

**Submission  
No 60**

**INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN CENTRAL WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Clontarf Foundation

**Date received:** 21/12/2011

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clontarf  
foundation

## **Submission by the Clontarf Foundation**

to the NSW Legislative Council

Standing Committee on State Development

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**Inquiry into economic and social development in central western NSW**

December 2011

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## Introduction

The Clontarf Foundation exists to improve the education, discipline, self-esteem, life skills and employment prospects of young Aboriginal men and by doing so, equip them to participate more meaningfully in society.

We use a unique, innovative and highly successful approach to target one of the most at-risk groups in contemporary Australian society: young Aboriginal men. The Foundation works in partnership with schools to attract and engage young Aboriginal men into education.

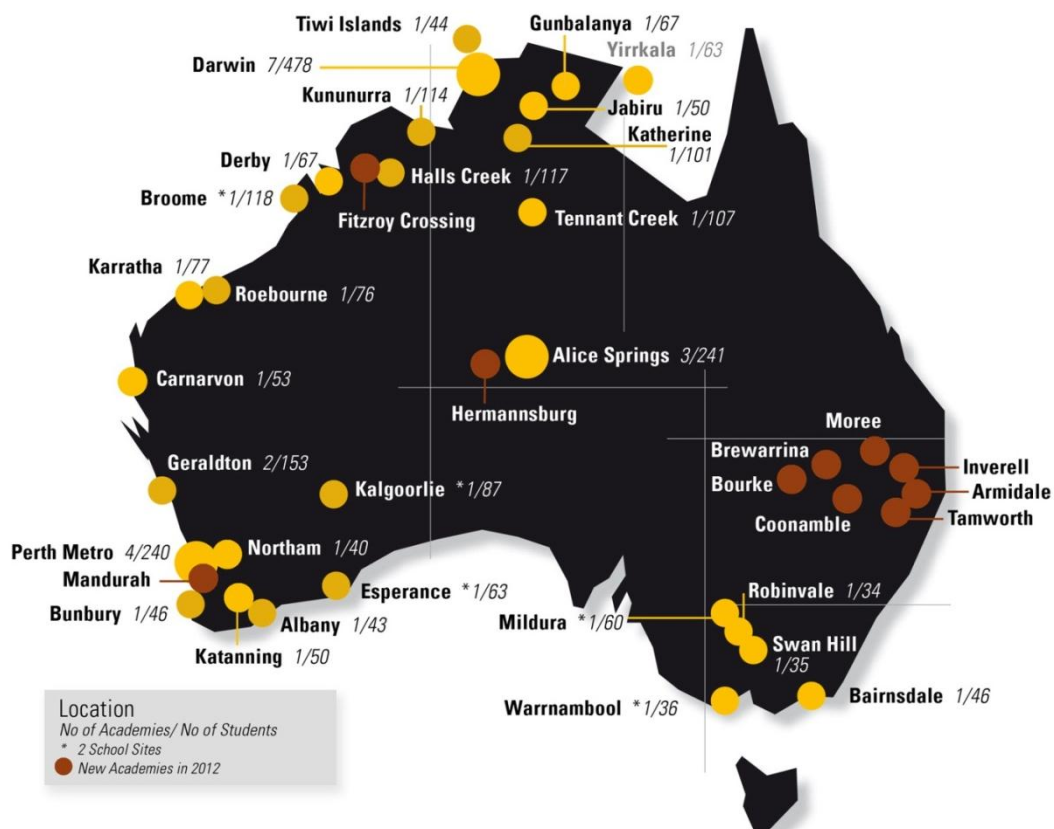
Using the existing passion that these boys have for football allows Clontarf to attract them to school and keep them coming. This is not a sporting program – it's about developing the values, skills and abilities that will assist the boys to transition into meaningful work and achieve better life outcomes.

At each school we form a Clontarf Academy where members must consistently endeavour to:

- Attend school regularly;
- Apply themselves to the study of appropriate courses; and
- Embrace the Academy's values and requirements for behaviour and self-discipline

Since establishing its first Academy in 2000, the Foundation continues to positively impact on the individuals, families and communities that engage with the program. Clontarf programs are helping to address issues relating to long-term disadvantage at the grass roots level and in doing so, are bringing about sustainable change.

The Clontarf Foundation is currently located in 45 schools in metropolitan, rural and remote locations across Victoria, the Northern Territory and Western Australia catering for over 2,500 participants. In 2012, it is proposed to commence up to seven Academies catering for around 300 students in the western region of NSW.



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Clontarf is a unique program and works because we;

- Partner with schools;
- Staff academies with full-time, locally-based, positive, healthy men;
- Take a holistic approach to supporting students to succeed at school;
- Develop positive attitudes amongst participants; and
- Assist with employment and provide on-going support.

The Foundation's success is based on the full-time nature of the program and the strength of the relationships between our staff and each student. Intensive, constant and consistent program delivery over a long-term period is the only way to achieve sustainable change.

