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

Part II – Outcome Evaluation Measuring Participant Benefits

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

**Sara Roetman**, Senior Research Assistant, Griffith Law School, Griffith University, authored Section 2 of this report

*April 2019*

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

Former Senior Research Assistants

Debbie Bargallie (Griffith Law School, Griffith University, 2016-2018)

Amelia Radke (Griffith Law School, Griffith University, 2018-2019)

Advisory Group Members

Dr Aunty Barbara Nicholson, Wadi Wadi Elder

Mr John Muk Muk Burke, Wiradjuri Elder

Mr Trevor Coles, Offender Services Manager, Junee Correctional Centre

Mr Gerome Brodin, Cultural Advisor/Cultural Centre Manager, Junee Correctional Centre
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge first and foremost the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who are imprisoned at the Junee Correctional Centre and who agreed to participate in interviews. Without their openness and trust, I would not have been able to conduct the research. I hope that this report helps ensure that programs such as Dreaming Inside can continue to be offered, because they clearly help make life in prison more bearable.

Prison research is not an easy area to work in, and in my case, it was only possible because of the support and assistance of the following people: the Advisory Group members, South Coast Writers Centre staff and members, Black Wallaby Writers members, GEO staff at the Junee Correctional Centre, my Senior Research Assistants Sara Roetman, Dr Debbie Bargallie and Dr Amelia Radke, and the Professional Services staff at Griffith Law School, Suzanne Marshall and Susan Powe.

The increasing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody is something we should all be concerned about. If this report teaches us anything, it is to think outside the box and to listen to those who are most affected.

Professor Elena Marchetti
Griffith University
Executive Summary

This report details the second component of the evaluation of the *Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre* program (Dreaming Inside program), an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prison poetry writing program conducted at Junee Correctional Centre (JCC), New South Wales. The first part of the evaluation focused on program processes, including articulating the aims and evaluating whether any processes could be improved.

As detailed in the first report, at the time of the process evaluation there were approximately 842 inmates at the 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% on 30 June 2018 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018).

Part II of the evaluation measures program effects on the men who participated in the Dreaming Inside program. The evaluation methodology used in this part comprised semi-structured interviews with 30 men who had participated in the Dreaming Inside program. Key findings include:

- Cultural, arts-based programs are highly valued by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners, regardless of their classification or offence type;
- The involvement of Elders is crucial to the success of programs targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoner wellbeing;
- Programs that give prisoners a voice are lacking and yet, needed to encourage prisoners to feel valued;
- Cultural safety is crucial for programs that encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners to express feelings about lived experiences;
- Creative writing programs that are culturally safe allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners to express feelings and work through unresolved emotions;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners respect community Elders and value opportunities to interact with them; and
• Treating prisoners with respect and making them feel valued, engenders reciprocal behaviour.

This evaluation does not assess the impact on recidivism for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it was made clear in the process evaluation (Part I of the overall evaluation) that reducing recidivism was not one of the aims of the program. Secondly, measuring recidivism is problematic. Difficulties arise in accurately capturing the number of new crimes committed, fully understanding reasons for changes in recidivism rates and isolating program impact from other causal factors.

Overwhelmingly, this evaluation concludes that the Dreaming Inside program is a positive initiative for male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates at JCC.
# Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ iii

Executive Summary .......................................................................................................... iv

1.0 Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Background ............................................................................................................... 1

1.2 Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation .................................................................. 4

1.3 Report Structure ..................................................................................................... 5

2.0 Benefits of Arts-Based Prison Programs .................................................................. 6

3.0 Evaluation Methodology .......................................................................................... 11

3.1 Research Design ..................................................................................................... 11

3.2 Program Participant Interviews .............................................................................. 15

3.4 Observations ........................................................................................................... 19

3.4 Limitations ............................................................................................................... 19

4.0 Evaluation Results ................................................................................................... 21

4.1 General Observations About the Lives of the Men in Prison .................................. 21

4.2 Spreading the Word About the Dreaming Inside Program ...................................... 24

4.3 Benefits of the Dreaming Inside Program ................................................................ 27

4.4 What the Men Wrote About .................................................................................. 31

4.5 Cultural Engagement .............................................................................................. 34

4.6 Importance of Being Published .............................................................................. 36

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion ..................................................................................... 39

6.0 References ............................................................................................................... 43

Appendix A ...................................................................................................................... 47

Appendix B ...................................................................................................................... 51
1.0 Introduction

As mentioned in the process evaluation report, 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 (measuring program effects) evaluation. This report focuses solely on the second part of the evaluation: an evaluation of the benefits the program delivers to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prison.

The research was proposed by Dr Barbara Nicholson (Aunty Barb), a respected Wadi Wadi Elder who initiated the Dreaming Inside program. The scope and methodology of the research was formulated in consultation with Aunty Barb, John Muk Muk Burke (Mukky) (Wiradjuri Elder), 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 Senior Research Assistant, Dr Debbie Bargallie, was also employed for most of the duration of the evaluation to work with me to ensure the research was carried out in a culturally appropriate manner and to assist with conducting the evaluation. During the writing phase Sara Roetman became my Senior Research Assistant and she authored Section 2 of this report.

1.1 Background

For the sake of completeness, this report includes a brief description of the inception and delivery of the program, as set out in ‘Evaluation of *Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre*’ report...
Correctional Centre Poetry Writing Program, Part I – Process Evaluation’ (Marchetti 2018). The Dreaming Inside program was conceived in 2010 after 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, Mukky, Aboriginal author and SCWC Board member, Bruce Pascoe and Illawarra writer, Simon Luckhurst undertook a four-day visit to JCC during NAIDOC 2012 to run creative writing and reading workshops with the male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners, and from that visit Volume 1 of the Dreaming Inside program anthology series was produced. At the time of writing this report, Volume 7 of the anthologies has just been completed and the program is entering its eighth year. The name ‘Dreaming Inside’ was chosen by the men who participated in the first set of workshops. From 2013 onwards, 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 the JCC twice a year for three days (in May and October each year) to work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributors to produce poems or stories about various topics. Each of the visits comprises five workshops; two workshops per day in the first two days and one workshop in the third day.

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 managed 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 normally used for the workshops. It was noted in Part I of the evaluation that one of the factors that encouraged the men to attend the program was the fact that it was held in the Cultural Centre of the prison. The
Cultural Centre is a large room in the prison that used to be utilised as a gymnasium for indoor basketball and cricket but it was transformed into a place where art and other activities took place. The walls of the Cultural Centre were covered in art. It took about five or six years to fill the walls with artwork, including paintings of well-known people, The Apology, scenes from overseas destinations, and painted didgeridoos and guitars attached to the walls. The men in prison saw it as a culturally safe space, which helped them relax. From early 2018, the JCC was undergoing an expansion and refurbishment, which resulted in the Cultural Centre being used as the visitors’ room. The artwork on the walls was removed and other walls were installed to facilitate its use as a visitors’ room, making the space smaller. This changed the atmosphere of the room quite dramatically.

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. Hanley and MacPherson (2019) in their analysis of 96 Dreaming Inside program feedback surveys, found that ‘the program was achieving at least seven of the eight “intended aims and goals” of the program’ (p. 17).

Volume 5 (published in 2017), was over six times larger (252 pages) than Volume 1 published in 2013 (which was 38 pages long), Volume 6 (published in 2018) was four and a half times larger (172 pages) and Volume 7 (published in 2019) was (like Volume 5) over six times larger (234 pages). There were five men who contributed to the first volume, 60\(^1\) who contributed to Volume 5, 48 who contributed to Volume 6 and 86 who contributed to Volume 7. 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

---

\(^1\) In ‘Evaluation of Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre Poetry Writing Program, Part I – Process Evaluation’ (Marchetti, 2018) it was noted on page 3 that there were only 59 contributors in Volume 5, which is not correct.
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 and Scope of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess program delivery (which was reported in Part I of the evaluation) and program effects (which is reported in this part (Part II) of the evaluation) and to assist with obtaining future and ongoing funding. The aims and goals of the Dreaming Inside Program that were articulated when conducting Part I of the evaluation 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.

Part II of the evaluation aims to examine the emotional and behavioural impacts of the Dreaming Inside program on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who participated in the program. In particular, using semi-structured interview data the evaluation aims to explore whether the program contributes to participant wellbeing, helps participants with expression of feelings and thoughts, and assists with encouraging use of creative mediums to process emotional trauma.
1.3 Report Structure

The following section of the report (Section 2), is a literature review of what benefits arts-based programs and more specifically, creative writing programs offer people in prison. 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. Section 4 reports the evaluation findings and section 5 concludes the report and assesses whether there is any need to make further changes to the program based on the interview data.
2.0 Benefits of Arts-Based Prison Programs

There is increasing academic and governmental interest in Australia and internationally in the role of arts and cultural activities in a broad range of social issues, including crime prevention, social cohesion, community building, and health. In particular, there is strong evidence internationally that prison-based arts programs deliver numerous benefits to incarcerated populations, as well as the greater community. The various philosophies of international arts-based programs for correctional populations, including Australia, have been summarised as educational, therapeutic, beneficial to individual, beneficial to institutional management, and beneficial to society (Djurichko 2011). Similarly, Hanley and Macpherson (2019, p. 4) split the literature thematically by the various program benefits: ‘individual-emotional, social-relational, skills acquisition, and cultural connection and safety’, while problematising research that focuses on crime-related outcomes such as recidivism and violence. A significant obstacle for these programs is thus the reliance on anecdotal, subjective, non-scientific, and short-term evidence, often with small participation numbers, and the subsequent difficulty in translating this to evidence-based policy (Djurichko 2011).

