Evaluation of *Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre Poetry Writing Program*  

Part I - Process Evaluation

Professor Elena Marchetti  
Professor and ARC Future Fellow  
Griffith Law School, Griffith University

March 2018

*This project was funded by an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship grant (FT140100313)*
Other Project Team Members

Senior Research Assistant
Debbie Bargallie (Griffith Law School, Griffith University)

Advisory Group Members
Dr Aunty Barbara Nicholson, Wadi Wadi Elder
Dr John Muk Muk Burke, Wiradjuri Elder
Dr Friederike Krishnabhakdi-Vasilakis, Director, South Coast Writers Centre
Mr Trevor Coles, Offender Services Manager, Junee Correctional Centre
Mr Gerome Brodin, Cultural Advisor, Junee Correctional Centre
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by my Research Assistant, Debbie Bargallie, the Advisory Group members, South Coast Writers Centre staff and members, Black Wallaby Writers members, GEO staff at the Junee Correctional Centre, Professional Services staff at Griffith Law School, Suzanne Marshall and Susan Powe, and the people who participated in the interviews that informed this evaluation. Without your generosity and passion, this evaluation would not have happened.

I would also like to acknowledge the strength and courage of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are in custody. I hope that this evaluation report somehow contributes to making their life that little bit better.

Professor Elena Marchetti
Griffith University
Executive Summary

This report details the first component of the evaluation of the Dreaming Inside program, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prison poetry writing program conducted at Junee Correctional Centre (JCC), New South Wales. There are not many other programs like the Dreaming Inside program currently running in Australia, and it is in fact the only creative writing prison program that specifically targets Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. At the time of the evaluation there were approximately 842 inmates at the Junee Correctional Centre (JCC) on any given day, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates making up approximately 25% of the prison population. This is not unusual and, in fact, equates to the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in adult prisons across New South Wales, which according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, was 24.3% on 30 June 2017 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017).

The evaluation methodology comprised observations of the program, interviews with key stakeholders and an analysis of the five volumes of the Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre books. Key findings include:

- There was a clear understanding amongst the stakeholders that the program was therapeutic (rather than rehabilitative or educational) in nature, despite the fact that the aims and goals of the Dreaming Inside program were never clearly articulated.
- The longevity of the program was due to the fact that it was community driven and that it involved Elders who were respected by the men in prison.
- There was some disagreement about the need to edit the contributions, but ultimately, most of the stakeholders thought that retaining the authenticity and originality of the poetry or prose was important to highlight the effects of colonisation and the power of Aboriginal English.

---

1 The Unlocked program, developed and run by Red Room Poetry, has been running since 2010, offering creative writing workshops to any inmate who is interested at nine different correctional centres (some which are diversionary residential centres) and a rehabilitation centre in New South Wales. It does not operate in the same way as the Dreaming Inside program, mainly because it has not adopted an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focus, until very recently. From 2017, the Unlocked program has only focused on inmates at the Balund-a Diversionary Program (Tabulam), a correctional facility where predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male offenders are sent to live and work prior to being sentenced. Balund-a reconnects residents to Culture, employing Bundjalung Elders to assist at the facility.
• Publication of the contributions in the form of books was a crucial component of the program, which assisted in teaching the men to trust others and contributed to increased feelings of pride, self-esteem and confidence.
• There is a danger that the program might not continue if a succession plan is not put in place.

This part of the overall evaluation of the Dreaming Inside program was not able to assess the outcomes of the program in relation to the male contributors. Stakeholders who participated in the interviews did not think the program necessarily benefited one group of men over the other, believing it depended on individual factors rather than group factors, such as age or type of offence committed. The second part of the evaluation will consider this issue in more depth by interviewing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who have participated in the program, although the impact on recidivism will not be able to be assessed.

Overwhelmingly, this evaluation concludes that the Dreaming Inside program is a positive initiative for male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates at Junee Correctional Centre. At the very least it gives the men something to do and something to look forward to, but it may be offering the men so much more, including opportunities to reconnect with Culture and feeling empowered through having a voice in a setting where they are normally silenced.
Contents

Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................. iii
Executive Summary .............................................................................................................. iv
1.0 Introduction ...............................................................................................................1
  1.1 Background .............................................................................................................1
  1.2 Objectives ..............................................................................................................3
  1.3 Scope of the Evaluation and Report Structure ........................................................5
2.0 Creative Writing Prison Programs ..............................................................................6
3.0 Evaluation Methodology ..........................................................................................12
  3.1 Research Design ...................................................................................................12
  3.2 Stakeholder Interviews .........................................................................................14
  3.3 Observations ........................................................................................................16
  3.4 Limitations ...........................................................................................................17
4.0 Evaluation Results ....................................................................................................18
  4.1 Process and aims of the program .........................................................................18
  4.2 What makes the program ‘work’? ........................................................................22
  4.3 Outcomes from the Program ................................................................................26
  4.4 Editing the contributions ......................................................................................28
  4.5 Publication and promotion of the anthologies ......................................................30
  4.6 Succession plan ...................................................................................................32
5.0 Discussion ................................................................................................................34
6.0 Recommendations ...................................................................................................36
7.0 References ...............................................................................................................38
Appendix A ..........................................................................................................................41
Appendix B ..........................................................................................................................44
1.0 Introduction

This evaluation forms part of an Australian Research Council funded Future Fellowship project (FT140100313). The overall aim of the Future Fellowship is to advance knowledge about how best to evaluate Indigenous-focused criminal justice programs in ways that acknowledge and privilege the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This report focuses on one component of the Future Fellowship project – an evaluation of a culturally appropriate prison program. The program being evaluated is the Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre program (Dreaming Inside program). The evaluation includes both a process and outcome component, however, this report focuses solely on the first part of the evaluation: an evaluation of the process of the program.

1.1 Background

The Dreaming Inside program was conceived in 2010 after Dr Aunty Barbara Nicholson (better known as Aunty Barb), with two former associates of the ‘Celebrating the Voice’ group, (a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers who, being members of the South Coast Writers’ Centre (SCWC), formed a sub-committee) visited the JCC (and other non-prison locations) for the Write Around the Murray Festival. Following that trip, Aunty Barb and others from the SCWC decided to return to the JCC to run creative writing and reading workshops with the male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates. A four-day visit during NAIDOC 2012, with local Wiradjuri Elder, John Muk Muk Burke (Mukky) produced Volume 1 of the Dreaming Inside program anthology series, which is now in its seventh year of production. The name ‘Dreaming Inside’ was chosen by the men who participated in the first set of workshops. Twice a year Aunty Barb, Mukky and members of the Black Wallaby Writers team (which was formerly known as the ‘Celebrating the Voice’ group) and members of the SCWC visit at the JCC for three days to work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributors to produce poems or stories about various topics. The Dreaming Inside program team (comprising Elders, Black Wallaby Writers (experienced
Aboriginal writers), tutors and mentees, and SCWC guest tutors) for each year was as follows:

- **Year 1 (2012)** – Aunty Barbara Nicholson, John Muk Muk Burke, Bruce Pascoe, Simon Luckhurst;
- **Year 2 (2013)** – Aunty Barbara Nicholson, John Muk Muk Burke, Ron Pretty;
- **Year 3 (2014)** – Aunty Barbara Nicholson, John Muk Muk Burke, Jack Baker;
- **Year 4 (2015)** – Aunty Barbara Nicholson, John Muk Muk Burke, Friederike Krishnabhakdi Vasilakis, Kenny Canning (Burraga Gutya);
- **Year 5 (2016)** – Aunty Barbara Nicholson, John Muk Muk Burke, Friederike Krishnabhakdi Vasilakis, Judi Morrison, Denika Thomas;
- **Year 6 (2017)** – Aunty Barbara Nicholson, John Muk Muk Burke, Simon Luckhurst, Lachlan McPherson, Gabrielle Journey Jones (Gabe);

Each year, the latest volume is launched at an event hosted by the Wollongong Art Gallery, as part of the Sydney Writers Festival, and at the JCC with the men who are present at the May workshop. The only requirement for participation in the program is that the men be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and have no active association alerts or restrictive protection status.