## What we know

There is significant focus within government and our community, as well as ongoing media coverage of the challenges and disadvantage that Aboriginal people face in Australian society.

There is a clear link between unemployment and other aspects of disadvantage that reduce life-expectancy. Unemployment is linked to poor health, poor living standards, low self-esteem, imprisonment and substance misuse. Unemployment also has a generational effect, which means children who grow up in a household or community with high levels of unemployment are less likely to be employed when they are adults.

Teenaged Aboriginal males, compared with non-Aboriginal males

- Have a life expectancy that is 17 years less;
- Are 3.5 times more likely to die of injury;
- Are 22 times more likely to be imprisoned (nationally);
- Are more likely to leave school prematurely (as early as age 9)
- Have school truancy rates of about 45%;
- Exhibit high levels of drug, alcohol and substance abuse; and
- More frequently engage in anti-social behaviour which often leads to crime

Engagement in education is a critical factor in addressing these issues. The positive effect that education has on an individual's economic outcomes, particularly employment and income, has been well established.

The lower-than-average school participation and retention rates of Indigenous students across Australia remains a complex problem, limiting employment options and largely reinforcing economic disadvantage. The retention of students in education is seen as an important milestone in breaking the cycle of disadvantage. Additionally, research indicates that participation in sport contributes to physical and mental health, confidence and self-esteem and reduced crime, smoking and illicit drug use.

Results from the 2006 ABS Census show that Indigenous people aged 15 years and over with higher levels of schooling were more likely than those with lower levels of attainment to be in full-time employment. For Indigenous people aged 18–24 years, the rate of full-time employment amongst those who had completed Year 12 was four times as high as among those who had left school at Year 9 or below (37% compared with 9%), but is still dismally low.

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## What we believe

To break the cycle of disadvantage, participation in the mainstream economy is imperative. Whilst there is significant corporate and government commitment to employ Aboriginal people, it is not the shortage of jobs that is limiting participation in employment by Aboriginal people, it is the supply of suitably motivated and skilled applicants/potential employees. The current job creation programs around the country are not working at a level and rate that will create change.

For many of the participants in the Clontarf Foundation's network of Academies, there is multi-generational unemployment, a lack of positive role models, and yet a rapidly growing Aboriginal population.

As more and more young people follow the existing trend and continue to disengage from school without completing their education or developing the necessary skills needed to obtain and retain a job, the social and economic disadvantage will continue.

The Clontarf Foundation believes that failure to experience achievement when young, coupled with a position of under privilege can lead to alienation, anger and then to more serious consequences.

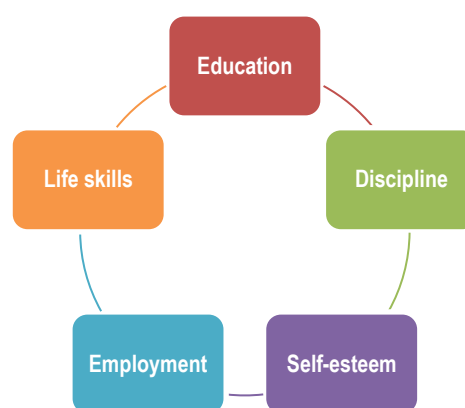
We urgently need to stem the flow of young people leaving school prematurely. To do this, we must make school a safe, welcoming and supportive environment that is attractive to young Indigenous people.

There is no short term or part-time solution that will break the cycle of disadvantage. It is the Foundation's belief that long-term sustainable change can only be achieved through intensive, holistic and full time programs that support young people throughout school to complete Year 12; create an expectation to get a job; help develop the values, skills and abilities to retain the job; and enjoy positive health and life outcomes.

## What we do and why it works

As a prelude to tackling some of the issues facing young Aboriginal men, participants in the Clontarf Foundation's programs are first provided with an opportunity and environment in which to succeed and hence to raise their self-esteem.

Our program provides an important school-engagement mechanism for many at-risk students who would otherwise not attend or have very low school attendance. The programs involve intensive daily mentoring and support of the youth through a critical time in their development toward adulthood, focusing on many of the determinants of health and mental health.



*Chart: Clontarf's five key focus areas*

Through the use of supportive relationships and environment, the students develop improved self-esteem and confidence which enables them to participate in education, employment and society in a positive way.

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## Method of operation

### Partner with schools

We work in partnership with the Education Department and schools. In each location we form a Clontarf Academy on the school property, which is open to any Aboriginal male enrolled at that school. The Academy room is the hub of the program and where our Clontarf staff are based.

The Clontarf Foundation works by using the existing passion that Aboriginal boys have for football to attract the boys to school and then through the diverse Academy program we are able to keep them coming through to the completion of Year 12. Whilst we are not aiming to develop good footballers, football is the ideal vehicle to use to obtain the desired outcomes especially when most of our boys and their parents are passionate, even fanatical, about the sport. It follows that in order to attract boys to our program and retain them, it is important that most of our teams enjoy an appropriate degree of success.

The school provides the academic education program and Clontarf provides the mechanism to engage the boys into the school environment. We work in partnership with teachers, parents and the community to ensure the education program provided by the school is meeting the needs of each student.

