter; she had an iPad. She was touching it with her hand, touching photographs, dragging them, enlarging, minimising, and I saw this and just about died, 'Hey! Look at this kid here!' And her grandmother said, 'Bring it over here and show Katrina your photos'. When asked, [she] brought it over and touched it, opened it, touched it, widened it and she was showing me the photographs, and I said, 'Hey? I can't see them!' And so she enlarged the photos. This is incredible! I saw this and I was thinking, 'She's such a young child!' And I was thinking, 'We should make this type of technology available for the three-year-olds to operate and to use in different ways, using the touchscreen technology'. And so I've been seeing and reflecting on these things. We must make a start with these things, from home, from early childhood, from preschool and from the older age groups. These are the issues.

### **Children teaching adults**

We've started an early years program and maybe it's quite different for this younger generation. Maybe it will be different in the sense that they can learn properly because they've learned from a very young age. We were probably writing in preschool, but not enough, maybe. We can't understand. And I'm thinking about how they gave that [iPad] to that child and she knows how to use it. From the things she's learned as a young child, having all of those skills, she will be trying things with complete confidence, important things, hidden things, things we have no knowledge of, we can't see them.

There will be all of these new things coming, things like this, all sorts of things. I saw one child when I went to another community. There were Piranpa there, older men. They had an iPod and they just COULDN'T turn it on. They couldn't do it at all! I was watching closely and I thought, 'Hey? These are Piranpa!' And one Anangu person said, 'My daughter knows how to do it. She's just young, four or five years old'. And they took the iPod over to the young child and gave it to them. And apparently that child turned the iPod on and took it and gave it to them. The child turned it on and they were looking at it and I saw this and [just about] died! 'Hey? That's amazing!'

[Laughs] It was completely amazing and I thought, ‘Oh, right! Maybe Piranpa have the same issues that we do’.

### **Stories from Anangu education and the classroom**

#### **The critical missing pieces; Anangu education as a broken chair**

Our challenges in education are like a bed with all of the nuts and bits and pieces to screw together. I was observing this situation when someone bought a chair and when they couldn’t understand it, they just abandoned it. And that chair lay there and lay there and then broke. In the same way, there are these small pieces that we’re missing for our children, poor things! And that chair’s just lying right there and I always see that chair and think, ‘What a shame! The instructions are there but we can’t really do it’. Assembling it, tightening it up again, taking it apart again; we can’t do it. And education is like this; maybe we’re missing tiny little pieces along the way and because of that, we don’t understand how to do it.

#### **Language and technology; learning from Japan**

I was seeing all of these things in Japan. When you open up a computer and look inside the laptop, there are tiny instructions inside in a different language. It’s in Japanese. And maybe if we can learn these sorts of things and understand the language, maybe we’ll be completely confident and we will do great things with expertise. And I always reflect on that image. I’ve been to these different places and think about the experiences. The things I saw there were so amazing, but Anangu are doing things in their own language *after* doing English, but over there, first language is so strong.

I went to Japan and I noticed that the students are at school all day and they go home at 3:30 and around 5:00 they return to school, and they are there until 7:00 and then they go back home. I watched and reflected on what they were doing. They had all of these computers, TVs, doing amazing things with all sorts of technologies, but it was in their own language; they were inputting the data in their own language so that they could see it, know it and do it. Absolutely everything was in their own language, there was no English anywhere. They’re engaging in technology in their own language. And they can see, or maybe if something breaks down, there were the instructions in their language for them to see and they fix it. But, as you know, it’s not like that for us, and because of that it’s hard for the children, for us to read and fix various things, to put various things together.

#### **Attendance and literacy measures; failure and frustration**

We’re thinking a lot about what’s important in education. Attendance is first up; it’s a big problem and we’re worrying about it, and we’re thinking about literacy and numeracy. We sit here and many people are reflecting on this; teachers and government are thinking and reflecting on why results are so low in our children’s learning. And we’re all pushing hard to improve this. But maybe somewhere there we’re losing various things, it’s like there’s a gap there. And I’m thinking, ‘How?’ We’re really concerned and worried.

I'm always thinking about the attendance issues and we've got a lot of reports coming in with our data and results and Anangu are seeing this and getting angry. 'They're talking about us!' They don't open up the reports and look at themselves [thinking], 'We might have a problem at home. It could be because we haven't been sending our children to school'. And so we're getting worried, but they're not really thinking [about it] and send their children haphazardly; only when they see a problem and are worried and then blame others, 'Maybe these teachers can't teach properly'.

They might think, 'This is the school's job and they should be teaching [properly]'. But perhaps [staff] from the school are really trying. Like those of us who live here are really worrying about this and we want to help. We're now in 2013 and maybe we'll still be stuck at that place in the future. Perhaps those of us who have expertise need to really help, to make a concerted effort and push, not giving up. One experienced person might keep going and going, but once they're on their own they can't fix the problems.

### **The need to see employment as a goal of education**

Mothers and fathers really need to help. I see the kids; all of them. They're sitting at home, completely oblivious, no work, young fellas and young girls. All of them. But there's plenty of work for Anangu to take on, for young people to take on, but they don't understand. It's like their thinking, their mind has become stuck. Again, others need doors to open. When doors open, they can then open the doors on their own. But others are afraid and doors are maybe difficult to open. At other doors, maybe Piranpa don't trust Anangu to do the job. We're trying other doors but we talk with Piranpa and we get frightened; there are lots of doors with various issues in each case. We want to go through that door, but it causes stress.

I'm always observing other Anangu. Look at the older men working at the store: some of them work one week, two weeks and they're gone. Maybe there's something wrong with the manager. One employee disappeared straight away after finishing up. So they looked for another one and gave him a go, but again, they left. And I saw at the store again, this time a girl was working and then left. And then another girl, and she left. And after seeing this, I had an idea that maybe there's something the matter. Maybe the management isn't trusting Anangu, maybe they're not working together, maybe they're not training the staff, maybe they're saying various things that put Anangu off working there. But because of these things, Anangu work for a bit and leave. And so maybe there are these types of problems for Anangu, for young people to work. And I'm always keeping an eye on the mothers. Perhaps mothers don't really push their children to get out and get a job; they remain completely unaware of the issues. They're sitting at home paying no attention. The kids are playing and the mothers see us and say, 'The bosses have come, run to school!' But I say, 'No. I'm not the boss of the kids, YOU ARE! You need to help; we're coming to you, not to scare the kids. You need to gently grab the kids and take them home and to school'.

I saw that with kids here who ran away and I couldn't get them to listen. I said, 'Go! Go to school, you lot!' And they defiantly just kept coming, so one woman said, 'Alright, I'm calling for the

police'. The policeman was listening to all of the names, [and the parents said] 'No, they're not here anymore, they've just run off to school, scared'. They didn't come back. And I was reflecting on that; it's funny, they wouldn't listen to us, and the policeman says their names and they race off to school afraid.

And the mothers of children like these ones haven't taught their children properly, and I'm thinking that some of these children are really unfortunate. They don't understand English and now they're young men and women; there's a whole range of things they don't understand. They haven't progressed with their education. In our generation, we didn't know about year 12 and didn't do any of that, and so we kept on trying over and over for ourselves until we opened doors and we learned. We could see a pathway. They're only thinking about school, but what's on the other side of school? Anangu need to see it, the children need to see it, but at the moment, the whole lot of them are sitting down without work, poor things! Others, school age children are getting married and living with their partners, but not working; they're thinking they're in charge of their parents. These are the difficult things in the [APY] Lands.

### **The scourge of 'sit down' money**

Yesterday my mother was asked, 'What can you see in the future?' And this is what she said: 'No, I can't see the future, only when that pathway emerges will I see it. When Anangu are working, when the kids get jobs and are doing all sorts of work. Transitioning from school to work. Maybe I'll see this, their future opening up'. But we, along with whitefellas, are doing a huge amount of teaching, but when our children leave [school] they can't go on and take the next step. Perhaps there are other sources of money coming, sit-down money, and they give it out but this money holds Anangu back; they're sitting down without work. The kids and many others are doing those programs like Newstart. I was thinking yesterday that those programs only help whitefellas.

He was asking, 'What's the name of your payment?' And they were saying, 'Newstart'. Others were saying, 'Centrelink'. All of the young people are getting it. And it gave me a shock when I heard it. I thought, 'Why are there so many of them on [Centrelink]?' Maybe Anangu are being held back from working by those payments; they get that money and sit at home. We want our children to get good things, but maybe they can't see it for themselves. Some others are well educated and are looking for work and they really want to get it.

### **Collaborative action and employment opportunities**

In the early days, they were all working. From a basic primary school education they all got work, the early generations of the Ernabella community. We're in the next generation and we got work; the current generation got a bit of work, but the latest generation is simply missing from the workforce. And they're thinking that for Anangu, you only need to worry about school, just school, that's it. But Piranpa see a full range of pathways, long-term alternatives and all sorts of things.

[Katrina draws paths branching out from a single path.]



But the options for our children are school and to take up opportunities after school, or maybe there's nothing there, that's what I'm thinking. Their future is there to see, it's open, in their spirit to see and comprehend, to get good work. But as my mum said, 'I will be able to see a future when Anangu are working on the lands, then I will see a future, there's perhaps both possibilities for Anangu, but at the moment, I can't see it'.

Maybe they only see one option, and I go to other places and I see Anangu working. But we're pushing really hard, we're working hard. We go and talk with other communities and they see the NAPLAN results and think about it and this is a really important story. But as a former District Director [who is sitting next to Katrina] was saying yesterday, maybe once we've come together, come together, come together [as Katrina is explaining this section, she is mapping out a story – somewhat like *milpatjunanyi*: storytelling by mark-making in the sand – on the table with her hands, showing the interconnectedness], all the organisations coming together, Health and the others have come together; we can see improvements. We can establish all of us working properly together and we will jointly develop a plan, and having developed a unified approach, we can establish work programs through TAFE and this will open doors for Anangu.

But we're working in isolation and we can't work it out. Maybe we need to be together for something like induction and continue to learn 'Anangu way', the way Anangu view the world. I teach student teachers in Melbourne and they come prepared. But perhaps they've all got different approaches; Nganampa Health do an induction, maybe Women's Council do their own. But perhaps we can come together and look at education and hold an induction to learn about Anangu way, to learn about how Anangu think and understand the world, how we are.

Together we could choose employment focus priorities; maybe Health could say, 'There's no employees here; there's an opening for a young person to get a job in that position'. And having looked at this together and identified where the young people are, we could have an interagency body like WP [Wiru Palyantjaku] coming and sitting together, and agencies could report to this type of body. 'There's work available here, work available here, and here ...' This type of process can encourage thinking where Anangu can see, 'Right, so we need to open work opportunities and perhaps put things in place, like sending students to Wiltja or to complete year 12 and yes, there's work available, it's open for young people'.

There's apparently work available here in Ernabella. At Umuwa, there's work with housing, salary, plenty of good jobs. But Anangu come and they go around looking but can't seem to find things for the children and eventually they just forget about it. But I'm thinking we need to put things in place well in advance; send the children to boarding school, or from the local school we can select and place them into employment. There are the jobs that are apparently available and families should send the children to get their year 12. Whitefellas look at these types of opportunities and think 'Hey? There are great jobs there!' And we need to look at university enrolment. But in all of our schools, it's not an option, the opportunities aren't there.

### **Committed principals supporting Anangu teachers**

There was a principal at Fregon, and his wife, early in my career. They both worked together with me and he was the principal. He worked with me. He worked so well and it was when I had just begun my career and he sat down and was helping the children and talked with me. We were planning together, he was supporting; he was always working together. He would come in every day and I was an Anangu teacher and I was thinking, 'I have limited English, and so how can I teach these children in my classroom?' I talked to him openly about this concern; this was how I spoke to him. And he said, 'Ok, I'll have someone to work with you for English literacy when it's timetabled for literacy'. And they'd come and teach.

And I saw those children, they spoke English so well and spoke with adults with no problems, no shame, because of the speaking they'd done from a young age, and now they speak without inhibition. And I think, at that time, I did some great work and we were seeing children really learning strongly.

### **Lessons from the classroom**

#### **Confidence as a precursor to success**

Only once young people are confident can they learn, only after having an inner confidence, but others have an inner fear about trying things like seeing difficult maths, and for those children – they can't learn for themselves with that fear. Children come and read to me but then they get shy and don't do it. I say, 'Yes, ok, have a look after, not in front of others'. They get embarrassed if they think others will see and hear them trying to read and the teacher reads it afterwards.

And afterwards I see their work and say, 'Oh, you've done some good work, that's great'. I've observed that it's the cultural way for us, to be shy [*kuntaringkupai* – this term can also be interpreted as 'respectful']. And I've been thinking that this is the one area where there needs to be a breakthrough, to become confident and do things with confidence. The children have been presenting here at Ernabella at assemblies confidently. They were getting up speaking individually in turns, 'Ok, now the junior primaries will speak'. And perhaps this is the kind of confidence we should be teaching to strengthen the children, for children to be confident to try things.

I was observing a family member at a boarding school in Adelaide where the students were in a music lesson and had to sing on their own and she was too shy. But I said, 'Hey! You need to be brave and stand up there by yourself and you'll finish the task; otherwise if you get shy, you can't do it'. And I was asking [the teacher], 'How can she do this singing this song?' And the teacher said, 'Ok, maybe she can sing in Pitjantjatjara. We can combine the music (songs) and the teachers could help with the arrangement and it's fine for her to sing in Pitjantjatjara and then she will finish her task. But it's fine to put in an English song'. And I said, 'If you want to do that, it's a different way'. And apparently she did it herself and said, 'Mum, no! I'm obviously fine, I'll give it a try'. She'd found the confidence.

Perhaps it's just a confidence thing that's the issue with Anangu children. We're sending children to school and they're fearful and run away from school. When there are different things on, like maths and literacy, they just up and leave. Maybe it's boring and it's the same all the time. Children are making their own decisions in this regard, but we've got to change and try different things.

We need to try things like activities and interesting and relevant things: play-based learning, group work. These are the kinds of things that will strengthen our children. Maybe we've run a program the same way for a whole year. Perhaps we need to have plans in place for a term and evaluate them; sit down and listen to what AEWs [Anangu Education Workers] are saying about the students who are unable to engage with this learning. Maybe have a go and try a different approach. And ask the children; maybe there are other students who aren't able to engage and can't grow. But there are probably some students who [can pick it up] straight away, and for these students we're thinking that they need to be confident. We need to strengthen them so that young children can grow in confidence. And perhaps there are highly intelligent children; they have something to say but get shy within themselves and don't speak up, [saying] 'No, no, leave it, we're not saying anything; I don't want to speak'. Perhaps highly intelligent children still retain a deep sense of shyness and they still can't really learn. They only speak when they're hidden. But it's the Anangu way and they are afraid in their thinking. There may be some really intelligent children, older kids who just talk straight out and make you laugh; you laugh and then they think, 'I won't do that anymore'.

And I've been thinking about how to build confidence in children; a different program approach will change this. We all have our own way about us. There are those children who are lacking in confidence; maybe they've grown up over the years and there's that one there with their own way of going about things. [Katrina is mapping out the two children and paths on the table as she speaks.] And these two are travelling together. And maybe this is a very confident child's approach, but by being confident together, spending time together, playing together, doing things together, they can all progress together at the same pace.

### **Keeping the program; losing the children**

A while back, I was in a school for four days and made some observations. There were a range of things I observed. Some children didn't know how to write their name. They had such small hands but they couldn't colour well at all [Katrina models heavy scribbling on the desk]. When I saw this, I felt that the children weren't strong inside. After trying and not being able to write, they just gave up. But the child's teacher was sticking closely to all of the things to be covered in the program. They couldn't see what was happening for the student, what the child was feeling and seeing. They didn't notice the child's hand and left the child to their own devices.

But they were chasing the program, thinking, 'Right, I'll finish this activity, then I'll do this one, then this one'. But that child was absolutely struggling the whole way, and I was observing as it

unfolded, thinking, ‘What’s going on with this child? Poor thing!’ And so I sat next to the child. And then I saw another just like them, and another. And I was thinking, ‘We need to be paying attention to what’s happening with children in this situation, and we need to reflect on the things we’ve observed and make changes, not going along the whole way with eyes closed finishing a program’. This is what I was seeing clearly. The child couldn’t write, and many others were unable to write.

‘Right! Maths, we need to do maths. Ok! Have a look at your literacy things now!’ And that child didn’t do any work. They didn’t finish any work, didn’t finish anything, didn’t finish, didn’t finish. I saw this and was thinking, ‘Hey, poor thing! They weren’t able to learn anything properly; they probably need a longer time to learn, a bit longer, not applying short timeframes’. Kids are able to learn effectively with adequate time to do it, but with such short time intervals, maybe ten minutes here, five minutes there, it seems they couldn’t finish. They’d write a tiny bit and ‘Right, that’s finished’. The child got a bit distressed and I was observing this firsthand. If I see a child struggling I go and see what’s going on with the child. I was seeing this and thinking, ‘How can we significantly change this situation?’ The children have plenty of time allocated for play and it’s easy for them to do fitness. They can go and do fitness, or perhaps we’ll do art without any issues; the kids are already artists. But with writing, they think and try but that’s so difficult for them. And because of that, they seem unable to grasp it.

### **Building children up**

When I observed the young students learning, their time ran out, poor things! They did the tiniest amount of writing and I was watching the child, and they couldn’t work out what to do, stuck there. They couldn’t write. But the time went on and on, ‘Right, time’s up!’ And that was the end. And I was thinking [we] must keep our eyes on that child and build them up to write and finish [their work]. To try, give them free time to sit and try it out. Put their name [on the paper] and they can look at it and write.

But one white [teacher] came and was helping with the names and said, ‘Apparently they can’t write their name’. But I was thinking that AEWs should be helping the children to write properly, maybe adopting a different approach. Maybe learn through painting; try a range of approaches. Painting, going outside and using their hands to get them strong. And also, maybe going out bush and arriving at a camping spot, maybe try some painting, tell stories, using their hands to make impressions in the sand and they’ll become strong through that and so too will their handwriting.

We give them pencils, proper ones to learn with, but they still can’t grasp it at all. But with reading and writing, it needs more time, a fairly long time. But fitness is fine. They went out for fitness and *just kept on* playing outside and I was there. I came outside and was watching the children play together from a distance, and they played and played right through to recess. And so they had a long time, but only a short time for that [other] learning.

Yes, that teacher just couldn't do it, poor thing! Couldn't do it. I was giving the teacher lots of good ideas, but they could only understand a fairly limited amount [of what I was saying]. And maybe this is the type of situation where we need to inform them about the problems for some of the children. Perhaps it's good that they talk regularly with the principal, but maybe we need to also meet with them and think about how we can improve classroom teaching practices. It's not about winning, getting to the top [of the data/results, saying], 'Yes, here we've got high literacy scores'. That's not the kind of thing *we* want to see. We look at the individual child's learning in their spirit. Maybe in our own land, we have a kind of different way of being; our spirit is different.

Long ago, they didn't write, they were only mark-making in the dirt, telling stories in the sand. Today we have to write as well. And I was watching this child writing on the ground; they'd got a colouring book and were doing the whole lot, completely focused on the colouring. I saw this at home and I thought, 'This is so great!' And they'd write and finish [the activity], young children too. And I thought, 'The children should take fun things like this home'. They were working on those dot [to dot] pictures and the children were trying and looking after them. But they don't have these things at home and maybe they should. A small box for writing. And I was watching the children doing it for so long and I was thinking, 'They aren't getting tired at all'.

I keep pencils at my house, I have a small bag. The kids come to my house and they write if they want to and colour in pictures. I keep them and give them to the children. They're so focused and go for so long. They have a cup of tea and come back again, writing again. Another takes over maybe for around twenty minutes; they just keep going.

And they take them and stick them up at home by themselves and I thought, 'Maybe these children are getting confident, at home as well, after writing on their own and taking it home to stick up and display'. And I was thinking it would be great for the teachers to send colouring books for those children who can't write; perhaps they can do those dot [to dot] pictures on their own as well as homework. Not just academic content, but they need to send colouring activities too.

### **The need for Anangu to be actively involved in classrooms**

I have a concern when there's no AEW with young children. I've been thinking there really needs to be two AEWs. There are lots of children but no AEW and the children are on their own with the teacher. That's why the teacher was kind of rushing through the lesson with the next activity, next activity, next activity. But I was thinking we need to be watching all of the classes and when young children are starting school, there needs to be two AEWs appointed so that they can work collaboratively across the spaces.

The teacher is teaching the lesson and I'm supporting them, but another [AEW] needs to support the slower learners, to show them what to do. But when there's one AEW, this one's going off-task or away from the class, that one's going. Or if one class is without an AEW, we have a problem there, a big problem; they just can't learn. A while ago, we went and spent around five days in one class to do some ongoing observations with young children. And it was there that we saw and

realised, ‘Right, in this situation, the children really can’t learn. This is causing the children to become fearful and leave the classroom because of the frustration of not being able to write’.

There wasn’t time for them to write, for them to write slowly and carefully, to write and complete the task and then put the things away. In that situation, the kids couldn’t really get it. And it made us realise that we should be constantly monitoring the students; there needs to be AEWs appointed to provide support. Competent and experienced AEWs can help the children. Not to sit back and watch from a long way off. I said, ‘Listen, when you start, you need to put the AEW’s chair up the front with you, don’t put it at the back. That’s where the children can see them, not when they’re sitting at the back, with their table at the back’.

And I said this to AEWs a while ago, ‘Put your table out the front together with the teacher. If you sit up the back, the children won’t be able to see you. You’re there too, and by putting your table out the front, they’ll see you all the time because they’re facing towards the front. They’re obviously facing the whiteboard or blackboard and the teacher’s things are at the front, but Anangu have their table at the back. And so how will they be able to write?’ And I said, ‘If you want the children to see you and the teachers to see you, you need to be out the front, so put your table there, not at the back’.

And you’ll see everything [from] there, you’ll be able to see kids who are having difficulty like that, reading their eyes, face, their spirit and their wellbeing. You can’t observe their learning from the back of the room’, I said. ‘Sit at the front and you’ll continue to see those children from there.’ This is what I was saying a while ago to the AEWs.

### **Learning to hear: Piranpa educators and improving practice**

Piranpa teachers need to come and work slowly and carefully, to be reflective. Start the work, and then take a moment to see what’s happening, ‘Oh, right, this one is struggling to do it, I might work with them’. Maybe all of the children are finding it difficult to do things like literacy, and maybe keep an eye on this. Maybe this needs some careful and ongoing observation, going through this type of process first, not just coming and sticking to the program.

It might be worthwhile for the new teachers to sit down and observe and learn from more experienced teachers. Not simply arriving here and making firm decisions about the way things are: ‘Right, so Anangu are like this, this and this’. It’s good to look at what’s there, at what previous teachers are doing and writing in their plans.

From there, it’s a good idea to look at assessing student progress and review the plans carefully and reflect on them, discussing them with AEWs. Like, what are the reasons that students aren’t learning? And then they can grow and improve. But perhaps some students are ahead; they may be ready to leave that class, and maybe students can be streamed into groups that better match their ability.

But for that struggling child, the same problem is there, and even after they've joined a new class, the problem is still there. We need to look at this for beginning teachers and give strong support. Look at the timetable. Review and discuss how they will go about their teaching, and the AEW can inform them about a range of things and maybe look at student records to inform their understanding, like, 'This one is high achieving, this one is having learning difficulties and this student leaves the class and runs away'.

Maybe some teachers are working off old programs from teachers who have already left and maybe these need to be reworked and changes made. We need to be working this way. Don't go down the same path. Try some new things and maybe the children will see, 'Hey? This teacher is doing some great things that are different'. In this case, children will come back to school when they see good things happening there.

We're redoing programs and adding more culturally appropriate things to them. We've got to change a range of things and put new things in and give them a try. Through this process, we're focusing on how students can approach their learning in a different way. I constantly see reports about all of the failures of the child and they take them around and just give them out willy-nilly. I've been thinking that reports need to come back and teachers need to see the mothers and talk with them. Family members who care about the children and send them to school – the teachers need to sit down with them and support the child by talking together with the family.

Teachers are giving this feedback and information to some mothers who have no interest in or idea of what's happening. For example, some grandparents care for their grandchildren, but some teachers are talking with the mother who really has no idea about the child's education; they don't even think about the child. They just say yes. 'Yes, good, yes, that's fine', not really taking in the information. It's best the teacher comes to the grandmother. They're looking after the child; give *them* the information and they'll understand, 'Yeah, there are some real issues here'.

There are lots of children whose parents are disinterested in the community. I'm thinking we need to be engaging these parents and educating them too. I'm seeing parents getting really involved in early years programs and I'm thinking we could engage the mothers, invite them, cook kangaroo tails, make damper and invite the AEWs and the mothers. Then we can take them out on a picnic also and maybe this will help them learn to relax and play and speak confidently. We're probably always in the classroom and rarely get out to go for a picnic.

But in the old days, when Nancy (Sheppard) was living here, they'd all go out and were learning all sort of things. And I'm thinking it would be good for a teacher and maybe the Anangu Coordinator to go around to classrooms for around an hour or so and observe that the students are better informed; reflect on their observations and again choose a teacher to go into another classroom to observe with an AEW. We were talking the other day about the idea of having two Anangu Coordinators: one to go out and monitor the outside areas and one inside the classrooms. And maybe this will show the teachers the importance of closely paying attention, to see and understand

the children and to learn, and from there the AEW can report to the governing council when they have their meetings and also go out and give feedback to the mothers.

### **Drawing in children who are afraid**

A while ago, I was running a children's church program and there were some very young, shy children sitting at the back, and the confident children were sitting up the front and talking and saying all sorts of things. And so I ran an activity, a game where you touch your head. I said, 'Touch your head, touch your friend's ear'. And they started to laugh, to be happy.

'Tickle your friend's back!' And they were tickling and they were laughing and those shy kids were watching with huge smiles. They joined in and coming close, they were really smiling and laughing. They joined in and they drew close and they sat down.

And in that situation, those kids had distanced themselves and I put an activity on and they joined in and were growing in confidence. They were sitting without smiling, sitting away sulking and they were thinking to themselves, 'I've got no idea about all of this'. They sat down and I put on a game at the children's church program that they hold every Thursday. I put on some fun games, like touching toes, 'Touch your friend's feet; touch your friend's back'. Some of those children are so funny and those quiet children started to smile, make friends and were really laughing. And I was thinking, 'Hey? These kids are so funny, you know they came and sat right away from the others and from there they've played a game and also joined in'. I was regularly doing this and those kids have joined in and made friends and now they keep on talking!

I take fun things, activities and teach them and they love it. And I show kids one on one and say, 'Make this'. The other day the young children were making a cross individually – it was a folding activity I'd prepared – and there was one child I spent a long time showing how to do it and they did it in front of the others. And after that, all of the children were trying the activity. There were many others who couldn't do it, but that child went around and was helping them from what they knew and then another one learned, and another one learned. Children get really excited when they see fun activities thinking, 'Hey, this is really different, they've brought some fun things. All of the things are here'.

I was watching one child come to church all the time. Coming again, coming again, they got their confidence and learned. Another child came and sat up the back all shy [and embarrassed]. That child doesn't come to school, they get shy, and the school is foreign to them. But that child said a memory verse all by themselves. And an aunty said, 'Hey! That's the first time that child's ever spoken [in front of others]'. And at the church also, we're doing things to build confidence in the children. A very young child reads the Bible [and I was thinking], 'These kids can do this. Once they're confident, they are doing it, they're strong; only once they have no fear'.



## Chapter summary

Throughout these narratives, Katrina describes a deep commitment to building the confidence of young people to succeed in education and the wider community. She does this through describing the foundational importance of a child's family, a strong sense of identity, affirmation of a child's first language and building confidence to engage in more unfamiliar contexts, such as a classroom with a Piraṅpa teacher. These stories relate to familial learning, broader education issues and classroom observations.

These stories highlight the difficulties for Piraṅpa educators in grasping the broader ontological, epistemological and cultural contexts that position and shape students in Anangu schools. They also reinforce the importance of family involvement and the work of Anangu educators in building a strong and successful Anangu education. These accounts provide unique insights for educators through a deep level of reflection specific to schooling and classrooms, where deeper Anangu perspectives are difficult to hear, or are simply not invited.

## **Chapter 8: Life and learning in Irrunytju; the stories of Natalie O’Toole and Christopher Reid**

### **Background and overview**

Natalie O’Toole is a young Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara woman who finished her year 12 South Australian Certificate of Education in 2005 at Ernabella and moved west to the Western Australian community of Irrunytju (Wingellina). Here she is working as an Anangu educator and is committed to pursuing a career as a qualified teacher. She is a young mother in her late twenties and is raising her two young sons. Natalie works in the junior primary section at Irrunytju School.

Christopher Reid, Natalie’s husband, joins the conversation in the final interview. He is the son of a Piranpa man and an Anangu woman and carries significant responsibilities in the community, particularly for such a young man. He has experienced schooling both in the community and also in larger centres such as Alice Springs and Katherine.

Both Natalie and Chris have experienced schooling and living in other towns and cities as well as being deeply connected in the cultural and community context. Natalie’s interviews were predominantly in Pitjantjatjara, whereas Chris spoke predominantly in English.

This chapter focuses on the life experiences and stories of Natalie O’Toole and Chris Reid, a young married couple raising two young boys at Irrunytju (Wingellina) in Western Australia. Both Natalie and Chris share in-depth accounts of their experiences in school and transition to work. This is followed by reflection on what is important for their children so they can survive and succeed as young people growing up in Irrunytju. Significant consideration is given to the challenge of striking a balance between Anangu and Western knowledges, the need to know and take notice of Anangu histories and stories and the importance of planning and being prepared for the future in and out of the remote community context.

They conclude with reflections and discussion more specifically focused on schooling at Irrunytju, where teachers and students alike attempt to come to terms with the complex interface of Western education and values and Anangu lives.

### **Growing up learning – Natalie O’Toole**

#### **The early years**

My name is Natalie O’Toole. My father was a Yankunytjatjara man and my mother is Pitjantjatjara. I’m the fourth child in my family and I was born in Alice Springs. I grew up with both sides of my family: my father’s family and my mother’s. Most of the time I grew up with my mother’s side at Ernabella.

I moved to Irrunytju in 2005 and I’m still living there now. Now I’ve got two kids and I’m working at the school. My husband is working. I’m constantly reflecting on my life because older sisters, from my point of view, I think should be continually teaching the younger ones. But my father sent me to Adelaide at seven years of age and my teacher’s name was Jenny Wendlebourne. I went as a

young child for one semester. I went and I had no understanding of English at all; I went and learned English there, step by step.

I attended Salisbury Primary School in Adelaide and lived with Jenny. She was a teacher there, so I was in her class. She was here recently and showed me photos and I was the big one, with all of the small children. They put me with the younger children to learn with them, so I was like two years older than my friends. My father sent me because he knew that there was another family member on the way but he also knew he wasn't going to be here long. So I would think about that and do things wholeheartedly. I'm not really close to my mother. I'm not close to her. And, sending me away, it was my father's 'thing'. He had to risk it, and so he sent me as a young child, for better outcomes later in the future for me.

And I was seeing the city, and going to school there I thought, 'Maybe I should become a teacher?' That's the dream I've held since then. I think about this a lot and I was seeing my older sister, my cousin, and she became my role model, Katrina Tjitayi, and she would always talk to me because they knew [some of the things I'd experienced as a child].

They would keep an eye on me. Other members of my family kept an eye on me and would say, 'Right, Natalie, you have a great responsibility', because my father sent me to Adelaide for school for a reason, knowing that he was getting sick. He wasn't going to be there to grow up me and Josiah, my younger brother. That's why there's such a great responsibility on me. So that's why he sent me and I feel proud of myself, the idea he had looking to the future which has happened in reality: I've got the responsibility for my younger brother and actually I'm still looking after my big brother.

He's got slight brain damage and I've set a goal for myself so I can finally reach the goal that I've dreamt of all my life ever since I was young. And I'm getting there slowly. And I had ups and downs in my teenage years but I've been thinking we've only got one chance at life, one shot for us; there's not going to be another me when I'm gone. That's why I think, 'I've just got to really live it. Make the best out of things'. I want to be out there, public, no matter where. And I've strengthened myself by focusing on good things and [built] my confidence. Focusing on the good things, I grew up oblivious to shame in school, and at my home, when things are hard for me, I apply myself through my work. I just focus on my work and if I get stuck, maybe various things have happened, like with my family or some people maybe try to put me down, I just think back to my childhood. I had a really good childhood. I had a good education. And when I think about that, I encourage myself with confidence and strengthen my own spirit.

But still, I was learning English in school; I speak clear English with whitefellas. Like there's two types of English with Anangu. There's speaking 'properly' with whitefellas and there's this other English people speak like with family. This is English that all Anangu understand.

And it's the same in language too. Like, it's all about respecting our elders. And also with elders, I speak to senior Anangu in 'proper' Pitjantjatjara. And with people my age, we speak Pitjantjatjara and laugh. We speak Pitjantjatjara clearly for all to hear. But old women and men also tell stories to the senior women in that quiet way, sitting and listening. I learned all of this from them, coming to my own understanding.

### **Following in my father's footsteps**

Every day I think about my father and the influence he is on me. When I have my quiet time I think, 'Is this where I'm at?' And I'm happy and I see my father and I think back on the kind of things he did for me. He didn't do just any old thing because he knew more about life. He had gained life experiences because of his asthma, because when they were young, they grew up in a time of rations, the Maralinga bomb, all of those things.

I can tell, when I think back, that deep down he would think to himself ... I can just imagine if my father was alive today, he would have been saying [to do] the same thing, what I'm actually doing right now. So I think this way: 'He's still in me, he's bonded to me'. Because it's his vision that's remained with me, the things he could see in the future. And he was not a small influence; he made an enormous impact, and it's from reflecting on this that I get mentally and physically stronger.

### **Hanging in there with school**

In the later high school years, I'd watch Kanytjupai [thinking], 'Wow, she's twenty-something and she really wanted to graduate'. She was my other inspiration; I'd watch her and think, 'Well I'm just not gonna give up, I'm just going to be like Kanytjupai'. Because she was older, she was the oldest out of us and she was still going to school and we were one school year apart. She was doing year 12 and I was doing year 11.

And my school mates who are the same age as me from when I went to Woodville, to Wiltja, they had already graduated in 2002, and my two nieces would tease me, not in a malicious way but it was always, 'Ah! You still goin' to school!' But even though it was a way of putting me down, it didn't have any effect on me. I just determined, 'No, I'm just gonna do what's best for me'. It's fine, anybody can still get an education, and it's even like that with whitefellas. I found out, my friend Nara Wilson from Adelaide told me, 'Oh, my mother, she's a great grandmother now and she's just got her uni degree!'

She told me that and I was thinking, 'Hey, that's absolutely what I've been thinking about'. Some of my friends were teasing me, not trying to put me down, but I was thinking a different way about it, thinking, 'That sort of talk builds shame, great shame. It really does'. I dropped out when I was in year 10. And I wagged school. I thought because we girls [were] doing bad things, like it's a big issue in the community now with marijuana. Yeah, I got into that but then, when I was in that group with the marijuana takers, I'd see that I'd get stoned and it seemed to have no effect on the others, but I would freak right out. And then I straightened out and I was thinking, 'That sort of thinking is a real problem, my mind is shrinking [from the marijuana]'. And it's probably not a

good thing for me and my life to be on that bad road. I couldn't really get into it and I got to thinking, 'No, it's not working out for me, I just can't help it. I'm not doing the right thing, the good thing, and I've got a little brother growing up and he's going to be my responsibility'.

In our family, we fell on very hard times with other people criticising; they'd talk [about our family]. And after hearing this, I'd think to myself, 'My mother ... they're talking about my mother'. And those kind of stories, they're the kind of things that bring you down. And Ernabella is a big community and for me, I always wanted to get out of that place. I'd think, 'When I finish this school, I'm leaving. I'm just going to explore more and get out of the whole situation'. My family group was stuck. It's a good way to live, as a family group, but what I've realised is that with Anangu in my family – I'm describing my own family situation here – when this family lived together, they weren't helping each other. One has to do all the work, everything.