Arts-based programs tend to contribute to crime outcomes indirectly (Cheliotis & Jordanoska 2016). Research to date suggests outcomes of arts interventions in correctional services are most likely to be improved physical and mental wellbeing, improved literacy skills, increased employability prospects, changes in attitudes or behaviours which lead to offending, greater acceptance of responsibility in managing behaviour and better understanding of the impact of offending (Hill 2015, p. 7). Despite the increasing attention and establishment of arts programs in prison, there is little discussion of theory in the design, implementation, or academic evaluation of these programs. Indeed, contemporary theories of positive criminology stress the need for programs which focus on broader social processes in pathways towards desistance from crime (Davey, Day & Balfour 2015). ‘Secondary desistance’ involves outcomes such as literacy, vocational skills, and social skills, which can assist in abstinence from crime, or ‘primary desistance’ (Cheliotis & Jordanoska 2016, p. 26). Arts-based programs are therefore most effective when they emphasise the development of
these positive social processes, are creative and diverse rather than prescriptive, and are less focused on demonstrating principles of risk management and offence-related outcomes (Davey, Day & Balfour 2015; Cheliotis & Jordanoska 2016).

Prison based creative writing programs, like the Dreaming Inside program central to this evaluation, have been recognised internationally for their various benefits, including supporting participants to follow pathways to desistance, but they are less commonly singled out and evaluated compared to visual arts-based programs (Marchetti 2018). Creative writing programs which are culturally specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are even less researched. The majority of the literature on creative writing programs, and arts-based prison programs more broadly, comes from Canada, the United States and United Kingdom. Within these programs, creative writing is often one art form amongst a broad range of arts activities offered, making the particular qualities and outcomes of creative writing programs in prison difficult to identify.

The Prison Arts Resource Project provides a useful and extensive annotated bibliography of prison-based art-program evaluations in the United States (Gardner, Hager & Hillman 2014). Projects which were either exclusively literary or writing focused, or which incorporated literary and writing elements within a broader range of art forms, consistently found positive behavioural, emotional, social, skills-based, mental health, and even cost-savings related outcomes (see Worrall & Koines 1978; Blinn 1995; Brewster 2010; Brewster 2014; Dunphy 1999; Schutt, Deng & Stoehr 2013; Moller 2011; Richards et al. 2000; as summarised in Gardner, Hager & Hillman 2014). The Writing for Our Lives program in the United States, which involved daily journal entries, weekly writing assignments, and weekly classroom discussions, found effective positive behavioural changes, such as increased prosocial behaviour, development of self-identities from pro-criminal to prosocial, increased sense of self-efficacy as writers, mastery of problem-solving skills, and increased empathy (Blinn 1995).

However, there is growing recognition of the need for culturally specific programs in bridging long-term social, economic, and health inequities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other populations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
people are significantly overrepresented in the Australian prison population, and this ‘isolation from family and community compounds the profound intergenerational trauma, associated unresolved grief and loss, and resulting mental illness and other chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, heart and respiratory diseases, cancer and substance misuse disorders (Sivak et al. 2017, p.8). In contrast to mainstream approaches to health, as far back as 1990, the National Aboriginal Health Strategy defined health as more than physical wellbeing of the individual, by also emphasising ‘the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing of the whole community’ (National Health and Medical Research Council 1996, cited in Biddle 2012, p.65). This tension between individualised versus holistic models of health and wellbeing exemplifies a recurring theme in Australian policies addressing the multi-faceted disadvantages of Indigenous communities (Dockery 2010). Mainstream approaches often work within the assumption that preservation and maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture is a hindrance to economic and social development. In contrast, stronger attachment to traditional Culture is associated with significantly enhanced socio-economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including health, substance abuse, exposure to the criminal justice system, employment, and educational attainment (Dockery 2010, p. 325-7). Furthermore, culturally focused programs can be more effective at engaging and encouraging participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who may be less likely to take part in more conventionally delivered programs (Martin et al. 2014).

An evaluation of Save-a-Mate (SAM) Our Way, a national program to improve social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in remote and regional Australia, found the most progress was observed when there was strong partnership with the local community, particularly when local people led and significantly influenced the content and process of the program, and the program built on elements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture (Blignault, Haswell & Jackson Pulver 2016). Similarly, a literature review of healing programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including prison-based programs, found consistent evidence that effective healing programs are:

- developed to address issues in their local community
- driven by local leadership
- based upon well-developed evidence and theory base

8
• combining both western methodologies and traditional healing in their treatment theory base
• informed about and understand the impact of colonisation and intergenerational trauma and grief
• building upon individual, family and community capacity through the acquisition of knowledge and skills
• incorporating strong evaluation frameworks
• with a proactive rather than reactive focus (McKendrick et al. 2013, p. 2).

Artistic expression can be key to revitalising and connecting to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture and Country. Cultural expression through the arts are particularly important ‘given the disruption to cultural continuity’ within Aboriginal communities (Ware 2014). The effects of arts programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be powerful as healing processes and cultivation of good health and wellbeing (Muirhead & de Leeuw 2012). Similar to art programs more generally, the benefits can be significant but are often indirect. The outcomes of art programs are therefore difficult to measure, and as such, the programs are most effective when focused on long-term, sustainable, and positive processes rather than measuring a given outcome (Ware 2014). Creative engagement, and emphasising creative ways of knowing and being, leads to feelings of belonging and engagement, improves social capital, helps build a sense of purpose and hope, empowers individuals and communities, and improves healing between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Ware 2014). These factors have been strongly linked to positive outcomes in physical and mental health, substance abuse and self-harm, social and cognitive skills, school retention, and, to some extent, crime reduction.

Despite the increasing support academically and from government for culturally specific art programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities, there is a scarcity of research in the prison context (Rasmussen, Donoghue & Sheehan 2018). The Torch Statewide Indigenous Arts in Prisons and Community program facilitated theatre projects for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women, exploring themes of history, Culture, and identity (Hallwright 2012). A qualitative evaluation highlighted the
positive impacts of Culture in the rehabilitation process, leading to increased confidence, reconnection to Culture, improved participation in other programs, increased skills opportunities post-release, and better social relationships with family and the broader community (Hallwright 2012). Similarly, DRUMBEAT (Discovering Relationships Using Music – Beliefs, Emotions, Attitudes and Thoughts) in Alice Springs Correctional Facility emphasised the experiential process of observing and experimenting, taking care to follow traditional modes of learning from Aboriginal Culture, and found significant improvements in self-confidence, interpersonal skills and relationships, and mental wellbeing for Aboriginal men (Martin et al. 2014). The Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre creative writing program being evaluated in this report was the subject of a mixed method analysis in early 2019 to understand participants’ perceptions of the program (Hanley & MacPherson 2019). The findings were ‘overwhelmingly positive’, with participants valuing the program for facilitating self-expression, sharing of their stories, experiencing and living their Culture, community building with fellow Koori people in their prison, discovery of hidden talents, and for advancing their education (Hanley & MacPherson 2019, p. 4). Although these programs do not all incorporate creative writing, they are indicative of the powerful potential of culturally informed arts programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their endeavours to engage in pathways leading to desistance.
3.0 Evaluation Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The hypotheses\(^2\) underpinning this research are:

1. Providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates with a culturally appropriate avenue to express their feelings, increases their ability to work through unresolved emotions;

2. A creative writing prison program that is Aboriginal-led and owned empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates and reconnects them to Culture;

3. Aboriginal-led and owned creative art and writing programs benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates regardless of their classification or offence type;

4. The more times Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates participate in an Aboriginal-led and owned creative art and writing program, the more likely they are to experience sustained and deep-seated changes.

5. Publishing the creative writings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates fosters empowerment and agency, which increases their confidence and self-esteem.

As a result of these hypotheses the outcome evaluation considered the following two main research questions:

1. What emotional and behavioural impacts does the Dreaming Inside program have on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners who undertake the program at the JCC?

2. In particular, does a cultural creative writing program, established and facilitated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, have an effect on the wellbeing of the prisoners, their ability to express their feelings and thoughts, and their motivation to continue using creative expressive mediums as a way to diminish emotional trauma?

---

\(^2\) The hypotheses have been formulated as a result of the first component of the evaluation, which is the process evaluation of the Dreaming Inside program.
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 research aims to take a decolonising, collaborative and participatory evaluation approach, in order to prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander standpoints and perspectives. An example of a collaborative and participatory research method is Participatory Action Research (PAR). It has been recognised as a method of research that is suitable for research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. PAR methods have synergies with Aboriginal methodologies due to the fact that it allows researchers to ‘challenge the historical privileging of Western positivist science that emphasise(d) neutrality and objectivity’ (Evans et al. 2009, p. 896). PAR frameworks allow social transformation, recognition of the lived experiences and knowledges of the various participants, and a more equal partnership in the way the research is carried out. According to Cargo and Mercer (2008), a ‘key strength of PAR is the integration of researchers’ theoretical and methodological expertise with non-academic participants’ real world knowledge and experiences into a mutually reinforcing partnership’ (p. 327). Evans et al. (2009) argue that a ‘fusion’ of Aboriginal methodologies and PAR can transform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from being the objects of inquiry to being the authors of the inquiry. Another evaluation approach that can be fused with Aboriginal paradigms or methodologies is Realist Evaluation, a theory-driven approach that starts with theory and ends with theory. Pawson and Tilley (2004) 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’ (p. 2). Such an approach focuses on ‘[w]hat works for whom in what circumstances and in what respects, and how?’ rather than simply asking ‘what works’ (Pawson and Tilley 2004, p. 2). This accommodates a deeper level of inquiry that captures the essence of a program within the evaluation process. Using a realist approach reinforces the cultural focus of the program, which is not claiming to reduce recidivism.