Support for the program is provided by staff at the JCC, which is run by the GEO Group Australia Pty Ltd. In particular, Trevor Coles, the Offender Services Manager and Gerome Brodin, Cultural Advisor and Cultural Centre Manager (supported by other Cultural Centre staff at the prison) assist in organising the prison visits, availability of workshop participants and access to the Cultural Centre, the space used to conduct the program. The impetus for the program was to develop the creative writing skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prison, as a form of expression and in the process, improve their self-esteem. It is not to ‘offer literacy classes’ but rather to get the men ‘thinking and writing creatively’ (Nicholson 2017, p. 21). The publication of the writings as book volumes ensure the contributors, who are mainly voiceless and forgotten in wider society, are given a voice to express their feelings and write their stories. Knowing their work is published gives the men a sense of pride and achievement, feelings that can increase a person’s confidence and self-esteem.
The latest volume, Volume 5, is over six times larger (252 pages) than the first volume published in 2013 (which was 38 pages long) and contains contributions from 59 men. There were five men who contributed to the first volume. The contributions speak about childhood memories and experiences, hardships and discrimination, government intervention in the personal lives of the men in prison, how and why the men became caught up in the criminal justice system, and views about how the devastating legacy of colonisation has impacted on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Some of the men contribute artwork along with their written contributions, which is also reproduced with permission in the anthologies.

1.2 Objectives

The purpose for the evaluation is two-fold: The first is to assess:

1. How the program was initially established and to note how the processes align with the original aims of the program.

2. How does the SCWC Emerging Indigenous Writers Mentoring Program support the Dreaming Inside program and how does it sufficiently ensure a succession plan for the continuation of the Dreaming Inside program?

3. How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men at the JCC do other training programs or have other commitments, or impediments (such as being in maximum security) which prohibits their attendance at the Dreaming Inside program workshops?

4. How are the Dreaming Inside publications disseminated and to what extent do they contribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literature in the public domain; and

5. What improvements can be made to the manner in which the program is carried out?

As is often the case with programs that develop organically, the founding members of the Dreaming Inside program had certain intended outcomes in mind when they started the program, but they had not put together a program logic. A list of intended aims and goals of the program was prepared at the commencement of this evaluation in consultation with the
Advisory Group established to guide the evaluation. The aims and goals that were articulated were:

- Encouraging a healing of the spirit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prison;
- Developing creative writing skills as a form of expression;
- Improving self-esteem of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prison;
- Providing an avenue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prison to exercise a form of agency;
- Giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prison a voice;
- Allowing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who are in custody to explore connections with Culture;
- Providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prison with the skills to continue to write once they are released; and
- Making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literature more prominent in the public mindset.

The second purpose of the evaluation is to assist with obtaining future and ongoing funding. In the sixth year of running the program, it cost approximately $30,000 to fund travel to Junee, the poetry writers’ (tutors’) fees (mentees are not paid), induction program for mentees, the launch and the compilation of the books. The printing of the books is extra and funded separately by GEO Group. This amount does not include administrative (which normally amounts to approximately $2,500) or co-ordination costs, which up until now have been carried by the SCWC and by volunteers working pro bono. In 2014 funding was obtained (from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet) for an Aboriginal project co-ordinator for 18 months, which amounted to approximately $13,000. Currently, the SCWC primarily funds the program, with small amounts of additional funding having been obtained from the following sources in different years: Aboriginal Regional Arts Fund (Arts NSW which is now called Create NSW), Wollongong City Council, UOW Legal Intersections Research Centre, Indigenous Advancement Strategy (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet), The Copyright Agency, GEO Group.
1.3 Scope of the Evaluation and Report Structure

This evaluation is limited to considering how the Dreaming Inside program has been conducted for the past seven years, and how it will continue running, both in terms of management and funding. The evaluation does not focus on the program’s impact on recidivism, nor does it evaluate other ways it might impact on the inmates. Interviews with stakeholders did consider their perceptions of program benefits, however, this was done in order to inform the second part of the overall evaluation, which is currently underway and which is an evaluation of program outcomes.

The following section of the Report (Section 2), provides an overview of creative writing prison programs that are specifically tailored for First Peoples who are in custody in Australia and overseas, and the theoretical frameworks that help explain the rationale for such programs. Section 3 sets out the evaluation methodology, including how the data was collected and ethical considerations which have informed the collection and analysis of the data. Sections 4 and 5 report the evaluation findings and their implications. Section 6 concludes the report by making recommendations for the future conduct of the Dreaming Inside program.
2.0 Creative Writing Prison Programs

Prison based art programs per se are not a new concept in Australia but they have struggled to gain positive and continuing recognition, particularly creative writing prison programs, which is the type of program this evaluation is considering. As much as creative writing is an art form, it is the visual arts programs in adult male prisons that appear to receive the majority of academic attention. The international literature strongly supports the benefits of creative writing programs in prisons and their role in assisting inmates on a pathway to desistance, however, much of the literature available on creative writing prison programs is often written under the topic of arts-based programs making them difficult to identify.

In a review of literature examining the practice and theory of the arts, including writing programs, in the criminal justice sector, Hughes identified ‘an abundance of success stories to be told within this field’, however, at the same time noting that the reasons for these success stories require further examination and better explanation (2005, p. 7). Hughes reports that there is not enough ‘high quality evaluation and research in the sector’ and calls for more ‘robust models and standardised evaluation models’ (p. 71). Prison management and government departments often require evaluations that rely on both qualitative and quantitative data and methodologies to measure specific performance indicators (McMillan 2003). Problems arise, however, because prisoners are difficult to track as they move through the criminal justice system, evaluations are insufficiently funded and expected within short timeframes, and cause and effect are difficult to measure when dealing with the range of factors that might affect a person’s life and behaviour. Indeed, Cheliotis and Jordanoska note that there is even less research conducted on the effects of prison art programs on inmate recidivism, post-release:

Despite ever-growing scholarly interest in desistance from crime after release from custody, there is very little information on the impact, if any, that arts-in-prisons programmes may have on participants when they are discharged from prison and faced with the multifarious challenges of re-entry into the community (2016, p. 30).
There is much more written about the operation and purpose of creative writing (and arts) prison programs in Canada, the United States and United Kingdom. When it comes to programs that focus on Indigenous inmates there is even less scholarship to access. Much of the research available regarding creative writing prison programs is largely descriptive and fails to offer a theoretical explanation for why the programs exist or have been established. This absence may be due to the organic nature of these programs that are most often developed at a grassroots level. Prison writing programs, including creative writing and poetry, have been described as being rehabilitative and re-educative in nature (Djurichkovic 2011), but as educational programs they are seen to provide ways of learning that are different from what traditional education courses can offer. Indeed, Reiter notes that poetry therapy is ‘more concerned with wellness, self-esteem, and personal growth than rules of grammar or punctuation’ (Reiter 2010, p. 216). Not only are creative arts programs thought to be able to assist participants in making sense of difficult and complex human experiences, their participatory and experiential nature supports learning retention (McMillan 2003). The challenge lies, however, in evaluating the artistic and spiritual activities since the outcomes of such interventions ‘might not easily fit into research paradigms or evaluation models acceptable to policy makers’ (Parkes and Bilby 2010, p. 104).