Around the house, with the food, and you think, 'Hey, forget it! I'm doing this all on my own!' That's how it is. And so I was thinking, 'When I finish school, I'm leaving. I don't know where I'll end up, as long as I make a future planned from the start, it's good'. And that's why I left. I only left once I finished school. I just needed to get out. And I left my younger brother behind for a time because I knew that once I'd settled down I could bring him across. But it didn't happen 'just like that'.

I was so slow and took a long time and I went through ups and downs. Good things happened, bad things, this and that. But within myself, I was able to be really strong through my past. It was really as a result of the education experiences that [my father] placed me in ... it's still in me. And others were trying to hurt me ... attacking [me] and still they're [trying to] hurt me.

### **Returning from Adelaide**

I came back into an Anangu school and I was realising and I saw, 'Poor thing! My little brother [and] my little uncle'. I was seeing that they were so far behind where I was at. But I didn't brag at all, I started to help them when I was still very young. This is the way I was in class, 'No, like this, here. Yes, that's the way!' And from that, my skills and confidence built up, not when I was a teenager or eighteen years old. I was continually helping other children from when I was eight and a half or nine years old in school.

But for the young children nowadays, I spun out when I saw young children who have been in school in the APY lands, 'Hey, such young kids are reading Pitjantjatjara!' In our day, we didn't write in Pitjantjatjara. But my father taught me at home; he taught me with the Pitjantjatjara Bible. The basic sounds: tja, tju, tji. They're more recent ways [to learn our language]. That's the new way of learning Pitjantjatjara; it's for Anangu and Piranpa. But I had to learn the hard way because I knew [how to speak Pitjantjatjara], that's my language. But to read this: 'How does that work and what is this?' I learned Pitjantjatjara at school. And I knew English by that time. After returning from school in Adelaide, my father was teaching me Pitjantjatjara at home.

And because of that, I see these kids [and what they're achieving] today and it gives me such joy. It's so easy for kids these days because of the technology and all those things. I read on Facebook all of my younger brothers and sisters' things, children who I haven't seen since I left them behind as babies. When I finished school I was reading their [Facebook], 'Hey, this is English! They can text in such excellent English', and I'd think, 'Hey? They speak such good English on Facebook, but I just don't see them when they talk'. They get too shy. That's what I see and think about.

### **Things get difficult**

My cousin Katrina Tjitayi was encouraging me with my schooling. I was going along with the wrong crowd, and she would get worried because she knew my father. And I think it was because of that that she worried about me and was supporting me. And she encouraged me by sharing good stories, not forcing me. She was giving me advice about my future. And I would listen to her. She was a role model and I trusted her. She grew me up. And I reflect on how white families talk to their children from a very early age. They set firm goals from childhood. They set goals and they just aim for that, isn't that right? Whitefellas ...

And I was thinking that way but I fell on hard times. There were some difficult issues in my family while I was in high school. I attended high school for four years at Wiltja. 1997, '98, '99 and I dropped out in 2000 and didn't attend school after that. I dropped out when I was in year 10. But because I was young and doing all the stupid things, not everything, but like smoking, but I was trying some risky things out and Adelaide was just too easy to get things like that. In high school back then, I'd smoke ganja and then be spaced out and I'd be sitting there at night completely out of it. And I'd think to myself, 'No, I think I'll go back to my community so I can be with my family and look after my brother and live without ganja. At least there's a school there'. And back then, they used Open Access College. So Adelaide was a good opportunity for me but then I decided not to go back because my friends were all smoking ganja. That was at Wiltja. I didn't want to be part of that. Because I would remember how my sister would remind me of the ideals that my father had for me. And I tried to stick to that, that's why I had different ideas in mind. I'll leave this school but still go to my community school and do distance education from home through Open Access College. And I was thinking, 'No, this is great doing this at home, no worries'.

I knew what I was doing. This was a good idea to maybe try at home where I can be far away, far away from a city high school. I thought, 'I can finish my school through Open Access College'. I was distracted because I was in a boarding school with others. And I had other worries that really ruined it for me. My father died in 1993 and my family didn't help me stay in that school. There was no support for me, but still there was so much pressure even though I was a long way away [from home].

I was thinking about my mother and there was no support from her. Josiah was just young; he was at home and this was a pressure too. For me, school was a good experience. I enjoyed it, but I had

pressures; when there was a bit of pressure, I'd just think, 'Well fine, I'll just smoke ganja to forget about everything'. And when I attended Wiltja, I was smoking ganja but it was affecting me; it just made my problems worse. I got to thinking, 'If I'm going to be going to school in Adelaide, of course I'm going to be doing all these bad things'. There's ganja everywhere in that place. And I was thinking, 'Ok, fine, I'll go back home so I don't have to go to school continually stoned and missing school. I can have my family there, I can look after my brother, and I don't have to worry about my mother. I'll still go to school there and finish it'. That's what I was thinking.

I went back in 2004 to try Wiltja out again but it didn't work out. Inside myself, I really didn't want to go; I was going to give it a try but it was still the same. My family brought alcohol and other things to me.

### **The encouragement of others**

Alison Coventry, the teacher at Ernabella – she's changed her name to 'Van Hoof' – encouraged me to keep going with school. She said, 'Natalie, I can feel it in my bones, you'll finish school if you go to Woodville'. That's what she told me. And I thought, 'Yes, ok. Well I want to hurry up and finish because all the others my age have finished'. But I was watching Kanytjupai and she was also encouraging me. And I'd watch and think, 'Wow! Kanytjupai's still going to school every day even though she's three years older than me'. She was in year 12 and I was year 11. Because of that, I thought I'd have another go in Adelaide. I thought, 'If I have issues, I can just come back'.

Yes, there were two houseparents who'd encourage me, and Bob Lines. He would encourage me with good stories. 'If you finish school, you can do anything, once you finish school here'. And I was thinking, 'Yeah, that's right'. Well my older siblings didn't go to boarding school, so I'll step up because I've got my younger brother growing up. I wasn't doing it just for me but I was doing it for him to look at me as well. But some issues came up. Even though I had great plans for my education, my younger brother was living with relations and they weren't encouraging him; I was the only one continually talking to him and encouraging him. I wanted him to follow my example, but he was doing it all on his own and it was really hard for me. I really enjoyed school and I was really wanting to strengthen my skills and knowledge.

It was a hard feeling for me because I was balancing things; I was trying to balance family responsibilities with my own things. That's how it was for me. There was support and encouragement but my family was making it hard and putting more pressure on me.

I didn't want to go back to Wiltja. I wanted to live at home, which I did. After when I got back from Adelaide, I left it. In 2004 I thought, 'This is hopeless, it's just how it was before'. The school was good but the boarding accommodation and family issues with relations living in Adelaide weren't working out, and I thought, 'Nup, this is destroying me. Well fine, I'll live at home so I don't have all these problems and pressures on me when I'm trying to finish my school'. School was good but I just didn't want to be there.

## **Finishing school**

We were poor, Kanytjupai, Kukika and I. We were living together, looking after other kids and trying to finish our schooling. And at the same time I was learning from Kanytjupai. I'd watch her too, like how she's handling herself; she was going to school. That's the time when I just wanted to get out from my family life. Tace was a great teacher because she was young and I really liked her. She was young, like around our age and we got along very well, Tace, Kanytjupai, Kukika and all of us. I think she was born around the 1980s.

I enjoyed the phone lessons because the teacher wasn't there; they were a long way away. It was only phone lessons, but we had to do it because the teachers would ask us about our work. We had to do a maths subject and other subjects. It was great being with Tace in that class with all of us older girls; we were really happy in school. There was a space for us older girls and the young fellas were separate. We were teenagers and would get up late and Tace said to us, 'Hey, you know, you can tell me anything and I'll discuss any ideas you have for the class with the principal'. And I said, 'Yes, because we get up late it would be good to make school start at this [later] time so we can get up, come to school and have some food and then start our work. Because [at the moment] we come early and we're still [half] asleep'. Tace [did that]; I shared my idea and from then we could take it easy, 'Oh, with this [starting] time, we'll go to school every day because we know we have a later start time'. It was really great for us.

I was thinking I'd finish as quickly as possible and I wasn't there for my graduation celebration because I'd finished everything off and I was thinking, 'I already know how to teach through the way whitefellas talk, but I just gotta finish school, year 12'. And I was doing it for my family and for me to make them proud. I was really happy when it got close. I think there was one outstanding piece of work I had to do, I think it was maths or art. One of them, but I just decided, 'Don't worry about it, it's only small. I'm going'.

And also Tace showed me one of those small iPods. She said, 'Natalie, this is the latest one, a mini iPod'. And I said, 'Yes, I wanna get that for my present'. Tace said, 'You make sure you do all the work and I'll get it for you'. [I thought] 'If I finish year 12 I don't want a big present. I want that little one'. It was smaller than a matchbox, the latest technology in those days. Well, I wasn't there to pick it up [laughs].

From there I was looking for work in Irrunytju. I was looking for work because I was so bored from sitting around without a job. I looked at the media centre because I knew a bit about Garage Band. I was looking [from] the door [and thought], 'I did that in school. I might just ask the whitefellas here for work'. And I had those skills and I went back to Ernabella and was looking for work there. I was looking for work and after not finding a job here, I went to Ernabella and we were both going to live there at that time.



## **Growing up learning – Chris Reid**

### **Going to school**

I went to school here first, like Cassius's age, then my father looked at me and said, 'Oh, I need to take him away so he can learn education, come back and be a leader in his community'. So he had to take me away to Katherine. I lived there for three years and they put me in the ESL class because I just came from the bush and it was new to me. But slowly I got used to it. After three years of primary school there, I started to catch up to the other kids in town. I was a bit behind. That's why my father, he knew; he looked at me and he thought, 'I'll take him'. And he used to tell me when I was a little boy, 'When you grow up, you're gonna come back and live here in your community and show your mob and come back'. That's what I'm doing now. So I went away and did three years of primary school (in Katherine) and moved to Alice Springs then from seven [or] eight to fourteen. I did three years in Alice, high school because we got flooded out in Katherine. And my father must have been thinking, 'I'll take him a bit closer to family; you can't just keep him away. He might just forget about all his family. How about I take him a bit closer into Alice, closer to family coming in and out'. I could see my grandmas and others.

### **Learning from my grandfather**

I came home on school holidays. They were organising [business]. They called me in and put me through. So I had to stay for a year and I was thinking, 'I wanna go out and do this and that'. So I missed a year of school, but I was like, 'C'mon Anangu tjuta!' Making noise and they were like, 'You can't do that'. I was too scared so I had to sit there for one year. And slowly I tasted this, started smoking ... bored sitting, waiting so I can be free. I missed a year. I was younger then and I was thinking, 'Oh, it's too late now'. It wasn't too late. I was only fifteen then. And so I was noticing that I was starting to lose the things that I learned at school. I think I had one or two more years at school. I finished year 10 and I was meant to be going back to year 11 but I didn't go back; I stayed out bush ever since. From the year 2000 I stayed out here, eleven or twelve years this way with my grandfather and just learning. And I was thinking to myself, 'I'm back now'.

At that time, because my grandfather was alive, I was more into cultural trips and my focus was on [learning the] law because my grandfather was alive at that time and so he was strict. 'C'mon grandson, I'll be off'. So I was just busy on men's business and I was just learning one side at that time when Natalie came. A couple of years later when my grandfather passed away I sort of stopped all of that because I didn't have a grandfather to teach me. So I just went learning, trying to learn more about our culture. I learned everything in those years. From 2000 to 2009 [and then] I stopped.

So I was into my grandfather's *Tjukurpa* (law/dreaming). I was young then but it was a bit hard. And I was learning more on that track. And until I got a bit older, until we had Cassius and then I started to realise, 'Wait a minute', and I felt alone. I had no-one to go out with because I didn't have a teacher grandfather. So I said, 'You mob go. I'm finished with this. I've got to start focusing

on education'. I was in school when I was younger but I came back and I was away from it. I had no choice.

### **Learning through work; teaching yourself**

After nine or ten years, I'd forgotten about education. So I had to regain all the things that I learned at school when I was young because I lost all that. I was doing this Anangu side, but we were strong enough. I had to educate myself and I got up to standard. Natalie had given that stuff up [makes a hand signal for smoking marijuana] but I was still smoking ganja at that time. And Natalie came and saw that I was still using ganja together with others. And I was also looking for work; I was experiencing some mental health issues and didn't have a job. I was working, but it was CDEP, poor thing, all the young fellas and I were completely addicted to ganja. And she saw that I was in this state and she was looking for work.

But work is how I changed. It must be ten years later. I got all the training and [song] lines and whatever, that level [of knowledge], and [my grandfather] passed on and I was thinking, 'Right, I've learned enough to carry on'. We had Cassius and I was looking at my son and I was thinking, 'When he grows up, I've got to change'. So we started teaching ourselves.

At home, I'd get papers, books, pens; I'd just write anything. I'd write stories. I'd start the spelling and I'd do it a different way. I'd do it the hard way, my way and teach myself because I started to lose all that from being too much on this [Anangu] side. So I had to train myself. I hated school. You learn from experience. You learn things with your hands.

I used to hate school. I was the worst kid in school. I was a bully in high school and I used to get in trouble nearly every week. As punishment, I used to get locked in my room because they used to send me home. No pocket money, I had to stay in my room for one week until I went back to school. But when I was out here, I learned a lot from working with the media and by experience, I learned wood shop and I did a bit of everything through CDEP as a young fella; I started off small. And I started to learn and I'd teach myself and Natalie came along. She finished her schooling. She was smart and we were like a team. So, I was thinking, 'Hey, it's like we're meant to be'.

NO: We were teaching each other.

CR: Teaching each other. I was teaching her about this and that, and she'd be teaching me and so we'd have a challenge.

NO: He taught me about confidence and I'd teach him about education in return.

CR: We used to test each other. We used to have games and all that. And I was thinking, 'Right, I gotta start getting serious now'. And she introduced me to all this technology. I was amazed to see her doing all this, and she used to teach me. I started working in media handling and learned how to use a computer. And I was thinking, 'I used to do this when I was a kid. Now I'm getting it all back'. And everything changed from there and now I'm right. I'm starting to learn. I've got everything back. I gave up the cigarettes and I was looking at my son and I was thinking, 'I wanna

be here in four years' time, I don't wanna be dead'. Jiah [was there] and I just said, 'Right, Natalie, you believe me?' And she said, 'Yeah'. I'm not gonna touch this, you know? I started with cigarettes and I said, 'You watch me tomorrow and the next day and the next day and a week later. I bet you'. And I just stopped. I quit cigarettes.

NO: And I said, 'If you can do that with cigarettes, why can't you do that with ganja?'

CR: Then I said, 'Ok', and everyone said, 'How did you do that?'

NO: I said, 'If you don't stop the ganja, then ganja is winning and you've got to think like that otherwise the ganja is beating you'.

CR: And I was thinking, 'I gotta beat this now'. And I just said, 'I'm not gonna smoke any more'. And it took me one, two weeks and I didn't touch it, remember?

NO: Then one month.

CR: I liked the smell. It's like it was tempting me to go there, but I just kept on ignoring it; ignored it, ignored it and a couple of months later I was right then. I started putting on weight and the ball was rolling then. And I was back on track again. I felt strong and the kids motivated us, and I was thinking, 'I'm not gonna let them grow up and see a dad without anything, poor things. They're going to miss out, we're all gonna miss out. I've got to change'.

### **Taking on responsibilities**

I started training, working with Steve and I said, 'Steve. I wanna work. I'm committed. I'm interested. I want to learn. Show me everything'. A mining guy who was here before showed me everything. He showed me what the jobs were all about. He was mentoring me and I was working for one year, then he said, 'You can do this'. And I said, 'Yeah, I want to do this. Teach me'. And I was really keen so I told him I was looking for jobs. I wanted to learn anything that comes across, any new people that come here; I wanna be right there, I wanna be right next to them learning. So how I learned was by experience, outside of school.

And after that I became the chairman. They elected me and I was the chairperson of Wingellina. I was the first young chairperson, I was probably twenty-three or twenty-four. I used to go to meetings and director's council meetings and I learned a lot through the council and the board and through the staff, just going to meetings and understanding how the system is governed, how and where we get money, how it gets distributed and all about governance and finance.

### **Intergenerational conversations about education and the future**

So we had the kids and I was thinking, 'Natalie, we're dragging the kids into the world. We didn't do this for fun, you know? To have kids, to watch them go down. We gotta do something. We're parents'. And when you look at babies we feel sad and it's like they're scary, you know, like kids in the world. It's our duty, our job to look after our kids and show them.

NO: It's a big responsibility for both of us to help the children think further and see a good future and we want to be proud and to achieve things in the future.

CR: And we keep telling each other, 'Natalie, we get one shot at life. Let's explore, let's do this, break barriers and keep climbing'. And the steps just keep breaking off each time you go up. And we said to each other, 'Let's explore. We're not gonna sit back in a small place'. Any challenges, we say, 'Bring it on'. We can do anything. Any training, any job, we'll do it. It's not rocket science. That's what we said. And now, we just move it forward. Every day we talk about it with the kids, 'Cassius, what do you want to be, prime minister? You wanna help us? Or you wanna be an AFL star? See all these fellas playing on TV? You wanna be like them?'

NO: 'You wanna talk up for grandparents, for your grandparents' and great grandparents' country?'

CR: And I said to Cassius, 'Cassius, you wanna be in the parliament? You wanna sit up there with them? Can you be like that?' And he said, 'Yeah!' And I said, 'See that footy star there? Someone like Rioli. There's a lot of things you can be; you can be a footy star or government or you can be a teacher or you can be a scientist. You wanna be a policeman? So you can help us when we're old?' And he'll be listening, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, I wanna do that'. And we talk about things. Like my father was telling me things when I was growing up, like, 'When you grow up, you've got to be a leader, and when you grow up, education is the key, it's important for life because if you've got education, it opens doors for opportunities. But then you've gotta have self-determination in the community to keep doing this. Don't let anything set you back, put you down. You've just gotta be strong and you've gotta do it in a positive way, not a negative way. Don't be violent or angry, you can do it in a smart, easy way, so you've gotta talk. I think, experience teaches you a lot.

### **Laying a foundation for the future**

Through meeting Natalie and having kids and living life and experiencing it, I'm moving on to a Cert IV. I'm looking for another job, another level up.

NO: Right here, this is where I got my confidence. From this [encouragement], I've built my confidence. And it's really helped my own feelings and thoughts.

CR: So, when she came, I saw, 'You're smart, you're quiet, not sure [i.e. not over confident]', but we're both like a team. And I feel like we were meant to be because we support each other and when we got together and had kids, she's really strong. She's really focused and positive. You might be going out and you'll be sad and when you come back you'll be happy and switched on. And she's got confidence now. And we have little meetings when we go back home and we talk about our job and what did we do today and what we're gonna do next year and a year later. If I want to get a car, how am I gonna get a car and pay it back in two years? And we budget this money and we save all this money and one day we'll move on if I get a job over there; I'll buy a house. We talk about all of this. Anangu, they don't talk about it. Poor things. And we get sad when we see that. Because we plan. We don't just see tomorrow, we see five years down the track, two

or three years down the track up ahead. You've got to see beyond, not [just] tomorrow and just focus on that one day. No, you've got to know what's happening next week and a week later. You've always got to plan ahead.

### **Country, stories, knowledge and identity; family as foundation**

NO: Chris has started to teach Cassius at certain places. Sacred sites that the younger generation is forgetting about. It's knowledge; he's been gathering that from his grandfathers over time.

CR: I'm up to a certain stage, levels. So from what I already know, I can use that and use hunting, the certain ways of cutting the meat, what to give out and who to give it out to, how you sort the meat out, how you hunt. I can do all those things with my kids and tell them stories.

It's important because it's been here for thousands of years and we can't just dump that. It's important to keep that going because it's there. We've got [our] culture, we've got stories. We're from here; we know where we're from. We know our backyard and it's important, so when they grow up they can be proud. 'I know how to get that. I can hunt kangaroo. I can get that bush tucker. I know, I heard that story about the bird.' All of those things, and connection to earth, you know?

But feeling, growing up as a human, knowing that you come from this background. He's Anangu. He knows his culture, our stories, his country; it's from Anangu. And he'll hold that, he'll never forget about that. So it's really important to understand it from that point of view, to know and to understand that you're from there and you know this and that and you'll always keep that and you'll have something to pass on. So my son will know that he's got something good, important to pass on to his kids. And that's really good. It makes them strong in understanding life from Anangu way. Then that little boy will grow up and think, 'Ok, I grew up Anangu way, I understand from this point of view. Ok, I might step over the other side'. And that kid, he'll have confidence, because if he knows all about this and if he can learn the other one, he's strong. Nothing can break him; he's strong. And he's a really smart person because he knows two ways. Not only one side. If you want to be really, really strong, really knowledgeable, you've got to learn two. If you can do that, well you're a smart human. To learn two [ways]. Others only really know one way. If you learn two [ways], you'll be strong and you can survive anything.

### **Strong both ways**

CR: That's why we always talk about balancing. Like school, we always think about school and language and English translation and teaching so they don't only learn one side because they really need to learn their language, to read and spell their language. But do that with different words; English words and language words. There's lots of similar terms. But in other cases, it's a story. They're not our words but we can turn it into meaning by telling a story about it. So if you can have two, you're good. You're proud, smart, both worlds, you're good. So then you'll be happy, but don't forget education. That's the world here where English is the common language. English is the language used at work. There's no Pitjantjatjara at the mines. They can put up signs but it's only English to do the work.

NO: Yes. That education: reading, writing and maths. Once you know that, you can do anything.

CR: I'm not saying, 'Don't do it that side, just learn Anangu way'. No, you've got to learn the other side because you need to survive.

NO: People won't be there to look after you; you've got to learn whitefella way from a young age. There are people like your parents and grandparents; the people who strengthened you and looked after you and they've died. Maybe you're proud, 'No, my family did it this way. I'll just stick to that and not worry about going to school'. But parents and the families are saying that kids need to go to school and learn. That's how you strengthen your own future.

### **Education as survival**

CR: If you're educated, THEN you'll know how to teach your kids. And your kids will pass that on to their kids. It just gets passed down from generation to generation. Education is important because we live in a cash economy. No more dingo skins and all that. Keycards, bank, money. Only from money, and we've got to have good food and everything else: money.

NO: And you've got to earn that money.

CR: We've got no choice. We can't walk out and live the old ways. Because where are you getting that car from? Same for Anangu, they can't say, 'Palya [ok], we're not staying this way, we're going back to the old way'. They'll die. That's why we've got no choice but to learn that. Look at American Indian histories; they've got to know their history. People who know all the stories of the past, going right back, how they lived. It's important to know the history. If you don't know the history, you're blind and you don't really understand. That's why you've got to understand history. But some of these people, they don't know what happened in other places; they don't understand. They think, 'Righto, I'll go for a ride. The store's open tomorrow'. This is what they know. They have no understanding of other things; they've never been taught that.

That's why they don't know it now. But it's good, to look to happy things. Just to have a happy life. If you can balance it, you can have a happy life. Because right now, Anangu don't have work. That's why they seem stressed and it all adds up, stress, fighting, when they're drinking [and say], 'Leave it, I'm giving up. I've given up'.

NO: And when they have kids. [They're] thinking of [just] receiving parenting payments instead of working.

CR: So they're out of work, they're not educated and when they grow up, they'll be living a sad life. They'll be struggling and have stresses. They're uneducated and have all of these problems and soon that person will get sick. [They'll] get sick and die. He'll die. She'll die. Forty-three, forty-five, their heart will get sick because they've become stuck in this life. And there's no example, you know? Education isn't [just] telling people a whole range of things, it links everything, like work.

NO: Health.

CR: Employment, family.

NO: They're not living traditional way [values and strengths].

CR: And this way is another way, isn't it? If you don't get that, you'll be stuck in this way: stress, no money, struggling, fighting, getting sick and dying.

NO: Like how we talk to young mothers. Having kids is not fun.

CR: And we see those children getting children and little girls becoming pregnant there and we just say, 'See, you're gonna find it really hard'. Maybe they think it's fun, but wait until they have a child and she'll find out it's hard, won't she? Maybe they think, 'Oh, such a cute little kid! I want a baby!' But no. It's not just that, it's hard work. They've got to be committed if they want to be parents. This is life and they need to break that cycle. Open that door.

NO: To know two [ways]. And also Anangu who are already adults are doing nothing or maybe they have such low skill levels, but they can join and learn by observing. But here these young children are learning through education. This new generation is possibly learning both ways.

### **Technology as educational opportunity**

These younger ones here, they're gonna be smarter than their parents. And with these kids that hang around here, they've got [a mobile phone] tower, they've got a telecentre.

NO: They're learning those two ways.

CR: They've got all this. They never had this in the '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s. They're just new; the kids even know how to sign themselves in on Facebook!

NO: Even in the telecentre, they go in and they don't have to type, they just look at previous entries. I saw young children in my class [doing this]. They go and press the arrow and having clicked on the address bar, they look for that letter. They look through the history and [say] 'Oh, here's that game!' And they put it on. They're [just] looking at the first letter. And they're teaching themselves by remembering the word for that first letter.

CR: We never had this. But these kids have got it. So going back to [what's] important: things like cultural life, education. If you can do both, you're right, you'll have a good life. Because, we're in the world; it's round. We live in the world. Life is really good and we ought to live it this way: a happy life as a whole family group, individual, family and [as a] group. That's all that matters. Happy because you understand work and two ways; the children are happy because they're engaged in education. When they go to the city he can talk confidently and speak up; he can speak in their language and our language, this language and that language. That's how it is here; this is smart. They can talk; he can talk in front of thousands of people, like a conference, he can get up and talk and read. This gives them confidence to do public speaking. They can do all that and some of the people still don't really understand, but if you can teach them from what level they're up to

now, they learn. You don't have to finish. Like, say if a person has never been to university or college, they're still smart. Some people are really intelligent.

NO: In different ways. Hidden talent.

CR: Hidden talent. You've heard stories about some old fella who's really, really smart and they say, 'I never even finished year 8', and he's running a big business? Anangu are kind of the same.

NO: I'm thinking about a young fella who's always got his mouth closed, Matthew Lewis.

CR: Quietest bloke in the world!

NO: And he talks on Facebook and gives the staff [at his work] a shock when he sends a message.

CR: He's really, really smart and you can't get a word out of him!

NO: [whispered, indicating sound coming from the mouth] Nothing. He's a quiet person. He doesn't talk. But on Facebook he changes completely. He's a different person. He's smart.

CR: But he's quiet.

## **Lessons from the classroom**

### **What does a 'good education' look like in Irrunytju?**

NO: To be well educated, students need to learn outside and in class. Literacy and numeracy they're learning inside and outside the classroom. Here, [on] this technology, like iPads, phones. I got a shock when my niece used her mother's Facebook, using English to tell stories, like big words.

CR: We had to move away to speak good English, to talk and to communicate with people. But the kids that have grown up here in the communities, they're smart but they won't speak as well as other Aboriginal kids who grew up in towns. To speak good English, they have to live in town. But they can practise in school. A couple of years ago they tried to ban language in school, but these kids, they keep going in school; they still speak their language. They tried to stop all of that. 'No more language in school. Only English.' But they can't stop them. They still do it here. So then their English will be like, 'Can I go there, please?' They know the basic words. But 'proper' English is a bit tricky for them unless they go and live in town.

Because our kids Jiah and Cassius, when they get up to a certain age, we want them to go to boarding school. But they still come back, see? When they come back, [we'll say] 'There, we're going out bush. Don't forget when you go back to the city'. We want them to be in a boarding school.

NO: But we both want them to be prepared for boarding school.

CR: That's what we're doing now. While they're young – we're not that old! – while we're young, we're planning. So, they're still small. We're going to finish [paying] the car off probably next year and all the other money, we've already started saving. So we save and save. We plan; we sort of know the risks and all that, what could come up unexpectedly. So what we want to focus on now is



encouraging them while they're young, like babies. And Cassius says, 'Dad, when I'm older, I'm gonna be working like you', and he says, 'Look, my father's working'. He goes and brags to all the other kids about me. We're being encouraging parents now and when they get to a certain age and they outgrow this school we want them to move away. We'll have money plus royalties and all that for school. There'll be money for all that and we'll be supporting them, kids from the Lands. Really, I want them to keep going to school here and finish off here. Then I want them to move away and live in the city. I want them to mix with other kids.

**Teaching too fast; the need for love, patience and repetition**

There's a teacher here, every week she changes things and changes and changes. There it's planned to learn the alphabet one week and the next week, 'Oh! Ok, next week you're going to write a sentence of what you did on the weekend'. And I said, 'These are just little children. They're not going to get that in their head; it takes time. You watch'. She was trying to ask a child to get up and point to which one is letter 'H'. And she chose a different child and I said, 'No, not that [one]', because he's much older. 'Try and do that with a prep 1', a bit younger. Like Cassius or Shannon. And Shannon, he's the same age as Cassius; he's six. He couldn't do it, not even ABC, nothing at all. I said, 'It's no wonder that they don't understand, because you're doing it too quick. You can't do that'. Maybe white children get it straight away and then get it straight away [again] because they've been brought up that way. Singing ABCDE ... 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star' and those songs. They already know the words.

CR: And don't forget, their parents just came into the community in the '50s and '60s. No, the '70s, because they never had a school. Some of the big kids, their parents are forty-something, you know? And then they're expected to talk a certain way. No, their parents grew up without attending school. You expect them to pick all of this up quick way? No! Poor things! [Go] slow. Their parents are from the bush. It's only recent that they were coming [out] from the bush. They just got settled in the community in houses and it's only been thirty years now.

NO: It's because of these things that I'm still learning this way about that white people's [Western] knowledge. And I had to correct the teacher straight away, because I help her and because I think she's a stressful person; she gets stressed so easily. If they can't do this, she stresses herself out straight away, a complete panic. I help her and at the same time I learn because I don't [always] understand what I'm saying [in English].

And I spoke to her with the principal [and said], 'Ever since I started this year when I first met you, you've had the same group, you don't mix them up. You're going along with the same groups and you've focused on those kids that you chose because you think they're smart. And what is this teaching them? You've forgotten about kids that really need teaching. This is what's causing this situation and it will all reflect on you. Why can't you mix it up each day and teach them all at once?' Because I look at her group and I can see, 'Oh, she's off now; she's gone mad. That teacher's become empty-headed'. She was going around giving things out and when she's finding

it hard she says, 'Natalie, can you get all the kids together and read a book? And I'll do the cleaning up'. Because she's tried and tried and tried to get the class in order only teaching the children that already understand but not the rest of the kids. And she hasn't built a relationship; she hasn't built a bond with the other children.

She looks and does this and watches [Natalie demonstrates a look of exhaustion and resignation, sitting back, somewhat deflated]. [And the teacher says] 'I don't know why. How do you do it?' And I said, 'Simple, you just gotta get the kids all together, not single them [out] or separate them to make them into two groups. Fine, do this with the kindergarten-age children; you can separate them and focus on these big kids, because at the moment you constantly choose your three 'star kids', only those three, and you're looking at thirteen kids altogether. That's why you're stressed'.

And the principal had me running the junior students in the morning because the teacher couldn't handle the kinder and prep 1 and 2. And with the big kids in the afternoon. Because the big kids get bored in the afternoon after they eat and play. And I do this and do this and do this [motioning back and forth with her hands]. Because when I'm not there, both of the teachers with both classes struggle because they have no relationship at all with the children. Like, there's no love; it's just growling, shouting.

### **The need for planning**

CR: These Anangu kids swear, you know, bad words; father this, mother this. But they do it in class because the teacher doesn't understand, because they're saying it in language. Some of them started to learn those words, but out of school, they're really bad. [They] shame us. Swearing, dirty pictures, all that and my kids are hanging around them. But we're telling them, 'That's not good'. Because their parents don't prepare them for the future, poor things, but there are some ways to help these children.

NO: In the old days it was all family groups, tribe by tribe, Anangu way, but they were all helping each other. One would get food, [someone] going [hunting] for meat, other women going around and [gathering plant foods for] baking damper, but currently, Anangu here are all living together in one house and they're all relying on the one person that works and gets money. The idea of money was new; whitefellas would say to them, 'Bring [skins] and you get food'. And they went and they'd talk with the grandfathers and fathers, 'Hey! Take things like these dingo scalps, and they give food there'. And everyone was doing that because they were strong. But now, with Centrelink, they can sit back, sign a form; there, pay day! And they can't think further. And I think one big thing that affects Anangu is shame; shame will take you nowhere.

CR: That's your life. It comes down to that truth. If you can do a lot of things and be happy, live a good life and pass away old and tired knowing that you did a lot of good things. That's the only message that we can say to people. And that is true in this world. If you can be happy, the family's happy, the kids are happy, you have a good life; when you die, you die happy, not die sad. And whitefella life is like that. Their culture. You've gotta have a house, you've gotta afford to pay your

rent, kids gotta have an education, you've gotta budget your money, plan your holidays, you gotta do your studies, work towards this. All these things we need to learn as Anangu, we're doing that now.

Being prepared for life, like travelling. Travelling is the worst one for Anangu. They travel with no [spare] tyres. You can start on small things like budgeting. You can say, 'I've got a spare tyre, I've got a pump. I've got plenty of fuel. This fuel's gonna take us probably 400 km then we'll fuel up at the next place. This will take us to there. This fuel will take us 1000 km, that's enough to get us there. We've got a jerry can. We've got money there. We need a certain amount to spend, but we need the other money to come back; do our shopping and get back home safe'. Basic things. But at the moment, they don't understand, poor things! But they just need people like us to show them.

### **Chapter summary**

Both Natalie and Chris have had powerful role modelling and encouragement to engage and succeed in schooling, employment and family responsibilities; and they have answered the call. The commitment to schooling and learning is described throughout the 'Growing up learning' accounts of both narrators. As younger people with family connections that reach outside of the tristate area, Natalie and Chris offer unique perspectives in negotiating the complex interactions between colonialism, education, Anangu identity and histories and the task of raising children to succeed in this context.

They are also both unique in the level of responsibility they have taken on as young parents in the wider community. As the narratives move to reflect on employment, training and wider community issues, it is clear that both Natalie and Chris remain deeply connected to their language, land, culture and families. From that foundation, they outline their plans for the future and their understanding of achievement and success for their lives and for their children.

Natalie also provides reflections on current experiences in the classroom, informing educators of the need for relationships and of love and patience as pedagogical underpinning. Despite living in the digital technology age and having lived in dominant culture social contexts, Natalie and Chris have remarkably similar values and language in relation to the pursuit of a 'good life' as the older narrators in other chapters, such as Gordon, Sandra and Katrina. This suggests that cultural knowledge transmission and the inculcation of inherently Anangu values continue to inform the foundation for success among Anangu young people.

## Chapter 9: *Yankunytjatjara wapar tjuta* – Yankunytjatjara stories

### Background and overview

#### Yami Lester

Yami Lester is a well-known Yankunytjatjara man through his many roles in various Aboriginal organisations such as the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD), Alice Springs, and Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY), the body that represents traditional owners of the APY Lands in remote South Australia, but primarily he is a prominent figure in the history and ongoing debates surrounding atomic testing that took place in the 1950s in the Maralinga region to the south-west of the area where he was born and grew up. As is recorded in his autobiography, *Yami* (Lester, 1993), the fallout from the atomic cloud caused him to become sick and lose his sight. After many years in state care in Adelaide, he returned to his ancestral lands to play an integral role in the land rights moves in the APY Lands (1981) and the handback of Uluru–Kata Tjuta (1985) as well as the formation of IAD. He continues to live at Walatina station on the far eastern fringe of the APY lands. Neither Yami nor Shannon Kantji (Yami’s brother) attended school, as schooling was not provided on stations in the tristate area. Yami and his family maintain an active interest in justice issues and politics, in particular, pursuing justice for families and communities affected by the Maralinga testing.

This interview was held on the verandah of the Walatina homestead with Rose Lester sitting beside him. Both Yami and Rose’s interviews were predominantly in English, with the use of some Yankunytjatjara language terms. The transcripts are recorded as they were spoken, with translation provided in italics where required. Yami requested that I read his autobiography as preparation for the interview and this can be read in conjunction with this story. Yami shares his experiences of growing up at Walatina without attending a school, working on the cattle station and coming to Adelaide after losing his sight during the Maralinga atomic testing era.