The ways in which a decolonising, collaborative and participatory approach embodying the abovementioned principles were adopted are: (1) that an Advisory Group was
established comprising key Indigenous and non-Indigenous Dreaming Inside program stakeholders to guide the research and to ensure that it maintained a culturally sensitive approach and perspective; and (2) that a process evaluation was conducted prior to commencing the outcome evaluation.

The methodology for Part I of the project relied on four main sources of data:

1. Existing documentation and publications: This included 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 methodology for Part II of the project relied on prison data regarding Dreaming Inside program attendance and prison population numbers, and semi-structured interviews with 30 program participants. It was initially envisaged that interviews would come from three different groups of possible participants: (1) First time participants of the Dreaming Inside program workshops held at the JCC in either October 2017 or May 2018; (2) Participants who had undertaken the Dreaming Inside program more than once; and (3) Participants who had been released from prison. Attempts were made to contact Dreaming Inside program participants who had been released from prison, by asking the interview participant when they would be released. If the release date was imminent, they were asked whether they would be interested in participating in an interview once released and if they agreed, they were asked for their best contact details (which more often than not, was a family member’s phone number). Eleven (out of 30) participants left details of when they were being released and how they might be able to be contacted. Aunty Barb (as the respected and trusted Elder) tried to contact seven of these men (who had left telephone
numbers), but none were able to be located. Numbers were disconnected, people who answered said they did not know the person we were looking for, we were told the person no longer lived at the location of the landline, or there was no response to the telephone call, despite leaving messages. One of the reasons why it was so difficult to locate Aboriginal and Torres Islander people released from prison may be that the person did not want to be found, despite initially agreeing to provide contact details. Their reason for initially agreeing, may be due to what has been labelled ‘gratuitous concurrence’, a strategy used by Aboriginal people to protect themselves in their interactions with non-Indigenous Australians when being asked questions they may not necessarily want to answer (Eades 2013). Eades explains that the apparent agreement is akin to the person saying ‘yes’ so that the inquirer thinks they are ‘obliging, and socially amenable’, and will continue to view them in a positive light ensuring ‘things will work out well between’ them (2013, p. 101). Of the 30 men who were interviewed in JCC, seven had been released since their first participation in the Dreaming Inside program. At the time the research was conducted they were back at JCC and back to participating in the Dreaming Inside program. These seven men were asked about whether the Dreaming Inside program had changed their experiences on the outside.

It was also initially proposed that Dreaming Inside program participants would be able to provide feedback by way of a written submission. Only two written submissions were received during the first lot of interviews (in October 2017). The two men who completed written submissions also did a face-to-face interview. It was therefore, decided in collaboration with the Advisory Group, that for future visits, the data collection would only come from interviews with the men and not from feedback via a written submission.

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 outcome evaluation was obtained from Corrective Services NSW. The Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee then ratified that approval. A variation was lodged with Corrective Services NSW in May 2018 to extend the data collection period to October 2018. Approval for the variation was granted on 11 May 2018, which allowed sufficient time for 30 interviews to be conducted.

3.2 Program Participant Interviews

Interview participants were selected based on their participation in the Dreaming Inside program. In the May 2018 and October 2018 visits, the Dreaming Inside program was for the first time, delivered to the men classified as Protection Limited Associated (PRLA) on the last day of the three-day visit. These are men who have special protection for their own safety or other prisoners’ safety and who, for that reason, cannot mix with prisoners in the rest of the prison. Five of the 30 men interviewed were in the PRLA section of the prison.

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:

1. How did you hear about the Dreaming Inside program?
2. How many times have you attended the Dreaming Inside program?
3. What was your motivation for attending?
4. If you have attended more than once, why do you keep coming?
5. How does it make you feel to have your writing published?
6. What are some of the things you’ve written about?
7. How does writing make you feel?
8. How does it feel to have your work published? Is that an important part of the program?
9. Are you writing poems or stories when you are not in the Dreaming Inside program?
10. Do you now write letters or poems to your family? Does it help you connect to your family more?
11. How would you encourage other inmates to participate? Have you told others about the program?
12. What did you like or not like about the Dreaming Inside program?

It is important to acknowledge that I am a non-Indigenous female researcher attempting to interpret verbal accounts of program experiences by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.³ To ensure the research was conducted in a culturally appropriate manner, critical race and Indigenous theories informed the methodology used to collect and analyse the data. By using critical race and Indigenous scholarship, I am expanding Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) conceptual framework. Tuhiwai Smith did not intend for her conceptual framework to be used by non-Indigenous people to analyse documents (the interview transcripts are considered documents) created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals.⁴ The analysis does this, however, by using an augmented and modified version of decolonising practices and by incorporating aspects of critical race and Indigenous theories. Certain aspects of Tuhiwai Smith’s framework, such as having an awareness of the importance and uniqueness of Indigenous knowledges, the importance of providing feedback to participants and stakeholders whenever possible, and the need to restructure hegemonic assumptions, values and concepts, have been utilised for this research.

The members of the Advisory Group, some of whom are Aboriginal, and one of the Senior Research Assistants (Dr Debbie Bargallie), who is a Kamilaroi/Wonnarua woman from New South Wales, had a continuing and influential role in informing and directing the research. This means that at all times, I was liaising with members of the Advisory Group to seek guidance regarding the collection and analysis of the data. In particular, the Advisory

³ This problem of correctly interpreting the voice of another has been acknowledged by a number of feminist, critical race and Indigenous scholars: Gloria Ladson-Billings, ‘Racialized Discourses and Ethnic Epistemologies’ in Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (eds) Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd ed, 2000) 215; Virginia L Olesen, ‘Feminisms and Qualitative Research at and into the Millennium’ in Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (eds) Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd ed, 2000) 215; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (1999).

⁴ Nor did she intend it to be used to analyse documents and reports prepared by non-Indigenous people from a critical race or Indigenous perspective.
Group members were consulted in relation to possible themes that informed and emerged from the analysis, as well as possible interpretations and perspectives that might be inferred from a thematic reading of the data. The interviews were analysed by summarising the themes that emerge in relation to the participants’ experiences of the program and how it has impacted on their behaviour and emotions. These themes were further analysed from an Indigenous-informed criminological, penological and psychological perspective to better understand how the creative writing program assists in diminishing trans-generational traumas, while increasing the wellbeing, agency and empowerment of the Dreaming Inside participants.

The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed by a transcription service. Each participant was assigned a number to de-identify their responses. All of the interviews aside from one, were conducted face-to-face while the Dreaming Inside program was being delivered at the prison. One interview was done over the telephone because the participant wanted to participate in an interview, but was not able to attend the program because he was on job-release. A suitable time was, therefore, arranged for his interview to be done via telephone. On average the Interviews took 25 minutes (range 6 to 48 minutes). Eleven out of the 30 men interviewed were doing the Dreaming Inside program for the first time, although two of those eleven men had submitted poems or stories for publication in prior volumes. The responses provided by the 11 men who were first time participants of the Dreaming Inside program, were not substantially different to the men who had attended the program more than once. Although they did not provide as much detail as the other men about the benefits of the program and the effects of publishing their contributions, they still responded to those questions as best they could, often relying on their observations of how it has impacted on others.

Table 3.1 provides a breakdown of the average number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and total prisoners in JCC over the three days the interviews with prisoners were conducted in October 2017, May 2018 and October 2018. Some of the dates within the three-day workshop are reported separately because different classifications of prisoners were targeted on particular days and sessions. This makes it impossible to report average attendance rates across all program delivery dates. It also provides details of the average
number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners who had other commitments on the listed dates.

Table 3.1: Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Prisoners and Dreaming Inside Program Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Period</th>
<th>Total Prisoners</th>
<th>ATSI Prisoners</th>
<th>Dreaming Inside Participants</th>
<th>Prisoners who were Unable to Attend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PRLA</td>
<td>SEG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18 Oct 2017</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>214 (25.4%)</td>
<td>28 (13.1% of ATSI prisoners)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07-08 May 2018</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>214 (25.5%)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 May 2018\textsuperscript{7}</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 (out of 25 PRLA ATSI prisoners – 36%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Oct 2018 (morning)\textsuperscript{8}</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (out of 25 PRLA ATSI prisoners – 24%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Oct 2018 (afternoon)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (out of 11 SMAP ATSI prisoners – 27%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 October 2018</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>213 (26%)</td>
<td>23 (out of 56 ATSI remands classified as B2 – 41%) plus 3 from B4 classification</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (out of 38 SMAP ATSI prisoners – 13%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 sets out the age ranges of the men who were interviewed. There was a relatively even spread of participants aged between 20 and 50.