Evidence of positive outcomes, assessed in ways that do not usually use randomised control trials or scientifically tested methods, can be found across the globe. A Writers in Residence in Prison Scheme, which was established in English prisons in 1992 by the Arts Council of England and the Home Office\(^2\) was evaluated (primarily by using a qualitative approach) by the Hallam Centre for Community Justice at Sheffield Hallam University in 2010. The scheme places writers and creative artists into prisons to deliver creative writing, drama, music and art programs to prisoners. Acknowledging that prisoners are not a homogenous group, the evaluation found that the Writers in Residence in Prison Scheme produced numerous benefits for prisoners who participated in the scheme. The scheme successfully engaged prisoners with learning in ways that maintained their attention and which motivated prisoners to seek further understanding (O’Keeffe & Albertson 2012).

---

Evidence that prisoners were ‘building their human capital by gaining concrete reading, writing and computer skills’ and also developing social capital by improving their relational skills, was found (O’Keeffe & Albertson 2012, p. 66). Through creative writing, poetry and performance, prisoners were better able to communicate with their families. The evaluators link improvements in human and social capital with desistance in crime. Furthermore, they found that the workshops encouraged prisoners to reflect on their emotions and responsibilities, which again have been linked to desistance from crime as a result of changes in the way ‘people think about and interpret their lives’ (O’Keeffe & Albertson 2012, p. 68).

In Canada, the Journal of Prisoners on Prisons is a peer reviewed journal that accepts contributions from prisoners. It has been operating for 25 years. It came about because participants at the International Conference on Penal Abolition III in Montreal in 1987, expressed concerns about the lack of prisoner representation in various forums. The journal offers a source of information that challenges stereotypes and misconceptions about prisoners and prisons. The journal is edited and published by the Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa and is funded by subscriptions. Gaucher edited an anthology of the contributions from the Journal of Prisoners from 1988-2002. He describes the essays as ‘illustrating the spirit of resistance that characterizes the survival strategies of most prisoners, especially prison bound writers and intellectuals’, suggesting that the contributions, whether in the anthology or the journal, can empower those who are most silenced by allowing them to voice what is often suppressed and hidden away (Gaucher 2002, p. 7). Similarly, Reiter describes a ‘Poets-Behind-Bars’ program offered at Indiana State Prison as ‘an adventure of creative self-expression for the inmates … [giving them] an opportunity to transform feelings of silent isolation to empowering communication through words’ (Reiter 2010, p. 226). Their relationship with their mentors, although long distance, taught the poet inmates to develop relationships built on trust and acceptance.

Dean and Field explored the role of arts programs in prisons by using the Tasmanian Risdon Prison creative arts program called Create as a case study, which aimed to ‘motivate group members to “break the cycle”’ and ‘give voice to an otherwise silenced group’ (2003, 3 See http://www.jpp.org/ for the journal website.
This program included both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants and aimed to develop the writing and other forms of visual and performance art skills of the inmates. Dean and Field were aware that introducing an ‘art as rehabilitation’ and re-education program in a correctional facility would be problematic because ‘art in prison is at best seen as a hobby to keep people occupied and at worst a total waste of time’ (2003, p. 6). They found that the program produced the following outcomes:

- A ‘realisation that there may be other life paths to choose’;
- Self-discipline, self-respect, empathy, commitment and increased levels of self-confidence;
- The ability to work in groups and to accept differences in others;
- Learning how to deal with frustrations, anger, anxiety and obstacles (Dean & Field 2003, p. 8).

Although cognitive skills programs that are multi-modal, meaning they ‘incorporate problem-solving components with education and therapeutic aspects’ (Howells et al. 2004, p. 31) have been found to be one of the most effective rehabilitation treatments for reducing recidivism (rearrest, reconviction and reincarceration), it is not the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Gilbert & Wilson 2009). Scholars have cautioned against using ‘what works’ literature derived from overseas studies to change the offending behaviour of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Cognitive behavioural therapy, which generally underpins cognitive skills programs, are viewed as emphasising individualised rather than contextual or cultural factors that contribute to why a person may reoffend. Holistic and culturally appropriate programs addressing non-criminogenic needs, ‘such as grief, depression, spiritual healing, loss of culture and educational deficits’ are more beneficial for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders who experience multi-faceted disadvantage, rather than programs that ‘address needs directly related to criminal offending, such as cognitive deficits and drug or alcohol abuse’ (Gilbert & Wilson 2009, p. 4). Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners are less likely to attend mainstream programs or drop out at higher rates than non-Indigenous prisoners. The lack of Indigenous-specific programs and services in prison serves as a major barrier for
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmate participation in programs and impedes their successful reintegration back into society.

An example of a culturally appropriate creative writing program is the *Inspired Minds: All Nations Creative Writing Collective* at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre, Canada. This program was developed for inmates as a result of a partnership that was established between the correctional centre and the Departments of English and Native Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. The program was named by participants who are mostly of Aboriginal heritage to reflect the focus of the program on Aboriginal people and writing, although participation is open to all inmates, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. The program uses workshops to educate inmates across different ‘genres of literature, including poetry, autobiography, short stories, traditional Aboriginal storytelling, and songs’ (Piché 2015, p. 17). The program is designed to encourage men who have experienced racial and class oppression to develop their voices, share stories of perseverance and hope and break down toxic constructions of masculinity. In her study, Piché found the program created a ‘space that values equality masculinities and the notion of warrior … [where the men] begin to examine themselves, their relationships to those around them, and their relationship with the toxic space of the prison through creative writing’ (2015, p. 89).

Similarly, an evaluation of the *Torch Statewide Indigenous Arts in Prisons and Community Program* in 2012, adopted a qualitative approach that considered the program’s effectiveness ‘in addressing the cultural and vocational needs specific to Indigenous prisoners and former prisoners interested in the arts’ (Hallwright 2012, p. 13). In addition to other stakeholders, six male prisoners and six former male prisoners were interviewed. The program was initiated in 10 Victorian correctional facilities, working with community arts networks to develop vocational visual (as opposed to creative writing) arts knowledge and skills of inmates in preparation for their release from prison. The evaluation found that the program ‘strengthened cultural connection and learning about country’, increased participant knowledge about the art market and helped participants understand and produce non-generic work, assisted and supported post-release knowledge of and entry into the visual arts community, and resulted in the establishment of the *Confined* exhibition (Hallwright 2012, p. 12). The prisoners who were interviewed reported that the program
had increased their sense of well-being and confidence, allowed them to establish a level of trust with the program facilitators, reconnected them to culture, improved their skills and opportunities post-release, and improved their relationships with family and other community members. Mention was made of the fact that it was difficult to locate former prisoners post-release, despite numerous conscientious efforts to contact them. As others have noted, assessing the ongoing effects of these programs on incarceration experiences and reoffending post-release is not an easy task and often not possible.
3.0 Evaluation Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The process evaluation considers the following questions:

1. How was the program initially established and to note how the processes align with the original aims of the program?

2. How does the SCWC Emerging Indigenous Writers Mentoring Program support the Dreaming Inside program and how does it sufficiently ensure a succession plan for the continuation of the Dreaming Inside program?

3. How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men at the JCC do other training programs or have other commitments, or impediments (such as being in maximum security) which prohibit their attendance at the Dreaming Inside program workshops?