Yami then recounts his experiences of work and raising a family, with particular attention given to the kinds of conversations and decisions that took place in relation to education. He concludes the narrative with some reflections on the education of his grandchildren and the spectre of potential language loss that accompanies mainstream education success.

#### Shannon Kantji

Shannon is a brother of Yami Lester and also grew up on the cattle stations of Walatina, Granite Downs and the surrounding region. His wife and daughter have been lifelong, deeply committed educators at Mimili Anangu School, where the family settled since the Walatina days.

Yankunytjatjara language is an endangered language, and Shannon is recognised as one of the few remaining ‘pure’ Yankunytjatjara speakers.

Shannon reflects on his experiences of growing up on the cattle stations and also the changing nature of the easterly languages he grew up with (Yankunytjatjara, Matutjara) as they are threatened and subsumed by the more westerly Pitjantjatjara language.

He also briefly recalls memories of his mother burying the children in the family to protect them from the atomic cloud as it passed over.

### **Rose Lester**

Rose is the eldest daughter of Yami Lester. She attended school in Mimili, Alice Springs and Adelaide. She currently lives in Adelaide where she works in the fields of interpreting, consulting and research and holds a number of board and advisory roles in natural resource management and Aboriginal community organisations. Along with her younger sister, Karina, she has also played a vital role in the Anangu Lands Paper Tracker radio and online programs (see The Anangu Lands Paper Tracker, 2015), a service that informs Anangu communities about government policy and other news and announcements that are relevant to Anangu lives. She is a strong advocate for the maintenance and development of Yankunytjatjara language and raising awareness of the impact of the nuclear industry on Aboriginal people and the environment. Rose regularly travels throughout Anangu communities and enjoys returning to Walatina with her children and granddaughter, Lucy.

Rose begins her narrative with recollections of learning from her mother at Mimili in the days before schooling was available there and moving to Alice Springs and then Adelaide to attend school. She describes a range of issues that made completing high school challenging and recounts the transition to work and, eventually, returning to work at Walatina.

She then describes the changing nature of teaching as the generations change in her family and outlines her hopes and concerns for her family and the wider Anangu community as they come to terms with various aspects of political, economic and educational engagement. The continuing threads of Anangu values, language, land, cultural identity and standing strong are woven throughout the intergenerational accounts of what is of utmost importance for the young people into the future.

## Yamiku wapar – Yami’s story

### Learning without a school

SO: *Growing up at Walatina you didn’t have a school here, so you didn’t grow up going to school every day like lots of other kids?*

YL: Oh yeah, we did! But different school. There was a lot of kids living here and adults with no school and I’d never heard of school, the word ‘school’, anyway. And we used to play a lot during the day, just play, but old fellas used to come and take us for walk [to] Walkinytjanu, it’s over there, you go that way. They’d teach us food, bush tucker: kampurara [*desert raisin*], tawal-tawal [*wild gooseberry*], wiriny-wiriny [*bush tomato*] and another one, they’d say, ‘No, you can’t eat that’. Maḷungku ngalkupai. Tjitjiku wiya [*The kangaroos eat it. It’s not for kids*].

When I was here, there were a lot of rabbits. We used to go hunting the rabbits and we’d go out to the waterhole Walkinytjanu, getting the rabbits along the way and miḷpali, that’s *goanna* and maḷu [*kangaroo*] might be and we’d get to Walkinytjanu waterhole in the bottom end where the road crosses, follow the creek around.

And then we’d come home and have dinner there and they would say, ‘Go and get those firesticks’. And we’d get them wood and make the fire and they’d cook the rabbit then. A lot of work and then they used to say, ‘Alatji nyawa!’ [*This way, look!*]. And they used to burn the fur out and wait for the fire to burn down and cook them and they sleep, all the old tawaritja tjuṭa, wati tawaritja, the single blokes and ulkumunu tjuṭa [*senior women*] used to be across the creek and the waterhole, the water between us, and we used to drink the same water. They’d be cooking rabbit there too.

Then ok, we come home, but getting more rabbits along the way and ngura tali [*sandhill camp*] here, I think, talingka ngura [*a camp in the sandhill*]. We used to camp all around here. And Mr and Mrs Cullinan had the waterpoint, the old windmill in the garden here. And, ok! Get home soon as the sun go down and say, ‘Tjuu! Tjuu! Wala walau! Tjitji tjuṭayi!’ [*Mate! Hurry up! There’s lots of kids!*] Because they had a good meat and plenty water and they happy and in those days there was no TV. So, inma [*ceremony*] time, they used to sing the inma [*song*] and the old fellas get up and dance and say, ‘Come on! Get up tjitji tjuṭa [*kids*]. Do the same’. And we’d call it tjitjiku inma [*children’s dance*]; nyii nyii maṭuku piri [*the zebra finch claw*] ... that one. They used to do that. They had a long line of them and they used to show us how to dance and have fun. Then we’d get tired and they used to say, ‘Ok, wiyaringu! Inma wiyaringu’ [*The dance is finished*].

And we’d go home and sleep, so that was sort of a school.

RL: Can you do that inma [*song*]? The chorus or something? [Yami laughs] Can you remember that?

YL: Yeah, but after the stroke, I think I can’t remember the tune properly. My throat ... ok [clears throat] ... Iriti ... iti inma ... inma nyii nyii, tjitjiku inma, tjitji tjuṭa taantjaripai, and old people teach ’em too and the kungkas, kungkaku ngapartji nintiripai, ka they ...

[In the old days, it was a young children's dance, the zebra finch song, a children's song, the children dance and old people teach them too and the girls, then it's the girls turn to learn and they ...]

[Begins to sing the song line] Maṭuku pirin maṭuku piri ... nyii nyii matuku piri matuku piri.

RL: Not bad! [Everyone has a laugh.] And they all painted up?

YL: Yeah, painted up and dance, yeah, the old tjamus [*grandfathers*] used to help you and kamis [*grandmothers*] used to help the kungka tjuṭa [*girls*], kungka tjapu tjuṭa [*young girls*] and they used to do dance and very good.

To get the paint, we used waṛu [*fire*], black from the coals and the ashes, white, then tuṭu [*ochre*] down here, down the creek here and ... red one, yeah, and the yellow one used to be there too and the white one. In Yankunytjatjara they said 'tuṭu', the red one and 'untanu', the yellow one and 'lilil', the white one.

### **The Yankunytjatjara education process**

And other times, the old fellas used to be sittin' down making boomerangs, or maybe miru, woomera [*spear thrower*], atuni axe-ingka [*chopping with an axe*] then telling you story, saying, 'Oh, what's-a-name, ini nyangatja [*is called this*]'. Nyuntumpa kamuṛu [*your uncle*] and they [were] teaching you about the relationship. And 'nyangatja nyuntumpa kuntuṭi, ini nyangatja [*this is your aunty, this name*]'. Mention the person's name and go through like that and we'd be asking questions. 'Ayi, ngananyampa [*So, what about that person*]?' Oh, that's your kami [*grandmother*], that one. We couldn't think of it and they'd ask questions and they [would be] telling you, 'That's your kamuṛu [*uncle*]' in Yankunytjatjara; in Pitjantjatjara they say, 'kulyalpa'. Uwa [*yes*], and I'd learn both language[s].

My mother's language is Pitjantjatjara, but I'm slow on that. My father's Yankunytjatjara and I'm pretty good on that, I reckon, and little bit English, not much. And so we learned about relationship. Kami, grandmother, tjamu [*grandfather*] and kamuṛu [*uncle*], mama [*father*], kuntuṭi [*aunty*], like that ... not too long. Just enough time and they say, 'Ok, come on, gotta go and do something else. You gotta go and play'. So we used to go away and play, but we'd learn like that, like a school. And they'd tell you stories about what happened in the creation days and they'll say, talk about the ngintaka [*perentie*] side down there, and telling the stories about what happened to the ngintaka. The ngintaka come and steal the tjiwa [*grinding stone*] and take him away and the ninytjiri [*a smaller type of lizard*] was there and the ninytjiri community livin' here. And they follow his track and ngintaka didn't get away.

'Where's that tjiwa? Yaaltji tjiwampai?' [*Where's the grinding stone?*]

'Wiya ngurangka kunyu nyaarinyi! Wantikatinguna.' [*No, apparently (they're) using it at the camp. I left it behind.*]

And paluru kunyu kanyiningi [*he was apparently carrying it*] right into the tail, the story goes. Then when they tell us that, they'd take us down to the ngintaka site into the waterhole there.

They ... this is the story I was telling you about. The wapar, waparitja [*the dreaming, pertaining to the dreaming*] kapi ngarinyi [*water lying on the ground*], that's where the tjiwa [*grinding stone*] was. And they used to say, 'Oh yeah, alatji kulini' [*understanding like this*]. Same as the pantalytjara [*flank of the hill*]. So, tell you story, 'Oh, nyangatja malungku tjawara ngalkuningi [*The kangaroo was digging and eating here*], purara, honey ants [*the worker ant in the honey ant family*] and the tjurki [*owl – probably the Australian owlet nightjar*] here, sitting and they'd tell you story first, then they used to take us there and say, 'You know, this is in the story I was telling you about. This is the rock hole now. Yeah, kapi [*water*], you can drink the water, and don't go for swimming, wanampi [*water serpent*] in there, ngunytji [*just pretending*], you know? No wanampi, they didn't want you to muck up the water, drinking water [laughs]. But they used to say 'wanampi', and that was really scary for us, so we [would think], 'Ok, no. Wanampi there, so we stay away'.

### **Learning through work**

My first job was how to cut the wood for Mrs Cullinan, for the kitchen. Tamiarangka wara atuningi [*cutting lengths with a tommy axe*], axe. And the axe was a little bit heavy. I used to take little ones and they said, 'Oh, no', I think, she said, for the stove I gotta get proper big wood. I wouldn't, so that job didn't last too long [laughs].

And, so next job, 'You gotta look after the nanny goats'. So I used to come in the morning from my camp and Mrs Cullinan would give me white cotton bag with a half a loaf of bread, homemade biscuits, tea and sugar and an ordinary water bag and billy can in the bag. So I used to go and open that nanny goat yard. All the three big ladies, they'd finish their milking in the morning then I'd go and open the gate, let the nanny goat out this side of Wala dam there. And all my mates used to catch up with me, maybe five or six of them. And they wangkapai [*would say*], 'Wai, tjuu? Milk-ampai?' [*Hey, mate! What's going on with the milk?*] And I'd say, 'Wiya, kuwaripa [*No, later*], you can't milk them yet, wait for a while', or, 'Patala kunyu [*you need to wait*]' . Wangkapaina [*I'd say that*].

Pula nyinara nyinara kanyira kanyira ka para-ngalkupai nanikuutangku maa-ngalkupai, wati-ngalkupai and we block-amilalpai angatjura kanyira [*The two goats would sit and sit (and I'd) look after and look after them and the goats would go around eating here and there and then we'd get in their way, hold them and block them off*] might be about twelve o'clock, sun get warm and they had enough and they go to the shady tree there and the nanny goats laying down then and I'd say, 'Uwa, palya tjuu! [*Yes, ok, mate!*] You can get the milk now'. And then I'd boil my billy can, put tea and I'd share my half a loaf of bread, little bit of biscuits, homemade one. And they'd drink the milk, drink a cup of tea, black tea. And then I'd come back at night time, or, I don't know, about half past four maybe? Nanny goat want to come for water then, and they start moving back this way and we follow them from behind then, water them, put 'em in the yard, close the gate and draft



the kiddy-kiddies. Catching the little kiddy-kiddies and put 'em in that square yard. Ok all done, all finished. Ok, those mummies gonna have a big fat milk the next morning with all the little kiddies having a sleep in the separate bedroom [laughs].

Then I go home to the camp, the sandhill here and the three working girls, three young ladies get up early and they milk the goat for Mrs Cullinan. She used to make a cream and give us the milk sometimes to drink – boiled one, not raw. So that was one of the things you do every day.

Then I wanted to go to Oodnadatta with them, Oodnadatta races in May. And through my father and my mother, they said, 'No, you gotta look after the goats because it's kiddy-kiddy time, goats ...

I don't know, nyaa wangkapai [*What do they say*]? Kiddy-kiddy tjapu tjuta [*lots of baby goats*]. So I stayed and they [said], 'They're gonna bring something back for you'. They brought me back lolly and little condensed milk ... tin. Oh, no wonder I gotta high sugar because you drink that! [laughs]

Then one time my father Kantji was shoeing the horse in the yard there near the windmill down that way. He finished shoeing and he called me over and put me on the horse to ride bareback and was leading the horse around, so that I would start learning how to get on the horse. Then me and my cousin Kelly, with our father, went to Granite Downs tender muster and he took us two boys.

We were tender muster then ... gunnin', and we didn't have a very good horse saddle ... kuya-kuya [*rubbish*], a military saddle. It was funny one. But I suppose Mr Cullinan was poor and getting it cheap, I s'pose. A military saddle. Over from the war, army ... and yeah, we used to go Granite Downs, bring back Walatina cattle; the Walatina brand was X22. Yeah, on the rump. And we'll bring 'em back all over Granite Downs, do mustering.

I was just a little wiyai [*young boy*]. Maybe eight, nine.

### **Avoiding removal, the bomb and moving away in sorrow**

Back in those days, the government had a policy for taking the kids away, a part Aboriginal, you know, coloured. And I'd seen a few taken away, but Uncle Bill and I were here; we were lucky because we were working on the station. So they reckon, 'That's alright, you're doing the work here'. But if you're not working, they take you away. But me and Uncle Bill Cullinan, we were lucky. We stayed here and they used to come, but my mother used to always say, 'Oh, don't trust 'em. Go away from the station'. We were at Mimili one time and they were coming through there, the policeman, and for three days we went out towards Rob's well. And three days, come back and hear from the station workers, 'Wiya [*No*], they gone. Yanu! [*Gone*]'.

And when I think about it now, I wish they did take me away, I wouldn't have had this problem. Yeah, but it's too late [laughs, with a sense of sadness].

*[Yami is referring to the blindness he received after the fallout from the 1953 nuclear bomb testing crossed over the Walatina area.]*

Yeah, I was still learning and they, after the bomb, 1953, people, old people from here, they moved to Granite Downs and we went to Mimili, Everard Park.

*SO: Was that because of the bomb or was that just because things were changing anyway?*

YL: Umm ... I think something to do with the bomb and things were changing. I reckon it would be both. Yeah. So, they lost Uncle Walter, we lost him here because of that illness and they wanted to make a move.

Anangu family and two, three ... maybe three couples stayed back. And we went to Everard Park. Yeah, Mimili, and I was there and I got a job. I was still learning how to ride a horse properly. And I finished there 1954. Then '55 I moved to Granite Downs and I worked out at Granite Downs and I reckon I did an apprenticeship. I reckon I was right then. Buck jumper then. Yeah, rough horses. Yeah, so that was good.

*SO: The old fella that passed away, was that health related to the bomb, do you think?*

YL: I reckon it was. Yeah, skin rash. Everything. Eye ... couldn't see. Yeah, poor old Uncle. It was sad for everybody. And when I was in Granite Downs, 1956, Tommy Singer said to me, 'Ayi! Walatina kid', he used to call me. 'Your old boss, Tommy Cullinan passed away'. And I remember the word 'cancer'. He was still here and he passed away in 1956.

RL: They (the Cullinans) were here during that fallout?

YL: Yeah, they were here, that fallout.

*SO: '53?*

RL: And the '56 cancer bomb. And they just went away, hey? To Alice, 'cause I remember Nana talking about that. They went away and they never came back.

YL: Yeah and '57 I'd gone totally blind then.

### **Life in Adelaide**

I ended up in Adelaide at Colebrook Home. That early one, early boys and girls, they were at Quorn and the late ones, we were at Eden Hills. Yeah, that's where we were. Well, I landed there because ... nowhere to go. And ... lucky, a missionary there was a blind fella and he looked after me. LJ Samuels. Someone told him I was in the hospital and to come and talk to me. I can't remember talking to him, but he used to say, 'Everything, you said yes'. [All laugh]

Uwa, proper Anangu mayu. [*Yes, proper Anangu style.*]

RL: And I suppose Nana and Tjamu [*grandfather*] were back here, or Mimili, or where were they then?

YL: Mimili.

RL: I wonder what they were thinking.

YL: Well, it was very sad [Yami gets quite emotional at this point]. Here, he followed me all the way to Adelaide. He went to Port Augusta and he left Shannon there and my mother and he got on the train and he went to Adelaide and he was in a Salvation Army place ... kunyu [*apparently*] ... he told me the story after; he couldn't find me.

And welfare people, you know, DAA [Department of Aboriginal Affairs] should have known from the mission days, but they didn't, they didn't know ... 'We don't know'. Then he come all the way back to Port Augusta and from Port Augusta ... Shannon knows the story, they walked all the way back to Woomera, I think, and they got somebody's truck and went to Marree and caught a train to Oodnadatta. Yeah, but when he told me it was very, very sad. But he told me and I always think about that.

He told me that story when I came back ... Oodnadatta ... '67 I think. We already had Leroy by then. He told me then, but I came up in 1965 to Coober Pedy. I used to keep on asking the welfare people where my mother and father and Shannon was and a brother George. I didn't know he died in an accident; a horse kicked him. Macumba country, Kidman country.

The welfare people from DAA used to say, 'Full car, can't take you'. Every time they used to say that. But I kept on trying and I was lucky 1965. A very good lady, she was a Presbyterian and she was a trained sister and a working patrol officer from Iwantja ration depot to Amata. And she said she was going and she'll take that blind man and so someone got onto me and they said, 'Ok, you ready?' And I said, 'I'm ready'. And she brought me up through Port Augusta, camped at Port Augusta, Davenport, and that was the first time I met Claire Coulthard's daughter Yvonne, my ukari [*niece*].

RL: She would've been young then?

YL: Oh yeah, very young. And they came to Coober Pedy. Robyn Percy. He was a patrol officer from Coober Pedy to Indulkana and Mimili, I think. And he went and found them. They were noodling [searching for opal in the discard piles left behind by the machines]. My mother and father ... and Shannon. They were noodling for opal and they had a good reunion [laughs] ... sad one and they broke the news to me then. [Yami becomes very emotional] Brother George, and they were there for nine days, I think. I think it was nine ... sixteen days in Coober Pedy. And it was funny, wangka ngayuku kawalinu Yankunytjatjara [*I'd lost my Yankunytjatjara language*] and it took me four days to pick it up again. And I said to myself, 'Ok, I'm not gonna lose it from now'. I went back to Adelaide, I bought a reel-to-reel tape recorder and made a wangka [*recording*] – two, no, three tapes: two blank ones and one my voice on – sent it back to my family at Coober Pedy and they used to play and hear it and my brother Shannon was a nyiinka [*pre-initiate*] then. And

my father used to send it to the tawaritja [*separate young men's camp*] camp and he'd play and listen and I was playing the guitar: Johnny Cash, 'I walk the line'. [All have a big laugh]

He remembered that in the nyiinka's camp. I wanted to hang on to the language, I didn't want to lose it, so we communicated like that.

I was in Adelaide thirteen years, ten months. It was good, they let me stay there, but I didn't like it and they said, 'We're not going to send you back up north', through an interpreter. They had a Kokatha interpreter, nearly like Yankunytjatjara.

He was VERY good. Georgie Turner, and he said, 'Tjuu, they can't let you go back; you're finished, 'cause of your eyes'. And I was sad. I was sad for my eyes; I cried for my eyes and everything. And he said to me, 'Well, they'll be teaching you new things here'. And I couldn't communicate, so he was my good interpreter, that one.

We used to visit Royal Adelaide Hospital eye ward and he ran into me. And the hospital told me, 'Look, he's a blind boy and we can't send him up north. He should be staying here and someone should look after him'. So, the old fella's name was Fred Gibbons. He said, 'Ok, wait'. Then he went back to his office, North Adelaide, and he rang LJ Samuels and he came and visited me at the eye ward and I couldn't understand him, but he reckons I said 'Yes' to everything [laughs]. So, I'm a bit worried about that! [Laughs more]

Eric Finke was the superintendent at Colebrook Home. He came down one afternoon, picked me up and took me to Colebrook Home. There were fifty-seven different boys and girls there. And they were saying hello and shaking hands and laughing. I still had a bandage on my eye. I've got a photo of the bandage somewhere. And the little fellow, David James, he was sitting there. He was three years old when he met me. And George Turner and Graeme McKenzie, they had to share a room with me. The superintendent said, 'You two big boys gotta look after him'. I had nowhere to go because for a person like me with no home, nothing. And I was too old to go to Colebrook Home but they said, 'Ok, you're here, but we don't know you're here'. [Laughs] And my father was asking and they [said they] didn't know.

### **Starting a new job in Adelaide**

Georgie Turner, he said to me, 'Tjuu, they're going to send you to ... I think he said ... the Blind Institute ... You gotta learn some trade'. So I become 'Broomologist'. [All laugh] I started learning how to make a broom. They put me for three months' trial and I was there for thirteen years, ten months. Same thing over and over.

It was boring but there was 115 different blind people there. Not in the same shop. We were brush makers, and next door to us there was mop, feather duster and washing boards. That was easier. I wanted to do that, but they said, 'Nup! You gotta stay here'. Why I didn't like that broom was you got a hot broom like tar, they were calling it 'pitch', you got a big horse hair, and you dip it in, put the string around and you gotta pick the right size to go in the hole in the stock. If it's too small,

it'll come out. Oh, it was nasty there. And the black pitch. You know, you were wearing overalls, but it used to get into your underpants and get stuck, OoooHHHH!

It was hot. You gotta be careful. And your hands get black and sticky and knock-off time you go to the back and use special soap, industrial thing on the gun and you get it off. But anyway, I didn't know how many people was there, but it was the United Nations there. They had Italian, French, Australian, and they used to call me 'One Abo' [laughs]. And I became the Blind Workers Union shop steward. They voted me in to become a shop steward and one bloke, one blind fellow wasn't very happy and he called me, 'Abo communist' [laughs]. Yeah! And he got into trouble from the other members. 'You've gotta apologise to him.' So he apologised. And they used to delegate me to go and talk to the manager, because it used to be 110 (degrees Fahrenheit) in the building, you gotta knock off and come back.

I used to say, 'Ok comrades, I got the message. Yeah, we can knock off, go home and come back tomorrow, eight o'clock'.

'Oh, thank you, Mr Shop Steward', they used to say! Blind Workers Union. I was a union man. For three years. But I didn't know nothing, you know? I just got in. And the Frenchman, he was really proud of me. He said, 'Hey, good on ya mate, good on ya!' [Laughs]

### **Learning English, learning to read braille**

I said to Georgie Turner, 'Hey, Tjuu! If I'm not gonna go back up north to Mimili, I might want to do something then, I better learn English'. He said, 'Yeah', and he told me about braille. So anyway, I went to the Blind Institute, I was working there and I said, 'Who I gotta see?' And the Frenchman said to me, 'You gotta go and see the Public Relations Officer. Talk to him'. So I talked to him. I wanted to learn English and braille. And he said, 'Ok. I'll let you know'. So he talked to another fella who became a very good friend of mine. He wasn't a teacher, but he was going to help me read braille. Half an hour from Monday to Friday, only half an hour. He did it for four years. So I was learning and it was very hard, the words. He used to say, 'A for apple'. And he'd say, 'B for bat', you know what that?'

'Nah!' [Laughs]

'C for cat'.

'Yeah, yeah, I know! Pussy!' [Laughs]

And after four years, he said, 'Look, I can't teach you anymore. I can only teach you what I know. I'll try and get you in down at Brighton, Townsend House, but you're too old for that. Only young kids go there'. And I stood up and I shook him by the hand and I said, 'Thanks my friend. I'll use what I learned from you'. So that's what I did.

*SO: It seems like it would have been a little bit frustrating trying to learn braille and English at the same time.*

YL: You can say that again, my friend!

SO: *So how did you deal with that, that feeling?*

YL: Wampa? [*I don't know?*] I wanted to learn. And I tried. There was a funny one: he was teaching me words with sound, 'C...O...A...X...'.

SO: *Coax.*

YL: Yeah. And he asked, 'What's that one? You know what that means?' And I said, 'Yeah, you buy them in a bottle'. [All laugh]

I still don't know what it was! [More laughter] Oh, he laughed about that, when he was alive, poor bugger! He was a good mate.

### **Meeting Lucy, coming home**

In 1965 I was in the hospital, I had an eye operation. Dr Tonkin had operated on me and I met Lucy. She used to get a day off on Tuesdays from her workplace, Wiltja hostel. So that's how we met. It was very nice. And she helped me, to bring me up north. She's ... [gets emotional] a strong person, so after thirteen years and ten months in front of the hot pitch, I wanted to get out. She knew Reverend Jim Downing. She used to read the Christmas newsletter so I said, 'Hey, I might do some interpreting'. He was talking to me about interpreting in the Alice Springs Hospital.

And I made a tape, a three-inch tape, reel to reel, telling him I was interested and can he use me; I'm sick of working at the Blind Institute and all that. And I never heard from him for 12 months. And I heard he was down in Adelaide at a church conference because he was a congregational minister but also a trained social worker. So I said, 'Hey, have you read my tape?' He said, 'No, I better go home and listen to it. It's there but I haven't heard it'. And he talked to his church and he came down and gave me that interview and gave me the job, three months' trial. So Lucy and I had the two little ones then, Leroy and Rosie, then we went up.

And tjilpi [*old man* – a respectful way to refer to Rev. Downing], he was training me on the job doing welfare work, but I was learning through him and doing it like that. And he was very good to give me a chance and help me like that. So, ngayulu nintiringangi tjukutjuku [*I was learning slowly*].

And at Ernabella, my relations used to tell me not to do it. Yeah, they said, 'Your ngunyntju [*mother*] [is] Pitjantjatjara and you should be doing ...' And I said, 'Oh, I gotta do everybody'.

So Papunya mob, I helped. Only interpreting, that's all. There was a funny one, though. There was a CIB detective, a good mate. He made a good mate with me. I thought we were really good. We used to go and have BBQs at his place. Well he rang me up one day and he said, 'Hey! Come around to the police station and help us. So I went down [to help interpret for the man in custody], but I didn't know what he saying, 'Yunami ... Yunami ...? We've got a lot of Yunami in this book'. [All burst into laughter]

YL: I said, 'He reckons you know him!'

RL: You know me!

YL: Yeah! Oh, we just laughed and he said, 'No, I don't know him!!!'

RL: And so there's a big criminal file for a person called Yunami.

YL: Yeah, 'You know me!' [Many Aboriginal people when arrested and asked for their name would reply, 'You know me', which had developed into a large criminal record for an unknown person, 'Yunami'.] Anyway, he let him go and he went back to Papunya.

### **Planning for the children's education and future**

Lucy and I went to Mimili. I don't think Rosie was the right school age but Leroy was. I said, 'Well, I missed out, but Leroy's not going to miss out'. So I put him in St Philip's College (in Alice Springs). He was in grade 2. He had to stay in at school, boarding school and Rosie and Karina came along to school at Mimili.

RL: I didn't like it. I used to think, 'You took my playmate away from me. What did you do that for?' [All laugh]

YL: Yeah, so after twelve months, Leroy wasn't happy, so I said, 'Ok, come to Mimili'. I had to get a governess and I argued with the School of the Air. And at that time [they said], 'No. You're in South Australia. You can't be having the kids on School of the Air; you're in South Australia'. I said, 'Where's Granite Downs? Where's Teyon [Station]? Where's De Rose Hill? They're in South Australia. What are you talking shit for?' And I said, 'No', I said, 'They're in South Australia, Mimili's in South Australia so I want my kids to go to School of the Air'. I wrote a letter to Senator somebody, I can't remember his name, but he was the Minister for Education.

So I got a governess from Murray Bridge.

*SO: You said you felt it was very important that Leroy had that education. Can you tell me what you were thinking was going to be important for him and why?*

YL: Yeah [laughs]. It's a funny one. I was thinking he can do well. Read and write number one and two and to learn, he might become a cattle manager. That's what I was thinking. Then, later on, I was thinking about Rosie and she told me that she wanted to be a lawyer. I said, 'Ok, I'll go talk to some lawyer friends about which school is the better school for a lawyer'. They said, 'Norwood High'. For cattle, they told me Leroy can go to Urrbrae, to learn the cattle thing.

And Karina, later, she wanted to be [an] anthropologist. So I said, 'Ok, I gotta talk to somebody and find out what's a good education'. And they told me the Catholic College, Cabra. And I was very wrong, friend [laughs]. Yeah! Yeah! When all the kids had grown up, they come back and then ok, Leroy went to National Parks and become a ranger, not a cattle manager. And Rosie, she come back, not a lawyer, she managed the cattle here! [Laughs again] Karina was going to Salisbury University, she [was] going to do it but she went back to tourism! And I was very wrong.

SO: *I think it's interesting that you were talking to the kids and saying, 'What do you want to do and be and where can we look for that opportunity?' I would imagine there weren't many Anangu talking to their kids in that way and thinking about the future and what learning through education might have. I think you would've almost stood alone amongst other Anangu in that way, would that be right?*

YL: I think you'd be right. Yeah. Anangu wouldn't think like that. Not our mob, Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara mob. They wouldn't be thinking like that. I think it was that experience in Adelaide; I went through hard times. I think it was that. Yeah.

RL: And you wanted something better for us mob.

YL: Yeah. Oh yeah, I was, really thinking about that. Mmmm.

### **Language learning and the early years**

I talked my language so they can pick it up. And because we were at Mimili they were hearing the language because we're Mimili people. And Karina, right up to when she was five years old, she went back to Alice Springs, she was speaking Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara, right through.

RL: That was a problem. I remember Mum going to a meeting, I think the preschool called her in, because I was a bit of a nosey one and I used to sit there and listen and I was *kuliningi* [*listening*], this teacher said, 'Mrs Lester, you've got a problem. Your daughter can't speak English' [all laugh]. And Mum said, 'Oh, ok?'

'If there's no improvement in the next term, you'll have to get some special help for her and she may not be able to stay in the preschool.'

And I thought, 'Oh no! My poor sis, she's gonna be wild! She's gonna get kicked out of school; what's going to happen? She's my little sister; I'd better start teaching her'. So when Mum used to work and we'd come home after school, I'd say, 'Righto!' Make the *weet-bix* [and say], 'Sit down in front of the TV now. You're going to watch *Playschool* and *Sesame Street*'. [All laugh] And she'd practise the sounds [laughs].

YL: And one day when the other Aboriginal neighbour at that Kurrajong Drive house, they used to come and they'd seen a big *ngintaka* [*perentie*] there and talked to Karina and Karina [said], 'Wiya, kuka palatja!' [*No, it's an animal/meat*] [They said], 'Hey look, it's a big lizard', and [she said], 'Wiya, kuka palatja!' And Leroy ran up to Karina and said, 'Karina, you can't talk like that!' [All laugh]

Yeah, I remember that day. We laughed about it and still laugh. 'Wiya, lizard wiya, kuka palatja!' [*No, not a lizard, that's meat!*] He'd come down from the hills right down to Kurrajong Drive and drink the water.



### **Prioritising schooling for the children**

SO: *So schooling has been very important. I think you've obviously gone to great lengths to give your kids opportunities through schooling.*

YL: I did. And Lucy was the same.

SO: *Had Lucy been through school?*

YL: Ernabella.

SO: *Ok. Who was her teacher?*

YL: Nancy Sheppard.

RL: Well, yeah. They worked together, didn't they? Mum would have been an AEW.

YL: Oh! Could have been Ron Trudinger? I think maybe Margaret Turner.

RL: Mum took her name, 'Turner'. Borrowed it, so she was Lucy Turner when she went down south. There's lots of stories in there to fill the gap. Everyone's story, but at the end of the day, Karina got the year 12 and Leroy didn't and Robbie [Rose's son] got year 12. And they're our two successes! [Laughs]

YL: But Leroy nearly got year 12.

RL: At Urrbrae. And I was different again.

YL: Boundary rider!

RL: I just wanted to get out of school as quick as I could because I felt that I didn't fit in and then went into a traineeship. On-the-job training with Maureen Ted.

YL: When I was at the Blind Institute North Adelaide, Leroy was born. I got a phone call from Queen Victoria Hospital and all my mates said, 'Ok, what is it?' they asked. I said, 'Oh, another boundary rider!'

### **One regret**

All the grandchildren and one great grandchild. I reckon they're pretty good now. Our three, I wanted to see that they got a good education. Now I got no worries with my grannies. They'll get it. They'll get a good education. And that's it. But only worrying about ... not worried, but the language.

RL: Yeah, they're going to lose their language.

YL: Yeah.

RL: They're not going to have a strong language.

YL: No, so that's all. They can say a little bit now, wangka [*language*], talking the wangka way and if they can learn to read and write, that's wangka, but they're already wangkanyi [*talking language*], but that's to see on the paper, read and write. That's all.

Sam Osborne – Anangu Voices – Chapter 9:  
*Yankunytjatjara wapar tjuta* – Yankunytjatjara stories

RL: There's only one school in Adelaide that does it and that's Cowandilla. That was Pitjantjatjara. Carlin's doing German and Elicia's doing Spanish at the moment [laughs]. And Lucy's picking up Spanish because she likes Dora. So she's doing gracias and numbers in Spanish.

*SO: Is it important for your children and your great grandchildren to retain Yankunytjatjara language?*

YL: Yeah, and Pitjantjatjara. To say English is our third or second language. To me, it's a third one. But that's me. I didn't go to school. Doesn't worry me now, I'm alright. And my three kids ... they're not kids anymore, they've got the language and they're very good on English, very good. Good interpreters and yeah ... I'm proud. And my grannies: ok, they're going to do well in English, but still teach them about cultural things. Robbie's really interested to go; he asks me a lot of questions. And Carlin does too.

### **Shannon-ku wapar – Shannon's story**

*I met with Shannon at Cave Hill. He was assisted by his wife Ngupulya Pumani. Close by, Tuppy and Puuna were cooking kangaroo tails and were encouraging and supporting Shannon to share this story. The interview was held in Yankunytjatjara language and a translation is provided as transcript.*

#### **The early days at Walatina**

Yes, in the early days, we were living at Walatina. I was born there at the place where the perentie's foot was speared, but there was no school, there was a cattle station. My parents were living there. My father worked with horses; we didn't go to school. And Yami wasn't a student there, he learned as a young man in Adelaide. There was no school at Walatina and they would walk to Mimili by the well, sleep there and go back to Walatina, out to Witjinti (around Granite Downs) and back to Walatina. And I would go around on foot, no car, only camels, or at times there were no camels and we would travel on foot.

I learned to pelt rabbits with rocks and to spear them.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Reclaiming Yankunytjatjara; resisting linguistic hegemony**

And I'm the only Yankunytjatjara speaker; the others who were there previously are now all speaking Pitjantjatjara.

The others, maybe they want Pitjantjatjara in their heart. Now they're teaching Pitjantjatjara in the school, not Yankunytjatjara. At the moment, there are young kids and they don't teach them

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<sup>11</sup> In the interview, Ngupulya relayed the Pitjantjatjara word for spear as Shannon has used the Yankunytjatjara word *katji* and Ngupulya is mediating for my benefit, knowing that I have a limited knowledge of Yankunytjatjara language. For further discussion on the process of collaborative brokering, see Chapter 3.

Yankunytjatjara language in school. And we think, we worry: ‘Why has Pitjantjatjara now become so dominant and Yankunytjatjara has disappeared?’

NP: Should be Yankunytjatjara as well.

SK: Yankunytjatjara should be taught in school, but it’s not. They’re just starting to speak it now, maybe those older ones, but maybe not, maybe they can’t learn. It might be too late for them to learn Yankunytjatjara, but there’s all of those babies there now, young children. Maybe they’ll teach them, but maybe not the older ones, it might really be too late.

### **Learning from my father**

My father was Maṭutjara. And we learned with him. Others were speaking Yankunytjatjara. But after we left, they were probably losing the Yankunytjatjara language, and now it’s just me. My language is Yankunytjatjara language. I was speaking Maṭutjara earlier, but the children from the other communities were speaking Pitjantjatjara. He was living there before there was a station; apparently they were digging a well. Old Tommy Cullinan and all of them were digging to establish the station. There weren’t any horses, and apparently the camp was on this side at the well over there.

