



2016 highlights

children and

prison program

Pioneers in Western NSW

VFFF's investment in the Children and Prison Program (CAPP) has increased substantially this year.

We are encouraged by the momentum building for the big changes required to reduce the unacceptable incarceration rates of Aboriginal children in NSW and across the country. With our partner, Dusseldorp Forum, we are especially inspired by the pioneering hard yakka of these communities in Western NSW.

BOURKE

Half of VFFF's investment in the CAPP this year was made across three initiatives in Bourke - that all emanate from the community's agenda to reduce incarceration of young people through a justice reinvestment approach. The Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project has kicked up a gear, building on two years of successful ground work - with the community, young people, Council, schools, Police, judiciary, various Government and other agencies.

The community's plan to reduce incarceration among Bourke's young people has four focus areas; Early childhood, 8-18 year olds, the Role of Men and Service Delivery Reform. The implementation phase, coordinated by the Maranguka team, aims to move resources into the community's strategies in each of these focus areas.

Obtaining a licence seems straightforward but many Aboriginal people face big barriers; not having ID, owing fines, low literacy, lack of driving supervision and feeling intimidated. Low rates of licencing is especially problematic in remote places where there is no public transport.



Bourke High School, Eternity Aid support program

Peter Mackay and
Sammi Jo,
Maranguka Driving
Licensing Initiative



Maranguka consultations identified driver licensing as one of three 'circuit-breakers' – a practical thing that could be done to reduce juvenile incarceration in Bourke. The Maranguka Driving Licensing Initiative, a partnership between Birrang, Maranguka and The George Institute will deliver a comprehensive driver licensing support program over the next three years, to reduce licence and driving offences and improve employment prospects.

Operating since 2005, Eternity Aid came from an invitation by a young detainee to Lee Bromley, Chaplain at Reiby Juvenile Justice Centre 'to come to Bourke and see how I can live there'. Described as 'quietly getting on with it', Eternity Aid's work has developed over 10 years in response to community need. Their voluntary team brings expertise not otherwise available in Bourke – speech & occupational therapy, physio, psychology, mental health, art and play therapy. They work where children and families are comfortable – at school, pre-school and on the mission – and train local workers so they can better support young people and families.

DUBBO

Sharon Tomas, Coordinator of the Children and Prison Program in Dubbo explains what it's all about.

What is CAPP Dubbo?

The Children and Prison Program (CAPP) is a collaboration between Dusseldorp Forum, VFFF and a group of people trusted in Dubbo to work with young people. High rates of youth recidivism as well as many thriving young Aboriginal people, brought VFFF and DF to Dubbo in 2015 to find out what locals thought could be done to change the path of children on track for juvenile incarceration. What they heard was that better service coordination could improve the outcomes for young people getting into trouble – and I couldn't agree more!

What difference is it making so far?

By bringing together many different people who work with young Aboriginal people at risk or already offending – Police, education, NGOs, legal and other services – there's a much better understanding of what everyone does and we can now reinforce each other's work. Every month, we are encountering ways to tighten the support net in Dubbo so less young people fall through. The Group is working on better bail outcomes for young people, activities for young men at high risk times and assisting young people to get a licence. We are also working with the NSW Children's Court to establish a Youth Koori Court in Dubbo.



What do you hope it will achieve?

"I hope we can put the pressures of our own systems aside to put our young people first. I hope that the learning and trust we are building up as a group emboldens us to take brave action to keep young people out of the justice system and in our community."

Sharon Tomas, Coordinator of the Children and Prison Program