4. How are the Dreaming Inside publications disseminated and to what extent do they contribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literature in the public domain; and

5. What improvements can be made to the manner in which the program is carried out?

As previously mentioned, this project forms part of a larger ARC Future Fellowship project which is exploring better ways to evaluate Indigenous-focused criminal justice programs in ways that acknowledge and privilege the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The overarching framework for the research is therefore to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols and knowledges are respected, followed and acknowledged and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are privileged. As Martin & Mirraboopa state, this does not necessarily equate to ‘resisting or opposing western research frameworks and ideologies’, but rather working in conjunction with such methodologies (2003, p. 205). A realist evaluation approach informed the research, in the sense of adopting a strategy that is informed by program theory to explain ‘why a program works, for whom and in what circumstances’ (Pawson and Tilley 1997, p. xvi). Pawson and
Tilley explain that realistic evaluation has a ‘distinctive account of the nature of programmes and how they work, of what is involved in explaining and understanding programmes, of the research methods that are needed to understand the workings of programmes, and of the proper products of evaluation research’ (Pawson and Tilley 2004, p. 2). Using this approach as the over-arching paradigm for the research will allow for a more nuanced evaluation of the Dreaming Inside program. The methodology for Part A of the project will rely on four main sources of data:

1. Existing documentation and publications: This includes documentation regarding the establishment and funding for the Dreaming Inside program; and Volumes 1-5 *Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre* books;
2. Interviews with certain stakeholders, including:
   a. JCC staff who have been involved in the program;
   b. Members of the SCWC and Black Wallaby Writers who have been involved in the program;
   c. SCWC Emerging Indigenous Writers Mentoring program participants;
   d. Local Wagga Wagga Elders and SCWC Aboriginal Consultative Team members.
4. JCC data on numbers of prisoners and number of Dreaming Inside attendees.

The research was proposed by Aunty Barb, a respected local Wadi Wadi Elder who initiated the Dreaming Inside program. The scope and methodology of the research was formulated in consultation with Aunty Barb, Friederike Krishnabhakdi-Vasilakis (Rike) (SCWC), Trevor Coles (JCC), and Gerome Brodin (JCC). These stakeholders were asked to be members of an Advisory Group, which continued to inform and direct the research, and the findings and results in this report. In this way, the research was collaborative and respectful, recognising and privileging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural values and norms. An Aboriginal Research Assistant was also employed to assist with the conduct of the research.

In conducting the research, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) research guidelines were followed. These Guidelines comprise 14 principles, which AIATSIS states can be grouped as follows:
• rights, respect and recognition;
• negotiation, consultation, agreement and mutual understanding;
• participation, collaboration and partnership;
• benefits, outcomes and giving back;
• managing research: use, storage and access, and
• reporting and compliance (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2012, p. 3).

Ethics approval for the process evaluation component of the research was obtained from the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee,\(^4\) which was later ratified by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Griffith University.

3.2 Stakeholder Interviews

Interview participants were selected based on their participation and involvement in the Dreaming Inside program. Potential participants were identified by the Advisory Group and by using snowball sampling, whereby an interview participant suggests other possible participants. Members of the SCWC, Black Wallaby Writers, the SCWC Emerging Indigenous Writers Mentoring program, and the SCWC Aboriginal Consultative Team were initially contacted by the CEO of the SCWC to ask if they were willing to participate in an interview. JCC staff and Wiradjuri Elders were contacted directly by the principal researcher. Two of the interview participants identified by the Advisory Group were not included in this study: one was ill and was therefore not contacted, and another declined to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted either via telephone, face-to-face, or in the case of three participants, questions were answered by written response sent via email. All of the participants were given an Information Statement (Appendix A) and signed a Consent Form (Appendix B). In total, 18 participants were recruited from the following groups:

\(^4\) Ethics approval was initially obtained from the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee because the principal researcher was based at that University when the evaluation commenced.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JCC staff</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiradjuri Elder</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder of Program</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCWC staff</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCWC Black Wallaby Writers, Aboriginal Consultative Team members and Emerging Indigenous Writers mentees</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCWC members</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information about the way in which the Dreaming Inside program was implemented and how it is now conducted, and whether the program is still meeting its original aims was collected utilising a semi-structured interview approach. The following questions, which were informed by the Advisory Group and aimed to privilege the voices and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, guided the interviews of the stakeholders:

1. How did you become involved in the Dreaming Inside program?
2. What is your role in the Dreaming Inside program?
3. Can you describe how the program works? Are there particular techniques or processes that are followed?
4. What do you see as being the main aim of the Dreaming Inside program?
5. Do you think there are particular men for whom the program works better?
6. Do you think that the program is achieving its aims?
7. What is the importance of having the contributions from the men published?
8. Should the contributions be edited?
9. Should the Dreaming Inside books be promoted? If so, how?
10. What changes would you make to the program?

On average the telephone and face-to-face Interviews took 38.5 minutes. A decolonising and critical race approach was used to interview Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants to reflect the purpose of the study, which is to change and improve
conditions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Dunbar Jr. 2008). Decolonising approaches to interviewing are typically concerned with building a rapport with the people being interviewed and ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives are prioritised (Neuman 2003). The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed by a transcription service. Each participant was assigned a code according to their role, and whether they were male (eight participants) or female (10 participants) and Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander (11 participants) or non-Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander (7 participants) to de-identify the interview data collected. The interview data were analysed according to themes that emerged from the data and that were informed by the scholarship that has discussed creative writing and arts programs in prisons.

3.3 Observations

Permission was sought from all those participating in the Dreaming Inside program (which included members of the SCWC, JCC staff, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in the JCC) to observe the conduct of the program. Observations took place in the weeks of the 17th of October 2016, 29th of May 2017 and 16th of October 2017. Notes were taken of the following observations:

1. How Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who participated in the workshops interacted with Elders, members of the Black Wallaby Writers and guest tutors;
2. How the layout and working space of the Cultural Centre in the JCC facilitated the ease with which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men connected to the Elders, Black Wallaby Writers and guest tutors;
3. How the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who participated in the workshops interacted with each other during the program;
4. How the JCC staff interacted with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who were participating in the workshops, Elders, members of the Black Wallaby Writers and guest tutors.

Information obtained from observing the program will inform the methodology for the outcome evaluation component of the research. It also allowed the researchers to
develop a relationship of trust with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men engaged in the program.

3.4 Limitations

It is important to remember that this evaluation is primarily focused on the program process and not on program outcomes. All but one of the stakeholders who agreed to participate in an interview were involved in establishing or facilitating the program. Only one of the interview participants might be considered an ‘outsider’. Although this might result in particular views being expressed, it was important to interview stakeholders who had a deep understanding of the program in order to conduct the process evaluation.
4.0 Evaluation Results

4.1 Process and aims of the program

The Dreaming Inside program developed organically without any procedural guidelines or stated aims and objectives. This is not uncommon for grassroots programs and indeed, when the program started, there was no clear indication that funding would be available for subsequent years. Even the idea of publishing the contributions from the men in the JCC as an anthology, resulted because there were remaining funds left over the first time the Black Wallaby Writers group ran the workshop in 2012, rather than because it was initially planned. One of the writers who was meant to be on that trip could not attend, which resulted in there being a small amount of funds left unspent. In order to give ‘something back’ to the men in the prison, it was agreed that a desktop publication of the contributions would be produced with the remaining funds.

So that’s how it ... that’s what happened. We did that. So, we didn’t get a great deal of interest in the workshops on that trip. It was very new and most of the lads seemed to think that, ‘oh, I can’t write poetry’, and poetry was out of their scope of understanding. So, we didn’t get too many people coming to the workshops. Only about nine or 10 or so and out of that, we only had four who actually contributed anything. Those four are in the first little book that we produced (interview with participant #6).

One of the poems that appears in the first volume is a replication of a published piece that one of the inmates recalled and could recite. It is published under the name of ‘Anonymous’ since the person who replicated it could not remember the name of the original author. This contribution is not counted as one that came from the four men who did contribute an original piece.