They were killing dingo pups and trading the scalps for food and they dug the Walatina waterhole, the well, and came up and dug the Walatina homestead, opened it up, built the house, and then old Tommy Cullinan and my father deepened the well with a horse, and my father began to work finally as a stockman. That was the way they did it apparently, long ago. I guess I was born about then. At that place.

NP: There was no school.

### **Surviving the atomic testing**

They tell me at the clinic, ‘You’re 61’. I was a young child when they tested the atom bomb.

NP: And apparently they went into a hole when the bomb went off.

SK: I was there, I was a bigger child, and they’d travel around with a strong understanding of how to live in the bush. A black smoke arrived, that bomb was black, the smoke. And my mother put [us] in a hole, put us into a rabbit hole.

NP: Safe, apparently for safety. And they all went inside the hole and they were all safe there inside, him and the others, a small child. That bomb, there was smoke and [their mother] saved them.

SK: The middle of the smoke, and we were there.

### **Learning through station work**

There was no school at Walatina, only a station. My father taught me about horses. And so I suppose I started to climb on to the horse and was mustering cattle and I had bush English in the

stock camp; I was learning English through the stockmen talking. Not city English, not from the city; it was the way it was in the bush. Firstly to understand, and then I learned to speak it.

I learned to break in the horses and ride them, and also muster cattle, like that. Yes, we would couple the horses as it got late so that they would stay close and not be drawn far away.

## **Rose-ku wapar – Rose’s story**

### **Growing up learning**

When we moved out to Mimili, I was really excited because we were going bush and my idea of bush was fun. My idea of bush was going hunting. I had a love for animals. I wanted to know what animals lived out there. I didn’t mind eating animals either. I was five. I must have done a term at Traeger Park [a school in Alice Springs] and then we shifted out to Mimili. I also wanted to learn language from a very early age because I used to hear Mum and Dad talking at home and I couldn’t understand what they were saying. I really wanted to learn. Also when Mum and Dad did social and welfare work supporting Anangu coming into Alice, there was always that spoken language spoken around. I felt like I was missing out. I wanted to learn.

When I wasn’t at school, because Mimili didn’t have a school, we moved out there so I’d be following Mum around everywhere when she was doing the chores around the homestead; Karina was in her nappies, falling around. I’d be helping Mum daily with whatever chores she was doing and then I’d be quizzing her about language. I must have annoyed Mum a lot. I was asking her words and I was building my vocabulary, practising, and I started to put it into sentences. I tested it out on my uncles when they came over to visit. They must have thought it was quite funny too. That was a lot of fun. I was mixing with the cousins too. We learned a lot together like that as well. We taught Harry some English words and he’d teach us language. That was just through play, playing in the yard, down the creek. Imagination, playing, we even used to light fires and boil mud and think we were cooking and mix ashes together and that. I used to spot Tjamu [*grandfather*] across the creek watching us. I think he was keeping an eye on us to see we were not in danger. He used to look at the tracks too and I used to wonder what he was doing, but he must have been looking for snakes, making sure there were no snakes around.

### **Moving to Alice and trying to fit in**

When I was about nine years old we moved to Alice Springs and I went to Ross Park [school]. I got teased when I first got there by a part-Aboriginal kid brought up in the town. I got teased about being a coon, being a blackfella. He must have overheard us talking a bit of language too, so we were coons. I got teased about what I was wearing. When I was at Mimili, we used to go out to the stock camps. We were brought up as mini cowboys or cowgirls. ‘What are you doing dressing up like that? Like a coon?’ Things like that. I toughened up when I got there. That was from the boys, I was getting teased from boys. The girls were palya [*fine*]. I had a pretty good friend there that I got along with and she was actually quite smart. My level of education was right there with her. I

was able to team up with the really smart friend of mine. I just didn't worry about the teasing thing. I just tried to ignore.

I'd already had all that play and experience out bush and my motor skills were pretty good. I was competitive with sport, highly competitive, because I'd already developed all those skills out bush, throwing rocks and hitting something, you know? Being a 'dead-eyed dick'. I was strong too for my age, I reckon. Out at Mimili, riding horses strengthened my arms and legs. I think I gained a lot of respect from the other peers, seeing how capable I was.

I got into netball and softball. When you do interschool sports, you're not allowed to do that until you're in grade 4 but because I was already way ahead I got special leave for netball. When I was in grade 3 I was competing with the grade 4s and 5s, 6s and 7s. They thought I was getting special treatment so I got teased for that. It was good for me, I got the afternoon off. I got to compete. I was competitive, even though I was in grade 3, I was just as good as the grade 7. I got spotted by Mrs D, who was doing the after-school sports. I started off with her after school sports playing for Federals. There was my love for netball. Eventually I went up and I became an NT representative for under 21s. I got right up there. I didn't get picked in the end; I reckon I was pretty good by the time I was nineteen but all the selectors were in Darwin and there was a lot of racism in the sport. I was lucky that my development coach in Alice nominated me for a lot of things. I'd go to trials but I'd never make the cut because I was too aggressive. She asked, 'How come Rose isn't making the selection? She's really good, what's she failing in?' The head selector from Darwin said, 'She's too aggressive'. I was an NT representative for netball and softball. I came home and told Dad when I was going away and he said, 'How much do I have to pay now?'

'\$700, Dad.'

Poor Dad. I must have cost him a lot of money.

### **Schooling in Alice Springs**

I was always in the top stream from when I transitioned from School of the Air, but when I went from Traeger Park to School of the Air, they made me repeat year 2 because I went straight into the alphabet and sounded it out differently because I used to watch Sesame Street. I did School of the Air from Mimili. All they had to do was come and say, 'Rose, do you know how to say ABC?' I would've done it, but nobody asked me. I was asking Mum, 'Why am I doing year 2 again? I'm smart'. That knocked me down a bit with my confidence level. I thought, 'Why am I doing this work again? I know it'.

When I got to Alice, my birthday is in February so I was a year older than most kids then. That's why I think I had that leadership role. I thought in my head, 'I've done all this work before, I'm a leader. I can show this mob how to do it'. And that's why I sat at that top stream then, competing with the smart kids. I was always on top.

In year 7 I made the final cut for the honour roll but didn't get through. I think I was final three.

Then I went to Sadadeen for a bit, and then high school is where it kind of got a little bit undone for me. I think it was because I was competing in the A grade at fourteen for netball and for softball. I was already being introduced to alcohol. I was already mixing with nineteen-year-olds and eighteen-year-olds. I felt just completely lost and I didn't fit in. In a way I suppose I felt like it was being a bit babyish. I wanted to step into a more responsible role. High school was too slow and too low. I didn't like the big classrooms and the teaching. I just didn't fit into high school. There was peer pressure as well. When you start to get to adolescence, there's a lot of bitchiness. There was culture clash between my principles; my values and the Piraṅpa ones were different, you know? I couldn't find a group to fit in with. The only group that I could fit in with was the Anangu group and that was all about just being a support network for one another and laughing and sharing those instances where we were being picked on for racism or the colour of our skin. There was no homework centre for Anangu then. That would've been good, if we had homework class, we could've gone in together and learned together. There was none of that. There was no tutoring, there was no mentoring, there was no counselling, none of that for us Anangu students.

There was no structure there to foster our needs and the issues we were facing socially and economically. There was that \$3 ABSTUDY. The parents got \$21 or something. We used to get \$3 and there was no support. What do we do with that \$3? Other kids went and bought cigarettes. Others went and blew it on junk food, because there was junk food at the canteen then too and there was no real curriculum telling us not to eat junk food because that's bad for you. Mum never bought soft drink because we couldn't afford it probably or Mum knew the sugar was bad. When we got to school that \$3 'coonie', we used to call it. Bad hey? The \$3 coonie was really good for buying junk food at high school. We knew we couldn't have it at home – we couldn't afford it – but we did it at school. Other kids bought cigarettes and they were being introduced to smoking. Then I knew these were bad things.

### **High school in Adelaide**

I asked Dad if I could go south. I thought I might get away from all this peer pressure and this environment. That's when I went to the Mason family. I was going along really well. I was enjoying high school. Again, I went into the top stream. I was in year 9 in the top stream for Maths and English and Technical Studies. I enjoyed it, it was challenging. I managed along alright. That was without tutoring. Mr Mason organised a tutor that used to come in and help us when we had homework night. I was pretty much alright, I was cruising along ok. I was keeping up with my level.

I went to Norwood first, when I went to Nindee Hostel. Then they changed the policy, no girls at Nindee. So I had to move to Kali and I was travelling on the bus and that was an hour and a half every day, one way. Three hours of bus. That used to tire me out. I wasn't happy then. At Norwood, we used to have homework night as well with a tutor, with a group. I was keeping up. I was pretty competitive at Norwood High. I think I was doing French then. I had a Sri Lankan

friend. There were three Aboriginal people at Norwood High. One fellow was from Tennant Creek, another one from Katherine and then myself. One was a boxer and one young fellow was a break-dancer. He was good at performing arts, good at sport. He probably struggled a bit academically. He was getting extra help. Leroy was doing well; he was cruising along ok.

### **Stolen generations and finding relations**

There was a Warriappendi fellow there, who I'm still friends with today. He went on to be a didgeridoo player and he has travelled with Tiddas overseas. He was taken away, stolen generation. He ended up interstate, that's where he was raised. When he reconnected with his family, he found his mother in the Katherine region. He always talks about when he met me and Leroy at Nindee Hostel. He was attracted to us because he reckons we were these strong Aboriginal people. We knew who we were, we had our identity and that's what he wanted because he didn't have it. When I reconnected with them last year when he came to the rock [Uluru] after, he reconnected with Leroy and that's what he told us. He was feeling lost at that time. He reckons meeting us on country gave him the courage to go and reconnect with his own relations.

Actually, there was four of us, there was one other. We just had an instant connection. There was three of us at Nindee but there was one outsider, adopted by a white family. We got on really well. There was a bit of drama but I thought, 'That's alright, it's probably because they're living in the city and I put it down to that'. We used to talk and then they started to open up and talk about significant difficulties at home and how they were mistreated. Their adoptive father was good to them, but was unaware of what was happening, as the situation at home was largely hidden from him. They were having serious issues and I was just a friend really, just listening to it but then later in life, I then came to realise that we were very closely related. That was a small world.

They were taken away as a baby. Pretty much from the hospital. They came back to Mimili as an adult and reconnected with family. They didn't stay long and couldn't develop a strong relationship with the family because of some unfortunate conflict that occurred. Those people who are hurting or have been taken away, a lot of them have drug and alcohol problems because that's how they cope with that pain. I've lost contact with them now. They might have moved interstate again.

### **Transition from school to work**

I just thought, 'Mentally I'm too grown up to be in this school structure. I'm not enjoying it. I'm not learning anything and the place is too slow for me'. The traineeships came out and I read a little bit about that and I thought, 'I want one of these traineeships'. I started to analyse my interests and my passion. Dad was the director at Pitjantjatjara Council then. There were other issues happening at home then, Mum and Dad had split up. I had a job at Coles and I was working on the weekends to earn money and to help Mum as well. I was paying a little bit of board. Leroy had left school; he wasn't happy after the divorce. He bombed out three months before his exams. When that happened it's like a yacht. The rudder was cracked then, the sails are broken and the ship was just, we were like the crew. It was a bit out of control. We were in the stormy water. Our whole security

was broken then as well. There was a lot of pain there at home. Working at Coles, I got money and Leroy used to steal it off me. That was another factor. I want to go forward in life. I went to Dad and I said, 'Dad, can you line me up with a traineeship at the legal service? I want to work in the legal service'. I had to wait. The first traineeship came up at APY as a permit clerk. I did that for only about five months. Then I just picked it up that quickly, I was that intelligent, I could learn things really quickly. The permit thing I learned in five months and my supervisor realised, 'This girl can do a bit more'.

They slipped another trainee into the permit clerk position and then they got funding for another trainee position in the legal service. I got that and then my boss, Maureen Tehan, was the Principal Legal Officer there and the senior one was Richard Bradshaw. Richard wasn't a people person but Maureen had an interest in helping youth. Maureen had that interest in me and developed a trainee package to cater for my needs, for what I wanted. She sat down with me and asked, 'What do you really want? What skills have you got now? What are you thinking for the future for yourself?' She developed this training program with the department that was handing out the traineeships in the Northern Territory at the time. I was put on a 12-month traineeship. My position was trainee legal secretary/field officer. I said I spoke language so she could see that there was potential for being an interpreter. She gave me a lot of paralegal things to do. I was doing jail visits and taking down instructions off clients in language and going back and reporting it to her and putting it in the file, writing it up and progressing cases of whether it was personal injuries or criminal matters or whatever. Land rights, land issues. I wasn't involved in the big things like mining or anything like that. I was just a baby junior. She personally lent me her car when I was going for my licence. We only had a big four-wheel drive when I was sixteen. That's when I was able to, independently at sixteen, do trips out to the Lands and get instructions and take out locum lawyers and be the person in charge of taking the lawyers out when they had to do their work. Luckily I knew how to change tyres and I knew how to drive in the bush from when I grew up at Mimili. All those skills are all built in for me already which enabled me to do that traineeship well. Twelve months in, I got full employment and did another six years after that.

### **The early working days and getting hungry for country**

Mum was there working for Nganampa [Health Service]. Karina was going to school and Leroy was kind of a bit lost but doing the odd bit of mustering when he went out to Kenmore. He did mustering at Watinuma. Leroy was still trying to find his way at that stage. I'd had enough, I thought, 'That's it, I want to be independent'. I moved out of home and got a flat with a friend. On my traineeship, that was tough. I was on like \$130 a week so I was budgeting \$30 a week for food. I ate a lot of dim sims and rice. There were still visits back to Mum to eat her cooking. That fostered my interest in legal studies. Maureen also allowed me to take time off to do a management course at IAD. I did a management course and I was pretty young, I was one of the youngest in the group. I would've been seventeen or eighteen and the others were well in their thirties. I was learning heaps in there, listening to their experiences. They were already in various management

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levels in different combined Aboriginal organisations. Maureen wrote into my job description for me to attend combined Aboriginal organisation meetings. That was my first role in a governance setting. I'd go along and listen to the combined Aboriginal organisations and just report back to the director then.

Then Dad got Walatina back. I was worried about him being on his own out there. I started to get hungry for going back to country. We didn't really have anywhere to go back to, to call our place. Mimili, sure, we'd been at Mimili and we did live in that community but it was a community environment, it's not like a homeland. When Dad got the place back, there was just this calling for me to go back there. I had Kiah, I was a mother then. I wanted her to go back to have those opportunities that I had when I was little. I moved back when I was twenty-one.

### **Back on country**

I went back to Walatina. First year back was spent just getting to know the country and the layout, learning the Anangu names for certain places. Mum was showing us the different bush medicines and bush tucker. We were enjoying hunting. There was no cattle then, it was just reconnecting with the country and learning and getting the feel for the place.

Coming back to Walatina, it just felt like it was home. Nobody could kick us out, nobody could say, 'This isn't your place, get going', nothing. It was ours. It was our birthright to be there. We knew that because it was Dad's place. We were following his line. In a way, for Mum there was a bit of an empty space there. We could see that Mum didn't really have country, it was taken away. They were dispossessed. We knew that side as well. She was born on Tieyon Station, east of Kulgera and south of Finke. Mum got her consent of determination this year. That's native title, that's not land rights. She was very happy about it, very happy, for getting that this year. De Rose Hill is also her family place, right through really to Ernabella.

We are Anangu. Her father who grew her up was Arrernte. She grew up with that Southern Arrernte connection, but she was from the Ernabella region. She's got a lot of relations at Amata as well.

That's because that's where her grandfather came from on her mum's side. My katja [*great grandfather*] came from there, from Amata. My mother's side, and my mother's mother's side. We could go back and be in that area but Walatina is home because it's Dad's grandfather's, from that side. We grew up at Mimili, therefore that root was strong and connection there was really strong. Being at Walatina just made us feel a sense of pride and a big boost to our self-esteem. It was really good for our mental health and wellbeing at that stage. We're connecting to country, learning about that ngintaka story, learning about how Dad grew up. I never read his book but I know those chapters because we quizzed him and he talked to us around the fire. We even drove out, we had field trips driving out to places. He talked about the stories and we did the cultural mapping through a little grant, we got \$30,000 to do the cultural mapping. What dad wanted was he wanted the sites protected and wanted us to be aware of it so if he passed, we didn't damage it when we

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had the cattle business or if there was any mining interest that came in. We had a cultural responsibility on us.

### **Living free; bringing family, cultural and economic interests together**

This was a chance to live on country and have a go at making a living, to live on country and also move forward economically for our family. That's how I viewed it. I really wanted to try and make a living. Leroy became a park ranger. I wanted to have a go at living on the land. Not being too greedy but making a little bit of money and not being reliant on having a job and being restrained and not having that freedom of creating your own interests and living free. It was like living free when I was at Walatina. I suppose the cattle business grew and money came into play. I was overworked, I was overworking myself. I got a bit carried away I think. I burnt myself out then. In 2005 I got pretty sick. I was working six days a week, 12 hour days and having Sunday off. I had two kids, Robbie and Kiah. But lucky Mum was there and Mum took on the role of being the nanny. She did the teaching. She was teaching her grandkids about country and a little bit of language, looking after their wellbeing. I might have been on a stock camp for eight days in the scrub, she'd be taking them for school and cooking and cleaning for them. She'd bring them out and she'd camp out with me on the weekends. Robbie had a motorbike so he used to like jumping on the motorbike. I was a bit discriminative towards Kiah and that's why she did a lot of cooking with Nanna. That's fostered her passion for cooking.

She used to help Nanna, my mum, in the kitchen doing the cooking for the stockmen when we were in the yard doing the yard work. It was physically demanding on everyone. We were up from sun-up until sundown. When you've got 300 to brand and do the nutting and all that, you've got to do it quickly because they're drinking all that water and you've got to feed the stock, so you're managing that. You're trying to do it really quickly so you're working flat out. It's taxing on your body, it's exhausting. Because I was already fit from my sport, that's why I could do it competitively. I learned a big lesson that too much of anything is no good for you. I wish I'd have managed that better.

### **Learning at Walatina; two generations on**

I wanted my kids to learn to read and write obviously. I wanted to leave that up to the [Mintabie] school to do. I felt like my role was to look after their wellbeing, prepare them emotionally to deal with issues that come up. That was my role, and the school's role was to teach them to read and write and look after them in that way. My role was their emotional wellbeing and discipline and endurance, persistence. I wanted to instil all those qualities, the Anangu side of things, the philosophy. Mum helped with all of that. Religion, that was our job. The school's job was for reading and writing. That's how I saw it. I was trying to work out how can I blend these two worlds together? Anangu way was important as well to teach them the rules of how to conduct themselves, teaching them those things, kinship. All those things that Dad talked about. That's our role as parents and the grandparents as well. Dad was doing that as well, talking to them. He was busy as

well, travelling as well, so Mum did a lot for the kids. That was her role, Anangu role as a grandparent that she was doing and did very well. That's how I viewed it.

### **Young people, education and the future**

What's going to matter is that we know where we come from, we know our family history. We know the history of land rights, that we know about the history of past events like the bomb, the Maralinga testing. All those things have had a massive impact on our family and our region. It shouldn't be written out of history; it needs to be written into history. It needs to be taught at school. All those things like the referendum, native title and land rights; all of those things are really important. I just want my kids to be really strong in knowing their black history, learning their language of course and being strong in their culture, not to lose that culture. That's where they're going to lose their identity. There are so many traps out there for our youth. Even I got trapped along the way and had obstacles, got led astray. I think if you're strong in your identity, you're more resilient and robust and able to get through those tough times. You've always got to have that cultural mentor there for you when you're a youth so you've got someone to fall back on and ask for wisdom and advice.

When we lose our grandparents, our roles change and our responsibilities change and hopefully we're prepared to fit into those roles and continue what they did. Taking on that different role now, it's teaching them their kinships. I'm teaching my kids at the moment how to be a good uncle and aunty. One is twelve, one is thirteen and they're learning now how to be a good uncle and a good ngunytju [*mother*] to little Lucy May. I'm giving a lot of advice. I'm not being pushy and bossy anymore. I've just got to be a guiding hand. I'm also teaching, helping Kiah to be a good parent. My role is changing. I've got to be more disciplined with my patience. You're growing and you're changing all the time. You're learning and shifting into different roles. I'm a grandparent now. My role has changed. It's a different role, being a grandparent.

### **Managing family, schooling and work**

I need flexibility. I can't be in a full-time job. That's why I'm a bit worried about taking on this TAFE role, even though it's only two and a half days a week. I won't have that flexibility now if anything goes wrong or there's an incident in the family, I won't have that flexibility to drop it and deal with it. I'm a little bit worried about that, I don't know how it's going to work out. I know I will always put family first. I think that's the difference between Anangu and other people, we always put family first before work. Work can wait; can family wait? I don't think so. Mum and Dad are older now so my role is changing. Kiah is even growing and changing too. She's thinking about how to help her grandparents because they helped her. She's even questioning whether she needs to go back to country. Then you think, 'Well, what about little Lucy May, what about her development?' We've talked about what we could do with Lucy May while we're out there. It looks positive, it's just the schooling for Lucy May's uncle and aunty that is holding us back at the moment.

I don't think it would work for them to attend a community school, because on a homeland you can protect your children from those bad social issues that are prevalent in Anangu communities like drug abuse, violence, petrol sniffing and relationship breakdowns. Like young people having adult relationships when they're only *tjitji tjapu tjuta* [*very young children*]. They haven't learned, they're not mentally ready yet to deal with that. That's just putting extra stress on you as an individual. I want to keep my kids away from that. I want to tell them that you're responsible for your choices and your actions. Say if they did go to Mintabie School, I'd be worried about the level of their education and how competitive they can be. When they become adults, I would like them to go further than me and I would like them, I know it's not all about me, but I'd like them to get a good job and that could mean going to university or TAFE.

Whether the kids will pursue an outside career or work in areas that are important to Anangu is a bit of an unknown and something that I question all the time. For instance, Robbie: I would've loved for him to come back and develop that sort of stuff but there's no opportunity on the Lands. There's nothing there. There's no career pathway for him there. He has to go away and get that experience now and develop it. Then he might come back later when he's thirty. At the moment he's still doing his discovery but he still needs to make a living. He still needs a genuine job, a real job. That's what he said, he said, 'Mum, there's nothing out there for me, I've got to go to Darwin. I want to play footy too'. So he's gone away. Kiah, same for her, there's no opportunity there for her. The only opportunity is at Ayers Rock Resort and we were hoping she was going to get into that. Then there's that commercial cookery at Umuwa. Kiah is getting a yearning for coming back to country because she's finding it hard to fit into young people in the city with highly sexualised behaviours and selfies and all that stuff. All that makes her feel no good about being there in that space and she's a mum herself now. She's starting to think, 'What does Lucy May need?' She's probably thinking the same way, that Lucy May needs to grow up on country to get that foundation. There's no opportunity and that's why our youth have to go away, to get those opportunities, which is sad because they can't be on their own country.

### **Growing opportunities for economic participation and equal power**

There needs to be strong leadership to develop those interests and ideas for language and media. If we could have the youth involved in digital filmmaking, they could be producing stuff that they could sell. How can we foster that for them? What about bands? How do we manage it so they're not being ripped off? You get people who come from the city that pick up on a band and make money off them and same with art. They make money off them but is it an equal partnership economic model? I don't know. We need to teach that in the training, business administration and business courses, how to run a business. What skills you need, what things you need to think about. How do you use the internet? How do you do market research? It needs to be done out in the bush. The difference between bush and the city is the pace as well. In the city it's flat out. Out in the bush you can slow down and think about things slowly. It's like time stands still a bit in a way when you're out bush. That's why I think it could be a good environment for those young people to do

those courses, accurately, slowly and thoroughly. It could be a good environment for that to happen. We don't fit into that flat-out lifestyle. Anangu culture is different.

I just want to say that because of those outside influences of government ideas that are coming in, it's not level with us and that's why we need that strong leadership for those people to block and protect our youth in ways so that we're fostering their needs and our culture, our values and that's what worries me. It's being lost. We don't want our kids to be caught up in the walypala [*whitefella*] race, that 'rat race'. We want to do it our way from our values, from our history, our culture; our experiences are different. Our pain is different. We're trying to heal as well, all in the same process. We need to protect our youth so we're not losing that culture. They're caught up with rap stuff and alcohol and drugs and all those outside bad influences. We need to give them guidance in doing and living the right way.

### **Chapter summary**

Yami, Shannon and Rose all provide accounts of growing up before local community schooling was available. Yami commenced engagement with Western education and employment as a teenager following the loss of his sight, and Rose began school of the air and then attended school in Alice Springs. These three Yankunytjatjara narratives are strongly shaped by the historical engagement with colonialism where cattle station life and close physical proximity to the Maralinga atomic testing of the 1950s profoundly affected Yankunytjatjara lives in ways that other populations throughout the tristate area were not.

The close, daily relationships that took place with Piranpa, such as the Cullinan family of Walatina, and the history of the stolen generation and institutional care that was more closely coupled to station lives than the missions of the tristate area have also significantly shaped the generations of the Lester and Kantji families in their engagement with education as well as political and economic engagement. These historical features are reflected in concerns about the current generation in terms of language reclamation, cultural identity and continuing relationship with the land. This history does, however, enable strong political and representational engagement with policymakers and other bodies through strong educational engagement and English language acquisition. These accounts pay significant attention to historical accounts, but also consider what is important for the next generations, which, despite contrasting histories and different experiences of educational engagement, echo the Anangu values voiced in Pitjantjatjara language narratives recorded in this thesis.

## Chapter 10: Analysis and dialogue

### Staging the dialogue

This chapter features a staged dialogue between Anangu participants and Piranpa educators. This contributes to addressing research questions:

B: How have committed educators, nominated by Anangu, taken account or been unaware of these positions in their work?

C: What are the possibilities for standpoint dialogue in Anangu education that is open, honest, power-sensitive and ethically attuned?

Standpoint dialogue requires more than the presentation of ‘subjective narrative’ and drawing analysis from ‘the aggregation of stories from lived experience’ (Nakata, 2007a, p. 11). Harding (1992) explains that, from a standpoint theoretical perspective, ‘one must start from outside’ (p. 581) the ‘values and interests that structure scientific institutions, practices, and conceptual schemes’ (p. 580) ‘to gain a causal, critical view of them’ (p. 581). Further, ‘one important way to do so is to start thought from marginal lives’ (p. 581). Drawing on matrix theory, she argues that attention to ‘the way class, gender, and race construct and maintain each other’ (p. 582) is necessary. Standpoint conversation, then, requires an awareness of the locations of power, and it privileges knowledges generated from the margins through what Haraway (1988) calls ‘power-sensitive conversation’ (p. 590). This shifts the conversation and research focus from being ‘about marginal lives’ to being ‘*from* them’ (Harding, 1992, p. 582).

Working from Harding’s (1992) methodological conception of ‘democratic dialogue – the sort characteristic of coalitions – between various marginal communities and, also, the dominant ones’ (p. 582), I am attempting to stage standpoint conversations between and across various standpoints, recognising the diversity and similarities within and across Anangu standpoints, and also across Anangu and Piranpa standpoints. Actual dialogue of this sort seldom occurs where language barriers and points of epistemic and ontological difference are compounded by significant demands on educators’ time and accountability to the system rather than to the community. In this chapter I stage ‘dialogue’ through selections from the data of interviews with Piranpa principals, framed by analytic reference to Anangu themes and standpoints presented in previous chapters.

In this chapter, Piranpa educator voices are presented and are ordered in response to themes identified through analysis of Anangu narratives. I have not provided references for these comments, as the pool of experienced and recognised educators even across some 75 years of Anangu education is relatively small, and it is important that people remain unidentifiable. The voices represented below move across different groups and historical generations, covering Piranpa reflections on colonialism in relation to diverse Anangu standpoint accounts. This staging of ‘dialogue’ does not represent interaction between two essentialised positions: there are

convergences but also divergences among Anangu positions, as well among Piranpa educators, and between Anangu and Piranpa standpoints.

Chapters 5–9 of this thesis featured interview testimony from Anangu voices, more-or-less verbatim, with some very brief summary provided. An important methodological feature of this means of representation was to privilege Anangu epistemologies and pedagogies in the research process. This means that the stories needed to stand, in text form, as close as possible to the original context of the narratives, without much analytic dissection. In this chapter, however, I present less elaborate excerpts from interviews with Piranpa educators and frame the analytical development, which then continues in the concluding Chapter 11. In this way I broker between the academic genre of analysis and the Indigenous genre of storytelling. Although in this chapter I follow the genre of thematic analysis which tends toward Piranpa/academic epistemology, the key themes are derived from earlier-presented Anangu narratives. The themes that were generated from this thematic analysis approach are presented in two tables at Appendix 2.

The Piranpa educators who contributed to this chapter are all critical friends in the work of Anangu education. They have been identified by Anangu participants as experienced, competent and ethical practitioners who can contribute meaningfully to the dialogue. These educators are unusual in that they have often spent many years working in the community, learned language and maintained ongoing relationships with Anangu. There are eight Piranpa educators in total, whose experiences are spread across a timespan from the 1950s to the present, and have worked as principals or in senior teaching positions. Their experience comes from government and non-government school sector experience and from early years to secondary education. All of the comments provided in block quotes come from Piranpa educator accounts unless specifically referenced.

Data analysis shows that the most common themes discussed by Anangu participants included family, values, Anangu capacities and strengths, language and culture, and experiences and observations of classroom-based learning. Other strongly represented themes included employment; aspiration; traditional learning models; identity and belonging; and community concerns in relation to justice, violence, health and so on. The importance of relationships and collaboration between school, family and community are also strongly represented.

For Piranpa educators, the most commonly discussed themes included school, family and community collaboration, issues of teacher preparedness, relationships, examples of school-based learning, the importance of Aboriginal language and Anangu capacities and strengths. Discussions about values and the need for contextually responsive teaching were also strongly represented.

### **Common ground**

Relationships between Piranpa educators and Anangu students and their families were identified as important by Anangu and Piranpa interviewed. A commitment to maintaining trusting relationships with the community was viewed as being of primary importance, and in some cases, is considered indicative of success as an educator:

It's about the relationship ... you have to keep working at it and also not give up when things get difficult.

If I achieved anything or had any success, I think I put it down to immersing yourself in the community. Being open to them and spending time with them.

I think the reason why I learnt the language was just because there were people there that I really wanted to be friends with, I wanted to communicate with, and that I really respected. I loved to learn their stories, learn all the stuff that they would tell me but at the same time I didn't want to be intrusive, like asking questions all the time. That's why it just takes time.

Relationships with the community were also considered to be vital in informing a more intimate understanding of the ontological and epistemological context of the community, which in turn informs and shapes education practice:

I say at the start of every year and all through the year, 'If you're offered an opportunity, go for it, take it. You learn language through hanging out with Anangu; do it. Invite AEWs over to your house. If they ask you to go out on a bush trip, yes, go on a bush trip. That way, because you get to meet kids in a totally different way, you see bits of their life, you're listening into their language.

[My relationships] shape my work in that I know what is going to work and what's not going to work. It's not like you go there and you maintain everything that is whitefella about you. There's a lot of you that you have to move into the Anangu world and be respectful.

Piranpa also critiqued Piranpa tendencies to fail to listen or to be bureaucratic rather than relationship-focused. At times, experienced educators implore their colleagues to see the importance of relationships with the local community and to pursue them as an avenue for informing their understanding of their own place in the community, but also to shape a more contextually responsive approach to teaching. Piranpa pointed to teachers who have superficial relationships with children and their families, who do not know all the members of the community and who fail to learn to see the world from Anangu perspective:

There are still people who really have very, very superficial relationships with the kids and the kids' families. Generally speaking it's secondary teachers, because I think secondary teachers come in with a headset that, 'I'm here to teach a subject'. I say, 'You're not here to teach a subject, you're not here to teach art, you're here to teach Anangu'. There's a massive difference.

There are things that happen constantly that you need to deal with. You have to. If there's been trouble at night time and Anangu decide 'We're going to sort this one out now', of course, you go and do that. If you were to shut yourself off from doing that in preference of filling in a form, I think you're breaking down that relationship that the school has with the community.

We only have five streets or so. You should know where every person in the community lives, you should know where the kids in your class live. You should



know the names of the parents. There's no excuse for it. I think, within all the little things that teachers do, you need to kind of move away from your own whitefella worldview and see that I'm actually in a bit of a foreign land. I chose to embrace it.

Their accounts indicate the importance that experienced educators place on relationships that are trusting, respectful and power-sensitive and stand as excellent advice to teachers entering the Anangu education context. This requires educators to step away from the power position and role they play as 'teacher' and approach the interface as a learner and to be persistent in engaging these relationships as an ethical and ongoing commitment to successful teaching practice. These testimonies stress the importance of making an epistemic shift that, in the process, entails ethical shifts. This requires being ready to hear and value Anangu ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies – to rethink the purposes of education accordingly, thinking beyond Western/institutional standpoints about the nature and purposes of schooling.

### **Absences**

There were a number of themes that I had anticipated but were rarely referred to explicitly in the data collected. These included the policy direction of 'Closing the Gap', policy and political issues, notions of sustainable delivery, university and further education (other than community-based teacher education) and the language of high expectations. These themes were anticipated as they are present in the contextual backdrop of remote education policy narratives. Their absence in the data shows epistemic gaps between how policymakers think and how both Anangu communities and Piranpa educators think in relation to remote education. Issues given some attention, but far less than anticipated, included boarding school, concerns about racism and concerns about academic achievement and outcomes. School attendance was also addressed, but not prominently and, although Piranpa educators made a number of references to academic success and the purposes of education, these were generally in the context of explaining how they felt unclear in their understandings and intentions as practitioners.

The absences indicate both diversity in community contexts and priorities, but also point to a disconnection between remote communities and the metro-centric origins of policy discourses and their underpinning assumptions. Given the dominance of school attendance, boarding schools and achievement in national literacy and numeracy benchmark testing (NAPLAN) (see B. Wilson, 2014) in remote education discourse, it is unsurprising that these themes were present in Anangu and Piranpa narratives. However, these were not dominant themes, which provides further evidence of the presence of alternative community expectations in relation to the role of schooling in preparing young people for the future.

In the context of this study, perhaps one of the most telling absences is the indication that no significant standpoint dialogue has occurred, either historically or in current education practice. Piranpa educators demonstrated experience and expertise in being able to describe the challenges and limitations of engaging with Anangu contexts, as well as a depth of understanding of their own position, showing capacity to account for Anangu standpoints to a degree. However, they were also

quick to convey uncertainty about their own sense of achievement and whether community expectations and understandings of the purpose of education were recognised or met.

Similarly, a lack of attention paid by Anangu to challenges for Piranpa teachers suggests that Anangu readiness or willingness to engage with Western education and knowledge orientations, and dominant policy contexts and assumptions, is an issue that needs to be broached rather than ignored. Within the daily pressures of remote teaching, the careful brokering and developing of a standpoint conversation seems almost impossible. Indications of standpoint conversations between Anangu and Piranpa only emerged where the educator expressed a lifelong commitment to engaging Anangu social and knowledge spaces, including mastery of local languages, or where relationships have continued and developed after the teacher had left the community, allowing spaces for standpoint conversations to emerge. These types of ‘democratic dialogues’ (Harding, 1992, p. 582) do not happen easily or often; they need to be negotiated carefully. One education leader sought support for this type of dialogue to occur, seeing it as critical for informing future plans for the school to be responsive to community expectations.

## **Young people, education and the future: a standpoint dialogue**

### **Points of difference between Anangu and Piranpa standpoints**

Some themes given strong emphasis by Anangu remained virtually untouched by Piranpa educators. Likewise, some themes regularly raised by Piranpa educators were not addressed by Anangu. The importance of family was discussed by both Anangu and Piranpa, but the significant weight applied to this theme by Anangu was not reflected in educator accounts.

Anangu provided substantial reflection on themes of school completion, the importance of student confidence, employment and transitions to employment, identity and belonging, and young people staying in the community or leaving in order to access education and employment. All these themes remain comparatively untouched throughout educator accounts.