\textsuperscript{5} SEG is Segregation.  
\textsuperscript{6} SMAP is Special Management Area Placement (Protection). Remand prisoners given this classification are not allowed to mix with prisoners in the main area of the prison.  
\textsuperscript{7} On the third day of this visit to deliver the Dreaming Inside program, it was offered only to PLRA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners. It was the first time the program had been offered to these prisoners, although they had heard about it in the past. The figures for the total number of prisoners is, therefore, not reported for this day.  
\textsuperscript{8} For the 29-31 October 2018 visit, the Dreaming Inside program was offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners with particular classifications on various dates and sessions. This is why the data for that period is separated into different days.
Table 3.2: Age Range of Dreaming Inside Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number of Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 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. Most of the observations of the conduct of the workshops took place in the weeks of the 17th of October 2016 and 29th of May 2017. These observations informed the research in both Part I and II of the evaluation. I continued to attend the workshop in the weeks of the 16th of October 2017, 7th of May 2018, and 25th of October 2018 to conduct interviews. Although I was observing the workshops when I wasn’t conducting interviews, the visits were mainly focused on doing interviews with the program participants.

3.4 Limitations

The questions that were asked of the participants were framed in a culturally appropriate manner, which may mean that at times, the questions may have been potentially leading. Eades (2013) explains that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more comfortable in answering questions that ‘make a hinting statement’ or that contain information that requires confirmation or denial (p. 100). When conducting the interviews, a discursive approach was taken, which meant that the interview questions were not always asked exactly as noted in section 3.2. The fact that the men were comfortable in disagreeing with statements or questions that may have suggested particular points of view, and candidly offered their thoughts and views about issues raised, confirms that the participants were not
influenced to answer the questions in any particular way. As much as possible, the questions were framed as open-ended questions and reassurances were given that there were no correct answers and that their responses would remain anonymous.

The men were also not always asked to provide demographic details such as their age or educational attainment. Again, Eades (2013) notes that personal privacy is often protected and valued, particularly when interacting with a non-Indigenous questioner. At times, when it appeared appropriate to do so, the men were asked their age, but not all were willing to provide an answer. Some of the men provided an age range or their age was ascertained at a later stage either from prison records or from other details provided by the Elders and the interview participant.

The interview data were compared with the data collected from stakeholders for the process evaluation and with Hanley and McPherson’s (2019) analysis of the program feedback surveys. Observations of the workshops also informed the analysis of the interview data. In this way, the findings were triangulated with other data.
4.0 Evaluation Results

4.1 General Observations About the Lives of the Men in Prison

The men were not asked about their lives prior to coming to prison but many talked about their upbringing and childhood experiences during the interview. The information that is, therefore, presented in this section does not describe the lives of all the men – only those who chose to discuss their upbringing, life as a child and life outside prison. Most of the men spoke about some form of grief and trauma, such as, losing a child; mothers, partners or siblings dying or getting sick while they have been in prison or just prior to going to prison; witnessing suicides; inter-generational alcoholism; and parental abuse and neglect. Being in prison compounded the grief when close family members died and the men were unable to attend funerals or visit gravesites. According to one of the men, who could not attend the funerals of his deceased sisters and brothers, not being able to attend the funerals ‘really mucks you up inside’ (Participant #27, aged 54). Non-attendance at funerals was usually due to the cost associated with attending funerals as a prisoner. Four of the men spoke about not being raised by their parents; one met his mum for the first time when he was 13. Grief was also expressed in the acknowledgement that family members, whether it be mothers, children or partners, had been let down and hurt as a result of their offending. For example, one of the men acknowledged the hurt he had caused his mother when talking about the focus of one of his poems:

I wrote to my mum. It was a poem to my mum. Like a rhyme to my mum. Just about all the effort she has put in and coming to court and I’m sorry that I’ve tarnished our family name and all the hard days she spent at court and lonely nights, crying for me, worried about me. Whether it be outside, running amok, maybe I could get shot, or in here she – it’s never easy on your mother. ... She comes once a year. She’s on a pension, a disability pension. So, once a year she gets her loan from Centrelink and spends it to travel wherever I am in the state to visit me. So, that’s why I wrote the poem. I suppose I owe her a lot. (Participant #26, aged 27)
Substance abuse was common amongst the men, with 13 mentioning abusing either alcohol or drugs on the outside. One of the men blamed his addictive personality on having been given Ritalin when he was a child:

I was bad, well not bad, but the way they perceived me, I was bad because I had ADD and ADHD. I was full on, too full on. ... [unclear] on Ritalin and Dexies and shit like that. They tried to medicate me because otherwise a normal 10 year old, you know. Now they look at me, like say, ‘all right, well why are you so – why have you got an addictive personality?’ Well come on man, ... you shoved pills down my throat when I was eight through until I was 10 until I told you to jam it and I didn’t want to take them no more, because, yeah, I was buzzing around all the time. (Participant #12, aged 38)

Four men considered time in prison or their long sentence of imprisonment beneficial because they had been able to get off drugs, get jobs, and have time and a clear head to reflect on what they would like out of life. One credited time in prison with saving his life, noting that he otherwise would probably have overdosed on drugs. More men, however, discussed the boredom, inertia, loss of freedom, and need to survive when describing life in prison. Prison politics dictated that you kept ‘your mouth shut’ (Participant #1, aged in his 50s) and watched your back in fear of saying or doing the wrong thing. Playing card games, chess or training were common general activities the men engaged in to keep themselves occupied. It was easy to ‘go off the path’ if you allowed yourself to. It was important to stick to a ‘routine’ and keep busy (Participant #6, aged 44). Although some of the men painted, it cost money to buy painting supplies, which one of the men mentioned, he and many others could not afford. JCC was considered to be one of the best prisons in New South Wales, due to the staff, the food and general atmosphere of the prison.

Nine of the men disclosed ‘the trouble started’ (Participant # 20, aged 45), which included dropping out of or not attending school and substance abuse, during their teenage years, although one mentioned he had been ‘in here’ since he was 11 years of age (Participant #26, aged 27). Indeed, five of these men made mention of the fact that they had been in and out of prison for most of their lives. Drug or alcohol abuse was connected to associating with the wrong crowd and not attending school. One of the men thought it would have been
better if his family had stayed in the country and not moved to the city when he was about 12 or 13, which is where he started mixing with the wrong people:

I think if I stayed where I was, if I didn’t – yeah – I think if I stayed in my home town, if I, if we didn’t – if we never left, I think we wouldn’t have – I wouldn’t have turned out to be a criminal and whatnot, or have a criminal record. As a juvenile – as a teenager, I had over 50 charges, just bad stuff; stealing cars and breaking into people’s houses and stuff like that. I think leaving my home town, my country town where I came from, and my ancestors come from, I think that was a – I don’t – back then I didn’t see it, but now I think it plays a big part in who I am, because in a small town everyone knows everyone. You can’t – you don’t get away with anything. ... Living in the city is – the city’s the fast life. It is full on. Then you see your mates doing cool things like going out and having fun, you think it’s cool to be cool. It’s cool to smoke cigarettes, all that kind of stuff. Before that – before smoking cigarettes or marijuana, I was a good kid. We used to do lots of good things. We used to run, athletics and play football. It just all deteriorated, I guess, at a fast rate to my own undoing. My family tried to help me and I didn’t listen. (Participant #3, aged 28).

This young man had been mainly raised by his Uncle and Aunty, because his father was often drunk when he was a child. The father’s childhood also came with much grief and trauma from deaths in the family and family separation as a result of being placed in the ‘care’ of Child Safety. The young man’s family had moved to the city when his Uncle died.

The majority of the men (77%) talked about their children and not being able to see them. Children were important either as motivators for change or as triggers generating feelings of guilt, grief and shame. One mentioned he had never met his daughter (who was 17 years of age); others had lost contact with children whose mothers no longer contacted them in prison; and some felt ashamed about the impact their criminogenic behaviour had had on their children, with one saying ‘I don’t want them to know that I’m in here, see. It’s not a place to bring kids’ (Participant #20, aged 45).
4.2 Spreading the Word About the Dreaming Inside Program

There were three ways that the men found out about the Dreaming Inside program. One was through word of mouth from other men who had participated in the program. Another was from Aboriginal delegates in various pods. A third was through Gerome Brodin, the Cultural Advisor and Cultural Centre Manager at JCC. In addition to hearing or being told about the program, some of the men had read previous volumes of the published work:

Yeah, he told me about two days before this. He gave me a book, Volume 5. I’ve read about it and it had the boys, a couple of the boys’ names in it. Then so I was like, yeah, yeah, I’m going to read their stories. I’ve read it and it shocked me. It touched my heart, part of my heart. I was like well, I’d like to write a story. (Participant #4, aged 21)

Information was obtained from the JCC library regarding how many times copies of the Dreaming Inside anthologies had been borrowed by prisoners up to 28 May 2018, which is presented in Table 4.1. The library service at the JCC is available to all offenders regardless of their classification. At the time of the evaluation JCC housed a maximum of 853 prisoners at any one time and it was running near capacity most weeks. The total number of library resources loaned out in 2017 was 8435 items. At the end of May 2018, 19 copies of the Dreaming Inside volumes were missing (no further information was provided regarding which volumes were missing and what length of time they had been missing). The JCC librarian noted that the prisoners appeared to misappropriate the volumes rather than loan and return them, which affected the statistics presented below. This may reflect the fact that the prisoners, whether they were contributors or not, valued the anthologies and found them sufficiently interesting and useful to warrant retention and risking disciplinary sanctions. As can be seen in Table 4.1, borrowing rates have continued to steadily increase over time.
Table 4.1: Library Borrowing Rates of Dreaming Inside Volumes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Further Information</th>
<th>2014 Loans</th>
<th>2015 Loans</th>
<th>2016 Loans</th>
<th>2017 Loans</th>
<th>2018 Loans (up to 28 May)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 new copies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 copies available; 2 are new with no circulation history</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 new copies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 copy with a circulation of 4 loans; one was 540 day overdue and was recently returned</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4 new copies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 copies recently created as a resource, which had not yet been loaned.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of contributors and contributions has increased over the eight years the Dreaming Inside program has been running, as depicted in Table 4.2. As mentioned in the process evaluation report (Marchetti 2018), the fact that the number of participants in the program and contributions have increased, is evidence that the program is having an impact on the men. The facilitators of the program published Volume 5 as an anniversary edition and included poems and stories from previous editions (those repeat contributions have not been reported in the figures for Volume 5 in Table 4.2). Although there was a slight drop in contributions for Volume 6, the number of contributions per author remained relatively the same.