The method by which the tutors and Emerging Indigenous Writers mentees run the workshops and encourage the men to write, is quite fluid. Aunty Barb discusses the approach they could use before the JCC visit, either at her house and/or on the road trip to Junee. A document containing guidelines (that is continuously being reviewed) is now
provided to tutors and mentees. Encouraging the men to write is not easy and one of the interview participants mentioned that there could be fear and shame around the act of telling their stories:

So, I always find with the Koori community, when you’re actually getting them to tell their story, there’s fear behind it because we’ve all had to deal with racism and we’ve all had to deal with our history and watching our families not be supported when they have stood up. There’s also, on top of that, I guess due to history as well, some of these guys couldn’t write. So, there was shame around that. There was shame around possibly what their stories were (interview with participant #10).

Interview participants who had been tutors or mentees talked about using their background in teaching, having the men write a word and construct a sentence around that word, talking about positive childhood memories, and creating a ‘safe space’ for the men to share their stories as strategies for encouraging the men to write. Creating a ‘safe space’ meant ‘making sure that it was a supportive environment, so, leaving judgement at the door’ (interview with participant #10). One of the participants recalled:

Some of them [the men] really wanted to tell their stories and for some of them it was a matter of getting them to dictate what they wanted to say and writing it down and then reading it back to them and talking about it and so on. Others of them – there was one I remember, who did almost no writing while he was sitting with me, but the next day he came back with a story, quite a long story that he’d written. So, they varied quite a lot in what they could do and what they wanted to do while they were there. Some of them I had to give very simple little exercises to just to get them putting pen to paper as it were (interview with participant #14).

In the initial years of running the program, the tutors and the men who participated in the workshops would read contributions from previous volumes at the end of the three-day workshop, but that stopped happening from about 2016 because of the large number of men who were attending. There was too much work in finalising and collecting contributions. It is common for some of the men, during the afternoon sessions of the program, to use the Cultural Centre as an exercise room by walking up and down the room. The room is larger than the exercise space provided in their pods and which gives them a
larger space in which to walk around. They also use the opportunity to interact with ‘brothers’ from other pods who they usually do not see. Some also bring guitars, which they softly play during the program. These activities were viewed by some of the interview participants as being disruptive for other men trying to write, but generally they were seen as a matter of course in running a prison program. Indeed, one of the interview participants thought that having someone play the guitar or a digeridoo at the start of the workshops would be helpful in creating a sense of belonging.

The aims that were identified by the Advisory Group when planning this evaluation (see page 4 of this report) reflected many of the aims identified by the interview participants. The aims had not been clearly stated when the program was initiated, allowing it the flexibility to evolve, and as a consequence, develop new and more defined aims and objectives. One of the participants saw this approach as being quite different from a ‘scientific approach’, and instead described it as an ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘sociologist’ approach where ‘those sorts of things can be a bit rubbery’, but yet appropriate for the task at hand (interview with participant #12).

The majority of interview participants (over 60%) identified aims that were therapeutic in nature. Creative writing in the form of poetry or prose, was seen to be a medium for the men to release pain, anger or worry, resolve past hurts, heal spiritually through story-telling and recall positive (and more empowering) memories. One of the participants recalls a story written by one of the men:

I think it is therapeutic to varying degrees for all of them and in different ways ... by remembering something funny or something good, like one of the guys who wrote a story about taking a girl out on a boat fishing and it was really good – it was a positive – a really good memory. I think that would have helped him to focus on something that was good, that was outside, something that he did with somebody he liked and it was funny. It was a funny story (interview with participant #9).

Providing the men with tools which they can use to benefit their lives was considered an important way to empower them. The art of writing allows the men to ‘dream’ and to think differently about who they are and what they are capable of. Although the program was not conceived for the purpose of reducing reoffending once the men were released, seven
(39%) of the interview participants did consider it could be rehabilitative in the sense that the men could use their new-found ability to write as a way of ‘search[ing] their souls and look[ing] to why they’re in the position that they’re in and perhaps not come back again to be contributing to the book’ (interview with participant #17). Aspirations for the program to encourage the men to think differently once they were released, so that they made choices that would not lead them back to prison, were expressed. However, the limitations of the program being able to achieve such aims was acknowledged:

Unfortunately, while it’s a really good program, it’s only a drop in the water in a very large bucket. The fact that the New South Wales Government has withdrawn so much money from education in jails, that’s a crime in itself. If you are really serious about stopping recidivism, then you need to educate people. Give them an opportunity to come out of jail skilled so they can find jobs and not end up back on the street and in the fullness of time, back in jail again (interview with participant #11).

Although many of the interview participants acknowledged the educational aspects of the program, most were quick to point out that they were not teaching literacy and that they could not improve literacy unless they could work with the men on a more regular basis. They were hopeful that the program would provide the men with the confidence to write and therefore, be a ‘bridge to employment’ (interview with participant #4), but this was not one of the primary goals. Instead, aside from the healing aspects of the program, the other most common aim mentioned by the interview participants was that it gave the men a culturally appropriate way of having a voice, particularly in a space where they are mainly voiceless. By being able to be heard by the wider community through the publication of the books, it builds their self-esteem:

It’s – giving a voice to somebody is a very powerful thing, especially somebody who may – or who feels that they may never have been listened to before. To actually give them a voice and not only to sit and listen to them, but to hand them something back at the end of this that they own, ‘they’re my words, there it is’, they can show that to their family. They can take this home. There’s a sense of pride. It’s pride in themselves, pride in their culture. Pride is also a very strong and powerful thing. So,
if you can give somebody that, it’s a great building block I suppose. You can then build on that. It’s that self-esteem (interview with participant #3).

Coupled with the aim of giving the men a voice is the goal of giving people on the outside the opportunity to understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody better: ‘It’s giving them a voice. ... It’s a cultural window. It allows the guys to look outside the window and see something that they might not have seen before and as the reader, us, it allows us to look in the window to see a life, where they’ve come from’ (interview with participant #4). Three non-rehabilitative or educational aims were also identified: the program gave the men something to do, it allowed them to escape the routine of prison life and do something they had not previously done, and it provided the men with an opportunity to catch up with other inmates who they normally were not able to interact with.

4.2 What makes the program ‘work’?

Evidence of the program having an impact on the men comes from:

- the fact that the number of contributors who participate in the program has increased;
- the volumes are continuing to be produced;
- the men keep returning and participating voluntarily (‘if they don’t feel that they’re getting something out of it, they won’t turn up. They’ll go to the oval and play touch footy’ (interview with participant #3);
- the men ask about the program when it is not running and expect it to return; and
- some of the men now prepare work in advance.

There are reasons why some men may not attend, such as the weather (the cold or the wind may deter some men from wanting to walk along the walkways), a lock down after an emergency response, not wanting to interact with certain inmates, work commitments, and attending education programs or other courses. The other education programs and courses that might be running at the same time include TAFE literacy and numeracy courses, RivMed (through-care program for younger inmates), and Colourful Dreaming (part of Shine for Kids). Further data about the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates who
were housed at the JCC and who could and could not attend will be provided for the evaluation of program outcomes.

The main components of the program that encourage the men to attend are the fact that it is a grassroots program run by Aboriginal people and that it is situated in the Cultural Centre of the JCC. Both these factors provide a connection to culture and ensure that the men feel comfortable, safe and relaxed while participating in the workshops. The fact that ‘it’s an Aboriginal initiative, by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people’ encourages respect for the tutors and mentees (interview with participant #9). It is not imperative that all the tutors and mentees are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people because of Aunty Barb and Mukky’s presence, as Elders. Having Elders who are respected running the workshops gives the men a sense of trust in everyone involved in the program.