Piranpa educators maintained strong focus on issues of teacher preparedness, contextual complexity, accountability, Piranpa capacity to recognise and account for Anangu standpoints and limitations of Piranpa educators at the cultural interface with Anangu. These themes were not addressed by Anangu participants to any significant degree.

Themes identified in the narratives are discussed in more detail below. The differences in focus between Anangu and Piranpa narratives reflect differences across the collective standpoints but also provide insights into the questions that are generated through lived experience. Piranpa educator narratives largely occupy themes which reflect their struggles in coming to terms with negotiating points of epistemological and ontological difference in their work and lives as teachers in Anangu communities. Anangu narratives also addressed issues of working between epistemic worlds, but had a much more holistic view of young people and education, including the condition for successfully positioning young people for educational engagement and wider concerns such as life outside of school. The scope of themes covered indicates that Anangu are frequently aware of

the challenges of negotiating dual epistemic and social systems, an important element of Anangu engagement with education that is largely overlooked in policy rhetoric and decision-making.

### **Family as foundation**

Storytelling is the preferred genre for Anangu participants sharing knowledge throughout this thesis. Personal recollections through story as pedagogy are shared in reflecting on learning, particularly in the family context but also in relation to school-based learning such as Katrina's 'close and constant [Anangu] voices', which she identifies as a key to success in early generations of schooling at Ernabella, and Gordon's 'family as foundation' are stressed as crucial to successful engagement with schooling. The importance of family and community participation in schooling was also seen as critical to the success of schooling endeavours and deeply valued by Anangu narrators. Piranpa educators can see the importance of family in the education process, but are also unclear at times of how they might negotiate a shared teaching approach across school and home and across pedagogical, epistemological and ontological differences, particularly where these differences conflict:

- I said [to a parent], "I just can't understand how you have just let her do that." She said, "But you've taught our children not to listen to us." That went into my heart in a terrible way. I've never forgotten her saying it and I've never forgotten me and my reaction to it.
- What's important? Anangu important is family and country and teaching about their stories and how it can be translated into art and whatever; telling your stories, writing your stories, dance, all that's happening and what is so important is that it's important to your family. If you're a kid and it's not important to your family, it's not going to be important to you. You're not going to go home and care about school but if what you're doing is making your family proud and they see your family really involved in the school and being excited about what they're doing, then the kids are going to learn. It's the only reason why any of us learn, because our families were pushing us. Especially there, because you're another culture – who wants to turn into a whitefella? That's all they see, the teachers are there, the educated ones, they're called. They're not going to model themselves on those teachers, it's the family that's important to them. If the family is not involved in the school, you're just fighting a losing battle really.

The importance of family as a starting point for recognition of Anangu culture was the theme most regularly referred to across the Anangu narratives as a central influence in shaping identity, sharing knowledge and inspiring young people. The quotes above show Piranpa educator empathy, but also perhaps not a sufficiently deep understanding of the ontology in which family is a community grounded in cultural history and geographic place. Rather, a more universalised (Western/white-based) model of 'the importance of family' is presented – which more direct and substantive standpoint dialogue with Anangu might illuminate.

Below, an educator recognises their own constraints for building aspiration in ways consistent with Anangu culture (see also, Burton & Osborne, 2014; Minutjukur & Osborne, 2014; Osborne &

Guenther, 2013a; Tjitayi & Osborne, 2014), incorporating family-oriented priorities, pedagogies and socialisation into the more rigid education space Piranpa occupy. The quote that follows shows somewhat more indication of recognition of Anangu culture, and its basis in ontology, as different from the ‘white’ culture of schooling – although still with some projection of assumptions based in a dominant cultural framing:

- There was significant social and cultural change but, underlying that, there were natural things happening. Role modelling was going on anyway; white people can’t be role models but they can still imitate them. The real role models were those who we know were typical, like young men were expected to be fit and strong and to be able to ride horses and climb the ranges and things like that. Girls were expected to be good mothers and whatever else and become maybe a teaching assistant or work in the office or the craft room or something like that. But motherhood was sort of like the main thing.

Standpoint dialogue offers potential to explore the spaces between family life and classroom learning which, according to educators, is problematic – and in which they may sense that they, and schooling, need to comprehend Anangu history and culture better than they do currently, despite this being a difficult ask. Anangu accounts within this thesis describe how families talk to their children and how educators can work with families and the wider community. The accounts explain the feelings children have in a classroom as they struggle to negotiate unfamiliar social and learning contexts in classrooms under the tuition of Piranpa educators. The high valuation that the interviewed Piranpa educators put on contributions from Anangu educators shows their sense both of what they do not know in terms of cultural-historical-ontological difference and that they do know that these differences matter to school engagement of Anangu learners.

### **Anangu educators**

There were strong statements from Piranpa educators about Anangu educators as the ‘only hope’ for future Anangu education in which local language, values and culture could be valorised through schooling. Examples of Anangu educators being critical to educational success were described throughout early schooling accounts, particularly at Ernabella, Amata and Areyonga, where the main language of instruction, particularly in the early years, was Pitjantjatjara and relatively few Piranpa teachers worked intensively to support teams of local educators on a daily basis:

- We prepared our lessons for the next day, meticulously, in detail: what will your group be doing and how did you get on with this today? We planned and prepared their lessons much more than I worked on mine because we needed to do that.
- I learnt a lot from [the Anangu educator]. She was doing a lot of work with the language. We had [a man] who used to come and teach as well as her husband would come and teach *inma* (traditional dancing and singing) with the kids and the women. We did quite a lot of cultural stuff as well. We taught mainly around themes but really I still think that’s the best way to teach. We taught all the languages, all the subjects around the one theme and the kids were really interested in that sort of thing.

- We tried to set up the school so that we were teaching Aboriginal teachers, and, in order to achieve this, we had formal classes only in the mornings and in the afternoons when the kids came back they would do a craft activity or art or whatever while we did some work with the Anangu teachers in preparation for the next day. What we found with Anangu teachers in charge of classes was kids were well behaved because it was not the teacher up there it was their relative, whether it was a man or a woman.

Positive early era accounts (1950s–1980s) demonstrate an appreciation of Anangu standpoints and reflect the priority of place that Anangu educators, families, communities and language held in the construction of curriculum and pedagogy. In more recent accounts (1990s–current), Anangu engagement becomes a matter of delegation rather than standpoint dialogue due in part to challenging institutional limits, especially in recent policy climates, about which Piranpa educators express frustration. These frustrations are consistent with broader policy shifts described by Nicholls, among others (Graham, 1999; Nicholls, 2005; Walton, 1995), where local language, knowledges and educator programs, which grew from the early 1970s, were largely abandoned by the late 1990s as English language literacy and national testing programs (NAPLAN) became the imperative:

I get exasperated when I hear politicians saying, ‘They’re not even sending their kids to school’. What’s so marvellous about this? You’ve got people teaching there that are teaching stuff that the kids don’t really want to learn. Why don’t they want to learn? Well they don’t want to learn because it’s not relevant. If they were run by Aboriginal people, Aboriginal people would almost by accident be introducing things into the course that were relevant. Anyway, here we are.

It is a crowded curriculum and we no longer have adequate training for Anangu staff. Formal training for Anangu staff hasn’t happened at our school for a number of years. Hopefully some training opportunity is going to be available in the future, but in the meantime, teachers get on with the business of teaching.

I think [Anangu teachers] probably got told for a very long time that they actually weren’t doing a very good job in that ridiculous requirement that they will teach in English. As if that was ever going to happen. There was constant criticism coming back. What were they? They weren’t taught our mainstream university course, they were taught something that was appropriate for being a teacher in an Anangu school. There were certain people who were very pro-Anangu teachers and [pro] getting them in, but the support kind of dropped off.

Piranpa educators also made the correlation between erosion of support for local language and educators and denial of power in education. From the educator’s perspective, these issues of power and justice are of utmost importance: a continuing failure to prioritise Anangu language, values and educators tells young people ‘they can never make it’ and there’s not ‘much future’ for Pitjantjatjara lifestyles being sustained through mainstream education:

- One of the reasons it’s important for Aboriginal people to run the schools is because [the systems] think school has got to be in English and Anangu kids are dumb. Anangu kids aren’t, they’re really quite smart. We have to let them

demonstrate this I think. If that doesn't happen, well then I don't think there's much future for Pitjantjatjara-based education. I don't mean Pitjantjatjara language, I mean Pitjantjatjara lifestyle.

- We've been looking at wellbeing and the fact that you can't expect kids to be learning if they're not happy or they've got problems and that sort of thing. If white people are always in control, and they are, no matter how much they say they're not or they're trying not to be, they're always in control of what the kids are seeing; [Anangu teachers] are always 'less than'; they can never make it.

Recent educator accounts further reflect growing tensions in relation to voice and power where Anangu priorities and Anangu educators are increasingly marginalised in education dialogue and policymaking. The critical voice in the second quote above does not reflect on how the discourse of 'wellbeing', and associated identification of 'problems' (or deficits), is hard to avoid when policy puts that discourse into school circulation as the way to discuss plights of Anangu learners. Still, these educators recognise epistemic differences between education policy assumptions and needs and aspirations in Anangu terms. They highlight that education for justice involves rethinking curriculum, pedagogy and the priority of Anangu educators, language and knowledge in Anangu education.

These accounts point to current incommensurability in values and priorities between education policy and Anangu terms of educational reference, leaving committed and ethically attuned educators caught between the three impulses of 1) advocating 'upwards' to those with greater power in systemic decision-making about educational approaches, 2) recognising the ethical obligations to listen — *and actually hear* (see Delpit, 1993) how Anangu might define their needs and aspirations, and 3) pressures to comply with current policy trajectories in which language and logics of 'intervention', 'Closing the Gap' and 'standards and accountability' (Biesta, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) marginalise Anangu knowledge that offers assets for engaged learning (Moll et al., 1992; Zipin, 2013). Instead, schooling imposes Western and urban-centric education models. In the power-laden silencing of education dialogue (Delpit, 1993), Anangu voices remain the least powerful – underscoring the need for power-sensitive standpoint dialogue across actors and stakeholders in Anangu education.

### **Teacher preparation and positioning**

Pirampa educators paid significant attention to the need for teachers incorporate into their teaching practice a consideration of their own identity positions, in order to develop reciprocal relationships with Anangu learners that include growing understanding of Anangu languages, epistemologies and values. A key concern is how educators position themselves for 'honest' listening, sensitive to issues of power in learning–teaching relationships. One advises:

- Get to know the AEWs and actually ask their advice about things; don't think that you know everything. Really ask their advice, not just a token. After a lesson, have a chat and ask them how do you think that went? Could I have

done it better? They've usually been in the classroom for years. They know the kids, they know the community. They've got things they would like to say but they're not going to say it unless you really honestly are going to listen to what they say.

- I came up to here with this incredibly naïve belief that Anangu were at the centre and driving all of the decisions about education and that it would be so different to what it was like everywhere else. That was the one belief I had coming up. The other belief I had coming up was I know absolutely nothing. I just came into this job thinking that there will probably be things from my past experience with Aboriginal people that would be useful but I should come in really with no preconceived ideas apart from my [mistaken] belief that they ran everything.
- I wanted to learn something about language, I wanted to learn something about culture and I was quite happy to leave [the city] behind and go and do something different. Preparation? I don't think you can ever really be prepared.

A justice-oriented approach to education makes room for Anangu ontology, language and epistemology within teaching practice. According to educator accounts above, educators need to consider how power is exercised in the teacher–student relationship. A responsive and ethical approach to teaching requires teachers to change their perceptions and practices as their learning grows through attention to power and prioritising relationships. This is a process that Delpit (1993) describes as 'a very special kind of listening', requiring 'not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds' (p. 139). She argues that 'both sides do need to be able to listen', but 'it is those with the most power ... who must take the greater responsibility for initiating the process' (p. 139). This can be 'painful' as it requires us to 'put our beliefs on hold' and to 'cease to exist as ourselves for a moment' and means 'turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's angry gaze' (p. 139).

This deeply personal, complex, indeed 'painful' process – in various ways and degrees recognised by the 'critical friend' educators interviewed for this study – is essential for all educators who work with Anangu populations in schools. Below, in statements of disappointed reflection on their thwarted expectations about what might be achieved, three educators chronicle personal accounts of trying to position themselves in responsive relation to educational needs of Anangu learners:

- It was an experience that you could never prepare yourself for apart from actually going through it. You don't want to take it personally but I left disappointed in the sense that you think nothing has really changed. You know you can rationalise it in that the problem is much bigger than just the school or this community, but I left, not disappointed in myself, but disappointed that you couldn't see a way forward that was going to turn things around in the short term or even long term; sometimes you got disillusioned.
- I suppose going up there is just a whole different job to what you did in mainstream schools. There's so many things that impinged on what you wanted to do or what you thought should be achieved. There were so many

different things impacting on it that none of the solutions were ever simple. Attendance was a classic one. You'd think this is pretty easy but of course it wasn't that lifestyle. Everything: language, culture; the two weren't always compatible, and trying to find that common ground was just hard work.

- I think things move so slowly in reality that you could get disheartened very quickly. For me it was just about this is where I live, this is my life and I'll enjoy it and I'll do the best that I can possibly do for whoever I work with.

Being prepared to 'listen' (Delpit, 1993) across standpoints and epistemological points of difference is useful advice that educators provide in their reflections; however, it also risks exposure to painful self-reflection about systemic failings of capacity to hear and respond, including one's own incapacities – as an agent of the system – to change it substantively. Remaining faithfully bonded to pre-conceived senses of 'successful' strategy can result in becoming disappointed, disillusioned and disheartened. As one educator describes above, at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007a) where Anangu and Piranpa epistemologies interact, 'the two [aren't] always compatible'. Nakata et al. (2012) echo the comment above that 'you could never fully prepare yourself', in stating, 'All students come to Indigenous Studies ill-prepared for the knowledge and political contests they will encounter' (p. 136). Arguing for a more nuanced engagement with knowledge than 'a decolonising framework that slips them too quickly across the Western–Indigenous binary' (p. 136), they challenge the academy to position educators at the interface: 'How they are brought to the encounter has everything to do with whether they resist, oppose, defend, convert, patronise, tolerate, or thoughtfully engage the content of their courses to the best of their ability' (p. 136). Principals and other experienced Piranpa educators need also to play this role, providing pedagogic guidance to 'ill-prepared' pre-service educators, as they encounter complex and contested knowledge spaces (Nakata et al., 2012), on how to be aware of their own knowledge–power positions and associated assumptions as they engage with Anangu in educational settings.

One educator summarises the process whereby 'listening' is the starting point, but being able to change is the 'main point':

That's the main point. You have to listen but then you have to take it on board and then you have to change. A lot of people don't. They say they listen but they don't really listen, and they continue on with the way they think.

This type of 'painful' listening process (Delpit, 1993), appreciating the consequent necessity to change both perception and practice, is critical for educators to adopt, where letting go of illusions of the 'tried and true' ways things could/should be done marks the way to avoid 'disillusionment'. Nakata et al. (2012) argue that universities can assist future educators by bringing them to Indigenous education encounters through 'intellectualised practice of a less personalised nature' as they engage the 'politics of knowledge production and ultimately the politics of their location and of social reproduction' (p. 135). Educators should be prepared for community relationships to re-



shape their intellectual and deeply personal senses of ‘experience’ if they are truly to engage Anangu at the education interface and re-inform their practical readiness for complex and contested knowledge exchange.

Two Anangu narrators discussed difficulties they observe in classrooms in Anangu schools. They described educators rushing and teaching in a flustered state, ‘following the program’ but failing to comprehend the knowledge and ontological context of children’s emotional and learning needs.

This issue is addressed by the Piranpa educators to some degree:

In terms of education practice, the most important thing is the 20–30 minutes where you talk at the start of the day. I cannot imagine walking in and going, ‘Hi, this is your maths lesson for today, here’s the sheet, start working on it’. It just doesn’t work. There has to be that conversation to start with, and if you’re in the classroom regularly, talk about what you did yesterday because with attendance being like it is, you have to say, ‘This is what we did yesterday and we’ve started some of those things and we’re working on them again today and you three guys over there who weren’t here yesterday, you’re going to have to see me so I know where to start you off’. Even just to gauge where kids are at from the night before.

In particular, educators critique the perceived inability of some colleagues to comprehend the social and knowledge contexts they are working with. The educators chosen for this study were not selected through a representative or random process, but were identified by Anangu participants as ethically attuned and competent to build relationships with Anangu. It is from this recognised position that they operate as both coach and critic of educator colleagues’ practice:

- You need to have lots and lots of those little building-up-trust sort of things before you’re in the situation of being able to go, ‘You’re out of line. That’s a load of crap!’ It’s a long time before you can have an abusive type conversation like most teachers seem to have with kids and get away with it and not destroy the relationship. There’s probably almost no kids that I’d actually step over that line for because I recognise that I don’t have a strong enough relationship to be able to do that and it’s something they should never do in any case.
- I’m not sure some teachers get it and it takes a while to kind of get it. There are people in various stages of thinking. We’ve got tutors back in Nazi Germany-type thinking and other people who believe the only way to teach Aboriginal kids to read is for them to have books that are written by Aboriginal authors. Some people don’t get the cultural stuff. I can say to people, ‘Look, I know this is really hard but this is how they do things. This is their cultural thinking versus yours’. I still think they struggle to get it. It wouldn’t matter how long you bash your head against the brick wall saying relationships are the most important thing.

Anangu argue that teachers need to allow time for students to engage with spoken instructions and academic content. It is critical to slow down, use repetition and build confidence in Anangu students in the unfamiliar context of the classroom and teacher-directed learning situations. In Chapter 7, Katrina Tjitayi describes learning in the sense of a sacred or spiritual process (rather

than cerebral) and asks both Anangu and Piranpa educators to consider the spirit of the child. Through patience, building confidence and drawing children into the social context of learning, the spirit opens to new knowledge, and the knowledge ‘sticks’. She also argues that reciprocal relationships prepare a learning space for Anangu children to succeed. Piranpa educators make the very humble and important point not just that relationships are the most important thing, but also, in the first quote above, recognise the great ethical challenge of simultaneously 1) treating the building of relationships as of central pedagogic importance, and 2) recognising how impossible it is for Piranpa to enter into the quality and strength of relationship with Anangu children that Anangu adults are able to sustain.

### **Accountability**

Piranpa educators made numerous comments about issues of vertical accountability ‘upward’ to broader education and political systems (see Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) where policy narratives and assumptions run counter to the reality of Anangu ontologies, epistemologies and expectations. Piranpa educators responded to this tension in various ways, including ‘stealth’ (paying lip service to systemic policies and approaches), attempting to broker the two seemingly incongruent worlds, challenging systemic norms and assumptions they were accountable to, or complying but feeling frustrated by their accountability to alienating and inflexible systems. Earlyera (1950s-1980s) educators saw personal accountability to the community and to the broader vision of what they were trying to achieve as important but also described a bygone environment of fewer systemic demands, with associated possibility for more reciprocal relationships with Anangu:

There were not any demands from the system to me. We were not an education department school, and I can remember the first time a school inspector came and the two of us talked until three o’clock in the morning and then I couldn’t get up and see the children in the back row in the morning. I was so groggy ... If they [Anangu] didn’t want me to do something, I never did it. Never ... I only did what they told me, I was only young when I went there and I listened to them, I had to listen to them. I didn’t know how I could manage or teach the children or get to know the children ... It was quite a different world. I really did what I was told by Dr Duguid. There is no doubt that that was what the school did.

In educator accounts about the 1970s–1990s, a tension is described between policy and systemic expectations, perceived as distant and inappropriate, and a conviction that contextually responsive approaches to teaching should be privileged in Anangu schools. Educators expressed a sense of creative license during this era, in negotiating between horizontal accountability to communities, and vertical accountability to systems (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). In some instances, educators recalled a somewhat cavalier, or finessing, strategic approach to navigating the tension in ways that privileged what they believed to be the most ethical and locally beneficial approach:

- Stick to the mainstream? Really, does it matter? Let it go, let it go.
- We discussed how good it would be if the schools were set up in family groups so that the things that were important to the Anangu educator and her

family, the stories that are her stories for her kids and her grandkids to hear and the art that's important to them that comes through the stories could be explored. If they were in control of their family group and the AEWs are from that family, they're coming back and reporting to family how the kids are going, and it's all very comfortable because it's the way it should be. We dreamt up this idea that the kids would still have important things in the morning, like English and whatever, but for much of the day they would be split into family groups and be learning what Anangu actually wanted them to learn. I took it to the principal and he said, 'It sounds like a really good idea but it's just never going to happen'. He would love to try it but he didn't think it would go down with the powers that be.

- I'd like to think that I erred on the side of the community if what they wanted and what the department wanted weren't compatible. I suppose it really came back to trust and it's very hard to gain that quickly. I'd like to think that I was able to be honest with them and listen to what they had to say. You're just one of quite a few people who go through the mill up there and I'm sure they've heard all the right things before and it never eventuated. When you do go up there you say the right things, they were polite and listened to you, but until it came to actually implementing what you said, they held their judgement.
- If my bosses had known, they would have told me off, the same as we weren't allowed to use any Pitjantjatjara in the classroom. I had kids who couldn't speak any English so of course I was going to be using some Pitjantjatjara. I call it stealth mode, where the system may not like what you're doing and you just go, 'Oh yeah', then go back to doing it.

Educators who were committed Piranpa advocates of Anangu voices and priorities and had continuing involvement over a long time shared a great frustration in their narratives about how capacities to finesse gave way to senses of futility as they were finally overwhelmed by the power of policies and systems to enforce 'mainstream' priorities through accountability mechanisms:

- When we first came out, I thought they were community schools and so on; but it's got worse and worse and worse. The pressure is on. You would just do what you had to do to please [the Department] and still try and have this community school, whereas now it seems like you've got much more pressure. They [the Department] want white schools.
- Until you talk to someone like [my Anangu educator colleague] and actually draw it out of her, she's not going to come around saying, 'This is the way it should be'. Most people sort of think, 'Oh well, whatever they're doing in the school, that's their business, that's a whitefella institution'. Anangu don't see it, they're not involved. It's not their thing. Back in the early days, I think they were hopeful that maybe schools would make a difference. But now I don't think they really care. They say to us that they do because we're in control but they can't see the point.

This sense of loss of Anangu faith that the system might make cultural space for them signifies a shift to a more rigid and disciplinary policy climate. The interviewed educators nonetheless urged the importance of accountability to Anangu communities, both in cultural responsiveness and sensitivity and in exploring educational alternatives to sustain young people's engagement in their

family and community life-worlds. However, the pressures of increasing global tendencies towards standards-focused vertical accountability are in tension with these educators' sense of need to prioritise 'horizontal accountability' (Biesta, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) as a more reciprocal accountability (Biesta, 2010). This resonates with Simone Tur's (Tur et al., 2010) methodological development of the Pitjantjatjara concept of *ngapartji ngapartji* (reciprocity) as an important pedagogical understanding in Anangu education contexts. As several Piranpa suggested:

- Well, I think Anangu expect you to treat their kids properly, so how are you accountable for that? They'll come and tell you if you're not treating their kid right. You have a sense of obligation and accountability to the community to do a really good job and be engaging.
- You are servicing every family in that community. [The school] has to belong to that community and the kids are in that community. Sure there are things that we need to do, like there's a whole lot of admin work, and one of the biggest stresses is actually supporting community. People are wanting to see you constantly and you're trying to keep up with all the departmental requirements. It's a balancing act and sometimes you're shocking at actually fulfilling that role. I tend to go more on helping communities sort out their things and I'll catch up on this admin stuff when I can.
- It gets back to, 'Who is most important, that I'm going to go and have to talk to about this to get some feedback from?' It's that knowledge that you build up over years and years and years to know what's appropriate and what's inappropriate. If I don't know it, I actually go and ask somebody. I've got the relationship that I can go and do whatever I need to do in my personal life plus in my work life [in this community]. It informs you. It's not like you go there and you maintain everything that is whitefella about you. There's a lot of you that you have to move into the Anangu world and be respectful.

These educator accounts suggest that it takes careful and stalwart mindfulness, in the current policy climate, to sustain the needed degree of sensitivity to issues of power and ethical obligation of reciprocal accountability to community interests. It is a crucial challenge for new teachers in very remote schools to develop understanding – both on a personal level and also through reflecting on the wider context – about power, voice and accountability in relation to educating for reconciliation and justice (Haebich, 2011; D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

### **What of attendance and Closing the Gap?**

Attendance is recognised by Piranpa educators as an important element of schooling:

- I always thought attendance was a good indicator [of success]. I know a lot of it was driven from the school and getting the kids there, but I felt that if the students were turning up then that was showing that the community and the families had confidence in us.
- Measuring success as far as student outcomes go was very difficult to do, [but attendance] was something that was measurable and was tangible and it was something that you could see straight away, whereas a child's progress was much longer and harder to assess. I just thought attendance is one way that I

took that we were doing something right. I would hazard a guess that if the community didn't like the school or didn't trust someone, getting kids there wouldn't have been as successful.

Early-era accounts of schooling (1950s–1980s) tended not to refer to attendance as an issue, generally noting that most or all children attended regularly, and therefore the issue of student non-attendance did not occupy a place of such importance (this was the case for early era accounts at Ernabella, Amata and Imanpa):

All the parents on the place wanted their children to come to school. All the children wanted to come to school.

Referring to the 1990s on, Piraipa educators talk about the challenge of getting children to school and the range of strategies they employed to improve attendance, often with a sense of frustration:

We weren't always successful. I was really pleased with attendance at both schools. It wasn't perfect but I was really quite pleased with the support the communities gave us in both locations about getting their kids to school. It required a lot of effort on our behalf, the school's behalf as well to get them there, but attendance is only the beginning. You're not going to achieve anything without it, but getting them there was half the battle; then the hard part was turning that attendance into some form of achievement for the kids. You had to take your wins wherever you could get them sometimes.

Outside of stories about encouraging children and grandchildren to go to school, Anangu narrators paid little attention to school attendance as a broader 'problem' of the sort indicated in policy language about 'Closing the Gap' between Anangu and other Australian children. Indeed, NAPLAN and Closing the Gap policies are given minimal attention by both Piraipa and Anangu in these accounts. The tendency to compare outcomes to the rest of the nation, and describe Anangu education and children as deficient or behind, is conspicuous by its absence in the data. The few mentions by Piraipa educators are in a critical voice:

- [A] significant thing for him was he went outside of the NAPLAN test and was crying just on the side of the courtyard. I said, 'What's the matter?'  
'No more'. He said, 'I can't do this. I can't read and write'.
- Once you have that rapport, then you can worry about their maths results.
- Disadvantage in whose world? Our world. It's a Western perception isn't it?

Anangu narratives do put strong priority on education leading to employment for young people, but not in a neoliberal language of achievement in terms of careers and success, income and wealth creation. The values stated as paramount throughout Anangu accounts include love, identity and belonging, being strong in two worlds, the importance of family, learning and the value of thinking and acting independently. There was one notable exception where Katrina Tjitayi (Chapter 7)

expressed strong concerns about student attendance rates, poor outcomes and the problem of parents not supporting their children to succeed in schooling and in transitioning to employment. It is important to note that these comments were made while she was sitting next to a former District Director (see notes on gratuitous concurrence in Chapter 4) and mirrored concerns they had been discussing the day before. These may be real concerns for Katrina, but this discourse was a marked shift away from the focus of stories and priorities she elaborated in other interviews.

### **Revisiting notions of success and the purpose of education**

When Piranpa educators described what they felt they were educating for, in terms of Anangu seeing good reason for education in their schools, they noted significant shifts across eras of educational engagement. In the first few decades of schooling, ‘successful’ Anangu education seemed clearer; in hindsight, that version of success, defined by their dominant thinking, now appears too simplistic. There was also some confusion about assumptions inherent in historical practices which were expressed in educator reflections:

- Well I think I was a bit mixed up about [what success was] because I think there was a conflict between the typical European, Western view of education and what I was thinking about as being the Aboriginal view of education. I was coming to the view, I guess around about that time, that the thing that was happening in Aboriginal society normally was socialisation for adulthood. School ought to be contributing to that socialisation process.
- We thought that we were shaping the future by shaping the people for the future that we thought they would have or should have or would like to have. But of course we didn’t know what the future held.
- I was absolutely clear that education is a language, it’s a passport. Therefore kids should be able to read and write but I wasn’t alone in that, that being the previous teacher and the other teacher I was with. We ran a really rigorous education program. We had 100% attendance, if kids didn’t come we went out into the community and people would basically throw them at us in the end: ‘Oh, God, they’re coming’. We also had a lot of the elders on board who got that this was important.
- I don’t think [the broader questions about the purpose of education] weighed heavily on my mind because it was such a different world. I didn’t have the opportunity to do anything different. If I’d gone there, believing that all Aborigines must learn to speak English, they can’t live in Australia if they don’t [then perhaps I would have done things differently]. ‘It’s wrong to spend school time talking and teaching them to read a language’, as people used to say, ‘that isn’t even written down. The parents can’t even read this language, what are you using school time for to teach them a language that has no literature?’

The comments above suggest a certain degree of responsibility on Piranpa educators to decide what should be taught and to what end. These accounts relate to schooling in the period 1950s–1980s and reflect an era where schooling was still being established. Deficit narratives and notions of closing apparent achievement gaps between Anangu students and other Australians do not appear

to influence the educator's thinking through this period, and educators describe their convictions in relation to education as well as the questions they encountered as some of these assumptions were challenged by their experiences and observations. Other comments from this early period of schooling, such as below, reflect a clear and pragmatic approach to schooling, untroubled by the types of frustrations and complexities that current day educators described:

- I can't actually remember ever grappling with anything.
- My job was to somehow or other teach them English.

Data collected for this thesis suggest that standpoint dialogue has seldom occurred as a means for shaping and informing education practice, although this account from the late 1960s/early 1970s reflects a clear understanding of community priorities and expectations:

They had their dreams. They sort of thought that, and which is the reason I would say that they were coming to school every day, they were thinking that within thirty years or less, we would expect that these kids would've taken over the community and be doing the jobs that the whitefellas were doing in the community. I think that's what Anangu were thinking. They were thinking that was what a school was for.

In the middle eras of educational engagement (1980s–1990s), frustration at the perceived lack of progress; rapid social change; and increasing accountability to physically and ideologically distant bureaucracies and their expectations (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) – seemingly remote from Anangu epistemologies and needs – appear to be factors that drove educators to focus on difficult and complex contradictions that induce educator uncertainties and doubts about what they understand:

- The big question, I suppose, it was really trying to provide something that was of benefit to the kids; and what we were told to provide and what was necessary weren't always compatible.
- The 'what for' part of education was sort of taken for granted. These kids would have to go and grow up and either learn a trade or go to university or something like that. The university bit didn't come into my mind. It was a standard approach as is applied in a metropolitan school. That wouldn't work.
- In my time I don't think I would claim that we delivered it as the concept was envisaged. We tried but it was difficult, everything was difficult. The longer I stayed in Anangu education, the less I knew. I went up there thinking, 'I could fix this, this is pretty simple', but of course the longer you stayed, the less you knew or the less you understood. It certainly cut you down to size pretty quickly if you had any thoughts of grandeur about solving the problem.
- It was brought to my attention the complexities that you're never aware of until you get there. The longer I was there, the less I understood and the more problems I had.

Uncertainty and self-doubt are more apparent in Piranpa educator narratives describing more recent times (late 1990s–current day). The narratives express rising futility and confusion about political and systemic success narratives – priorities in which Piranpa educators feel unable to succeed:

I don't know anymore, to tell you the truth. I always thought ... that it's for, and this is what I believe for my own children, their education is about giving them choices in their future. I don't know what we're preparing Anangu kids for, whether it's, as we say, to walk in two worlds. Whether that's realistic ... I don't know. I don't think Anangu actually want to walk into our world.

School and then what? I reckon when I started here we had no idea. I don't think that anyone knew what the hell we were even running the school for.

Historical approaches to schooling that engaged Anangu educators, languages and epistemologies seem almost a distant memory after the Ernabella Mission approach and government school bilingual development grew from the late 1960s (Amata, 1972 in the NT, see Graham, 1999; Nicholls, 2005). The expertise and resources to re-engage Anangu priorities in Anangu education now appear thin. While their sense that things need to change is strong, educators find it difficult to see how it might occur. Below, an educator questions whether Anangu narratives about education are merely attempts to mirror long-standing Piranpa stories about what education is for:

I think [Anangu education discourse] is no longer about the Anangu domain, Piranpa domain. With NAPLAN, with all the assessments that we need to do, we're measuring kids up against the rest of Australia. Maybe I won't go into that debate but our schools are clearly not mainstream schools so I'm unsure why we persist in that kind of behaviour. You know how Anangu talk about 'I want my kids to be able to read and write'? Whether that was something we told them a long time ago, I don't know.

While Piranpa educators gesture vaguely towards a return to, and moving forward with, better rationales for education provision in Anangu schools, they show very little confidence that such a shift can follow from current interventionist policy approaches that not only narrow the scope for considering what 'good' Anangu education is, but also fail to achieve significant improvements on those narrow measures (S. Martin, 2014a; Osborne et al., 2014).

The accounts below describe trust and recognition of Anangu knowledge assets (Moll et al., 1992; Zipin, 2013) as critical to successful teaching practice:

- Trust with the staff is really important. They've got to understand that you're there for the right reasons. I suppose that would be the one word that would encapsulate any form of success at a school.
- I think you need to be realistic about where you are, where the kids are at and where your teaching staff is because the majority of our teachers are graduate teachers. They're doing the best that they possibly can for kids, but also the reality that it's a community school and it's not a mainstream school. We can make it look like a mainstream school, but our kids are still coming from the community. I don't think that teachers actually get what kids are bringing with



them. They don't tap into that kind of knowledge. I think the school had been disconnected from the community, so the staff and I, our aim was to make it the hub of the community again.

Piranpa educators consulted in this research argued consistently for contextually relevant and responsive educational approaches, built on trusting relationships. Although a number of educators expressed confusion about the purpose of education in Anangu communities, they were all clear that richer and broader aims and purposes for Anangu education need to be enunciated, but these can only be generated in the context of personal commitments to trusting relationships and honest dialogue.

### **Boarding schools**

The logic of 'intervention', Closing the Gap and policies such as winding back local provision of secondary schooling in remote communities (B. Wilson, 2014) – in the expectation that young people will pursue opportunities such as scholarship programs in eastern seaboard private schools (ABC, 2013, February 26; Penfold, 2013, June 1-2) – is not generally supported across interviews conducted with Anangu and Piranpa in this study. Educators referred to 'success' at boarding school, although this was not in reference to any measures such as completion, attaining entry scores for university or transition to further learning or employment, but in the context of 'not failing' by returning within weeks, disengaged from schooling entirely. Boarding was not discussed by most educators, as it has not been taken up in all eras and locations of Anangu education and therefore has not been part of the education experience for many.

Current policy rhetoric about boarding schools as a 'stepping stone' to 'success' is at odds with many of the accounts of Anangu narrators. The logic of dominant policy and media discourse is that Aboriginal children who come from remote communities to board in city schools should aspire to lift themselves from a position of social and educational disadvantage and return to the community to 'help their people' as a productive professional person who can 'reach down' to the financially dependent members of their family from their new-found position of financial independence (Forrest, 2014). In contrast, Anangu narrators expect that boarding school provides a space for safety, discipline and social development in broader contexts, with the view that new-found confidence in Western social spaces can be valuable to the wider family as young people return to the family able more confidently to interpret and negotiate interactions with Piranpa and associated institutions on behalf of the family. Piranpa educators' interpretations of community attitudes suggest that many Anangu see success at boarding school as an end in itself:

- [Boarding school] was a huge change. The community saw it as, not a proper school but they saw it as a better option than having been schooled in the community. I suppose they did see that's in [the city] so that's a proper school. It may have had that image.
- In one respect, boarding school was probably an end in itself, as in 'Yep, they've gone and succeeded at boarding school, that's good'. I don't know

whether they saw it more as a stepping stone rather than an actual achievement in itself. I can't say that I got a sense that they wanted their kids to become doctors, teachers. To me, success at school was an end in itself rather than giving them the opportunity of leading somewhere else.