Table 4.2: Number of Contributions per Volume

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Number of Contributors</th>
<th>Range of Number of Contributions per Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1-5 (2 men submitted at least 3 contributions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1-8 (3 men submitted at least 3 contributions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1-11 (11 men submitted at least 3 contributions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1-9 (14 men submitted at least 3 contributions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1-14 (17 men submitted at least 3 contributions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1-17 (16 men submitted at least 3 contributions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Not available at the time of completing the report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the men had participated in the Dreaming Inside program, most encouraged other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners to do the program.
The main motivation for attending the program was to connect with Culture. The men knew it was a program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners and that Elders facilitated its delivery:

I didn’t write much. I think it was more because he said that there was Elders here, and I have some respect for my Elders, so this is – they’ve made what we have today, so I’ve got a lot of respect for them. You probably notice I sit with all the old guys here, even if they’re inmates or if they’re not inmates. I still have a lot of respect for Elders. (Participant #13, aged 38).

A program that specifically targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners and that was run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people captured their interest, because according to the men there were very few programs like that in the prison system in New South Wales.

Three other popular reasons why the men decided to participate in the program were to express themselves and tell their story, to socialise with their ‘brothers’, and to break up the day and engage in an activity that distracted them from the mundaneness of prison life. Many mentioned the fact that in prison they are silenced, not only because they are incarcerated, but also because they cannot speak freely to other prisoners about their thoughts and feelings. This is explored further in the following section, but for now, it is important to note that seven of the men wanted to attend the program because they wanted to document and convey their feelings or stories. Being able to interact with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners who were in different pods and who they could not see on a regular basis was another, equally important reason why the men attended. Having said that, one of the men said that some prisoners did not attend because ‘some people just don’t get on with other people. It’s nothing to do with the program; not a thing to do with the program. If you’ve got someone – it’s the politics of the jail’ (Participant #1, aged in his 50s). Prison life can be boring if a prisoner chooses not to engage, or because of their classification, cannot participate in programs or other activities. Having outsiders deliver a program that is of interest, influenced many of the men to attend. It broke up their day, with one participant saying that he was looking forward to the last two days of the workshop after having attended the first day. Another participant noted that he was ‘mostly surprised that so many … [came] today, because they like to sit around and just do nothing all day’ (Participant #20, aged 45).
Other factors that motivated the men to attend were, like some of the reasons mentioned above, linked to what the men perceived to be the benefits of the program, which is discussed in more detail in the next section. These included the fact that they felt they should attend out of respect, because someone was giving up their time to help them. They were surprised someone cared, with one participant saying, ‘I thought it was beautiful that someone had actually taken the time out to put Indigenous inmates’ stories in a book. That meant a lot. Anything to do with that, I’m willing to help’ (Participant #15, aged 35). Being published in a book, which gives them a voice and also protects copyright associated with songs they submitted as poems was a reason mentioned by some of the men. Those who already wrote songs or stories were immediately interested in engaging in an activity, which cultivated their talents.

4.3 Benefits of the Dreaming Inside Program

All of the men had positive things to say about the Dreaming Inside program. Most of the men did not normally write because they said they were not good at it, indicating that they lacked the confidence to do so. Seven men said they had written songs or rap music before the program; three said that they wrote letters to their children or other family members even prior to doing the program; and two said they had been artists rather than writers. The program was certainly the impetus for many of the men to put pen to paper for the first time in a very long time. Without the program, it is unlikely most of the men would have engaged in writing. Some spoke of the shame of writing, because of their lack of confidence or because they were afraid of being ridiculed. Only one of the seven men who had been released since having first participated in the program, said that he continued to write while he was released. He had always been into writing rap music, which is what he continued to do while he was not in prison. It helped him ‘vent a bit of frustration’ (Participant #8, aged in his early 30s). The program did not, therefore, appear to change the behaviour of participants once released.

Hanley and McPherson’s (2019) analysis of the program feedback surveys found that ‘[v]alue in the program was expressed in five main themes: expression, stories, culture,
community and education’ (p. 13). The benefits expressed in this evaluation reflected similar themes. The main benefit identified by most (70%) of the men who were interviewed was that the program allowed them to tell their story. It was a way for them to be understood by others in the prison and by the wider community. They usually did not discuss their stories with the other men in prison and nor were they able to explain how they ended up where they did to the broader community, which made publishing their stories in the Dreaming Inside volumes important:

I was like well, I’d like to write a story. I’ve got a story to tell at a young age, which people would read on the long run and just to know how I felt and what I went through. ... I felt like I was opening my heart to someone, but it was to the page. Now I’ve got it on the page it’s out there. It’s more than opening my heart. People can read it, that I’ve put it down, so it’s good. (Participant #4, aged 20-21).

In essence, the men, who are normally voiceless and powerless both in and outside prison, wanted others to know who they were, why they did what they did and that they were ‘not that bad’ (Participant #13, aged 38). This suggests a desire to counter public assumptions and stereotypes of people in prison, as well as a desire to seek personal redemption, themes that have emerged in previous studies of prison writing programs (Jacobi 2011). One of the men posited that the ‘Prime Minister might pick it up one day and that’s just a little influence, isn’t it’ (Participant #6, aged 44), suggesting there is a degree of political activism at the heart of some of the contributions. Indeed, one of the men thought that it might combat racism:

It’s [the stories] not something to be ashamed of. Who’s to say that this book’s not going to be handed down through the generations to say well, this is what we’ve come from. It’ll help with a bit of racism if you look at it like that, because they actually see a different side of us than just, ‘oh, he’s a blackfella sitting on the corner drinking, fighting and going to jail’. (Participant #15, aged 35)

Not only did the men want to change public perceptions about who they were as individuals and as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, they also wanted to influence young people not to follow in their footsteps. Six of the men hoped that young people might read their stories and decide to live differently, away from drugs and gangs, in order to stay out of prison.
Many men revealed that they would not tell other prisoners their stories or disclose how they might be feeling, because it is not what males did and information of that type could always be used against them in prison. This meant that feelings and thoughts were often left unspoken and unresolved. By writing poems or stories, 63% of the men said that it helped them to express and process feelings that they would otherwise have to suppress. For example, one of the men, who said he was not confident writing, explained the impact of the program in the following way:

It was a nice friendly shock I suppose. It was a lot of fear probably, at least at the start, of having to write down emotions and feelings, but it helped. I’ve had a hard time at the moment with my mum and that. That’s what I wrote about. She almost passed away after I got sentenced. Had a brain aneurysm and had to have emergency surgery. That just helped get – not as much as I want to get off my chest, but at least a bit. (Participant #24, aged 24).

Towards the end of the interview, this participant said that he couldn’t discuss these feelings with the other prisoners, because he did not feel comfortable doing that. The men described writing about feelings as an ‘outlet’, ‘pressure valve release’, a way to vent frustration, ‘frustration release’, and as a way of getting ‘shit off [their] ... chest’. Writing about their feelings encouraged them to ‘reflect and see where [they stood]’ (Participant #19, aged 32), but two of the men said this did not necessarily make them feel less angry. Participant #19 was one of those two men. He thought that writing about something might result in placing a greater focus on the topic, which might lead to more anger, particularly if the person is on drugs. Only one of the participants said that writing did not help him release feelings. Instead it frustrated and confused him, because he did not think that what he writes reflects what he really wants to say.

Engaging with the program improved wellbeing for 33% of the participants. The men talked about gaining feelings of self-worth, confidence, empowerment and belonging. The program also improved morale because they and others were proud of their achievements. One of the men said, ‘your mob coming down shows someone else cares, like you want to hear our voices’ (Participant #28, aged 42). Wellbeing was also connected to having something to do, with some of the men noting that it got them out of their pods and interacting with other ‘boys’ who they usually did not see. Interacting with people from the
‘outside’ was also important because it reminded them that ‘there is a life outside of being incarcerated’ and that for the men who had been in prison for a long time and who may therefore, be ‘paranoid’ or ‘anxious’ about being released, it helped them ‘assimilate’ (Participant #1, aged in his 50s). This participant mentioned that even doing the interview ‘is a process in helping [him]’ to ‘assimilate back into society’. One of the participants called the program ‘a meeting place’, aligning it with cultural support and engagement:

Well, interesting for me was, we were all meeting up, all the brothers in one spot. You could see cousins and that that you hadn’t seen for so long. It was alike a meeting place. We came up here because we were in different units and don’t get to see each other. Then after speaking to Elders, we sat down and wrote stories. After I explained some of my stories, they wanted to know more and through learning and sharing stories I was able to learn back off the Elders some more. (Participant #30, aged 37).

Cultural engagement also came from reading the stories of other contributors, because they related to their experiences as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people caught up in the justice system. Two of the men specifically mentioned that reading the poems and stories in some of the volumes made them realise how many people they knew in prison. One said he knew about 80% of the names, most from having spent time in jail, and thought ‘oh, that’s terrible’ (Participant #19, aged 32). He said he wished he didn’t know any of them, because of the way he had met them, and that he wished he ‘was just good sometimes’.

