

## Maranguka

### 1. In evidence to the Committee, Bourke Shire Council said:

*A potential solution for young offenders is a diversionary centre for the youth of Bourke, built on country. This facility would allow magistrates an option other than juvenile detention centres.*

#### **Would you support such a facility, and are there any existing facilities or programs elsewhere that you think are a good example of this type of diversionary centre?**

I fully support the development of alternative options to incarceration for young offenders. Instead of transporting youth to detention centres located hundreds of kilometres away, addressing these issues through locally-based, community-driven solutions can provide significant social and economic benefits. By managing these matters on country, we can leverage local strengths, cultural connections, and a sense of belonging to create more positive outcomes for youth.

If establishing a diversionary centre on country aligns with these principles, I would be in favour of such a project. However, my support would be contingent on careful consideration of how the facility would be administered. Ensuring the success of this initiative would require substantial investment in upskilling community members and attracting qualified professionals to guarantee the centre is adequately staffed and equipped to meet the needs of the youth it serves.

A promising example of this approach is the proposed Kunpu-Gunya project, which seeks to address the underlying causes of youth disengagement and offending, rather than waiting for issues to escalate. By providing comprehensive, culturally-informed support, Kunpu-Gunya emphasizes early intervention and community integration, offering youth a pathway to healing, education, and personal development. This proactive model could serve as a blueprint for similar diversionary initiatives on country.

### 2. With regard to the Kunpu-Gunya accommodation program:

#### a) Is it currently operating and, if not, what needs to happen to progress this initiative?

The Kunpu-Gunya accommodation program is not yet operational. The proposal outlines plan for developing a culturally appropriate youth accommodation facility that will provide crisis support and act as an alternative to detention, remand, or out-of-home care. The program's establishment requires several steps, including:

- **Property Acquisition:** A suitable property outside Bourke must be acquired, which is to be facilitated through partnerships with Maranguka Ltd.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Approval processes and construction phases are necessary to develop the facility on the acquired property. The envisaged timeline for this process is approximately two years, contingent on securing the appropriate approvals and completing construction.

- **Establishment of Partnerships:** Ongoing collaboration with key stakeholders, including Just Reinvest NSW, the Dusseldorp Foundation, and local education providers, is essential. These partnerships will support the integration of services and the program's operational readiness.
- **Staffing and Training:** Recruiting a core team of qualified staff who can provide 24/7 support and implement the program's cultural, educational, and health-focused interventions is crucial.

**b) How would the program benefit the community in Bourke?**

The Kunpu-Gunya program would offer significant benefits to the Bourke community by:

- **Reducing Youth Homelessness and Crime:** By providing safe, supported accommodation for at-risk First Nations youth, the program aims to decrease homelessness and reduce youth interactions with the criminal justice system. This will serve as a diversionary measure, helping young people avoid detention or out-of-home care.
- **Promoting Social Integration and Safety:** The program is designed to encourage positive social participation and change the community's perception of disengaged youth. By fostering a sense of belonging and purpose, it can promote community safety, social harmony, and reduced stigmatisation.
- **Cultural and Educational Development:** The program integrates cultural support and educational activities, including On-Country experiences and farm enterprise projects. These initiatives will help youth develop skills, independence, and resilience while connecting them to their cultural roots.
- **Supporting Long-term Well-being:** Through wrap-around services, including education, rehabilitation, and psychological support, the program will empower young participants to achieve personal goals and develop better coping mechanisms, leading to long-term improvements in their well-being and future prospects.
- The Kunpu-Gunya program represents a community-driven approach to youth development, emphasizing cultural empowerment, social reintegration, and the reduction of youth crime and homelessness in Bourke.