Diverse standpoints, shaped by the various histories and interactions with colonialism described across Chapters 4–9, inform a wide range of attitudes and assumptions in relation to boarding school. Yami saw town- and city-based schooling as important for his children, and he and his wife moved to Alice Springs when their children were young to provide this opportunity. Later, he used his professional and personal connections to negotiate opportunities for each of his children to attend a school the family felt would best prepare them for a career. This meant that each child attended a different school, and a combination of staying with relations, Aboriginal Hostels and boarding was utilised to make this happen. Sandra fought with unrelenting resolve for a local secondary schooling option in preference to sending children away. Katrina supports boarding school in the context of her daughter learning to become confident to do things independently in a wider social and educational context; and her daughter's completion of year 12 is a significant source of pride. Gordon sees boarding school as a waste if young people return disengaged and 'sit down' without activating their social and language learning to broker and interpret for their family. Natalie and Chris see boarding school as a great opportunity to enable choices for their children. They expect such an opportunity will build confidence in Western social and academic spaces but also broaden the horizons of their children's understanding of the world; they expect the disciplined environment will be important for their personal development. They explained that boarding school and the city are not final destinations and are only of worth if the identity, belonging and family foundation are intentionally laid, as they are actively doing with their children while they are still young. They expect this process will involve a series of going from, and coming back to, Irrunytju, much like the concept of 'orbits' that Noel Pearson describes (2006, p. 2) 'as a solution to the problem of how we can avoid economic integration becoming a one-way ticket for the young away from their origins, a prospect that many parents and community elders dread'.

Educator accounts describe a coming and going between the community and boarding schools, although the schools that students are attending are not the eastern seaboard schools that are the focus of large-scale funding and national media attention. The schools that Piranpa referred to provide boarding for very remote students as their core business:

- There are girls [here] who have been to Shalom, Wiltja, Shalom, Wiltja again, Kormilda, Wiltja again, Kormilda. It doesn't fit, one doesn't fit. There's a long history of it and if it doesn't work, we'll try a new one. The whole thing is around if there are boys there, it's not going to happen. They need to be separate. I think it's about protection. Some people do genuinely not want their teenage kids to live the life they lived, having a baby at age 14 or 15. They want them to have something different.

- There's a huge push in our community for kids to attend school. They're also very eager for their kids to go to Wiltja or go wherever for a mainstream experience. They want them to have something different. They don't want their teenagers living in community, getting involved in the drugs, the boyfriends and girlfriends. They don't want that kind of stuff. Of course if kids don't make it at Wiltja, we're very happy to have them back. They still embrace that. You hear [narratives about] people becoming the leaders in their own community, taking over the jobs, doing that kind of thing. For me, it's about, the same as I feel for my own children, I want them to be able to choose where they want to go, what they want to do. Be a well-rounded person.

These comments are indicative of the uncertainties educators hold in relation to boarding schools. On the one hand, it seems there is a community expectation that boarding schools offer some sort of quarantine zone to protect young people from harmful influences and behaviours in the community. On the other hand, it is suggested that a 'mainstream experience' is valued by parents and the community – but even this statement appears to be far from the neoliberal concept of 'choice' that the educator above feels is important for their own children as well as their Anangu students. This broad range of ideas reflects the diverse views and approaches Anangu narrators shared as summarised above but is at odds with narrow policy rhetoric in relation to boarding schools, which assumes remote communities universally share a neoliberal logic in relation to aspiration and success.

### **Confidence, identity and belonging**

The Anangu narratives share a strong and consistent vision of a successful young person that education could and should enable. Anangu identity is the bedrock of a confident and successful learner; family and community provide this foundation. Language and culture contribute to this strong sense of a child with confident place-based identity in the world. Teachers need to recognise and embed these aspects of students' worlds in classroom curriculum and pedagogic interactions, to build confidence for the students that school, like family and community, is a place to engage with stories, values and social context associated with student identity (Osborne, 2015a). Piranpa educators hold some ideas about how a renewed approach to engaging family as 'close and constant voices' (Tjitayi & Osborne, 2014, p. 25) might achieve this, although they expressed these views in sorrowful tones with the sense that conditions are not ripe:

- I feel, like, sorry for Anangu kids a lot of the time because every year they're confronted with a new teacher who might be really interested in the kids and learning stuff but they can't actually tap into them because they don't have language. They don't have the skills in language; they have no idea what these kids are saying. I feel sorry for Anangu kids, particularly in the early years. It's like going into a foreign country; you have no idea what people are saying around you. Yet for little children who are learning about their world and their own language to have a non-Pitjantjatjara speaker, presenting all this wonderful information [seems crazy].

- I didn't want these children to think, to grow up or to get the idea that white people and white thought and white culture was alien to them and unacceptable.... I only tried to relate to them and to bond with them and to let them think that what I was saying would bring them to the point where they could choose to listen to me and that they liked what they were hearing and believed that they needed to hear it.

Despite limitations of language and conceptual frameworks in Pitjantjatjara language regarding 'success' (see Osborne & Guenther, 2013a), Anangu narrators shared a consistent image of a successful student in terms of a child who knows who they are and who, with family support, proceeds from confidence to negotiate the social and academic dimensions of a classroom dominated by English language literacy and numeracy and Western cultural codes. Anangu narrators visualise that, as young people grow, secondary schooling should prepare them for engaging with meaningful work (rather than a 'career' concept of work) that has virtuous connection to Anangu contexts, involving capacities to be honest (*tjukaruru*), to think and make good decisions for themselves (*walytjangku kulintjaku*) and to carry on timeless knowledge traditions (*Tjukurpa*) for which they are increasingly entrusted. Embracing the workplace with confidence and self-discipline, and with a strong sense of civic participation, is held as crucial (particularly to older narrators) within the context of Anangu law and world view.

One Piranpa educator described their belief that the use of local language in schools is critical to strengthening the identity of students, providing 'opportunity [for them] to understand who they [are]', not just as individuals, but as 'a people', as well as being a logical pathway to English language acquisition:

It seemed to me that the kids did need to learn English, and in my reading and in my personal experience it was clear that the vernacular approach would be the most sensible way of going about it. The language gave them the opportunity to understand who they were as a people.

These themes of identity, belonging and confidence – central to Anangu narratives of a 'successful' young person – are cultural elements that Piranpa educators are least positioned to guide. Delpit (1993) argues that while justice requires that learners from less powerful social positions 'must be taught the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream', this must 'not [be] by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, decontextualized subskills' but by being 'allowed the resource of the teacher's expert knowledge, while being helped to acknowledge their own "expertness" as well' (p. 138). Explicit, patient, well-contextualised and non-judgemental teaching of social and academic codes of 'the culture of power' builds confidence in Anangu children, if – *and only if* – teachers simultaneously valorise and make educational use of the resources and strengths that children bring with them, as learning *assets*, rather than as 'deficits' to be marginalised out of the learning context (Ladson-Billings, 1991; Moll et al., 1992; Sarra, 2011; Zipin, 2013).

‘Appropriate education’ [for children], which affirms deeper aspects of identity and belonging that Anangu narrators have described, ‘can only be devised in consultation with adults who share their culture’ (Delpit, 1993, p. 138). This reminds Piranpa educators of the primary importance of consulting Anangu educators, parents, elders and the wider community to incorporate Anangu ‘funds of knowledge’ (Moll et al., 1992; Zipin, 2013) in curriculum and pedagogical practice.

### **Power, curriculum and pedagogy**

Increased national and global attention on uniform standards and measurement (Biesta, 2010) is perhaps felt hardest in very remote schools where the greatest points of epistemic differentiation from dominant cultural contexts are apparent. The following accounts reflect experienced and committed educator engagement with complex issues of *what* should be taught in Anangu schools, *how* it should be taught and *who* should have the power to decide these matters (Fraser, 2009). In the first instance, educators highlight the futility of blindly reproducing mainstream curriculum and pedagogical approaches:

[Don’t] do anything that you already know; throw it out the window, because it’s not necessarily going to be applicable up here.

Our schools are clearly not mainstream; yet we’re expecting everybody to perform in that way.

Having identified the need for a differentiated approach, educators describe the process of deciding what was of most benefit for the students:

I was always looking to understand in the first instance: what was the difference?  
What was the teaching approach that was going to work with these kids?

This process draws educators into dilemmas of great complexity, involving incommensurable demands around competing knowledge priorities:

I certainly wanted to prepare them to mix in our world and stay like they were, like I needed those two things which could never happen.

Educators recognise that Anangu knowledges and values are positioned as subordinate in education provision. They also see that Anangu tend not to challenge the situation where teacher after teacher intentionally or unknowingly takes up the power of daily decision-making in regards to content, method and values that apply at the knowledge interface:

How different things could be to what they’re actually being taught in the school. It must be so frustrating because Anangu values are so different, and those values the white teachers bring into that classroom and think that their values are the right ones. It doesn’t seem to occur to Anangu that it’s ok to have different values.

This statement expresses frustration, almost bewilderment at Anangu choices to avoid direct challenge to white teachers’ values, where Anangu are fully aware of the points of difference but

choose compliance in an unequal power relationship over a situation of conflict. Well-meaning Piranpa educators are apt to see classroom events from a white Western perspective, even if it is a critiquing one. However, the statement illustrates how challenging is the struggle to imagine the standpoints of Anangu ‘others’ from within the frame of school-system pressures and constraints, about which this Piranpa educator is self-reflexively critical. Another educator, in recalling a community meeting in the late 1960s, suggests that Anangu may assume schooling is a Western institution, therefore Piranpa are best placed to decide what should happen at the school:

Something that stuck in my memory was a community meeting where we were talking about education, what education was for. I think it was [an old man], he said, ‘But we didn’t have education’. He was only seeing it as the school. Education was something different to what they had, he wasn’t seeing that Anangu were actually educated. Obviously, we were trying to say, ‘Of course you did [have education]’. He was seeing the formal institution of the school and they didn’t have that. This was all a whitefella sort of a thing. We were having this big meeting because we were having someone coming to talk about education and the school. It shocked me that he would think that there wasn’t ever an education before that, and that only came with the school.

Another educator conceptualises a model that prioritises Anangu educators, families, knowledge and values, but notes that such a structure would require an arrangement where a special type of Piranpa educator (‘people who actually listen’) is positioned specifically to ‘listen to the families’ and to be responsive to their needs, rather than adopt policy and system directives that typically shape educator interactions in Anangu schools:

I can see a school with [an Anangu educator] as the principal but it would have to be her family that she’s teaching. Then, because she’s sort of in control, you’d employ teachers to come in but they’ve got to listen to the family. I would love to see that, I would love to see them try that, but it’s not going to happen under the education department. It would have to be an independent body; bring in people who actually listen. Their only job is to actually listen to Anangu and what they’re telling them. Our teachers can’t do that because they’ve got to be responsive to [the requirements of the system]. It’s not their fault but they just can’t be the school that they should be. They should be listening to the families. If you could just forget about schooling for a while and just have some meetings with family and see ... I don’t know whether they would do it.

Evidence presented in this thesis suggests that standpoint dialogue between Anangu and Piranpa where Anangu communities shape the nature of education in their communities is not easily arrived at. This Piranpa educator emphasises the importance of humour in sustaining relationships with Anangu and describes a situation where ‘rich conversations’ have occurred many years following the completion of their teaching appointment in the tristate area:

We just had multiple funny, funny experiences. The humour was the relationship but it was my subsequent visits where we kept talking that has probably helped her, it helped her to see things differently and me; and bloody hell, age is amazing. Age does change how you view some things and certainly [the Anangu educator] and I had a good relationship but the rich conversations really happened down the track as opposed to there.

Another Piranpa educator described a process of actively seeking support for dialogue to occur so that the school could respond to community values and demands without needing decades to become more familiar with what these might look like:

We got support to run an in-depth workshop to have those sort of discussions about those bigger kind of questions. What do you want for your kids? What does it all look like? Where do you want your kids to be and what do you want your schools to look like and what do you want your kids to do? They're the conversations, and I reckon we're just so well-placed to try some things because we know what parents actually want for their kids at school. We can start building some of that strategic plan with a really good start and link with the community who are doing their own strategic planning as well at the moment.

National curriculum determines what should be taught in all Australian schools and whose values and epistemologies are prioritised, based on the assumption that 'common sense' purposes of schooling are shared uniformly across the nation, without reflection on how mainstream purposes encode some, not all, standpoints of social-structural position. The Anangu narratives in this thesis demonstrate strong senses of distinct and unique priorities and assumptions about education in tristate communities. Some argue that to address the current divide between very remote schools and national education policies, a return to the days of bilingual education could be tried. In some tristate schools, early eras of schooling are remembered as successful in building strong literacy skills through bilingual approaches to schooling:

I suppose one of the things I thought with that age group was they learnt to read and write in their own language really quickly. Within the year, most of them could write, were writing a couple of pages, and the idea with bilingual was you just taught them oral English so we weren't teaching them to read and write in English at that point, we were just teaching them to read and write in their own language. We were doing a lot of talking and oral stuff.

[A visiting person from the education department] told me that he'd like to know what the children's reading was like. I said, 'How would you like to find that out, would you like to see their writing?' He said, 'No, I'd like to hear them read an English book'. The way he said it, he threw the sentence off and obviously he didn't mean that they'd be able to do it. They just got up one after another and read books to him and he said, 'I've never heard an Aboriginal child in any school in any place in South Australia read like that'. The whole lot of the big children, not the little ones, although he was a bit impressed with the little ones.

Both Anangu and Piranpa participants argue the need to prioritise local languages and cultural values and to engage families and the wider community in schooling. However, significant and ongoing cultural and societal change needs to occur if tristate schooling is to make cultural inclusion part of preparing young Anangu children for 'success' in their adult lives. Well-resourced and executed bilingual education programs embraced a wide range of aspects of education beyond language, including locally derived curriculum, a focus on ecological knowledge, local employment, community engagement and secondary programs that prepare young people for employment and civic participation in the local community. This process exemplified a more equal

sharing of power for deciding what should be taught and how, in collaboration with families and the local community who are best placed to guide a contextually responsive and relevant program in Anangu schools.

Bilingual/bicultural programs were ended in favour of English-only programs, as illustrated in the APY Lands in the late 1990s (see Macgill, 1999), or diminished through gradually decreasing political and financial support, as seen in Northern Territory schools (see Disbray, 2014a; Disbray, 2014b; Graham, 1999; Nicholls, 2005). The history and achievements of bilingual education should provide important foundational lessons for tristate schools, particularly as a record of where educators felt they were successful. However, a renewed education approach needs also to account for the changing nature of social, cultural, educational and economic conditions of the region.

Piranpa educators highlight the important role that contextually responsive curriculum plays, including re-contextualising broader curriculum to be attuned to the cultural life-worlds, needs and values of their students:

In fact, I think all of the ‘successful’ teachers in Aboriginal schools have certainly gone about it in a way where they’ve worked out the curriculum that applies to their kids and developed a program to get the message through.

Returning to Delpit’s (1993) argument that ‘*appropriate* education’ can only be ‘devised in consultation with adults who share their culture’ (p. 138, emphasis added), there are inspiring and important lessons to be learned through engaging with historical approaches to Anangu education where schooling was reliant on Anangu educators and prioritised local language:

The AEW that worked with me ... had started a little school of her own, her and a pretty well educated lad from Ernabella who had been to Adelaide, just them, they didn’t have anyone. [She] was just a teacher, she just loved teaching. It was, what – a bit of a shed that they turned into a school. She was just fantastic. For my class there was pretty well just the two of us. There were 34 kids, you’d pretty well get 30 a day. They all came every day and they learnt really quickly. By the end of the year they were reading and writing in their own language, writing their own little stories. We didn’t really have any books; we had no resources really to use. By the end of three years they were writing pages in English. Probably a lot of that is to do with the fact that they were coming to school every day but they learnt so well. I reckon also it’s because of the age. They were actually at that older age. Perhaps they’re ready for a more formal program [after having the early years with their family].

The following recollection contrasts the respect and power that was historically attributed to Anangu educators with a current-day situation where it is suggested that Piranpa are in charge and do not really listen for the contextual knowledge of Anangu children and their community. A sense of ongoing transitional decline across historical eras of schooling in tristate schools is reflected throughout Piranpa educator accounts shared in this chapter. Experienced and critical Piranpa educators lament how Anangu educators – who can bring local community aspirations and



priorities into the educational context – are increasingly excluded as education instead fixates on externally imagined policy priorities:

AEWs need to be respected and actually teaching in the space. Back in the day, the mission days, the AEWs were the teachers. When you ask people, ‘Who was your teacher?’ they’ll often say, ‘Nganyinytja was my teacher’. They don’t necessarily say a whitefella. [Anangu] were respected as teachers and so the kids weren’t seeing the white teachers. The AEWs now don’t get that, it’s just not the same. There are very few AEWs that are teaching and being shown that respect from the teacher that they should be getting. It’s their community, it’s their kids. Who are we to say how their kids should be learning or what they should be learning or whatever, but we do. We don’t really listen. We pretend to listen but we don’t really listen to what Anangu are saying. I suppose they’ve just stopped, they think, ‘That’s a school so [Piranpa are] in charge of the school. What do you want us to do? It’s not our business, it’s your business. You’re the ones who have brought the school and you’re the teachers. You can discuss what you want us to do or what should be happening.

In saying that ‘We don’t really listen’, this critical Piranpa educator recognises that even well-meaning Piranpa such as herself will suffer from incapacity to hear ‘the other’ in ways and degrees that do justice because of the nature of their own position as Piranpa, constrained by limitations of epistemological difference and misunderstanding and broader allegiance to the institutions they represent in a vertical accountability environment. What is critical in the development of educational approaches for the future is that Anangu voices, communities and families are privileged in ongoing dialogue about what is to be taught, how it is to be delivered, and to what end. Successive governments have shown increasing negligence in not engaging voices of Aboriginal community priorities (Bat, Kilgariff, & Doe, 2014) in a manner that is open and power-sensitive (Haraway, 2004), with the ‘special kind of listening’ that Delpit (1993) describes as being not only through our eyes and ears but ‘through our beliefs’ (p. 139). This is necessary to renegotiate the power-laden nature of decision-making and education delivery in tristate schools. This process must be substantively supported by education policymakers, system officials and education leaders who hold the greatest power, and therefore responsibility, to enable education that works for – and in the cultural terms of – learners, their families and communities.

### **The need for further dialogue**

A multifaceted standpoint dialogue is required to establish Anangu priorities – both in the upholding of Anangu knowledge and experience and in renegotiating interactions with Western knowledge and associated institutions – and to reimagine the possibilities that Anangu education might enable. Such a dialogue is not made possible through a singular articulation of an Anangu standpoint but requires a dialogic space where multiple standpoints can be engaged. This process requires understanding that knowledges, experiences, values and priorities are diverse and yet broadly cohesive in and across Anangu contexts, and that engaging these diverse standpoints requires a careful and collaborative methodological approach.

Power-sensitive conversation is required to shift the incorporation of Anangu knowledge and priorities in education from a process of 'ethnoscience' to 'science' (Harding, 1992, p. 582), where Anangu voices are centred in exploring alternatives for education provision in tristate schools. These conversations have been historically difficult to engage and are likely to remain so. Piranpa educators interviewed are trusted friends of Anangu interviewed in this thesis, with long-term relationships and, in some cases, language proficiency, yet they described how difficult dialogue with the community has been. Such conversations will not occur by chance but require reflective and intentional preparation where venues can be mobilised and developed for new knowledge and narratives to emerge in Anangu education spaces, practice and policymaking.

## Chapter 11: Conclusion

### Standpoint theory and the potential for dialogue

The redevelopment of Standpoint theory by Indigenous scholars, as discussed in Chapter 2, has provided a helpful framing for the work of this study. Following on from feminist debates about how to objectify the intersections of multiple relations of power inequality, Nakata (Nakata, 2007a, 2007b), among other Indigenous scholars, has argued for a standpoint epistemological approach to social science that interrelates partial perspectives across diverse positions in structural power relations, particularly attending to what those in less powerful positions can contribute. Harding's (1992) suggested methodological process to identify standpoints has been a particularly helpful guide:

First, to generate scientific problems not from within the debates and puzzles of the research traditions, not from the priorities of funders or dominant policy groups, but from outside these conceptual frameworks, namely, from the lives of marginalized peoples; and to develop this thought through democratic dialogues between knowledge-producing groups. (p. 582)

In articulating the case for an Indigenous standpoint process that included diverse knowledge traditions across different Indigenous Australian positions of experience, Nakata (1998, 2007a, 2007b) and other Indigenous scholars (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Tur et al., 2010) have pointed to the problem of assuming a singular, homogenous Indigenous experience in Australia. Such approaches are insufficient to represent experiences formed by gender and by diverse knowledge positions, histories, geographies, languages, cultures, and interactions with colonialism and education.

This study does not attempt to contribute to the debates among Indigenous academics but has sought to provide a virtual venue for 'dialogue between knowledge-producing groups' (Harding, 1992, p. 582) where Anangu voices, experiences, knowledge and lives can be engaged through text-staged dialogue. Through carefully recording, transcribing and translating of Anangu narratives, I have attempted to privilege Anangu voices in democratic dialogue, while registering an exchange through sharing textual accounts that demonstrate diversity among the various Indigenous standpoints and exploring these standpoints. This thesis is thus significant in adding to public knowledge by concretely representing multiple very remote Indigenous voices, where diverse very remote voices remain otherwise largely unheard and unknown.

This thesis has presented some differences in ways of knowing across Indigenous groups, and has demonstrated the roles that historical interactions with colonialism play in shaping experiences of education, future aspirations and the platforms that Anangu incorporate to attempt to improve the lives of their children and grandchildren as well as the wider community. Just as Indigenous and other standpoint theorists argue that a singular or homogenous notion of an Indigenous standpoint is insufficient, so non-Western Desert Indigenous standpoints are also only partially representative,

as they are situated in specific epistemological, ontological and cosmological contexts, needing dialogic interchange with other Indigenous standpoints in wider democratic discourse. Even within the tristate area, participants in this study represent diverse histories, experiences and standpoint positions. Yankunytjatjara histories, for example, being closely linked to stations rather than missions, differ greatly in terms of their interactions with education, employment and historical social policies. Yankunytjatjara people were far more likely to provide cheap labour, to intermarry and also to experience the removal of children to southern institutions.

However, divergent experiences do not mean there are no significant convergences across different standpoints that unite Anangu. Prominent Yankunytjatjara advocates such as Lowitja O'Donoghue (State Library of South Australia, 2014), Yami Lester (Lester, 1993), Rose and Karina Lester (Osborne et al., 2014), Simone Tur (Tur et al., 2010) and many others identify notable values and expressions that unite Anangu. Nakata (2007a) describes some seeming universal expressions of Indigenous knowledges through practices of:

... story-telling, of memory-making, in narrative, art and performance; in cultural and social practices, of relating to kin, of socialising children; in ways of thinking, of transmitting knowledge, even in creolised languages; and in that all encompassing popular, though loosely used term, 'worldview', and so on. (p. 10)

There are indeed commonalities of expression across testimonies of Anangu narrators in this study. In spite of diverse experiences of interaction with colonialism and education, the importance of Anangu identity and belonging, expressed through notions of connection to country, family and language, were given priority in all of the Anangu narratives recorded in this thesis. Notably, distinct geographical and historical factors related to the interaction with Western education irrevocably shape standpoints. Those Anangu who were removed to Adelaide from stations – as opposed to Jay Creek (west of Alice Springs), the Bungalow (Alice Springs), Croker Island (north of Darwin) and a range of other destinations across the Northern Territory – tended to be placed into better resourced situations with improved education and subsequent employment opportunities.

Anangu interaction with colonialism and education is a relatively recent phenomenon and covers diverse histories and experiences. Colonial relationships frequently positioned Anangu as unequal and their interests as subordinate. Partington and Beresford (2012) describe current policy engagement in remote Indigenous communities as 'neo-colonial' (p. 60) in recognition of continued unequal power and struggle despite historical language and policy periods of 'self-determination' (Cowlshaw, 1998) and 'reconciliation' (Haebich, 2011; D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014). Since I commenced this thesis, questions of Aboriginal education have been much in the policy eye, with standardised policies and actions focusing on Closing the Gap (Abbott, 2015, February 11) on measures of school attendance (NESA, 2015; Wright et al., 2012) and NAPLAN scores (see ACARA, 2014). These policies position remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

communities and schools as somehow deficient (Comber & Kamler, 2004; Milner, 2008), behind (Forrest, 2014; B. Wilson, 2014), or having simply failed (Hughes & Hughes, 2012) and disregard local community strengths, values and other cultural ‘funds of knowledge’ (Moll et al., 1992; Sarra, 2011; Zipin, 2013) as learning assets for designing engaging and intellectually challenging school curriculum.

Indigenous scholars have challenged colonial and anthropological descriptions of themselves, calling for an end to colonising approaches to research and education (Nakata, 2007b; L. Rigney, 1999; Smith, 1999). Nakata et al. (2012) argue for an approach of ‘decolonial knowledge making’ (p. 124) as a pedagogical model for rejecting colonialist approaches to research and education in Indigenous communities. I argue that venues for power-sensitive standpoint dialogue (Harding, 1992) are required to address historical injustices and continued (neo)colonial practices, where unequal power relations and representation of voices in Anangu education dialogue have tended to result in universalist, narrow and punitive policy approaches being applied across tristate schooling contexts, with limited opportunity for Anangu voicing of aspirations to reset the education agenda. I have sought to privilege Anangu voices in virtual (text-based) standpoint dialogue as a means to inform educators and encourage the possibility for face-to-face standpoint dialogue in the future where Anangu education might pursue goals of justice and reconciliation in place of current minimalist policy approaches where literacy and numeracy benchmarks and attendance rates (Abbott, 2015, February 11) dominate the evaluation and funding focus for very remote schooling, including the tristate area.

In this chapter, I further explore the potential for standpoint dialogue between Anangu and Piranpa educators and describe some unexpected findings from the sets of interviews with both groups of participants. The central importance of history in the present is a key focus, as is identifying barriers to ongoing standpoint dialogue. I then reflect on the methodology for the study before summarising the thesis’ contributions to knowledge and finishing by considering future options for action.

### **Exploring the potential for standpoint dialogue between Anangu and Piranpa educators**

The eight Anangu narratives in Chapters 5–9 demonstrate the synergy in language and values across generations of Anangu and address the broad research question:

- A. What are the values, dreams and beliefs that Anangu hold in relation to young people, education and the future?

Strong commitments to Anangu identity, culture, language, country and family are repeated throughout all accounts, with significant emphasis and depth. Anangu narrators described various levels of interaction with education but presented a unified expectation that education should sustain young peoples’ robust engagement with Anangu values even as they pursue what can benefit them from Western education and schooling success. Educators reflected on the importance of successful learning, but also expressed their frustrations in feeling caught between competing

demands of 1) upward accountability to system priorities and constraints (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), and 2) demands of the community – with particular comments on what does not work in classrooms. Some Anangu narrators characterised the importance of learning in terms of an act of survival.

The importance of work and employment as an outcome of education was emphasised across all generations of Anangu participants. This was supported by Piranpa educators, but was not a strong focus in their interviews. This may reflect historical tendencies of educational discourse about Aboriginal education to focus on the early and primary years, with most attention on the classroom, such that wider concern about later opportunities for employment is bracketed. The focus of this discourse might reflect an environment where not enough Anangu students get to the point of school completion, and perhaps that educators do not expect that they will. It also points to a dynamic where Anangu are engaged in a wider community context, whereas educators primarily spend time with Anangu in the classroom and within the school gates, and are less familiar with the context of Anangu lives outside of school. This is problematic in that education purports to prepare young people for life after schooling, but if educators are uncertain as to the context of employment and economic opportunities and community life more generally, a ‘culturally and contextually responsive’ (Guenther, 2015e) approach to education is unlikely.

Anangu and Piranpa participants emphasised the importance of relationships, whether inside or outside the school gates. For educators, the need to collaborate and build relationships in the community was described as essential to success in their role as teachers and education leaders. It was through my existing relationships with Anangu participants in the research that I found the Piranpa participants. Having explored the broad research question with Anangu narrators, I asked them to suggest former or current educators who were experienced and capable in taking account of Anangu standpoints in their work as educators. I then interviewed eight committed and respected educators to provide accounts of their experiences in engaging Anangu standpoints, values and epistemologies in their work as educators in Anangu schools. This enabled me to stage, in my text, a ‘dialogue’ addressing the question:

- B. How have committed educators taken account or been unaware of these positions in their work?

Through this process I explored the limitations and potentials for standpoint conversations to inform education practice in the tristate area, asking:

- C. How can there be a standpoint dialogue in Anangu education that is open, honest, power-sensitive and ethically attuned; and what might this achieve?

The research questions have stood up as reasonable and relevant throughout the course of the study. At the same time, other priorities and areas of focus came to attention that were not anticipated from the outset, such as the need to deal with writing a history in describing the context of

education in the tristate area, and the need to develop a research relationship on top of existing relationships with participants.

I have been careful not to reduce extensive Anangu narratives into distilled summaries that I then overwhelm with dissection and interpretation. Nonetheless, interpretive analysis is needed to illuminate important themes in the narratives (Bourdieu, 1999; Wolcott, 1994). In this chapter, I extract and highlight key general themes that emerge across both Anangu and Piraipa accounts; I have organised the data to make important themes and messages clearer for the reader. Two summary tables, at Appendix 2, detail the themes that emerged from the interview data. However, this condensation cannot fully explicate the insights inhering in the fuller accounts from the eight Anangu participants (Chapters 5 through 9), in which Anangu voices speak in their own terms in relation to education, young people and the future.

The data collected for this study reveal key themes that were expressed; but themes inhere as well in what is not expressed, which also will be explored here. Themes include points of convergence in values and ideas expressed by both Anangu and Piraipa; but there are also points of difference that provide insight into distinctive experiences and priorities across standpoints of interaction with remote education in tristate schools.

### **Barriers to standpoint dialogue**

Interviews with trusted and experienced Piraipa educators highlighted how seldom deeper standpoint conversations regarding education have occurred even for them, let alone for more 'mainstream' Piraipa educators, and the significant level of investment in relationships and time that is required to prepare spaces for such a dialogue to occur. In some cases, it was assumed that either Piraipa knew best in the schooling domain, and/or that Anangu implicitly understood what schooling was for and why it was conducted in a certain way, and therefore were 'on board'. This sort of gratuitous concurrence (Lieberman, 1980) perhaps sustains an incomplete picture among educators, whereby, if Anangu mirror the language of institutional priorities in education, this is wrongly understood as giving accord to dominant cultural values, assumptions and priorities. One Piraipa educator expressed rare insight about underlying discordances:

Whenever I went to community, they all would see the relevance and the importance of education and so the concept of the school was really supported in theory; but when it came to the nuts and bolts and mechanics of it, it wasn't really compatible at times.

Conversations approximating standpoint dialogue did take place where significant, long-term relationships allowed dialogic space to emerge, or where space was carefully prepared for such a dialogue to occur, as evidenced in testimony from some Piraipa educators as cited in Chapter 10. However, these testimonies come from Piraipa educators who are unusually committed to interaction with Anangu. Even then, the statements can be read to indicate assumptions, by these Piraipa educators, about Anangu accordance with educational purposes and values that may not have been as real as presumed. Genuine standpoint engagements across difference do not happen

routinely in the course of a professional working relationship between educators and Anangu, as one educator highlighted:

The opportunity to discuss things with me? I can't remember ever an in-depth conversation.

The depth of Sandra's account in Chapter 5, outlining her hopes for her grandchildren and her articulated vision of the social and economic opportunities that education might enable, needs to be seen as the result of more than five years of active involvement between Sandra and me, working in an education context, as well as a period spanning nearly two years of ongoing conversation, both formal (the interviews) and informal. In August 2015, it has been more than a year since the final interview was held, but as recently as last week, we were talking as a function of the relationship formed around our interview process. Taking the argument for standpoint dialogue a step further, when I went back to Sandra to look over the final version of her chapter, she gathered her family and some of the grandchildren who are the focus of her narratives. As she relayed stories from the chapter to them, they were astounded and intensely interested; they had never heard the stories of her birth, the arrest of her family, or her deep convictions regarding their education and post-school economic engagement. From my perspective, this experience confirmed the need for venues for direct standpoint dialogue to occur within and between families, among Anangu more broadly, in wider circles of Indigenous standpoint diversity, and with educators and education systems and policymakers.

Colonialism – and its heritage in institutions, including schools – continues to shape the power-laden nature of engagement between Anangu and Western education today. National policies are externally imagined and resourced, and significant accountability pressures are applied to ensure the priorities of the government of the day are privileged in education dialogue. This neo-colonial approach to education in tristate communities positions Anangu as subordinate and constrained to speak only in response to the imperatives of others. Educators describe frustrations in being caught between seeking to be responsive to Anangu epistemology, voices and aspirations within a context of upward accountability to the institutions they represent. Standpoint dialogue requires forward planning and proactive engagement, allowing time for concepts to be shared, reflected on and renegotiated as pedagogy. In short, time and patience are needed to create well-informed opportunities for education to be more contextually responsive in engaging the Anangu context. As suggested in Chapter 3, simply calling a meeting and even seeking the assistance of an interpreter to discuss institutional priorities falls short of what I am suggesting is required. Room for a collaborative brokerage process is rarely afforded spaces for dialogue about education, but this is required to privilege Anangu voices and engage the various standpoints in reshaping tristate education. Such a process cannot afford to be constrained to dialogue alone or to be merely symbolic. Piranpa educators described, in Chapter 10, their sense that Anangu realise that ultimately they have little influence over education in their communities; consequently, many have



simply given up. Adopting a justice-oriented approach to tristate education requires honest and pragmatic actions that are sensitive to the conditions of unequal power and accordingly privilege Anangu voices in Anangu education dialogue, but then move from talk to action.

### **Methodological reflections**

Listening carefully to what marginalized people say – with fairness, honesty, and detachment – and trying to understand their life worlds are crucial first steps in gaining less partial and distorted accounts of the entire social order; but these could not be the last step. (Harding, 1992, p. 583)

In Chapter 3, I argued for a methodological approach that privileges Anangu voices in order to develop the basis for a standpoint conversation. To achieve this, extended timeframes for data collection, working in local languages and providing a platform for Anangu to speak on their own terms, expressing their own priorities and values through open questions and discussion, was necessary. Avoiding structured and semi-structured interview methods meant that Anangu participants had more control of the narratives, instead of me over-selecting their voicing in the standpoint dialogue that I sought to broker. My position in the community by marriage to an Anangu woman, with Anangu children who have grown up at Ernabella, made communicative openness more likely across my standpoint and those of Anangu participants. A carefully framed methodological approach and a strong commitment to power-sensitive dialogue (Haraway, 2004) enabled narrators to move beyond the comfortable and well-rehearsed conversation space where the tendency towards gratuitous concurrence (Lieberman, 1980) can draw narratives into mirroring dominant culture narratives and priorities.

In my attempt to play the role of broker of virtual dialogue, I worked collaboratively between the spaces of Anangu and remote educators – wherein I have a sense of membership as a former remote educator and principal, joined to an unusual level of access in the context of Anangu lives through language proficiency and family relationships. Despite this unique positioning, and the extended research time afforded due to being enrolled part time, it is unrealistic to suggest that this thesis research can instigate processes for robust standpoint dialogue to aid communication, and so find meaningful meetings, between the different social epistemologies of 1) a complex mix of the worlds of education theorists, Indigenous academics, school educators, and the systems they represent; and 2) the lives of Anangu community members. Such dialogue requires different modes of engagement to even power-laden anthropological approaches, even where local interpreters and assistants are engaged to assist communication.

I began this thesis entertaining questions that emerged from my work as a principal in the tristate area. As the research has developed, it has been necessary to reflect on ethical and methodological questions that arise in the process of brokering a text-staged standpoint dialogue. In particular, these questions focus on the nature of institutional power in relation to marginality. Increasingly, I became aware that the proper sites for robust standpoint dialogue to occur exceed what can be

staged by either my data-collecting or my textual methods, and that I needed to be aware of my own locations and attachments in relation to institutions that I represent. Nonetheless, prioritising Anangu narratives in their life-world contexts, and joining these narratives to testimonies of experienced educators suggested to me by Anangu participants, have allowed resonances to emerge between Anangu and educator accounts of young people, education and the future in tristate communities.