The process evaluation of the Dreaming Inside program, found that the stakeholders did not believe the program was aiming to teach literacy despite the educational aspects of the program. It was difficult to ‘improve literacy unless they could work with the men on a more regular basis’ (Marchetti 2018, p. 21). Nevertheless, five of the men interviewed for the outcome evaluation specifically attributed their improved writing skills and motivation to seek further literacy training to the Dreaming Inside program. The fact that the majority of the men normally did not engage in any form of writing, but yet were able to produce poems and stories that were published in the anthologies, demonstrates the educational value of the program, as articulated by the following participant:

It gives you, well obviously in learning how to write, put pen to paper, that helps a lot. It’s good that you’ve got other fellas there who are writers themselves. Aunty Barb and the other lads and that, that know what they’re doing, can come and sit with you
and help you write properly. Because we just write. We don’t know where full stops go and punctuation and stuff like that. We don’t know stuff. I mean, where to put a comma and that. We don’t know that, you know? So, we just keep writing. We don’t know paragraphs and that. So, it’s good to have them there. It gives you that bit of confidence that way. I think the more you do that course, the better you become at it. If you’re a long term, it helps a lot, because it can help in them ways. (Participant #21, aged 34).

Eleven offered some suggestions for improvements. Four suggested that it be run more often or that copies of the books be put into other prisons. One mentioned the way they were notified about the program needed to be more organised. This participant, as well as one of the other men, thought that the cultural aspect of the program should be expanded, by introducing things like dancing or a discussion about totems and tribes. One thought time should be spent on the oval, in the open space, which he connected to ‘a bit of a Country feel’ (Participant #23, aged 45), although another of the men thought it was better in the Cultural Centre than outside because it was cooler in temperature. Other suggested changes were providing sandwiches on the last day to be shared together, supplying paints or coloured pencils for those who wanted to contribute by drawing and involving more Elders as tutors. One of the men mentioned that he did not like the fact his poems were altered somewhat but he emphasised that it did not deter him from participating in the program.9 By contrast, another of the men expressed a preference that errors be corrected. The rest said there was nothing they would change, that ‘it’s run pretty good. They give you so much help the tutors. … They’re encouraging you know what I mean?’ (Participant #16, aged 25).

4.4 What the Men Wrote About

The Dreaming Inside anthologies provide us with insights about the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison. The poems and stories are not only

---

9 As noted in the process evaluation report (Marchetti 2018), the aims of the program are therapeutic rather than educative, which ‘supports an approach that encourages empowerment and retains authenticity, and discourages editing the contributions’ (Marchetti 2018, p. 29). Therefore, it is not the norm to change the contributions of the men. As mentioned in the process evaluation, alterations are usually only made if necessary.
about their time in prison. They are also about their childhood, their families and their hopes for the future. A detailed analysis of the anthologies is currently being undertaken (with Dr Debbie Bargallie) and will be published as a separate journal article. This section of the report focuses on what the men who were interviewed said they had written about. For some it was their first time in the program so they had not yet completed their poems or stories. As previously mentioned, there was a lot of fear at the start to be writing about feelings and also shame about not being able to spell. However, the men overcame these internal obstacles to express their thoughts and feelings about various topics. The facilitators do suggest topics for the men to write about during the workshops to stimulate ideas. In October 2018, the facilitators specifically nominated the NAIDOC theme for that year, ‘Because of Her We Can’, as a possible focus of the contributions.

Mostly, the men said they wrote about their families, upbringing, life in the ‘housos’ (housing commission) and missions, children and mothers. When discussing these topics, some wrote about stories they had been told by grandparents, some described their own life experiences, some focused on the grief of losing family members and not being able to attend funerals, and some focused on intergenerational trauma, with one of the men describing how his grandfather killing his grandmother had affected future generations in his family. Remorse was expressed about how they had hurt mothers, partners and children as a result of their offending behaviour.

Another theme the men said they wrote about was the discrimination Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had been, and still are, subjected to as a result of colonisation. There was recognition that discriminatory government policies and practices had impacted on their lives, with one participant noting that writing about discrimination had made him angry so he changed the topic. Another questioned the logic of assimilation policies, which created the Stolen Generations, policies which he viewed as continuing as a result of DOCS (the Department of Child Safety) taking children from their families. This participant, like many others, ‘grew up in DOCS’ and his father had been in the ‘Sisters of Mercy orphanage’, which he described as ‘a quarter-caste Aboriginal orphanage’ housing Stolen Generations children (Participant #30, aged 37). This man had only just started to learn about his
Aboriginal heritage and through the Dreaming Inside program had started to learn more about his Culture:

Now because of what I’ve learned, and what I’ve shared, I’ve got more of a focus on where I’m going and what I’m doing, to find out, so that when I find my daughter when I get out, I can share the stories but also show her with the research that I’ve gathered. If it wasn’t for all the writers’ group, I’d still be stuck in limbo and wouldn’t know which way I’m going. It’s put me on that course for the end and for a beginning for when I get out.

Other topics relating to politics also featured, with one of the men saying he had written about Donald Trump because he had seen him in the news.

Life inside prison was also a topic that was discussed in the poems and stories. Many did not elaborate, stating simply that they wrote about ‘life on the inside’ (Participant #25, aged 46), but some mentioned their feelings of missing family, having depression, their desire to influence young people through their stories about crime and prison, their appreciation of prison staff and their hard work, nothing changing in prison in terms of rehabilitation, being let down by friends not visiting, and how life on the outside appeared scary from the inside.

In talking about the topic of his contributions, one of the men reflected on the way his poems had changed over time. He said that ‘if you have a good look [at his poems] you can understand there’s a man who goes from being a struggler man in himself to a man who’s found confidence in himself’ (Participant #21, aged 34). His first contributions mainly focused on how dependent he was on drugs, and how he took things for granted and was likely to do that again. In later volumes his poems were more reflective and hopeful. He questions whether he is someone he now likes as a person. The most recent poem describes his fear of being released and being rejected by his family because of the pain he has caused them, but at the same time feeling hopeful because he is a changed man. He attributes this growth in maturity and changed attitudes to the Dreaming Inside program. Had he not written the initial poems and read them sometime later when they were published, he may never have questioned what he was doing with his life.
### 4.5 Cultural Engagement

Having Elders deliver and facilitate the program raised strong emotive responses about the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity, connection to Country and cultural engagement. Elders were ‘family. [T]hat’s one thing about Aboriginal Culture – it is we are all one family’ (Participant #1, aged in his 50s). Twenty-four out of the 30 men (80%) said that it was important Elders led and facilitated the program; their attendance hinged on this. Most said that without Elders the men who participated in the program would not have listened and behaved themselves, with one suggesting that a female Elder (an Aunty) creates even more respect amongst the men. He said:

> Because with Aunty you’re not going to carry on and be stupid around. You’re going to show her that little bit of respect. You’re not going to swear around her and carry on you know, where if it is a male, you can do what you want. So that helps keep the boys in line a little bit more and focused. (Participant #21, aged 34).

One of the 24 men thought that having an Elder facilitate the program was important because the men respected and listened to Elders, but it was age that created respect not their cultural identity. Of the remaining six men, one did not discuss whether having Elders or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people run the program was important for his participation, although he did refer to the ‘old Aunty and old Unk’ when saying the program was interesting (Participant #2, aged 46). Another attended because he was told that there was ‘an Aboriginal thing going on at the Culture Centre’ but not because it was run by Elders (Participant #17, aged 21). Four said that they would still have attended even if the program had been delivered by non-Indigenous people, but one of the four said he felt more comfortable because of the presence of the Elders and another said it would not have been the same if the program had been led by non-Indigenous people.

The presence of Elders made participation in the Dreaming Inside program take on an historical context, because the exercise of writing and discussing shared experiences made them reflect on either their own lived experiences or on intergenerational trauma caused by violent and discriminatory government policies and practices since colonisation. Knowing that the Elders had lived experiences of what they or their relatives had been through, engendered cultural connectivity and trust. Learning how to write poems, which often
revealed their inner-most thoughts and feelings and contained their life stories, needed to be taught by people who could understand and relate to what they were writing about, people who could create a culturally safe space. The men emphasised that they did not want to be trained in this art by people who had learned from textbooks and attained some sort of official qualification. They knew with Elders that ‘[i]t’s all from their heart ... . People respond to that more.’ (Participant #19, aged 32).

Cultural safety translated into respect and gratitude. Aunty Barb in particular was known to have travelled a long way to deliver the program to the men, and this added to the degree of trust the men had in the Elders: ‘It’s good to have Elders and it means, it’s really knowing they travelled a long way for it too. They come a long way, so that means a lot too, I know, a lot to us boys here.’ (Participant #28, aged 42). This level of effort was an indication of how much the Elders cared for them. As can be seen in the following quote, acts of kindness by people who they knew had experienced greater hardship than they had, generated feelings that usually did not surface:

Interviewer: Does the fact that it’s your Elders who are running the program made a difference to you?

Interviewee: Oh yeah, it does because you got to be a lot more respectful and it’s a lot more influence. It gives you a bigger perspective because they’ve been around a lot longer than we have. Learned a lot more than we have and probably had a harder life than we have. It’s only just now recently, that things are going a lot easier for us being Indigenous. So, having their perspective and their help, it’s a big one. It’s a big one. Something that yeah, makes me quite proud and emotional inside because they’re helping us. They’re taking their time out of their life to come to the jail and give us that time of the day where most people wouldn’t. So yeah, it’s a good thing. (Participant #24, aged 24)

Trust in the Elders and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander facilitators, went beyond trusting someone sufficiently to discuss and disclose sensitive information. It included trusting the facilitators to not misuse or profit from the contributions:
Interviewee: It’s obviously a lot easier run by Aboriginal people. But if it was run by an officer or a school teacher or something like that, it wouldn’t be the same.