**3 How can we improve collaboration between NGOs and different government agencies to ensure that youth at risk of offending receive the supports they need?**

To improve collaboration between NGOs and government agencies, particularly to support youth at risk of offending, it is essential to foster stronger partnerships at the community level. This can be achieved by:

- **Mandating Collaborative Frameworks:** Require government agencies to actively collaborate with NGOs by establishing formal partnerships at the community level. This would ensure that agencies work alongside local organizations to co-design and deliver programs that are responsive to the unique needs of the community.
- **Creating Shared Funding and Resource Models:** Develop funding structures that encourage joint initiatives between government agencies and NGOs, enabling them to pool resources, share expertise, and coordinate efforts more effectively. This approach would prevent duplication of services and ensure that youth receive comprehensive, integrated support.
- **Establishing Local Coordination Hubs:** Set up local coordination hubs where NGOs and government representatives can regularly meet, share information, and strategize on the best ways to address issues facing at-risk youth. These hubs would facilitate real-time collaboration, enabling a more proactive and holistic approach to youth support.
- **Regular Cross-Sector Strategy Meetings:** Schedule regular strategy meetings where key stakeholders from both sectors can discuss emerging issues, share insights, and adjust strategies as needed. Consistent communication will help align efforts, ensure accountability, and enable quicker response to crises.
- **Joint Training and Capacity Building:** Organize joint training sessions and workshops for NGO staff and government agency personnel. This would foster a mutual understanding of each sector's roles, capabilities, and challenges, as well as build trust and teamwork across organizations.
- **Integrated Case Management Systems:** Develop shared digital platforms that allow NGOs and government agencies to access and update information on youth at risk. This would ensure that all parties are aware of a young person's history, current needs, and the support they are receiving, leading to more coordinated and seamless service delivery.

#### 4 In your evidence you said:

*One of the biggest limitations, I believe, for us to do the work that we need to do or that is required in this community is the activity requirements of a grant.*

**Can you give examples of where this has impeded Maranguka's ability to deliver services the community needs? What changes would you like to see to the administration of government grants and reporting requirements?**

The rigid activity requirements tied to government grants often limit Maranguka's ability to address the community's most pressing needs. For example, specific grants may allocate funding solely for predetermined activities, which can restrict our ability to adapt programs as circumstances change or new needs emerge. This rigidity prevents us from responding effectively to dynamic community

issues, such as sudden increases in youth homelessness or the need for additional mental health support.

To improve the administration of government grants, I recommend the following changes:

- **Greater Flexibility in Grant Utilization:** Allow communities more freedom to allocate funds based on local priorities and emerging needs, rather than being confined to strict pre-defined activities. This would empower community organizations like Maranguka to adapt and innovate, ensuring the most effective use of resources.
- **Collaborative Approach Between Government Agencies and Communities:** Encourage government agencies to work directly with community organizations throughout the grant period to adjust outcomes as necessary. This partnership would foster a more responsive and tailored approach, ensuring that funding supports long-term, sustainable change.
- **Streamlined Reporting Requirements:** Simplify and reduce the administrative burden associated with grant reporting. This would allow community organizations to dedicate more time and resources to service delivery, rather than navigating complex and time-consuming paperwork.

Implementing these changes, government grants can be more effective in supporting holistic, community-driven solutions that are better aligned with local needs and priorities.

**5 Some stakeholders told us about the success of programs supporting Aboriginal young people, like the Clontarf Academy. In your opinion, what makes these programs successful?**

Programs like the Clontarf Academy benefit greatly from their integration within the education system. Clontarf is a well-resourced organization that has developed a strong, positive reputation. It leverages not only its extensive national network but also the support of the education system to provide comprehensive services to young men across various communities.

While Clontarf programs have a positive impact on the communities they serve, their approach tends to follow a one-size-fits-all model. For programs to be truly effective, it would be more beneficial for communities to have ownership over their design and implementation. This would allow them to tailor initiatives to meet local needs and align with specific cultural contexts.

In our community, for example, the high school is currently facilitating two separate programs for girls: "My Tidas My Sistas" and "Morning Stars." These initiatives offer targeted support for young women, focusing on empowerment and addressing their unique needs.

By fostering more locally-owned programs like "My Tidas My Sistas" and "Morning Stars," communities can develop initiatives that are not only responsive and culturally

appropriate but also adaptable to the specific circumstances and aspirations of their youth. Locally driven initiatives ensure greater relevance and sustainability, ultimately providing a stronger foundation for long-term positive outcomes.