Structuring education to respond to Anangu aspirations, expectations and values would require lengthy and wide-ranging power-sensitive conversations (Haraway, 2004) with communities rather than the current power-laden methods of cursory consultation on pre-existing institutional priorities. Anangu constantly meet government officials, mining representatives and a range of other organisational delegations who ask them to describe 'what they want' within the context of a pre-ordered process and pre-ordained terms. These consultations typically trigger a sequence of planning and goal setting, program construction, milestones and reporting accountabilities with evaluations in place to monitor outcomes against the agreed plans. In the context of such interactions, there is little opportunity for Anangu to renegotiate alternative understandings of education or employment, social justice or economic participation. There is currently no venue for conversations where historical injustices might be addressed and, in some way, reconciled through an educative process.

Points of difference across Anangu histories, experiences and interactions with colonialism and education became apparent throughout the course of this thesis research and writing. These accounts also highlight differences between Anangu and wider Indigenous contexts. In Chapter 4, I documented colonial influences across the tristate area, including pastoralism where families integrated but schooling was not provided and mixed heritage children were often removed; mission centres where schooling and a range of work and church activities were built around access to rations and medical treatment; the Maralinga and Blue Streak rocket testing regimes that cleared Anangu out of their desert homes and into ration depots, stations and missions; and the emergence of fringe populations around small-scale opal, nickel and chrysophrase mining operations.

Accounting for epistemic difference among Anangu enables new educational possibilities for contextually responsive approaches, rather than persisting with narrow colonial policy approaches that, across generations, have demonstrated unsatisfactory results in remote education. This thesis does not suggest that there are simple solutions which have somehow been missed. Rather, it demonstrates the significant care required to construct spaces where new conversations might take place across standpoints. Historical, linguistic, geographical and jurisdictional diversity across the tristate area can constrain dialogue across the various Anangu standpoints. Establishing linkages between Anangu histories, communities, languages and values is an important first step in pursuing the potential of broader dialogue. To reach a point of 'democratic dialogue ... between various marginal communities and, also, the dominant ones' (Harding, 1992, p. 582), issues of power,

ethics and justice need to be discussed and renegotiated to privilege Anangu, the least powerful of voices in current education dialogue, and to instil increased awareness of ethical responsibilities among the most powerful (Delpit, 1993), including policymakers and systems that resource and regulate Anangu education.

An important aspect of the methodology has been to record interviews in local language and then produce these interviews as bilingual transcripts to be returned to the narrators. It is from these documents that the translations found in Chapters 5–9 have been produced. Small excerpts of these transcriptions and translations are provided in Appendix 3. Working across points of significant philosophical and linguistic difference presents constant challenges, and translators make decisions constantly in regards to how best to represent certain concepts, be true to the tenor of the original voice, and ensure translations make sense in the second language and are of commensurate weight to the context of the transcript (see Jaivin, 2014). Discussion on these ethical-methodological issues can be found in Chapter 3. Producing bilingual transcripts and translations is a highly technical and time-consuming process which is often truncated or avoided in research due to constraints of time and funding. Fully producing these audio and written materials and returning them to the narrators and their families was incited by a felt need for ethical research practice that ensures narrator contributions are honoured and reciprocated, and that the research benefits those I have involved.

Methodologically, it would not be appropriate for me to attempt to work from an Indigenist paradigm. I have also sought to avoid anthropological approaches that are robustly rejected by Indigenous scholars such as Nakata (2007b), Rigney (1999) and Smith (2012). Instead, this study has aimed to begin charting the *potential for approaching* standpoint dialogue where multiple Anangu standpoints and experiences can engage 1) each other, 2) other Indigenous experience and knowledge positions, and 3) Western, social-scientific knowledges values and implicit assumptions that shape education provision. Anangu such as Simone Tur (Tur et al., 2010) and Karina Lester (see Osborne et al., 2014) have begun to articulate their own standpoint accounts in relation to education through their positions within the academy and interactions with and across various Indigenous standpoints of experience. However, both Tur and Lester are careful to describe the various family influences, historical interactions with colonialism, education and linguistic and cultural positions that shape their accounts in standpoint relation to broader Anangu histories, knowledges and representatives of a diverse cultural landscape.

In tristate communities, Anangu are consistently positioned to speak from marginal positions in relation to various institutions. Addressing this power imbalance necessitates a methodological approach that documents Anangu standpoint accounts, not in response to terms set by the academy or educational institutions and policies, but on their own terms, articulating their own histories, epistemologies, values and aspirations. Since Anangu do not have substantial power in current education interactions, the greatest ethical responsibility lies with those who hold the power to create conditions for respectful, power-sensitive and ethically responsive listening to, and actual

*hearing* (Delpit, 1993), of Anangu voices speaking from their standpoints about educational concerns, needs and aspirations. It is especially important for those in powerful positions to demonstrate ethical responsibility, according agency and power to Anangu, in recognition of historical injustices where Anangu and other Indigenous peoples have shared important knowledge and stories, and these sacred gifts have been misused to exert power over Indigenous peoples (see Bunda, Zipin, & Brennan, 2012; Hill, 2003; Mountford, 1976; Strehlow, 1971; Wallace & Wallace, 1977). Many Piranpa educators involved in this study were attuned and responsive to Anangu demands and priorities but expressed frustration at being caught between the inflexible system priorities and an awareness of the need to renegotiate issues of power, pedagogy, cultural engagement and curriculum on both ethical and pragmatic grounds.

### **Ethical responsibilities for discussion and action**

Delpit (1993) argues that within an education context where frequently white, middle-class educators are tasked with teaching ‘other people’s children’, there is a need for dialogue across points of power difference in relation to race, class and so on. She proposes an ethical framework for action where ‘both sides do need to be able to listen, and ... it is those with the most power ... who must take the greater responsibility for initiating the process’ (p. 139). This thesis argues in support of this logic that those with greater power have greater ethical responsibility to listen in the sense that Delpit describes, with ‘open hearts and minds’ and to engage the ‘painful’ process of listening ‘though our beliefs’ (p. 139). Rizvi and Lingard (2010) point to a global trend, including in Australia, where greater power is concentrated in central systems, while, increasingly, those on the margins have more responsibility and less power, and this includes in schools. Local efforts are needed to respond to Anangu aspirations and priorities, with support from those with most power.

If we are to take up and reverse these tendencies, people need to come to the party in different ways. Anangu are positioned as least powerful and therefore have burdens that fall to them that are not chosen. Delpit (1993) explains that students from outside the ‘culture of power’ (p. 122) carry a double burden as they negotiate both their own culture and keeping that alive, as well as negotiating systems within Western education. My thesis has certain implications for action from an Anangu standpoint, but these cannot be carried out in education without support from people at ever-increasing levels of power. Teachers are limited by power to influence systemic change, as shown in this thesis. Getting closer to power are the academics and researchers. Indigenous scholars argue that, too often, academics take knowledge and resources from Indigenous communities and contribute to a power imbalance (Bishop, 2011; Nakata, 2007b; Smith, 1999). The institutions of education administration and of government have greatest power, but without power-sensitive dialogue they tend to redistribute unequal power by cleaving to implicit ‘common sense’ assumptions and paying particular attention to the perceived needs of the system.

The purpose of dialogue is not just to clarify views but also to negotiate new understandings for action, iterating the needs and aspirations of those whom education exists to serve. My research has

been unusual in attempting to privilege Anangu voices, but it is a beginning towards centring Anangu and relinquishing power from the researcher. This involves more pro-action and pursuing a methodology that is sensitive to knowledge and the social context of Anangu communities. Working from Anangu voices, power-sensitive dialogue requires the system to put an ear to the ground and to promote listening across all four spaces of community, schools and educators, research and the more powerful institutions.

There are possibilities for the research presented in this thesis to assist a process of moving from power-sensitive dialogue to action. This could include forums where Anangu can consider how the thesis can stimulate more wide-ranging standpoint dialogue. Similarly, professional network groups across the tristate area could come together to consider the content and implications of the dialogues that this thesis assembles: this includes educators and education officers from the various jurisdictions, principal discussion forums, tertiary discussions and forums for interdisciplinary research. As collegial forums develop discussions in response to standpoints in this thesis, collaboration across regions and disciplines – including Anangu and Piranpa voices engaging in power-sensitive dialogue and from disciplines such as education, health, employment, arts and anthropology, among others – can result in data and resources from many sectors being used to diversify the conversation.

The CRC-REP (see CRC-REP, 2014) has explored interdisciplinary research engagement models, bringing together tertiary, government and non-government institutions, with a particular focus on engaging and privileging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in research. Ninti One Ltd provides the governance and infrastructure for this type of collaboration and research engagement. Such a body could be resourced to oversee a tristate knowledge institute where Anangu histories and knowledge, language and stories can generate ‘decolonial knowledge production’ (Nakata et al., 2012, p. 129). This could be a venue for initiating standpoint dialogue where education draws benefit through resources and expertise to guide teacher induction, language instruction, curriculum and resource development, long-term decision-making, institutional partnerships and research practice.

### **Colonialism, Anangu education and the importance of history**

The findings of this thesis highlight the continued inadequacy of narrow, universalist national policies in tristate schools and the need to broaden the capacity of schooling and the wider understanding of a ‘good’ education in Anangu communities to achieve improved and alternative outcomes. The narrowness of current approaches is illustrated in a jointly issued edict by the federal ministers for Indigenous Affairs and Education (Scullion & Pyne, June 15th 2015), instructing remote schools and communities to cease community activities such as sports carnivals and arts festivals during the school term and recommending restricted access to shopping for students who do not have an approved pass confirming their school attendance. This restrictive and punitive impulse graphically contradicts recent policy/media gestures towards innovations more

widely in school programs around Australia, such as ethics and philosophy classes for primary school students, improved student access to technology, civic participation and social justice campaigns in schools, and educational leadership, among others. It is important for Piranpa educators to understand how colonialism has shaped interactions with education as well as broader Anangu experiences, identities and communities. The neo-colonial context of remote education demands reflection on the part of educators to help come to terms with the need for dialogue that privileges local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices as a means for challenging and reversing the nature of power-laden interactions between Anangu and more powerful institutions.

### **History matters**

In contributing to this study, Anangu narrators moved to recount historical events because they are fundamental to the articulation of their stances in relation to young people, education and the future. These stories were key to explaining influences, experiences and cultural connections that inform their various standpoints. History constitutes a foundation for the present and a view to the future. Anangu spent significant time carefully explaining collective and individual histories in detail. The intensive focus on historical narratives may be surprising to those outside an Indigenous frame of reference, but it makes perfect sense in the context of Anangu social epistemologies, especially in considering the future, for Anangu understand that where their communities have come from shapes who they are now and, in turn, who they can become.

Older narrators described historical contexts and events involving doggers, stations, missions, police (in)justice, the Maralinga tests, pre-contact and other familial accounts. Consequently, understanding history became increasingly important to explain references to sites and events. Chapter 4 was developed specifically to provide context to inform a deeper appreciation of tristate history, including the history related in the narratives by participants in this research. This thesis thus has generated richly contextualised situated histories that Anangu narrators can share with their families, communities and schools and can contribute to archival databases such as Ara Irititja (2015) or AIATSIS (2015) as they see fit. Younger Anangu participants also addressed the past but tended to move to current and future-focused accounts more quickly. Natalie O’Toole, for example, described the historical and familial context that shaped her father’s life and experiences. Her father died when she was young, yet she states, ‘Every day I think about my father and the influence he is on me’. Her daily act of remembering her father’s influence acknowledges the historical interactions with colonialism that, in turn, inform her own standpoint and motivate her to engage in Western education, with incredible resilience.

The importance of local (and broader) history can easily be forgotten within an increasing populist and educational emphasis on global citizenship. History is not merely a backdrop. Notions of the future rely on history for Anangu people, whose concepts of solidarity, social fabric and sense of self are grounded in place and history. The prioritising of historical accounts repositions place-based notions of Anangu values and aspirations in education discourse as paramount. This needs to

be understood by educators, service providers, policymakers and other visitors to Anangu communities. Engaging with history is critical for Piranpa educators as a means for making Anangu stories intelligible across epistemic and ontological points of difference. It also contributes to counteracting historical injustices where ‘forgetting in action’ or ‘disremembering’ (Haebich, 2011, p. 1034) of Aboriginal histories has negatively influenced dominant cultural ideologies in pursuing notions of reconciliation and justice through education (D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

The historical and continuing policy language and logic of remote education assumes 1) that Anangu will eventually adopt the neoliberal ideologies that underpin human capital models of education and employment whereby achieving financial independence and contributing to the nation’s wealth is seen as the pinnacle for marginal societies; and, somewhat contradictorily, 2) that industrial-age understandings of employment in relation to education will continue to make sense and make good into the future (Guenther, Bat, et al., 2014). This study demonstrates that Anangu are unlikely to subscribe to such logic any time soon. At the commencement of this thesis in 2009, the suggestions of likely answers to employment concerns for very remote communities were mining (Aikman, 2012; A. Anderson, 2012; Forrest, 2014), large-scale tourism (Ayers Rock Resort, see Alice Springs News, 2011) or moving to less remote sites of increased opportunity (Tudge, 2014), with relevant skills gained through education. However, in recent times, these simplistic ‘solutions’ have proved implausible. And in light of this failure, policy and populist responses have not been to rethink the relationship between education and employment in terms of rejuvenating remote communities, but rather to argue that employment schemes in remote communities are over-subsidised and, indeed, that those communities are ‘not economically viable’ (Hale, October 22nd 2014; S. Martin, June 5th 2015; Purvis & Reynolds, March 19th 2015), leading to suggestions that some closures take place (Forrest, 2014; Kagi, 2014; Powell & O'Connor, 2015).

The incapacity of large-scale industry to provide mass employment highlights the need to reinvent education in tristate schools. If the purpose of an Anangu education is not to leave the community and get a job at the nearest mine (perhaps hundreds of kilometres from home), resort or cattle station, then how might education be repositioned and alternative understandings of employment and economic participation be negotiated? Potential for greater justice, linked to notions of both cultural and economic development (see Appadurai, 2004; Pearson, 2014; Sen, 1984), is lost if educators and education programs continue to limit the scope of curriculum and reduce notions of success to school attendance rates and the attainment of modest benchmarks in basic English language literacy and numeracy (ACARA, 2011). A curriculum that resists colonial interpretations of remote education and the purposes of education should enable students to prepare for life after school as authoritative traditional land owners and spokespeople for various land trust arrangements; directors and board members of Aboriginal Corporations that oversee significant economic, cultural and community development opportunities; leaders in service delivery

organisations; cultural and ecological knowledge experts to open new opportunities in fields such as land management, cultural tourism and ranger work; users of digital media for accessing education, recording knowledge and histories and sharing knowledge across national and global contexts; and artists, perhaps one of the most understated opportunities for social, cultural, educational and economic development opportunities in Anangu communities (see Osborne et al., 2014). If remote schools can begin to interact with issues of historical colonialism, unequal power and the pursuit of social and economic justice (Rigney & Hemming, 2014), there are resources and opportunities available to engage broader Indigenous standpoints and experiences and to connect students with global issues relevant to Anangu lives. Such an approach can connect students to community and regional stories and enables community social-cultural assets (Moll et al., 1992; Zipin, 2013) of language, knowledge, history and families to be drawn into the process of Anangu education.

### **Moving to actions**

In the remainder of this section, I put forward some ethical considerations and possible actions that arise from the findings of the thesis. I have summarised ethical responsibilities for action moving through different degrees of power, starting from those with the least power and working to those with the most: Anangu, Piranpa educators, researchers and education systems.

#### **For Anangu**

Given colonial relationships are still present, Anangu are going to have to spend more time being more active in developing and articulating their standpoint, which does not easily sit with the dispersed and diverse nature of the region.

As Delpit (1993) made clear, those less powerfully positioned struggle to negotiate epistemologies that hold dominant power. Anangu shoulder complex cognitive labours of sustaining their own systems of epistemology, language and ontology; orienting Piranpa to these; and negotiating Piranpa ways of knowing. Anangu cannot be asked to do this unless there is serious support from other actors, within educational engagement, who recognise the burden of responsibilities on *them* to act in ways that acknowledge and respect social-cultural points of difference.

In Chapter 4, I described Anangu as environmentally responsive, with populations centralising and decentralising as determined by availability of resources. These patterns generated opportunities for social and cultural engagement and were critical to desert survival. In many ways, Anangu still tend to approach engagement with social, cultural and educational opportunities in a manner that could be described as environmentally responsive. Current attempts to improve school attendance through employing attendance officers and punitive measures such as threatening to remove welfare benefits where children are not attending (see S. Martin, 2014a; Wright et al., 2012) have had patchy results at best. Anangu have waited out bad teachers, unwelcoming school environments and other sites of conflict as they would wait out a drought, through avoidance or even moving away. As the environmental conditions change, they return and re-engage. This has



been a strategy for safety, cultural survival and managing the abraded feelings that interactions with colonialism and education can leave with people.

The problem is that while Anangu have an implicit normative sense of how things should be and what constitutes an educational experience worth pressuring a child to attend, current approaches by schools and school systems fail to engage these community norms. Unless venues for dialogue on current practice and, more importantly, Anangu-directed reimagining of education provision in schools serving Anangu are realised, the colonial positioning of schooling and associated spasmodic engagement with schooling will continue. In Chapter 2, I argued that implicit Western cultural assumptions and norms that condition success in school classrooms ('codes of power', see Delpit, 1993) need to be explicitly taught as a means of de-mystification and building confidence among Anangu students. A both-ways approach (Yunupingu, 1999) then requires Anangu to broker Piraṅpa educators into more explicit appreciation of the implicit codes of Anangu epistemologies and ontologies. Multiple standpoint dialogue requires engagement across the cultural interface, where Anangu need learning spaces both to articulate their own priorities and standpoints and to begin explicitly engaging the implicit understandings and assumptions that underpin Western education and its associated institutions.

The Anangu narratives in this study describe Anangu epistemologies in terms of law, language, relationships, geographies and knowledge in Anangu terms. They demonstrate deep and important reflections about young people, education and the future that are often held in contrast to, and despite, activities and plans of local and regional education and employment planning processes. These epistemic positions are not easily heard, but, as demonstrated through this study, such positions can be heard through 'Listening carefully to what [Anangu] say – with fairness, honesty, and detachment' (Harding, 1992, p. 582 emphasis added) and growing the standpoint conversation.

Anangu narrators might make educative use of the bilingual transcripts produced through their generous contributions to this thesis: both as a family resource, and as a resource for informing educators and, where appropriate, providing materials for bilingual text production in local schools that articulate local and regional histories and Anangu standpoints. It is hoped that local text production might also stimulate further dialogue across the community. Finding the confidence to speak in unfamiliar forums can be challenging for Anangu. Giving voice to pedagogies through stories shared within the families, connected to family histories, could be important starting points for stimulating dialogue, as these are rarely heard by educators and in education circles, and perhaps not even among Anangu themselves.

### **For educators**

Educators interviewed in this thesis understand a good deal about the struggle Anangu face to work between the contexts of Western education and their lives as Anangu, but they need to do more. There are important questions that remain about how educators might show convergence in their approach, adopting a commitment towards pro-action and reversing power imbalance. What might

educators do to support Anangu in their two-way epistemological negotiations, beyond gaining a personal appreciation of the issues? Educators have access to power in terms of shaping what happens in classrooms, but, as this thesis shows, there are also the constraints of requirements to be responsive to institutionalised expectations, rather than to the context of the communities their schools are serving.

The remote teaching cohort generally consists of 1) early career educators who often show great enthusiasm and flexibility in their lives and work as remote educators, but lack professional experience and confidence as they hone their craft, and 2) educators often referred to as ‘empty nesters’. In my experience, this second group of educators can be critical to the cohesion and guidance of young staff, but many find it very difficult to ‘unlearn’ (Ma Rhea & Teasedale, 2000) and re-contextualise their understanding of education, curriculum and pedagogy to be responsive to local needs and effective practice in Anangu schools. Reading texts such as this thesis will not provide educators with practice in the tools, experiences and understandings they need to negotiate diverse, complex and contested knowledge spaces and to prioritise education for justice and reconciliation in Anangu schools. However, there are clear and guiding principles that emerge as important.

*Power-sensitivity: Making room for Anangu and the unlearning of ‘teacherness’*

This thesis demonstrates that Anangu teach and learn through storytelling, and therefore the use of stories as pedagogy and resources needs to be central in classrooms. Teachers need to be prepared to be positioned by these stories as learners from Anangu who can teach them; and, further, to account for the pedagogical nature of storytelling. Typical classroom pedagogy positions young people to *speak* more (in response to teachers’ directions); whereas Anangu pedagogies of sharing stories and knowledge position young people to *listen* more. Making room for this pedagogical process can also assist teachers to gain an appreciation of how hard it is not just to listen, but to actually hear in the way that Delpit (1993) and Harding (1992) argue is necessary to address issues of unequal power in education and research.

The capacities to organise, structure, timetable and order learning spaces can be great strengths of teachers. However, as is highlighted in this thesis by both Anangu and Piranpa accounts of classroom-based learning, it is essential that teachers account for the epistemological and ontological context of Anangu communities. Teachers can wrongly assume (whether consciously or unconsciously) that their formal qualifications, command of English and attention to the organisational rigours of schools position them as superior to Anangu colleagues in the classroom. The associated tendency to co-opt Anangu educator colleagues into a predetermined timetable from day one destabilises the relationship, as Anangu educators are acutely aware that the rigid plans of a new teacher in an Anangu school still await the litmus test of contextual reality checks. All participants in this thesis strongly emphasised the importance of establishing relationships on equal terms as the key to effective education practice in Anangu schools. These relationships are slow to

develop and need to happen in both professional and social contexts. Piranpa educator accounts found in Chapter 10 provide well-considered advice on how developing the needed relationships can be approached.

As appreciation for Anangu capacities develops, new possibilities emerge for a widened view of what teaching teams can achieve when valuing the learning assets (Moll et al., 1992; Zipin, 2013) that local communities offer to a shared teaching space. Teachers who assume colonial positioning in relationships with Anangu often expect that their ‘assistants’ aspire to mirror them and, in sensing hesitancy and withdrawal from Anangu colleagues, can quickly timetable them out, feeling disappointed that they do not seem to be on the same page. This pattern appears often in Anangu schools. Teachers can do well to remember that this may be their first teaching appointment, and that Anangu educators they work with have probably seen dozens of teachers come and go and can quickly ascertain whether there is room for them in a fruitful teaching collaboration with the Piranpa educator. In a classroom context, this tends to result in either the careful development of significant relationships, or withdrawal from the relationship, even if the latter means waiting the current teacher out like a drought and returning to see what the next teacher is like.

#### *Time, repetition and opening the spirit for learning*

Anangu narrators provided insights to guide pedagogical considerations for classroom teaching practice. Their accounts of issues with teachers ‘following the program’ and prioritising the routine administration of content while remaining oblivious to the learning needs and emotional state of the students remind educators that Anangu pedagogy and ontology need to be accounted for. Feedback from Anangu narrators suggests that student relationships are critical and that far more opportunity for repetition is required to build student confidence and a desire to engage with learning tasks. These themes were addressed as well by Piranpa educators, although in less depth. Such an approach often requires less talking and more intentional student observation. Through years of observing Anangu students in classrooms with Piranpa teachers, I came to describe ‘teacher talk’ as ‘white noise’: a constant and irritating sound that erodes students’ sense of wellbeing. Particularly in the early years, ‘close and constant Anangu voices’ and a sensitivity to the wellbeing or ‘spirit’ of the child (see Tjitayi & Osborne, 2014) builds children’s confidence to be receptive and responsive to unfamiliar learning contexts and unfamiliar voices, language and knowledge contexts so that knowledge ‘sticks’ (Tjitayi & Osborne, 2014, p. 28).

Delpit (1993, p. 85) argues that, ‘Good liberal intentions are not enough’. It is important that educators pursue a more responsive and ethical pedagogical approach to their positioning and practice. Ultimately, they must invite Anangu to ‘participate fully in the discussion of what kind of instruction is in their children’s best interest’ (p. 85). This includes privileging Anangu pedagogy, such as storytelling as a means of intergenerational knowledge sharing, allowing the time, space and repetition required. While, as Delpit notes, effective teachers need to be able to engage ‘skills’

and ‘processes’ elements of teaching, good teaching must go well beyond such ‘basic’ elements, argues Delpit, in a pedagogy of two-way cultural attention that understands:

... the need to help students establish their own voices, but to coach those voices to produce notes that will be heard clearly in the larger society. (p. 85)

Here, Delpit argues the need for teachers to understand the importance of their role in that they are not merely aspiring to student attainment of minimal benchmarks in literacy and numeracy testing programs, but are preparing students to speak clearly across points of power and knowledge difference. If Anangu are to participate fully, teachers and Anangu educators need to work with the students to be more explicit in relation to their own knowledge and values within broader dialogue.

### **For researchers**

Indigenous scholars rightly argue for Indigenous voices to be given priority in relation to their own knowledge and representations of themselves in Indigenous research. This is specifically in response to historical and continuing anthropological approaches to research (Nakata, 2007b; L. Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012) where the power to investigate questions of interest to the academy and to interpret and make meaning of Indigenous lives remains largely with those who represent the interests of the various institutions (see also Appadurai, 2006; Harding, 1992).

In very remote communities such as in the tristate area, research continues to uphold interests of those with the most power: non-locals, non-Indigenous peoples and organisations. This thesis attempts to engage Anangu knowledge and priorities through a power-sensitive methodological approach. As described in Chapter 3, I stand in a position as an ‘outside’ researcher, but who draws on membership of the remote education leader community, and on unusual levels of access to Anangu community through long-standing relationships, family connections and language proficiency to broker the spaces between experienced education leaders and Anangu standpoints. This specific methodology is not easily replicated, but it enables my research to articulate more general principles for engaging Indigenous knowledge spaces with attention to issues of power and representation that have been continually disregarded by researchers and their institutions, and subsequently draw criticism from Indigenous scholars. If, as Indigenous scholars argue, research takes from Indigenous communities, researchers need to pay particular attention to considering how their effort can give back to communities and, in particular, how their research might work to amplify rather than silence Indigenous voices.

Slowing down the research process is critical if Aboriginal voices and interests are to have any power or benefit from research activity. This includes the important process of developing prior, informed consent. As I have described in Chapter 3, for some participants, this process took up to a year for organisations and individuals, with clear and repeated messages that the right not to participate lies with Anangu communities and participants, no questions asked. Leaving a research proposal as an open discussion without pressuring participants is an important method for leaving it to participants to decide not to follow through, without a sense of embarrassment. At the same

time, it leaves room for participants to actively follow up conversations as a clear sign of their interest. This short-circuits researcher temptation to use both their pre-existing relationships and the cultural tendency of Anangu towards ‘gratuitous concurrence’ (Lieberman, 1980) to push through and prioritise their own agendas and timelines, anticipating that participants will participate as a function of honouring existing relationships, rather than give care to more important considerations such as the purpose and audience for the research, ethical considerations and the associated benefits or risks for individuals or the wider community.

In this thesis, an open dialogic space was important to avoid channelling standpoint dialogue in a predetermined direction, as is more likely through structured and semi-structured interview techniques. Working in language and committing to provide bilingual transcripts back to participants reciprocates, in some modest way, the generous gift of important stories that are offered in the research process. This commitment can be labour intensive and therefore costly, but it builds trust and confidence that the stories participants choose to contribute are valued. This also offers wider and longer term benefit to participants and their families, honouring a stated commitment to the *ngapartji ngapartji* principles (Tur et al., 2010) of reciprocity in research practice. Chapter 5, for example required extensive transcription, translation and further research to locate and provide context to the oral history narratives. This labour-intensive approach has produced significant materials that are valuable resources for Sandra, her family and the wider community.

Starting from Anangu priorities and working back to the demands of the institutions is another methodological consideration that assists in addressing concerns of unequal power relationships. As Delpit (1993) argues, it is important to commit to the ‘painful’ process of ‘ceasing to exist as ourselves for a moment’, as it is ‘the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue’ (p. 139).

### **For education systems**

The testimonies presented in this thesis reveal that both Anangu and Pīranpa educators feel that education is not responsive to the context and needs of Anangu lives, and that it should be (see also Guenther, 2015e). Narrators argue that cursory consultation on systemic priorities and agendas is not adequate for engaging Anangu standpoints in education. Instead, a careful and intentional process of seeking spaces for power-sensitive dialogue needs to be established and built upon to inform new possibilities for redesigning Anangu education. In terms of Delpit’s (1993) ordering of who has ethical responsibility for what actions, it is the institutions that have a ‘greater responsibility’ (p. 139) for initiating actions that enable them to ‘hear’ the voices of marginal communities. Reimagining tristate education may largely rest on the voices, vision and actions of Anangu in partnership with local schools; but it is the system that has the resources and power to support alternatives to current neo-colonial modes of policymaking and upward-focused accountability structures. These top-down structures and processes also tend to consume such large

portions of the available financial resources that local schools and communities are burdened with the unfairly devolved expectation to achieve ‘improvements’ without having the freedom and resources to pursue local aspirations and local sensibilities for action. The findings of this thesis charge the institutions with significant responsibility for ‘listening’ and ‘initiating’ actions that are responsive to Anangu voices and are committed to reversing historically unequal power interactions that continue to yield poor outcomes even against their own measures (see ABC, 2014, August 18; Forrest, 2014; Karvelis, 2014a; S. Martin, 2014a, June 5th 2015; B. Wilson, 2014).

Systemic responses can focus on 1) widening what is included in curriculum, where Anangu histories and historical interactions with colonialism, and the engagement of community assets and organisations, can give rise to rich opportunities for content and practical engagement; 2) (Pirampa) teacher preparation; 3) rethinking Anangu as educators in (and out of) schools; 4) renegotiating understandings of employment and post-school engagement for school leavers; 5) diversifying the policy logic and models for boarding school provision; and 6) regional collaboration around development of language, curriculum and knowledge resources, and in forming research, corporate and institutional partnerships as a priority across the tristate area.

#### *Curriculum: Educating for justice; reconciling history*

There are unresolved and bitter collisions that need to be remembered and addressed as an act of educating for justice and reconciliation (Haebich, 2011; D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) and very few materials are available to assist this process; they need to be produced. Issues include a continued colonialist education agenda, where education appears to act as a tool for assimilating Aboriginal people to serve the interests of the dominant culture; Maralinga and Blue Streak rockets – where nuclear weapons testing in the tristate area marked a particularly violent and final form of dispossession which is the subject of an ongoing Royal Commission and campaign for justice (Dunne-Breen, 2012; Ngaanyatjarra Council, 2014d; Walker, 2014); the Stolen Generations (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997) – the systematic policy and practice of removing mixed-heritage children from their Aboriginal mothers and placing them into institutions; murders and massacres that remain largely unaccounted for in mainstream literatures (see Chapter 4); early interactions with state (in)justice where police resources were often used by pastoralists to maintain the upper hand in any land or resource-related tension, including disputes over women (see Chapters 4 and 5, also, Brown & Studdy-Clift, 1990; Duguid, 1972; Edwards, 1992); and the relegation of Anangu to unpaid labourers and fringe dwellers on their own land (Duguid, 1963, 1972; Edwards, 1992; Mattingley & Hampton, 1987; McGrath, 1987).

In the introduction chapter, I provided a brief overview of the history of Aboriginal education and the broader context of Indigenous policy, where early periods of social and educational exclusion gave way to strongly assimilative policy and education practices followed by a move towards self-determination, reconciliation, intervention and, most recently, recognition (Haebich, 2011;

Partington & Beresford, 2012; Welch, 1988). According to the Anangu narrators who contributed to this study, efforts such as the 2008 apology to the Stolen Generation (Rudd, 2008) and the preceding eras of self-determination, land rights and so on have not resolved significant historical injustices. Anangu thus remain careful and wary about offering trust to educational (Haebich, 2011; Partington & Beresford, 2012), economic and social justice narratives that come from positions of power, however these may be presented as speaking for the greater good of Anangu and their interests. Anangu narrators do not focus on these historical injustices in order to position themselves as victims in an unequal struggle. Rather, these stories are offered in the context of explaining important historical interactions that make them who they are, have shaped their standpoint accounts in the dialogue about education and, in many instances, remain a source of pride in that they have survived and, having come through, have gained important life experiences that young people can learn from.

Anangu schools would do well to embrace these generous testimonies in curriculum. Engaging with these historical events and issues educates Anangu children to understand the historical, political and economic context that they live in while also affirming the strength of their own families and ancestors, building a sense of inspiration and aspiration to forge ahead in even the most trying of circumstances. These important historical interactions can also be taught to shine a light for young people to see hope and potential in the pursuit of social, relational, legal and land-related economic and educational justice. Local community members and community organisations can provide important resources and sites of engagement with community histories, stories and activity. Such an approach enables scaffolding that extends from cultural grounding in locally contextual experiences, reaching to engage critically with mainstream curriculum while acquiring its cultural codes. To develop such a two-way curriculum requires a space that is carefully instituted and resourced if Anangu are to be central to the sharing of stories and knowledge and in the construction of curriculum content and framing of pedagogical considerations. Historically, Anangu languages have been central in producing educational materials, which offer a precedent for developing new histories, songs, art and other materials based on local memory work would be a sound contribution.

#### *Rethinking teacher preparation*

Significant points of epistemic differentiation between Anangu and Pīranpa knowledges and lives are highlighted in this study, but to engage at the knowledge interface (Nakata, 2007a), reading alone is insufficient for acquiring an appreciation of Anangu epistemologies, ontologies, cosmologies and axiologies. Pīranpa educators emphasised that Anangu values and priorities are experienced and understood in a slowly unfolding manner, over time and in context, where relationships that are given room and time to develop provide the learning context for Pīranpa educators.

One of the advantages of the bilingual education era of decades gone by is that Piranpa teachers were required to learn local languages and to engage deeply with Aṅangu epistemologies as part of their role as teachers. Teachers stayed for longer periods and were able to assist in inducting other teachers on arrival. There are now very few non-Aṅangu teachers with significant language skills and experience in working in Aṅangu schools, so it is necessary to plan for the rebuilding of capacity back into the system. A strategic and shared focus between education systems, universities, schools and local communities is required to grow the kind of help needed to underpin an education approach that is contextually responsive. This might include university courses specifically targeted for remote teaching preparation, reinstating access to comprehensive language courses (such as I experienced in the 1990s where the University of South Australia offered three semesters in Pitjantjatjara language taught by a team of expert Aṅangu and Piranpa teachers), incentivising completion of specialist courses and training in relevant areas, increased involvement of Aṅangu as part of initial and ongoing induction programs, and providing avenues for flexible engagement with competent and contextually experienced educators – who may no longer live and work in Aṅangu communities – to provide mentoring and support to new teachers.

‘Successful’ and recognised educators interviewed in this study describe their own sense of inadequacy and failure, often feeling inadequately prepared for the role of teaching in Aṅangu communities. These accounts underscore the need for teacher preparation to be contextually responsive and well informed. This preparation needs to engage educators in the process of understanding themselves as culturally positioned people, as they engage at the complex interface of Aṅangu education (see Nakata et al., 2012). Experienced educators selected by Aṅangu to engage in this dialogue were able to describe the importance of self-awareness in relation to their own identity and position, as this shapes the personal and professional interactions that occur daily in Aṅangu education. Throughout this study, I have argued the need for power-sensitive dialogue. The Piranpa educators emphasised the need for power-sensitive relationships, both in and out of the classroom, as an important platform for informing successful practice in Aṅangu schools and community living.