Interviewer: Why is that? Can you just explain a little bit more?

Interviewee: Well, when say they white fellas didn’t relate. Blackfella is funny. He looks at them … you’re going to think ‘oh these white fellas, they’re trying to make money or something’, you know. It’s another blackfella trying to help another brother you know. That’s just how you are. It’s just the way people have been brought up. (Participant #21, aged 34)

Distrust of non-Indigenous people, particularly authority figures or people associated with government departments and agencies, runs deep within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander psyche because of the ongoing consequences of colonisation (Korff 2019).

4.6 Importance of Being Published

Being published was considered important not only because it is the basis by which the poems and stories could be disseminated, but because it gave the men a sense of pride to have achieved something they would have never imagined was possible:

Interviewer: How does it make you feel to know that your work has now been published? ...

Interviewee: It’s a good feeling. Yeah. I was excited to come and see what it was like.

Interviewer: Why is it a good feeling? Is it ‘my stuff is now published’?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, because it was from me. I’ve never been in a book before. (Participant #11, aged 21)

Twenty-six out of the 30 men (87%) viewed having their contributions published in a book as an integral component of the program, using adjectives such as ‘good’, ‘great’, ‘excellent’, ‘unreal’, ‘cool’, ‘grouse’. The men described reactions from family members and children when they read the books and saw the poems and stories:

Interviewee: The first one that I done I sent home to show the wife and kids that dad’s not just in jail doing nothing, he’s having a go, you know. I send paintings home every couple of weeks, but actually having stuff written
in a published book make it real for them. They think it’s great. My daughter took it to show and tell for a couple of days in a row so she was pretty proud of me.

Interviewer: Did she? How old is she?

Interviewee: She’s 12 in November. It was last year. I sent it home and she was really proud. That’s good.

Interviewer: Fantastic. That must make you feel good?

Interviewee: Yeah, it’s good. She’s taken a few paintings and that, and everyone’s gone, ‘oh that’s pretty, that’s nice’, but to actually show a teacher that he’s in a book. It meant a lot, you know. (Participant #15, aged 35)

Similarly, another described the reaction of his mother:

Interviewee: When I got back in June this year, I went to the library and I looked for Volume 4 and then I read it. Yeah, it made me real proud.

Interviewer: Did you? To see your work published?

Interviewee: Yeah, and see it in there, actually in the book, you know? Because being in 2015 ‘til now was a long time and when I come back, I just looked for that book. Then I went to the library and, yeah, just seeing it, I forgot what I wrote. But when I seen it, I just thought ‘oh, yeah, that means a lot’. So I asked her for a photocopy and I sent it home to mum and my two boys.

Interviewer: Wow. Yeah?

Interviewee: I was really happy with it.

Interviewer: Did you get a response from your mum?

Interviewee: Yeah, mum was asking, ‘who wrote that’. I said ‘I did’. She said ‘oh, did you?’ She was, yeah, really happy. I could hear it in her voice. She was really proud. (Participant #28, aged 42)

The men felt a strong sense of achievement from having been published, which was in stark contrast to their controlled and invisible life in prison. For example, one participant said, ‘In here you’ve got nothing really. Just to know that you’ve got a story that’s published in a book, it makes you feel that you’ve done something I guess. It’s a way for you to be heard of, spoke about. I don’t know’ (Participant #18, aged 27). Another made it clear that in prison ‘it’s a
cold world’ where they ‘don’t get much praise. So, to get noticed, it’s actually alright’ (Participant #26, aged 27).

Publication generated conversations and positive dialogue in prison, something which the men explained usually did not happen. It connected people with their ‘mob’ through shared stories and experiences, generating a feeling of belonging. There was no indication that the sharing and exchange of stories was related to reinforcing negative behaviours or attitudes. Instead, the experience of being published was linked to a desire to influence others to choose a different, pro-social pathway.
5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The process evaluation of the Dreaming Inside program (Marchetti 2018) found that the aims identified by stakeholders involved in the delivery of the program and production of the anthologies, were therapeutic in nature. The stakeholders revealed that the program aimed to deliver a creative writing workshop to facilitate the free and voluntary expression of feelings and thoughts through poems and stories, which are published and made accessible to the broader community. It also aimed to improve self-esteem and facilitate cultural engagement and stronger connections to cultural identity. Underlying their aims and goals was a quest to encourage a ‘healing of the spirit’. Educating and rehabilitating the men, were not direct goals, although some stakeholders hoped that over time, the men would become more proficient in writing and reflective of their behaviour.

This evaluation tested these aims by questioning 30 men about their reasons for attending the Dreaming Inside program and about the benefits they had experienced in doing so. It was a qualitative assessment which did not consider the impact of the program on reoffending. This was deliberate, because a program such as Dreaming Inside will not, on its own, have a direct causal impact on reoffending. It is more likely, that such a program will affect the wellbeing of the participants and over time, together with other rehabilitative programs and support, it may facilitate changed attitudes and behaviour. In order to assess the program’s impact on reoffending, a much larger, longitudinal study would be required. Instead, this evaluation took a more in-depth and participatory approach in assessing how the program affected individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences in prison. This evaluation found that the Dreaming Inside program achieved all except two of the aims identified by the stakeholders in the process evaluation. The last two aims, 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 Islander literature more prominent in the public mindset, are quite ambitious and this evaluation was unable to conclusively affirm that they are being realised. There is some evidence that released prisoners may continue writing once released, but it appears that this is likely only if the person is engaged in writing songs or rap music. Generally, the men who had been released but were back in JCC re-engaging
with the Dreaming Inside program, were focused on other things during the time in which they had been released from prison. The books are being disseminated, particularly amongst family members, but this study did not assess whether the Dreaming Inside anthologies were in general encouraging the wider community to seek Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literature.

The interviews revealed that generally the men have had difficult childhoods with many having been institutionalised at a very young age. Hearing their stories contextualised their offending behaviour and highlighted the importance of Culture in helping them choose different pathways. Overall, the men had a great deal of affection, gratitude and respect for the Elders who delivered the program. They appreciated their time and effort in travelling long distances to engage with them and teach them about creative writing, and to publish their honest and profound poems and stories. The men were not used to this level of care and respect. They valued this rare opportunity to express their inner-most thoughts and feelings, despite most not being confident with their writing capacity and not often engaging in conversations about how they felt about certain experiences. Other artistic endeavours were discussed, such as song writing, drawing and painting as alternatives to creative writing, but in prison they were not often nurtured through prison programs, particularly not culturally focused programs. The culturally safe environment, created by the presence of Elders and other Aboriginal tutors, motivated the men to attend the program and encouraged them to open up in ways they normally wouldn’t. Writing poems and stories helped the men to process and release feelings they would have otherwise kept bottled up inside.

The program gave the men something to do in an otherwise mundane and highly regulated life, facilitating their ability to meet up with ‘brothers’ in other sections of the prison. The effect of publishing the poems and stories added another dimension to the benefits generated by the program. Publication not only gave the men a sense of security that their work would not be copied, it also gave them a sense of purpose because they viewed it as an opportunity to change lives. Influencing young people to choose a different pathway or changing stereotypical views about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners and communities were strong motivators for engaging in the program, knowing their contributions would be disseminated beyond the walls of the prison. The need for
redemption and desire to make a positive contribution should be explored further to
determine whether, if nurtured, such goals could be utilised to encourage changed attitudes
and behaviour. A recommendation based on this finding is to encourage the facilitators to
explore the possibility of engaging men who have been released and who had made
substantial contributions to the Dreaming Inside program, as tutors and as peer champions.
Not only would this accord and assist with the cultural safety aspects of the program, it may
also support and encourage the men who have been released to maintain a pro-social
lifestyle. Of course, implementing this recommendation is dependent on being able to locate
former participants of the program once they have been released, which as this evaluation
has demonstrated, is not always easy. The men also took pride in seeing their contributions
published in a book and being able to show others their achievement. Many recognised that
had it not been for the program, they would never have experienced such an outcome.

Eleven men suggested changes, eight of whom had attended the program more than
once. Many of the suggested changes, such as the provision of sandwiches, coloured pencils
and paints or the location of the workshops are at the behest of prison management. Other
suggested changes, such as including other cultural activities (for example, dance or
discussions about totems and tribes) would be difficult for the facilitators to implement
because of time constraints. The workshops usually go for one and a half to two hours, but it
usually takes about 20-30 minutes for the men to settle in to each session, leaving limited
time for actual writing. Trying to incorporate further activities into such short timeframes
would be challenging and possibly disruptive.

Further funding and finding other dedicated Elders and tutors to deliver the program
would be needed to incorporate suggestions to expand the reach of the program, such as
implementing it in other prisons or increasing the number of times the program is delivered
at JCC. Expansion to other prisons would also need prison management approval and support
at those other prisons. The only two suggestions that may be easily within the control of the
facilitators to implement are to provide copies of the books to other prison libraries and to
offer the program to all prisoners, not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners. This
outcome evaluation would recommend implementing the first of these two suggestions as a
relatively easy way of expanding the reach of the program. Reading the books can help
improve prisoner wellbeing and cultural engagement, and encourage others to start using poetry as a form of expression. Copies of the books could be provided in photocopied format, which is how they are kept at the JCC prison library, to minimise cost. This outcome evaluation does not recommend offering the program to all prisoners, because this would destroy the central component of the program. The program works so well because it is a grassroots program, initiated and facilitated by Elders for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners, making it culturally relevant and safe. Bringing other prisoners into the mix would break the cultural bond and would potentially dilute the power of the program to influence and transform any prisoners.