It is difficult to describe the creative and cultural spirit that permeates the Culture Centre. The essence of the room is captured in Friederike Krishnabhakdi-Vasilakis’ (Rike) contribution to Volume 4 of the Dreaming Inside anthologies, which describes her reaction and observations the first time she visited the Cultural Centre:

The space that houses the Cultural Centre is huge. I draw in my breath and hold it, stunned by the intensity of colour that greets me. As we enter through the door that is framed by tribal posts, we leave the hot, dry and dreary landscape outside and enter a green, lush colourful space, an oasis, where inspirations can fly free like birds.

I let out my breath and relax. I read a poster of the Wiradjuri history near the entrance. The space is a former sports hall, which has been transformed into a creative hub for inmates, by inmates. Four round tables that comfortably seat six to seven people and are painted with colourful mini stories, landscapes and vibrant shapes, are waiting for the workshop participants and tutors.

It is an unusual, unexpected place. From the ceiling hang flags and red Chinese lanterns, while a ten-meter dragon winds its way around the loft’s painting workshop. It seems to be a retreat for those who like to work in colour and
transform anything that can be painted on – from doors, room dividers, boards, to tables and the list goes on – into something meaningful. Tucked underneath is the music room where a choir practices songs from the seventies and eighties, and right now it is House of the Rising Sun that travels easily up into the loft studios. The cultural officer and his assistants work in a caged office near the entrance, the door always open.

I’m humbled by the spiritual element of the architecture as we enter this space. The energy created is raw; it is mesmerizing and captivating, and its painted walls inspire me, the observer, to engage in an inner conversation with the building itself. One of the key aspects of this centre is its unique essence – it is open to all cultures and religions. It feels like an arena of spiritual gathering, with the strong voices of the choir belting out rock songs in the background, the painters in the loft studio, the writers soon pouring their heart and black stories on reams of white paper. It shows that the architecture lends itself to creating this personal relationship between building and the men (and few women) who come here (Krishnabhakdi-Vasilakis 2016, p. 116-117).

These photographs of the Cultural Centre capture some of Rike’s reflections:
Other factors that were identified as contributing to the success and longevity of the program are the support offered by prison staff, including the fact that the Cultural Centre manager promotes the program weeks before a workshop session is due to commence, and the fact that the men get a sense that someone cares and values them because the tutors and mentees have given up their time to be there for them: ‘To go inside a prison, prisoners really value that because someone cares about them, someone’s thinking about them, to have a voice and certainly – even just visiting people – I’ve always had that response in the past. So yeah, it’s good to be acknowledged’ (interview with participant #4).

4.3 Outcomes from the Program

It was difficult for the interview participants to assess for whom the program works best, because the tutors and mentees do not know any details about the men who attend the workshops. Two of the interview participants mentioned that it is an ‘individual thing’ and that it was certainly not offence related. Three of the interview participants thought that the program probably resonated more with older rather than younger men, although
another participant thought that younger workshop participants, who were ‘early in the cycle of imprisonment and re-imprisonment’ might also benefit from the program because ‘the catharsis may have been actually useful to reinforce for them that they just don’t want to get ... back in again’ (interview with participant #12).

This evaluation is not focused on assessing the outcomes of the program since it is a process evaluation, however, in her ‘Introduction’ to Volume 3 of the *Dreaming Inside* series, Aunty Barb observes that when the men become more confident in writing their thoughts, their contributions increase if they are repeat contributors:

Compelling themes emerge in their writing and even though there is often an initial reticence to reveal or expose their deepest thoughts, these writers can become absorbed in the cathartic process of putting those most secret thoughts onto paper, then having done so once or twice, become more self-assured and prepared to continue writing. Their growing confidence in self-expression is exemplified in the volume of their output (Nicholson 2015, p. 9).

Therefore, an analysis was conducted of whether the contributions of the men who contributed to more than one volume, increased. Of the seven men who contributed to more than one volume:

- Three continued to increase their outputs in every volume in which their writings were published;
- One had equal number of contributions in the two volumes that contained his writings;
- Two increased their output from the first volume in which they contributed to the next, but then decreased the output in the following volume (meaning they contributed to three volumes). Their outputs from the first to the last volume in which they had contributed had, however, increased, and
- One inmate had less outputs each time he contributed (he contributed to three volumes).

This analysis indicates that there is evidence of increasing confidence in self-expression through creative writing as a result of the Dreaming Inside program. Further evaluation of the outcomes produced by the program is, however, needed.
4.4 Editing the contributions

Since the second volume of the *Dreaming Inside* series, there has been a clear message to the reader (in the earlier sections of the books) that the publishers of the anthologies do not edit the contributions of the men. The reason provided for not editing the contributions is to preserve the authenticity of the work and to reflect, through the way the men write, the disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a result of Australia’s history of colonisation:

Educational disadvantage is a common bond shared by the inmate writers and unites not only the one to the other, but also their understanding of how the workings of language govern their received knowledge of spelling and grammar. Born out of this is the evolution of Aboriginal English, which is widely used across Aboriginal Australia and is a recognized dialect of English. Common to them all, this collective understanding permeates their work and challenges the reader to be diligent. ...

Self-determination is a key principle of Aboriginal cultural maintenance and in accordance with that principle the inmate writers assert their right to the continued use of Aboriginal English. This principle is wholly endorsed by the Black Wallaby Writers team and is supported by the South Coast Writers Centre.

To that end we have retained the spelling and grammar of the original handwritten manuscripts and do so for a number of reasons: it is their work and their voice telling their stories; it is a nod to self-determination; it bespeaks a wealth of reasons why the writers are in their present situation; censorship in any guise presents itself as indulgence in the moral high ground and so we ascribe to a ‘no censorship’ philosophy and therefore do not ruthlessly edit the inmate work; and lastly it is not ours to tinker with. We are very aware of the author’s right to have his/her work protected against the censor’s pen.
The nature of prison life is such that for various internal reasons we may see individual inmates only once or twice. Consequently there is scant opportunity to skill-up their literacy ability. Our brief is to get them thinking and writing creatively, not to offer literacy classes (Nicholson 2015, p. 9).

This passage speaks directly to how the aims of the program influence the processes that are adopted in running the workshops and publishing the contributions. As mentioned in Part 4.1, the majority of the interview participants considered the aims of the program to be therapeutic in nature rather than focused on teaching literacy, which supports an approach that encourages empowerment and retains authenticity, and discourages editing the contributions. A number of the interview participants thought that the spelling or grammatical errors were important to retain because they reflect the consequences of colonisation, both through the development of language and due to educational disadvantage:

I think it needs to stay authentic. I think it needs to because if you’re looking at a way of being colonised that’s where the spelling came from. That’s where – ‘oh it’s not correct, you need to go and do it again’ [came from]. It feels very white man world. So, for these Koori blokes, I think it’s important for them to spell how they speak because we have been made to speak a particular way. So, there’s still elements when language comes in or – I don’t know if you – it’s not slang but there’s an Aboriginal English also. So, I think it’s really important to be present and identified. So, if we were to start correcting spelling or maybe thinking that ‘oh this is what he actually means, I’ll just change it a little bit’, I don’t think that’s authentic. It’s sort of like if you got a painting and said ‘oh, actually I really don’t like the purple, I’m actually going to change that to a yellow because it fits better’, I don’t think that’s okay. It’s looking at it as an art work or somebody expressing themselves and I think it shows a huge lot of story and history if you actually are looking at people that haven’t been educated’ (interview with participant #10).