### *Rethinking Aṅangu as educators*

Piranpa educators were united in the view that the success of Aṅangu education relies on the prioritisation of Aṅangu educators. According to accounts across the generations of Piranpa educators interviewed, Aṅangu participation in the teaching process has declined. In Ernabella in the 1950s, for example, one Piranpa teacher and five Aṅangu educators taught up to 111 students daily. UniSA’s Aṅangu Teacher Education Program (AṅTEP) (Gale, 1996) and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) (Bat et al., 2014) in the NT have historically provided access to locally accredited three-year degrees as well as a range of training and professional development opportunities for Aṅangu educators at all stages of academic study. Located outside of the tristate area, programs such as RATEP (Qld, see James Cook University, 2015) and the Institute of Koorie Education (IKE) (Deakin University, 2015), a program that runs



residential schools at its campus in Geelong for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across the country, also provide opportunities for remote Aboriginal teaching students. A recent national focus on standards and accountability measures (see AITSL, 2011) in the teaching profession has instituted minimum four-year degrees, and a requirement that ‘applicants’ levels of personal literacy [in English] and numeracy should be broadly equivalent to those of the top 30% of the [national] population’ (p. 12) along with a range of national requirements, also applied to contextual remote community teacher preparation courses. For many Anangu teachers who would ordinarily be registered under a three-year contextualised degree, attaining these national standards under mainstream expectations and quality teacher or ‘excellence’ models will be a bridge too far due to the length of time it takes to complete each year of study and the national standards focus, where what is valued and measured does not easily correlate with Anangu strengths, experiences and priorities.

This shift in teacher standards policy demands a rethink on the part of institutions that provide pre-service teacher training and in-service professional development courses. Mainstreaming of programs and increased years of required study take a teacher qualification out of the reach of most Anangu educators and shift the power for decision making in relation to content, knowledge priorities and conceptualisation of what constitutes a good Anangu education firmly into the hands of the urban-centred academy. A careful collaboration between university programs such as BIITE and AnTEP – the education systems that employ Anangu educators –and other training providers such as TAFE is urgently required to ensure that Anangu educators, their knowledge assets and critical contributions to success in Anangu schools are valued and prioritised as alternative models are considered. Failure to do so empowers a re-colonising of Anangu education where, increasingly, Piranpa teachers stand alone in front of Anangu students, and students are likely to be further alienated in schooling and, research suggests, less likely to attend (see Guenther, et al., 2014). The teacher standards framework (AITSL, 2011) does mention the needs of ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ (standards 1.4, 2.4, see AITSL, 2011) but assumes a broad and generalist notion of a collective Indigenous identity and experience. This thesis demonstrates the insufficiency of singular, universalist policy approaches and the need for differentiated and contextually responsive approaches to teacher qualities, curriculum and education more broadly.

We are facing a critical moment where the positioning of resources and policy priorities increasingly put pressure on Anangu educators and Anangu knowledges, values and priorities to retain a foothold in Anangu education. The pressures include a secondary school focus on urban-based provision through boarding schools (AIEF, 2013; B. Wilson, 2014); the mainstreaming of access to tertiary teacher preparation programs, including an increased tendency towards providing content online; solely measuring outcomes based on national benchmarks on English language literacy and numeracy (see ABC, 2014, August 18); and over-stress on school attendance initiatives such as the Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) (see Martin, 2014a). It is vital that policymakers, education systems and university programs consider the adverse effect that the shift

to tightening national standards and accountability measures will have on the priority and place of Anangu educators in Anangu schools. Given epistemic, historical, cultural and linguistic differences that matter to Anangu identity, it is necessary for Anangu communities to negotiate their own understandings of success and how best to measure them. Accordingly, teacher qualities and standards for both Anangu and Piranpa educators in Anangu schools should be developed to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared and working towards locally negotiated outcomes. This is not to suggest that attendance and literacy and numeracy measures should be done away with, but to argue that these measures are insufficient to inform educational success, and room is needed for Anangu priorities in Anangu education.

### *Renegotiating understandings of employment and post-school engagement*

Testimonies in this thesis indicated that employment and economic development opportunities need to be further developed and re-imagined in view of continuing priorities for Anangu. Accordingly, schooling must position young people for success in post-school engagement activities. I have described the potential of a contextually responsive curriculum in this regard (see also, Osborne et al., 2014), but it is also critical that educators and education leaders understand the wider employment and economic development potential specific to the region. This requires educators to see outside of the school gates and to understand the importance of historical factors such as land rights, and historical ventures in relation to pastoralism and mining, and to be far more engaged with organisations based outside education-specific concerns. How will education prepare young people to broker important and complex collaborations between commercial interests and opportunities, legal entities and corporations, cultural obligations and knowledge claims in contested spaces? These are the kinds of post-school interactions that Anangu engage in on almost a daily basis, apart from training programs and getting a job. Beyond the cultural context of the community, they must negotiate with government officials, anthropologists, lawyers, corporation managers, politicians, land councils and mining interests, among many others. The humble classroom teacher who rarely leaves the classroom can remain unaware of the existence of these types of demands and opportunities that shape the nature of post-school engagement for their students.

Throughout the interviews, Anangu described the essential character and capacities that young people need and that education should sustain. These priorities include ‘basics’ such as literacy and numeracy skills, the ability to think independently, and so on, in order to be positioned to obtain work. However, these generic needs are adapted within a firmly place-based context of local community. This is where competing logics come into play, between community understandings of the purposes of education and broader policy assumptions. Anangu repeatedly affirmed the values of their language; being strongly connected to family; Anangu law, stories and country; having a strong sense of Anangu identity and belonging; and reaching out to interact with employment and education from these positions. The notion of leaving the community in order to pursue tertiary studies, a ‘career’ or financial independence to enable a ‘coming back’ to the family and

community in order to help from the position of a financially independent professional was simply foreign or absent unless narrators had personally experienced significant engagement with education or employment in cities or town (see narratives from Yami and Rose – Chapter 9, and Chris – Chapter 8), where such ideas have been appropriated in various ways. Piranpa educators also repeatedly articulated the futility of pursuing mainstream understandings of the purposes of education and argued the importance of working with the community to develop a contextually relevant and responsive program wherever possible.

Appropriate education and employment initiatives will demonstrate an ability to uphold the priorities of family, language and obligations to country and will contain high degrees of flexibility to allow for social and cultural participation at certain times of the year, without severely limiting or penalising students or employees where extended periods of time are needed to attend to these obligations. This means that long-term traineeships and employment arrangements away from the community, shift work such as mining rotations and associated travel demands, as well as inflexible employment conditions are unlikely to attract or retain the vast majority of Anangu, even accounting for cultural change, improved roads and access to air travel and so on. There are some young people who can engage in large-scale employment opportunities away from the community with support and could be increasingly encouraged to do so; however, this is not the majority. There is also strong potential for emerging digital technologies to offer flexible and responsive engagement with education and employment; but community access to infrastructure remains limited in this regard and online content needs to be accessible and of benefit to Anangu interests in order to realise this potential.

### *Boarding schools*

The fact is that Anangu students are largely absent from well-funded and politically recognised scholarship programs (see AIEF, 2013). Such programs may be excellent opportunities for some students, from some geographical and cultural contexts. However, investing heavily in single-focussed strategies such as boarding school scholarships, solely committed to dominant culture measures of success, further marginalises Anangu communities who ultimately remain judged as dysfunctional, deficient or failed within this narrow frame. A diversified approach to provision of full-time and semi-residential boarding provision, that is responsive to Anangu aspirations, will increase engagement with out-of-community secondary education. This requires strengthening local community opportunities for education that work in collaboration with externally located education opportunities, in order to build connection between the staff and management of local and non-local schooling (see Mander, Cohen & Pooley, 2015; Stewart, 2015). As described in Chapter 10, Anangu continue to appropriate the various available boarding opportunities to support perceived needs of their families in diverse ways, not necessarily in line with the narratives and assumptions of those providing these programs. Rarely do Anangu motivations and expected outcomes fit neatly within broader neoliberal narratives and assumptions that inform boarding

programs, but this study demonstrates that Anangu view boarding schools as a worthwhile resource at certain times and in certain ways.

Once again, power-sensitive standpoint dialogue is necessary, in this case to reorient the nature of boarding school opportunities to free students from the burden of choosing between limited or non-existent local opportunities in the senior years (B. Wilson, 2014) or subscribing to an education experience that can be culturally, socially and physically isolating in drawing on a strongly assimilative logic (see Pearson, 2006). Such neo-colonial approaches have been roundly criticised by Indigenous authors and scholars globally as destructive to entire communities across generations (Wallace Adams, 1995). Negotiating a reorientation of the nature of boarding school opportunities requires, as Delpit (1993) suggests, a significant ethical commitment from those with the ‘most power’ – that is, institutions and systems – to ‘listen’ openly and responsively, and to ‘take the greater responsibility for initiating the process’ (p. 139).

### *Collaborating as a region*

Seeing the tristate area as a connected entity that can work regionally and across borders is a critical consideration if education and employment opportunities that are of relevance to communities are to be realised. Organisations such as Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women’s Council (NPYWC, 2015) and legislation such as the *Cross-border Justice Act 2009* (WA Attorney General, 2008) are examples of cross-border collaboration that recognise the need to work in a coordinated way, building on the close connections of family, language and history, considering the sparseness of the dispersed populations that challenges separate jurisdictional service delivery models. Significant work was done to argue for a similar structure in the late 1980s (see Tri-State Board of Management, 1990), but the Tristate report’s recommendations were not acted on due to political contestations at the time. It is disappointing that political convergence can be achieved to assist policing and legal versions of ‘justice’, but not for education, health or provision of other services.

Investment in a regional education body should provide the infrastructure to engage experts in language and curriculum development to privilege Anangu knowledges, languages and histories and prioritise Anangu aspirations in negotiating alternatives for education and training, employment and economic development. An educational approach of regional collaboration encourages larger institutions such as universities, philanthropic partners and industry to engage with education and communities, building collective capacity to make better possibilities practicable. Anangu can then be at the fore in deciding which knowledge should be available to whom: they may not always want their knowledge to be widely available. Piranpa should avoid trying to pull out Anangu knowledge to garnish their own institutionally derived agendas and epistemic priorities; instead, they should position themselves as learners and invite knowledge contribution in the context of more power-sensitive collaborations. A regional forum could provide a space for such knowledge negotiation.

As described earlier, Indigenous scholars located within academic institutions are able to dialogue across Indigenous standpoints and experiences, but Anangu sit largely outside of such forums, often located in the least powerful position. Exploring venues for power-sensitive conversations that might enable a more contextually responsive and ethically attuned approach to the framing of education might include strategic regional engagement between Indigenous scholarship and broader academic institutions that otherwise rarely engage Anangu knowledge and interests from Anangu standpoints of need, aspiration and value.

The development of a tristate knowledge institute could be worth considering. A regional approach could draw on a depth of experience and specific expertise to enable the collaborative brokering process discussed earlier. Across the tristate area, these skills and people exist, but not in numbers to drive sufficient activity in areas such as curriculum design, language development and academic engagement in every community. Anangu and Piranpa educators who can work both ways across the cultural interface, and engage in curriculum development, are few and far between. Many of the educators who have provided this kind of expert contribution in the past are now nearing or have reached their retirement years. Prioritising and resourcing the concept of a tristate knowledge institute can drive innovation in partnership with community organisations, industry and accredited training providers. A tristate knowledge institute could provide a venue for renegotiating understandings of success in Anangu education, developing curriculum and pedagogical guidance for local schools, re-contextualising accountability and standards documents and repositioning education to succeed, with measures Anangu are central in designing. Such a forum could also draw on wider Anangu expertise to provide teacher induction and ongoing training, language courses, research engagement and partnerships with larger training and employment bodies from a position of negotiating and valuing Anangu priorities in education dialogue.

### **Contribution to new knowledge**

This study is significant in that important stories have been collected and shared that offer both substance and depth and that document collective Anangu histories and values as well as personal narratives in relation to education. This data has been provided through patient and reflective contributions by Anangu narrators, offered as generous gifts. Their stories form a body of work that lays the foundation for potential participation in wider standpoint conversations: they both highlight the strength of common cultural and wider values among Anangu, and demonstrate diverse experiences across regions, families, individuals and generations. Historical accounts that Anangu narrators shared are significant in that they outline a long history of interaction with colonisation where a distrust of governmental decision-making, police justice, policies and processes is warranted. These accounts also highlight the need for democratic dialogue (Harding, 1992, p. 582) if education is to move beyond colonial models and old ideas in framing remote education. In this sense, this thesis embodies unique contributions in privileging Anangu knowledges, languages, values and aspirations to be heard in different ways, and in suggesting

grounds for creating new kinds of spaces where standpoint dialogue might occur across Anangu and Piranpa education.

This thesis makes an important contribution to broader literature and knowledge in that most accounts of Anangu lives that are accessible in the public domain have largely been provided through European lenses, in anthropological publications (Basedow, 2008; Bates, 1938; Elkin, 1938-1939; Gould, Hackett, Glass, & Tedford, 1968; Mountford, 1962; Strehlow, 1970; Tindale, 1933, 1935, 1937; Wallace & Wallace, 1977), historical texts (Edwards, 1992; Finlayson, 1946), mission histories and accounts (Duguid, 1963, 1972; Edwards, 2008; Hilliard, 1968; Sheppard, 2004) and the work of linguists and bible translators (Douglas, 1959; Eckert & Hudson, 2010; Glass & Hackett, 1970). Only in more recent years have Anangu voices emerged through the recording and sharing of oral histories (Edwards, 1994, 1997). In the post-mission school era, there have been few research materials or other literatures available that focus on education in tristate schools, except within broader research-based reports such as the Desert Schools language and literacy report (NLLIA, 1996) and the Tristate report (Tri-State Board of Management, 1990) as well as a series of government-funded reports (see, for example, Lea et al., 2008; Mulligan, 2008). More recently, Kral (Kral, 2012; Kral & Ellis, 2008; Kral & Schwab, 2012) has contributed tristate education-specific papers that describe and engage Yarnangu language, pedagogies and values in education. Specific prioritisation of Anangu voices in relation to education, through collaborative authorship, has only recently begun to emerge. With the Anangu participants, I have contributed to this approach (Burton & Osborne, 2014; Eikelkamp, 2011; Minutjukur & Osborne, 2014; Osborne et al., 2014; Tjitayi & Osborne, 2014). Anangu accounts and standpoints in relation to education have also been articulated from within the academy through the work of Anangu academics such as Simone Tur (Tur et al., 2010), Karina Lester (see Osborne et al., 2014) and others. These are important developments in which Anangu accounts in education research are engaged from positions of knowledge encounters, moving methodological approaches beyond anthropological descriptions of culture and 'the other' (see Nakata, 2007b; Sarra, 2011).

Methodologically, the thesis also contributes to debates about Indigenous and non-Indigenous research collaboration. I have worked towards an 'outside researcher' methodological approach (see also Guenther, Osborne, et al., 2015) which represents a shift away from usual anthropological approaches to research of Indigenous peoples, through a more thorough consideration of issues in relation to power and ethics in engaging with Anangu knowledge in research spaces. As I outlined in Chapter 3, the concept of collaborative brokerage describes the process of negotiating knowledge spaces within the 'contact zone' (D. Rigney & Hemming, 2014). The use of story and circling ('progressive focusing', see Wolcott, 1994, p. 18) as a pedagogical tool for explaining, revisiting and reinforcing the various descriptions and arguments is an important feature of the narratives that order this thesis, and the priority of working from local language accounts locates the narratives within an Anangu frame.

Given the difficulties for Anangu to engage in standpoint dialogue within and across Anangu and broader Indigenous standpoints and with the institutions that provide schooling in tristate communities, future collaboration around research is important. Further research is needed to encourage standpoint dialogue as a way for Anangu to articulate their priorities for education and for Piranpa to take account of Anangu standpoints in shaping their own practice.

## Appendix 1: Just one lifetime – contact, colonialism and enduring Anangu values

Immense and rapid change has occurred across the Western Desert over the past 100 or so years. To further explain, I have included a brief summary of the life of Billy Wara Mervin, my wife's *tjamu* (grandfather). In Western terms, he was my wife's paternal grandmother's younger brother (or great uncle). Billy Wara died in 2008. It is not certain how old he was, but a guess places him at around 95 years old at the time of his death. A number of texts (see, for example, Edwards, 1997; Hilliard, 1968) describe him as a young man around 19 years old attempting to take *ili* (wild figs) and water to the dehydrated adventurer Harold Lasseter, who was sheltered in a cave in January 1931 following the evaporation of his dream to find a 'reef of gold' in the Petermann Ranges. Lasseter reportedly fired his pistol at the group as they attempted to take supplies to him. According to the interpretive signs erected at the cave, Lasseter set off on 25 January 1931 from the cave with 1.7 litres of water in an attempt to reach Mt Olga (Kata Tjuta), 140 km away, and despite being 'assisted by a friendly Aboriginal family', died 55 km from the cave around four days later. I have provided pictures below that I took of the cave and the public signage at Lasseter's Cave in the south-west of the Northern Territory.

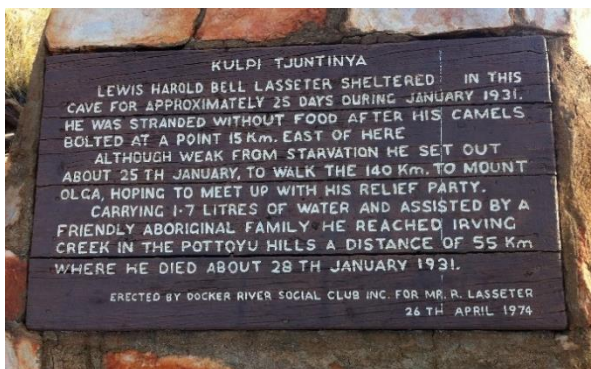


Figure A1.1: Information sign erected by Docker River Social Club, 26 April 1974, for R Lasseter (Harold Lasseter's son) at Lasseter's Cave (*Kulpi Tjunti-nya*)

Image credit: Sam Osborne



Figure A1.2: Lasseter's Cave

Image credit: Sam Osborne

This record provides insight into the immense distances Anangu travelled and their ability to survive, even in the hottest periods of a central Australian desert summer. As I have described in Chapter 4, their environmentally responsive mobility patterns and intricate knowledge of the land to locate food and water meant that they did not carry a burdensome volume of tools. Anangu did not generally retain or store water for travelling other than minimal amounts where possible with the aid of a shallow wooden dish (*piti*). Instead, they were dependent on their ability to locate and retrieve water along the way until more plentiful supplies of food and water could be reached. Knowledge was the key to desert survival, in complete contrast to Piranpa reliance on resource accumulation (see Mountford, 1962; Northern Territory Archives Service, 2014; Strehlow, 1969).



Anangu travelled many hundreds of kilometres on foot, carrying few wooden tools and weapons along with other minimal resources such as quartz stone chips (*kanti*) and spinifex resin formed into an adhesive gum (*kiti*), which was used to repair bowls and make weapons and was sometimes mixed with meat and fed to children to suppress hunger in times when food was scarce (Goddard, 1996, p. 42). Small quantities of food or medicines were also carried while travelling.



Figure A1.3: Rock formation, the body of the dead perentie man, Aranja Spring [sic. Aran], Mann Ranges, Northern Territory, 1940

Source: (Mountford, 1940a)



Figure A1.4: Pitjantjatjara artist Billy Wara carving an ancestral totem, Ernabella, central Australia

Source: (Keen, 1990s)

Billy Wara was born very close to the tristate corner at a place called Aran (see photo above) where an extrusion of cylindrical rock lassoes the mountain's girth. This is an important site for *Wati Ngintaka* (the Perentie Man), and the rock has the appearance of being the monstrous tail of a perentie. Billy Wara's dreaming (totemic association) is *Papa Inura* (dingo), and his birthplace is close to the hills between Piipalyatjara and Wingellina known as *Nyiku Kura* (lit. 'bad elbow') where the *papa* (dog) suffers an injury to his leg joint in the *tjukurpa* (creation story) for that site.

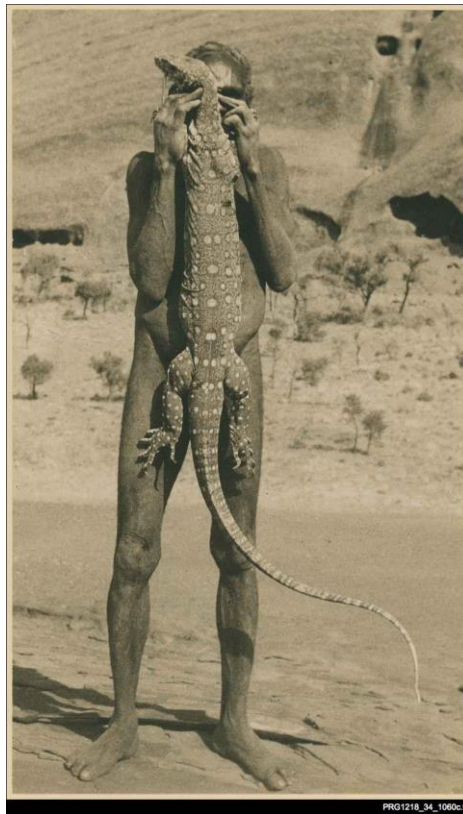


Figure A1.5: Pitjantjatjara man 'Tjalerina' [sic] holding a *ngintaka*

Source: (Mountford, 1940b)

Although Billy Wara and his older sister Wanynga (my wife's *kami* – grandmother) were born close to Irrunytju (Wingellina) in Western Australia, Billy Wara was intimately connected to Uluru and had a small homeland between Kata Tjuta and Irrunytju called Umutju in the south-west region of the Northern Territory. Billy was an active traditional owner for the Uluru–Kata Tjuta region, and his connection to Uluru is well documented in that he features heavily in video and photographic material at the Uluru cultural centre, and his photo appears throughout the children's book *Growing up at Uluru* (Breedon, 1995). To traverse the territory of these key sites, as he did when he was a young man, took a journey on foot of around 1000 kilometres.

In *People of the Big Sky Country* (Rees & Rees, 1970), experiences of the Ernabella Mission in the 1960s are documented, and Billy Wara is described as patiently and persistently attempting to take his son Mututa to school for the first time (with limited success as Mututa continually tries to run away). As was common for Anangu between the 1930s and 1960s, Billy Wara travelled throughout the tristate area. At times this was on foot, but family stories recall trips where he took his children travelling on camels. Journeying in and out of Ernabella Mission, he passed by cattle stations, small shacks and cattle runs (see Edwards, 1992; Scales, 2007; Young, 2010) that occupied outlying areas within larger pastoral leases and the 'Central Reserve' (now referred to generally as the tristate area, see Edwards, 1988, 1992). He was revered for his knowledge of the land, his bush

skills and his immense knowledge of *Tjukurpa* – the stories, law and ceremonial song cycles that pertain to sites spread across the region.

I only knew Billy Wara well in the last seven years of his life. In that time, he lived at Amata and Ernabella (SA), Mutitjulu (NT) and Irrunytju (WA). He also spent a few months in Adelaide. In 2003 he joined us as we took a group of secondary students from Ernabella to his homeland (Umutju and the surrounding areas) to share some of the stories and see the places. We stopped constantly. Despite being a man in his late eighties, standing at somewhere around 6 ft 4”, immaculately dressed in navy blue trousers and suit jacket, he reverted to something of a teenager as he regularly ordered the vehicles to stop and we walked over hills and across rocky outcrops to arrive at a range of sites. Some sites were many kilometres from the road and impossible to find unless you knew the exact location. At one site he showed the students a water-harvesting point which was a hole with an opening about the size of a dinner plate. Billy Wara had intimate knowledge of an enormous tract of country. When I would drive in different parts of the country with him in South Australia and the Northern Territory, he would constantly relate stories of the sites and their related *Tjukurpa* accounts as we passed through.

In the space of a single lifetime, Anangu lives changed irrevocably. From growing up oblivious to the ‘other’ world (see Gordon’s narratives in Chapter 6), Billy Wara continued to traverse the deserts of the tristate area, coming into contact with all aspects of colonial activity outlined in Chapter 4 (cattle, nuclear weapons testing, mining activities, missions and church activity, doggers, explorers, community bodies and schools). One family story shared with great affection recounts the time that one of his granddaughters asked him to look after her mobile phone. The phone was left on vibrate mode and as it went off in his pocket, he proclaimed in great alarm, ‘*Mamangkuni kurani!*’ (An evil spirit is attacking me!).

Despite living through an era of great and irreversible change, Billy Wara chose the terms on which his life would be defined and redefined. He remained a respected senior law man, teacher and, as pictured in Figure A1.4 above, was dedicated to his craft, carving wooden *ngintakas* as an artistic representation of his identity, but also as an avenue for economic engagement. In his early nineties, he took up painting canvases and completed two *ngintaka*-related canvases just prior to his death. Billy Wara’s wooden *ngintakas* were sold at the Uluru cultural centre gallery for anywhere up to \$3000. He received \$500 for each one and he was determined to earn enough money through this labour-intensive craft to put bitumen on the road from Kata Tjuta to Umutju so that he could take tourists there and keep his family connected to the sites and stories that were important to him. He suffered the grief of outliving grandchildren and two of his three children, and even in his nineties was the main carer for two of his grandchildren. Despite having limited English, he would spend long hours talking to our children, joking with them and playing with toy cars and animals, and the sense of identity, belonging and importance in the world that he instilled in them through this

process, despite their young age at the time, is remembered and held with great importance by our children today.

Billy Wara's connection to vast tracts of country across the tristate area demonstrates the social and physical mobility that is necessary for maintaining relationships with the land and with each other. The boundaries are fluid and not limited to lines such as state borders. Anangu with similar life experiences to Billy Wara still live in tristate communities, although this cohort is rapidly dwindling; opportunities for collecting oral history accounts are increasingly limited, although many stories are retained and recalled as family stories (see Sandra's accounts of life as a very young child in Chapter 5, for example). Billy Wara was deeply respected. Although he participated in community activities, he had a quiet approach to life. He negotiated radical changes to Anangu society and cultural shifts but maintained an unwavering commitment to enduring Anangu values as he considered how he might appropriate newly available resources to assist the expression of those values of family, cultural knowledge and country. His example provided inspiration for Makinti Minutjukur, his *ukari* (niece), as she wrote her reflections on how education might assist Anangu to retain their own sense of power and identity in a changed world where educational engagement and achievement is an important consideration for young people today (see Minutjukur & Osborne, 2014).

## Appendix 2: The translation and transcription process

Three short examples of the transcription and translation process are provided here to demonstrate the process of producing bilingual transcripts. Full transcripts and translations were provided back to the narrators, and English language translations have been used to produce Chapters 5–9.

### Appendix 2a: Gordon Inkatji – Interview 1 excerpt

0:00

Uwa, ngayuluna irititjanguru wangkanyi ngayulu tjitji nyinara nintiringkunyjtatjanungku ngayuku mamangka ngunytjungka nyinara munu ngayulu tjitji tjukutjuku mukuringkupai tjukurpa wangkanytjaku ngayuku ngunytjungku mamangku. Ka pula tjukurpa wangkapai munu [ngayulu ... sic] nganana inkapai wiya nyinapai mamangka ngunytjungka kutju. Mununa wangkapai, ‘Tjukurpa wangkama!’ Ka pula tjukurpa wangkangu ka ngayulu kulilpai. Kulira kulira kulira ... kunkunaripai ka pula wiyaringkupai ka ngayulu kunkunarira munga winki pakara watjalpai, ‘Alala – tjukurpa panya wangka’. Ka watjalpai, ‘Wiya, mungaku wanti!’

Yes, I’m talking about the things I learned about a long time ago as a child living with my father and mother. As a young child, I would love it when my mother and father told stories. They would both tell stories and we didn’t play, we’d just stay with our mother and father. And I would say, ‘Tell me a story!’ And they would both tell me a story and I would listen. I would listen and listen and listen and then fall asleep and they would finish. And in the morning, I’d get up after sleeping and say, ‘Right, tell me that story!’ And they’d say, ‘No, leave it for night time.’

1:00

Ka mungawinki wangkapai, ‘Wiya’. Kana wantipai, nganana ankupai munu nyangangi kulū ngayuku mamangku ngunytjungku ... mamangku katingi kuka pulka; nyuti katipai munu paulpai [kala ...] kaya pitjala nyinapai kana ngayulu nyakula nyangaku kulilapi, ‘Ayi nyanga tjana nyaaku pitjangu panya tjana ngayuku mamaku kuka katingu, nganampa mankurku?’ Munu wangka wiyangu patunguru ngarala nyakupai ka palyara wiyaringkula nganana kuka panya palula itingka nyinakatipai.

And in the morning they’d say, ‘No’. And so I’d leave it. Off we’d go and I was watching my father and mother. My father was carrying a big lot of meat; he’d carry it wrapped on his head and would cook it. And others would come and sit down and I would see this and think, ‘Hey, why did they all come and they’ve taken my father’s meat, for the three of us?’ And without saying anything, I’d watch from a distance and after everything was done, we would sit down next to the meat.

1:38

Mununa mantjilpai mununa ngalkupai ka kutjupa tjuta ungkupai kana miralpai, ‘Ayi, maliki tjuta mulapa unganyi ngananya tjananya unganyi?’ Ka paluru malanypa tjuta, wati tjuta malanypa munu

kungka tjuṭa maḷanypa unḡkupai ngayuku mamangku. Ka pala purunypa ngayukutjungku unḡkupai. Pukulpa uwankara nyinanytjaku.

And I would pick it up and I would eat some and Dad would give out the meat to the others as I watched, thinking, ‘Hey, he’s giving the meat to total strangers! Who are these people he’s giving it to?’ And my father would give to his younger brothers and sisters, men and women. And in this way, he would give away meat – that I thought should be for me – so that everyone would be happy.

## **Appendix 2b: Katrina Tjitayi – Interview 2 excerpt**

23:31

KT: Rapa kutju nyinara panya nintiringanyi ... unḡgu rapa ngarala kutju, palu unḡgu ngulu ngaranyi kutjupa tjuṭa arkantjaku maths wituwitu nyakula, nyara palunya tjananya nyaa, tjitji tjuṭa puṭu nintiringanyi walytja, panya nguluringanyi arkantjaku. Munu tjitji tjuṭangku, tjinguru ngayunya riitamilalpai pitjala ka tjana wantipai ... kuntaringkula tjana wantipai. ‘Uwa palya, nyuntu maḷa nyawa, tjuṭangka mirangka wiya.’ Tjuṭangku nyakula kulintjakutawara tjana kuntaringkupai. Ka tiitjangku maḷa riitamilalpai.

Only once they’re confident can they learn ... only after having an inner confidence, but others have an inner fear about trying things like seeing difficult maths and for those children, they can’t learn for themselves with that fear to try things. And [those] children come and read to me but then they won’t do it; they get shy and don’t do it. [I say] ‘Yes, ok, have a look after, not in front of others.’ They get embarrassed if they think others will see and hear them [trying to read]. And the teacher reads it afterwards.

24:11

Ka maḷa nyakula wangkanyi, ‘Oh, waarka wirunya nyuntu, wirunyatu!’ Tjaka tjinguru nganampa ara pala palunya nyangu, kuntaringkunyitjaku. Ka ngayulu kulinigi, nyanga palunya kunta nyara palunya kutju breakthrough ngaranytjaku, raparingkunyitjaku, rapangku palyantjaku. Tjinguru rapangku nyangangka assembly-ngka tjunu tjitji tjuṭa. Ka tjana walytjangku walytjangku wangkangi pakara, “Uwa, kuwari junior primary-ngku wangkanyi”. Ka tjinguru rapa nyara palunya kutju nganana nintintjaku ngaranyi, kumpuntjaku. Tjitji tjuṭangku raparingkula arkantjaku.

And afterwards [I] see [their work] and say, ‘Oh, you’ve done some good work, that’s great’. I’ve observed that it’s the [cultural] way things are for us, to be shy [this term can also be interpreted as respectful]. And I’ve been thinking that this is the one area where there needs to be a breakthrough, to become confident and do things with confidence. The children have been presenting here [at Ernabella] at assemblies with confidence. They were getting up speaking individually in turns, ‘Ok, now the junior primaries will speak’. And perhaps this is the kind of confidence we should be teaching to strengthen [the children], for children to be confident to try things.

## Appendix 2c: Sandra Armstrong – Interview 3 excerpt

3:08

Ka ngayuku ngunyjungku tjukurpa wangkapai, wilurara nyinapai tjuta, ka watjalpai paluru ngayuku ngura nganana wiru tjuta wantikatingu munu ngura kutjupangka tjarpangu.

And my mother would tell stories [about] the people who lived out west, and would say, ‘We left so many good things behind [at] my home and settled in different country’.

Kana ngayulu watjalpai, ‘Ngura ngananya nyuntumpa? Ngura yaalitja nyuntumpa?’

‘Ngayuku ngura “Tiwa.” Wangka kutjupangu wangkapai; paluru Ngaanyatjarra. Munu paluru wangkapai ... paluru kulilpai, ‘Ngayuku malanypa [x] wantikatingu munu ngura kutjupakutu kutitjitjangu pitjangu’. Ka ngayulu kulilpai, ‘Ayi?’ Paluru titutjarangu Ngaanyatjarra wangkapai.

And I would say, ‘Which is your home? Where is your country?’

‘My home is Tiwa.’ She spoke a different language; she was Ngaanyatjarra. And she would say ... she’d think, ‘I left my younger sister [x] and we came to a different place in a hurry’. And I would think, ‘Hey?’ She would always speak Ngaanyatjarra.

## Appendix 3: Data analysis tables

Table A3.1: Key themes identified for data analysis

| <b>Key areas for analysis</b>  | <b>A: Anangu Participant</b> | <b>B: Piranpa Educator</b> |
|--|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1: Limitations of Piranpa educators at the cultural interface in Anangu education        | 1                            | 64                         |
| 2: Vertical, horizontal and reciprocal accountability                                    | 3                            | 60                         |
| 3: Piranpa educator capacity in accounting for Anangu standpoints                        | 4                            | 85                         |
| 4: Pre-contact accounts of learning  | 6                            | 0                          |
| 5: Examples and potential for shared teaching  | 26                           | 32                         |
| 6: Anangu as educators   | 54                           | 28                         |
| 7: Early historical accounts of schooling and the cultural interface                     | 60                           | 83                         |
| 8: Current accounts of schooling and the cultural interface                              | 116                          | 46                         |
| 9: Anangu expectations, disappointments and hopes in relation to schooling and education | 122                          | 24                         |



Table A3.2: Fine-grained themes recorded within the data

| <b>Fine grained data analysis (top responses)</b> | <b>A: Anangu Participant</b> | <b>B: Piranpa Educator</b> |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1: School, family and community collaboration     | 28                           | 56                         |
| 2: Teacher preparedness                           | 3                            | 40                         |
| 3: Relationships                                  | 24                           | 39                         |
| 4: School-based learning                          | 43                           | 37                         |
| 5: Aboriginal language                            | 31                           | 34                         |
| 6: Values   | 74                           | 32                         |
| 7: Anangu capacities and strengths                | 70                           | 31                         |
| 8: Contextually responsive teaching               | 24                           | 29                         |
| 9: Effective teachers and teaching                | 22                           | 27                         |
| 10: Success                                       | 20                           | 27                         |
| 11: Culture                                       | 54                           | 25                         |
| 12: Community concerns, justice, violence, health | 40                           | 21                         |
| 13: Curriculum                                    | 21                           | 21                         |
| 14: English language literacy and numeracy        | 16                           | 21                         |
| 15: Family  | 115                          | 21                         |
| 16: School attendance                             | 13                           | 15                         |
| 17: Poor teachers and teaching                    | 9                            | 14                         |
| 18: Both ways                                     | 9                            | 13                         |
| 19: Anangu voice and power                        | 8                            | 11                         |
| 20: Complexity                                    | 0                            | 11                         |
| 21: Academic outcomes and achievement             | 7                            | 9                          |
| 22: Traditional learning models and examples      | 32                           | 9                          |
| 23: Identity and belonging                        | 33                           | 8                          |
| 24: Boarding school                               | 16                           | 7                          |
| 25: Racism  | 5                            | 7                          |
| 26: Aspiration                                    | 38                           | 5                          |
| 27: High expectations                             | 4                            | 5                          |
| 28: Employment and transitions to employment      | 39                           | 4                          |
| 29: Sustainability                                | 0                            | 4                          |
| 30: Closing the Gap, policy and political issues  | 0                            | 1                          |
| 31: Confidence                                    | 27                           | 1                          |
| 32: School completion                             | 11                           | 1                          |
| 33: Stay in community or leaving the community    | 22                           | 1                          |
| 34: University and further education              | 3                            | 1                          |
| 36: Repetition                                    | 5                            | 0                          |
| 37: Unemployment, welfare                         | 9                            | 0                          |

Note: This table is displayed in order of the frequency of references by Piranpa educators

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