Further research is required to more fully understand the effects of culturally focused arts-based prison programs on the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners. As mentioned earlier, a detailed thematic analysis of the anthologies is currently underway. Part of that research will also consider changes in the contributions over time for men who have participated in the program more than once. The analysis will consider how topics that are discussed in the poems or stories have changed and whether there has been an improvement in the writing style and grammar. These matters will add further insights into whether the process of reflective writing engenders changed attitudes and whether the program does have an educative function. We do not know much about culturally focused arts-based prison programs, since most research and evaluations of prison programs tend to focus on conventional rehabilitation programs addressing criminogenic risk factors. However, as this research has found, culturally focused arts-based prison programs have a lot to offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners, and it is time that we start to think about new and innovative ways to empower and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison to change.
6.0 References


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


Marchetti, E 2018, Evaluation of Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre poetry writing program, Part 1 - Process evaluation, Griffith University, Brisbane.

Martin, K, Wood, L, Tasker, J & Coletsis, C 2014, The Impact of Holyoake’s DRUMBEAT Program on Prisoner Wellbeing in Western Australian Prisons, The University of Western Australia, Crawley, WA.


Tuhiwai Smith, L 1999, Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, Otago University Press, Dunedin.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR DREAMING INSIDE PROGRAM INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

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 your experience of the Dreaming Inside program at the Junee Correction Centre. The Dreaming Inside program publishes the creative writing work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates at Junee Correctional Centre. This research is looking at:

1. How does the Dreaming Inside program impact on your emotional wellbeing and behaviour?
2. Does participating in a cultural creative writing program, help you to express your feelings and thoughts, and motivate you to continue using art or writing as a way to deal with emotional trauma?

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

OTHER INVESTIGATOR
Debbie Bargallie
Griffith Law School
Faculty of Arts, Education and Law
Griffith University
(07) 37355307
d.bargallie@griffith.edu.au

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO
If you choose to participate, you will be asked to do a short (30 minute) face-to-face interview with Elena Marchetti. The interview may take place over the phone if a face-to-face interview cannot be done. The location of the interview can be decided between you and Elena. If you are currently in the Junee Correctional Centre, the interview will be done in a room in the Cultural Centre. If you are no longer in Junee Correctional Centre and the interview is face-to-face, the interview will be done somewhere near where you live. You can have a support person present if you want. If you want a support person but don’t have any, then just ask Elena and she may be able to attend with an Elder or Community Representative who can be a support person for you.
In these interviews, we will discuss what you thought of the Dreaming Inside program and whether it has helped you to deal with negative feelings and helped you to change your behaviour.

The interview will be a casual chat and you can stop the interview at any time. The interview will be audio recorded unless you tell Elena that you do not want it recorded. The audio recordings will be transcribed by a transcriber and once that is done the recording will be deleted. Before any information from the research is published, your name and details will be removed. You will remain anonymous (which means no one will know it was you who was interviewed).

POSSIBLE RISKS
This interview will take about 30 minutes of your time, which could be inconvenient. We may also talk about things that you find it hard or difficult to talk about, such as some of the topics you have written about. This may make you feel sad or angry.

If you feel bad at any time during the interview, you can stop doing it. If you feel the need to talk to someone after the interview, because you feel sad or angry or like you could hurt yourself, please let Elena know. If the interview is done in the Junee Correctional Centre you can speak to a chaplain, psychologist or counsellor. If you are no longer at the Junee Correctional Centre, you can contact Lifeline by phoning or going on to their website:

Phone: 13 11 14
Website: https://www.lifeline.org.au/Get-Help/

Remember – you can stop being part of the interview at any time. This will not cause any problems with the researcher (Elena) or with the Junee Correctional Centre or with Griffith University. You have the right to stop at any time.

FUNDING OF THE RESEARCH AND WHO IT MAY HELP
This research is funded by a research grant from the Australian Research Council. It is the first time that the Dreaming Inside program is being evaluated and it is hoped that by interviewing people like you, we will learn if it benefits you. This information will help improve the program and help to keep it running.

The research will be published in a report for the Junee Correctional Centre (GEO Group Australia Pty Ltd), the Black Wallaby Writers team, the South Coast Writers Centre, and Corrective Services, NSW. Findings will also be published in academic journals. Confidentiality is assured and none of the participants will be identified in any part of the research.

CAUTION – MANDATORY REPORTING
Be aware that Elena may be forced to tell information to the Police or Family and Community Services (FACS) if you tell her details of any criminal offence that you have not been charged or convicted for before. If Elena thinks you might hurt another person or if you tell her that you ARE going to hurt another person or yourself, she may also have to tell the Police or FACS. Elena will also have to tell FACS if she think any children are in danger.
If you really need advice about offences for which you have not been arrested, charged or convicted you are better off talking to the Aboriginal Legal Service and only do it in general terms (because they also need to report to the Police or FACS if a person or children are in danger). Their contact details are:

Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT Limited
Phone: 1800 765 767 or 02 8303 6600
Website: http://www.alsnswact.org.au/

COMPLAINTS
This study has been reviewed and approved by Corrective Services NSW Ethics Committee. It has also been reviewed and approved 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 being a part of this study.

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, INNOVENCIES 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 post-colonial 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.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR DREAMING INSIDE PROGRAM WRITTEN SUBMISSION PARTICIPANTS

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 your experience of the Dreaming Inside program at the Junee Correction Centre. The Dreaming Inside program publishes the creative writing work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates at Junee Correctional Centre. This research is looking at:

1. How does the Dreaming Inside program impact on your emotional wellbeing and behaviour?
2. Does participating in a cultural creative writing program, help you to express your feelings and thoughts, and motivate you to continue using art or writing as a way to deal with emotional trauma?

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

OTHER INVESTIGATOR
Debbie Bargallie
Griffith Law School
Faculty of Arts, Education and Law
Griffith University
(07) 37355307
d.bargallie@griffith.edu.au

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO
If you choose to participate, you will be asked to write your thoughts about your experience with the program on the South Coast Writers Centre paper that is provided. You can do this in your spare time. The piece of paper will contain some questions about what you thought of the Dreaming Inside program and whether the Dreaming Inside program has helped you to deal with negative feelings and helped you to change your behaviour. You will also be given an envelope in which to put your submission. What you write will remain anonymous (which means that you do not need to write your name on the submission and that when the
research findings are published your answers to the questions on the paper will not be published under your name).

If you are still at the Junee Correctional Centre the envelope can be put in a box in the Cultural Centre, which has ‘Dreaming Inside Program Submissions’ on it. The box will be there for a week after the Dreaming Inside program ends. If you have been released from prison, the envelope which will be provided to you will be a stamped self-addressed envelope for you to use to return the written submission.

It is important for you to realise that the written submission will not be published on its own, in the same way that the writings produced from the Dreaming Inside program are published. The written submission will be used for the purposes of research.

POSSIBLE RISKS
Writing the submission could take about 30 minutes of your time, which could be inconvenient. You may also find it hard or difficult to write about how the Dreaming Inside program has helped you express your feelings about the topics you wrote about in the program. This may make you feel sad or angry.

If you feel bad at any time while you are writing the submission, you can stop doing it. If you feel the need to talk to someone and you are at the Junee Correctional Centre please tell a staff member. They can help you speak to a chaplain, psychologist or counsellor. If you are no longer at the Junee Correctional Centre, you can contact Lifeline by phoning or going on to their website:
Phone: 13 11 14
Website: https://www.lifeline.org.au/Get-Help/

Remember – you can stop writing at any time. This will not cause any problems with the researcher (Elena) or with the Junee Correctional Centre or with Griffith University. You have the right to stop at any time.

FUNDING OF THE RESEARCH AND WHO IT MAY HELP
This research is funded by a research grant from the Australian Research Council. It is the first time that the Dreaming Inside program is being evaluated and it is hoped that by learning about your experiences, we will learn if the Dreaming Inside program benefits you. This information will help improve the program and help to keep it running.

The research will be published in a report for the Junee Correctional Centre (GEO Group Australia Pty Ltd), the Black Wallaby Writers team, the South Coast Writers Centre, and Corrective Services, NSW. Findings will also be published in academic journals. Confidentiality is assured and none of the participants will be identified in any part of the research.

CAUTION – MANDATORY REPORTING
Be aware that Elena may be forced to tell information to the Police or Family and Community Services (FACS) if you write about details of any criminal offence that you have not been charged or convicted for before. If Elena thinks you might hurt another person or if you write
that you ARE going to hurt another person or yourself, she may also have to tell the Police or FACS. Elena will also have to tell FACS if she think any children are in danger.

If you really need advice about offences for which you have not been arrested, charged or convicted you are better off talking to the Aboriginal Legal Service and only do it in general terms (because they also need to report to the Police or FACS if a person or children are in danger). Their contact details are:

Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT Limited  
Phone: 1800 765 767 or 02 8303 6600  
Website: [http://www.alsnswact.org.au/](http://www.alsnswact.org.au/)

COMPLAINTS  
This study has been reviewed and approved by Corrective Services NSW Ethics Committee. It has also been reviewed and approved 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 being a part of this study.