Having said that, nine (50%) of the interview participants thought that if a contributor asked for his spelling errors be corrected, they should edit the work. More of the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interview participants thought that editing the work, such as correcting spelling or punctuation, particularly if the men request some editing, was an
appropriate thing to do. The reason they held this view was because they did not want the men to be judged as being uneducated or unable to spell. The opposing view to this was that ‘uncorrected work tells its own story about why [the men] ... are where they are. Straightaway you’ve got to think about educational disadvantage, employment disadvantage, housing disadvantage’ and readers of the books should be made to think about this and also be ‘challenged’ in the same way the men in prison ‘have all been challenged by that reading public’ (interview with participant #6). An example of how uncorrected work tells a story, can be found in a contribution that was written using all capitals (see *Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre, Volume 4*). The reasons why capitals were used or why the contributor may not have been able to write in any other form are not explained, which leaves the reader pondering these questions. Swearing is retained, however, abusive language, inappropriate language or stories, or negative comments about a person who can be identified is deleted. The only other change that was mentioned was putting in line breaks to make a contribution look more like a poem, although it did not matter if the contribution read more like a prose rather than a poem.

4.5 Publication and promotion of the anthologies

The contributions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in JCC have been published in book volumes since 2013. Volume 1 was translated into Italian and published in an Italian electronic journal. Both Volumes 1 and 2 have been widely distributed in libraries including the School of Australian Studies at the University of Bengal in India (Nicholson 2015, p. 8). The significance of publishing the contributions was explored in this evaluation to understand whether it is a crucial component of the program, since extra funding is required each year to achieve this goal. All of the interview participants understood the Dreaming Inside program as necessarily including the publication of the writings in the form of anthologies. The program was viewed as being not just about engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prison to write poetry, but also about being published. Publishing the writings was viewed as a way of giving something back to the men who made a contribution, a way to ‘reward’ them for their efforts:
That's [publishing] the definite key. I think if you give them an award at the end, a medal like you've won the Olympics, this is what you've achieved. ... No-one is just going to run - there's no point in me beating the 100 metres in under nine seconds if no-one is going to know about it. I'm not going to train. I'm not going to do that. I want to be acknowledged for what I've done. For these guys, we're talking about inmates here, getting published is huge. So, you've got to - I think you've got to have that reward at the end to say look what you've done (interview with participant #4).

Congruent with the aims of the program, publishing the contributions was viewed as an important tool for increasing the pride, self-esteem and confidence of the men because they could say they were published authors and could show their families and friends what they had achieved. Their stories would not be lost, not be forgotten and not be locked away. Two of the interview participants mentioned that publication protected an author’s ownership in the work, in the sense that it protected their copyright. One of the interviewees also viewed the act of publishing as building trust in those who had decided not to contribute a piece of writing. They could see that the promises made at the workshop came to fruition and that those who made the effort to write something did receive the rewards promised.

In 2017, funding was obtained from the JCC to promote Volume 5. Jason Williamson (from Jason Williamson Management) was engaged for the marketing campaign. The campaign consisted of a press release that was sent to all major print media, radio interviews and coverage on prime television news, and promotion on website hosts which focused on Aboriginal art and culture. During this process, questions were raised about whether the source of the funding for the marketing campaign created a conflict of interest. In particular, questions were raised about whether the fact that GEO Group funded the marketing campaign meant the promotion would encourage a perception that being in prison can produce something positive or was it an exercise that would ultimately benefit the men by trying to disseminate their work more widely? The overwhelming view was that the books should be promoted, particularly if the program aimed to educate the wider public about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prison. If the program’s aim was simply to give the men a voice, there may not need to be any promotion of the books. The marketing campaign only marginally increased sales of Volume 5, mainly because the
mainstream media were not very interested in the story. It did, however, have an impact on public awareness of the program, evidenced by increased inquiries from Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander organisations. Two of the interview participants noted that any marketing campaign needed to be mindful of protecting the ownership of the program, in the sense that the contributors should not ‘start to see it as a jail project rather than a project coming from the outside’ (interview with participant #9). Maintaining a grassroots focus was necessary to maintain the integrity of the program. Promoting the books was also seen as a way to foster the expansion of the program in other correctional facilities.

4.6 Succession plan

The Emerging Indigenous Writers Mentoring program was initially established in order to find someone who could take over from Aunty Barb when she was ready to step down from the role of being the leader and driver of the program. The idea for a mentoring program arose at an Australia Council for the Arts one-day grants program presentation, Carriage Works, in 2013, when Aunty Barb met a young Aboriginal writer who was in attendance. An amount of $15,000 was awarded from the fund to assist with establishing and conducting the Emerging Indigenous Writers Mentoring program (the funds were only obtained once). To date, none of the mentees have been suitable successors to Aunty Barb because they are at an age where they have other commitment such as work or the care of young children that would preclude them from travelling and putting in the time, effort and energy required to run the program. The predominant view was that whomever took over from Aunty Barb needed the same ‘drive and cultural knowledge and cultural authority’ as Aunty Barb (interview with participant #9). Indeed, another participant observed that ‘their heart and soul has to be in it, they have to see the importance of it, they have to see that this is a worthwhile project and the succession will happen with the right person’ (interview with participant #17). The problem that was commonly raised in relation to a succession plan was that there are not many people like Aunty Barb in the world. Some interview participants thought that the program may not continue if Aunty Barb was unable to carry it on. One interviewee thought that Aunty Barb’s successor may, in fact, need to be a group
of people rather than a single person. The problem of a succession plan was a critical concern for many of the interview participants, and it is an issue that needs resolution.
5.0 Discussion

Overall, the Dreaming Inside program is operating in a way that supports the achievement of its goals and objectives. It is providing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men at JCC with an opportunity to use creative writing as a form of expression, exercise a form of agency through publishing their poems and stories in books without censorship, and engage with Elders and other community members, fostering a reconnection with Culture. Publication of the contributions also leads to the dissemination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literature that would otherwise not be in the public space. Evidence that the program is viewed as beneficial is reflected in the suggestion offered by seven of the interview participants, that the program be expanded, either to other prisons or by increasing the frequency or length of time the workshops are conducted at JCC. This, of course, requires more funding and more personnel.

The theories that underpin the rationale for the Dreaming Inside program appear to mirror those of other creative writing prisons programs. Using creative writing to improve emotional intelligence, acknowledge and accept responsibility for past actions, facilitate better relationships, and increase self-esteem and confidence are therapeutic aims that other scholars such as Hughes (2005), McMillan (2003) and Appleman (2013) have also identified. As many of these scholars have suggested, the educative or skill development aspect of the Dreaming Inside program is evident but appears as a secondary focus of the workshops.

Challenges to the operation and continuation of the program include the provision of adequate funding, recruiting experienced writers and volunteers to participate in the program, finding a person (or people) who is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander to support and continue the work initiated by Aunty Barb, and ensuring the program remains a community-based, grassroots program, that is led and controlled by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.
Often, evidence that a criminal justice program reduces the likelihood of reoffending can assist in securing funding, however, with programs like Dreaming Inside, measuring the impact on recidivism is not an easy task and nor should it be assumed that a reduction in recidivism is the program’s main measure of success. As was made clear at the commencement of this evaluation, reducing recidivism was not one of the goals of the program, and nor did it surface as an aim in the interviews conducted for this process evaluation. When evaluating creative arts or writing prison programs, Hughes recommends using a longitudinal realist approach, that incorporates ‘long-term follow up and tracking of representative samples of participants’, and using a mixed methods approach to test theoretical assumptions about ‘how programmes “work”, for whom and in what circumstances’ (2005, p. 73). One of the impediments to being able to carry out a longitudinal study that follows the men after they complete the program and are released from prison is the difficulty in locating them once they are back in the community. With this in mind, further investigation of what therapeutic impacts the Dreaming Inside program has on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in JCC will be carried out in the second phase of this evaluation, using the findings of this process evaluation to identify theoretical assumptions of how the program operates to bring about change. It will not be possible to go as far as Hughes (2005) suggests since time and resources are limited, but both parts of this evaluation will set the scaffolding for further research.
6.0 Recommendations

As a result of the process evaluation the following key recommendations are made:

*Strengthen governance and program planning* – A program manual outlining the manner in which the workshops are run has been prepared, which will continue to be updated. A further document containing the aims and goals of the program is, however, required. This document should also consider questions such as: the future direction of the program (whether it should be expanded and if so, how?), promotion strategies (online promotion, expansion of invitation list to launch, media releases), the rationale for not editing the contributions and guidelines for what type of editing is appropriate, and detailing various options for a succession plan (linking with other programs, strengthening the Emerging Indigenous Writers Mentoring program, requirements for succession).

*Manualise the program for structure and training* – The program manual needs to remain flexible; however, it needs to contain further details about how tutors are trained prior to participating in a workshop, schedule when arriving at the JCC, activities that must occur at every workshop, and role descriptions for each Elder, writer and tutor who assists in the conduct of the program.

*Investigate links with other creative arts and writing prison programs* – Further discussions should be initiated with the *Unlocked* program to explore synergies, exchange ideas and gain support for funding applications and personnel requirements. Linkages with other programs may assist in resolving the problem of a succession plan.

*Funding requirements* – The difficulties of obtaining funding are acknowledged, however, guidelines around what funding is available each year and how to maintain autonomy regardless of the source of funding need to be documented. Setting up a volunteer program (using university students or researchers) to seek and apply for funding should be explored.
Collection of certain data for future evaluations – To maintain the efficacy of the Dreaming Inside program, yearly reviews should be initiated. Records of funding, events, workshop trips, and training programs need to be maintained. Thought should be given to the collection of the following data from the men who participate in the program: information about family connections/Country (to be able to contact them once they are released); administering a short survey before each workshop to assess inmate expectations of the program; administering a short survey containing questions about participant experience of the program and whether it has changed their behaviour in prison (if they are repeat participants); and administering a short survey 3-6 months after the program containing questions about improvements in writing skills and whether they feel more confident when writing (if they are repeat participants).
7.0 References


Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2012, *Guidelines for ethical research in Australian Indigenous studies*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra.


Djurichkovic, A 2011, *Art in prisons: a literature review of the philosophies and impacts of visual art programs for correctional populations*, University of Technology Sydney, Broadway.


O’Keeffe, C & Albertson, K 2012, “The good days are amazing” - an evaluation of the Writers in Prison Network, Sheffield Hallam University, viewed 16 February 2018, http://shura.shu.ac.uk/7044/1/okeeffe_good_days_are_amazing.pdf.


PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

RESEARCH TITLE: Nothing works? Re-appraising research on Indigenous-focused crime and justice programs

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH
This is an invitation to participate in a study conducted by researchers at Griffith University. The purpose of the research is to investigate the operation of the Black Wallaby Dreaming Inside program at the Junee Correction Centre, for an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship project that aims to advance knowledge about how best to evaluate Indigenous-focused crime and justice programs in ways that acknowledge and privilege the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The Black Wallaby Dreaming Inside program commenced in 2009 when Aunty Barbara Nicholson with two former associates of the South Coast Writers’ Centre visited the Junee Correctional Facility on a writing tour to do a day of reading with Koori inmates. A subsequent trip resulted in the initiation of a poetry writing workshop with Aboriginal and Torres Strait inmates. This initial workshop produced Volume 1 of the Dreaming Inside program book series, which is now in its fifth year of production. This research will conduct a process evaluation of the program, which will consider, amongst other things:

1. How the program was initially established and whether the processes are aligned with the original aims of the program?
2. How the South Coast Writers Indigenous Emerging Writers Mentorship Program supports the Dreaming Inside program and whether it can sufficiently ensure a succession plan for the continuation of the Dreaming Inside program?
3. What other commitments or impediments make it difficult for Aboriginal inmates to attend the Dreaming Inside program workshops? and
4. What improvements can be made to the manner in which the program is carried out?

INVESTIGATOR
Professor Elena Marchetti
Griffith Law School
Faculty of Arts, Education and Law
Griffith University
(07) 37355307
e.marchetti@griffith.edu.au
METHOD AND DEMANDS ON PARTICIPANTS

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to engage in a brief (30-60 minute) face-to-face interview with Elena Marchetti. If a face-to-face interview is not possible, the interview will be conducted over the telephone or via Skype. The location of the interview will be at a mutually convenient location and time.

Typical questions in the interview include: How did you become involved in the Dreaming Inside program? What is your role in the Dreaming Inside program? Can you describe how the program works? Do you think there are particular offenders for whom the program works better? What do you see as being the main aim of the Dreaming Inside program? Do you think that the program is achieving its aims? What changes would you make to the program?

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded in order to ensure the accuracy of what is discussed. A code will be used to de-identify the interview data so that you retain your anonymity. The audio recording will be transcribed by a transcriber.

POSSIBLE RISKS, INCONVENIENCES AND DISCOMFORTS

Apart from the 30-60 minutes of your time for the interview I cannot foresee any risks for you in participating in the interview. Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time and withdraw any data that you have provided to that point. Refusal to participate in the study will not affect your relationship with Griffith University or your employer.

FUNDING AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

This study is funded by a research grant from the Australian Research Council. The benefits of this study to the participants and wider community are:

- It will inform the stakeholders involved in the Dreaming Inside program of the manner in which the program is being conducted, whether it meets certain aims and goals, and whether it can be improved;
- It will improve the conduct of the program for Aboriginal inmates at the Junee Correctional Centre;
- The Department of Corrective Services will gain an understanding of how a culturally appropriate prison program can be successfully implemented;
- The GEO Group Australia Pty Ltd will gain an understanding of how the Dreaming Inside program might be expanded to other prisons;
- It will feed into the outcomes of the over-arching Future Fellowship program, which aims to add new knowledge about how to put in practice scholarship that uses postcolonial and decolonising methodologies to explain what it means to do Indigenous-centric research.

Findings from the study will be published in a report to the Junee Correctional Centre (GEO Group Australia Pty Ltd), the Black Wallaby Writers team, the South Coast Writers Centre, and the Department of Corrective Services, NSW. Findings will also be published in scholarly journals. Confidentiality is assured and none of the participants will be identified in any part of the research.
ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS
This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong and recognised and endorsed by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Griffith University. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity, Office for Research on (07) 37354375 or email research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Thank you for your interest in this study.
CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

RESEARCH TITLE: Nothing works? Re-appraising research on Indigenous-focused crime and justice programs

RESEARCHER: Elena Marchetti

I have been given information about the Black Wallaby Dreaming Inside program evaluation which forms part of a larger research project titled “Nothing works? Re-appraising research on Indigenous-focused crime and justice programs”. I have discussed the research project with Elena Marchetti who is conducting this research as part of her Australian Research Council Future Fellowship project.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research, which include giving up 30-60 minutes of my time, and have had an opportunity to ask Elena Marchetti any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my treatment in any way /my relationship with Griffith University, GEO Group Australia Pty Ltd or the Department of Corrective Services, NSW.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Elena Marchetti on (07) 37355307 or if I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity, Office for Research on 07 37354375 or email research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to (please tick):

☐ Engaging in an interview with Elena Marchetti
☐ Allowing the interview to be recorded
☐ Allowing my de-identified data to be published in research findings

Signed ................................................................. Date: ....../....../......

Name (please print) .................................................................