To remain in the Academy, members must consistently endeavour to:

- Attend school regularly;
- Apply themselves to the study of appropriate courses; and
- Embrace the Academy's values and requirements for behaviour and self-discipline

### Staff with strong men

The Clontarf Foundation employs highly functional, confident, family-oriented men who can capture the respect and trust of the participants. Many of our staff are former teachers, youth workers, community development workers, policemen and sportsmen.

All of our staff live in the community where they are working. This immersion means they understand the dynamics of the community and personal circumstances of each participant in the program.

Our staff are the most important investment that we make and we resource our Academies at a ratio of one staff member for every 20-25 students.

### Support and act as positive role models

Academy staff work full time at each school and provide continuous mentoring across five key Clontarf focus areas. We take a holistic approach to implementing full time programs which meet the needs of each individual student. The intensity, consistency, and constancy of delivery are integral to building strong relationships and trust with the boys.

**THINK POSITIVE**  
Set examples, show integrity  
**HAVE FUN!**

**HONESTY**  
If you say you're going  
to do something, **DO IT!**

**ENCOURAGEMENT**  
Don't just support yourself,  
support all those around you

**COMMITMENT**  
Commit yourself

**STRENGTH**  
Our real strength  
is on the inside

**RESPECT**  
Treat people how you  
want to be treated

**BELIEF**  
Believe in yourself and  
others will believe in you

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### Develop positive values and attitudes, and improve self-esteem

Clontarf programs are values-driven and based on strong relationships and trust. Participants are encouraged to think positively and learn about the value of better health, education, employment and life styles. All participants are provided with new sporting and life challenges which expose them to positive people in positive environments.

### Develop a pathway to employment

With every student, we work closely to identify their abilities, interests and aspirations. Matching each student with an appropriate training program and/or employer is important to ensure a successful employment outcome.

Clontarf's full-time Employment Officers assist with job placement and provide on-going support including working with employers to develop the necessary mentoring and support during the first year of work.

### Continue mentoring

We act like family and stay in the lives of the boys. Given our expansive network we are able to support the boys in most locations.

## **Academy program**

The successful outcomes of our program are based on a diverse range of in-school and extra-curricular activities using the following approaches:

- Providing a rich relationship-based program that is student-centred and based on trust and respect;
- Ensuring a comprehensive and holistic approach that recognises the individual life circumstances of each student and minimising barriers to education wherever possible;
- Creating high expectations of success at school and in life;
- Providing an environment within the school that is welcoming and supportive and will increase school enrolments and outcomes of Indigenous students;
- Engaging with parents and care-givers in a positive way;
- Supporting increased attendance of Indigenous students as a basis to improve education outcomes;
- Encouraging improved confidence and self-esteem of Clontarf students;
- Improving student engagement with teachers and other students within the school community;
- Acknowledging and respecting Indigenous heritage, history and culture;
- Encouraging increased application to learning by students;
- Providing a range of extra-curricular and experiential learning opportunities; and
- Ensuring all students are exposed to a range of post-school pathways and are supported to transition successfully to employment and/or further study.

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## Clontarf Post-School Pathways

One of the key objectives of the Clontarf Foundation programs is to support participants into employment or further education and training. In working toward assisting students to gain employment, Clontarf strives to develop a culture that promotes the importance of employment and the skills of the workplace.

It is very difficult to participate meaningfully in today's society and feel a sense of purpose if there is no prospect of employment or source of income beyond welfare. Participation in employment is an important contributor to living standards and overall wellbeing.

Being employed leads to improved income for families and communities, which in turn has a positive influence on health, the education of children, and so on. It also enhances self-esteem, increases opportunities for self-development, influences interaction at the family and community levels and reduces social alienation.

The reality for many Indigenous boys is that they have not been raised in an environment where there is the expectation that they will complete school and transition successfully to the workforce or to tertiary studies. Some students have parents who have never been employed and have few, if any, role models of working adults.

It is therefore, an important focus of Clontarf programs to create the expectation that all the boys will have the ability and skills to be employed when they complete school. Equally important is to ensure that boys who have the ability to complete tertiary studies are enabled to do so.

There are several core principles that underpin Clontarf's employment focus:

- The relationships that staff have with Academy participants influence positive behaviour changes. These changes evolve over an extended period of time and support the participants to be 'job-ready'.
- The need to create the expectation that our boys will be employed is paramount. Employment programs need to have activities that "Celebrate the Work Environment".
- Clontarf Foundation's staff endeavour to assist students to identify work that is of interest to them and fits their skills and abilities, is meaningful and sustainable. The world of work and career options should be introduced in the early years of high school and intensify in the year of graduation.
- The activities undertaken in the Clontarf program are planned to develop life-skills. Some of these skills include good communication, team work, problem-solving, initiative, learning skills, technology, planning and organizing.

These skills are equally valuable in preparation for tertiary study. Preparing students for tertiary study is a natural enhancement and extension of 'Leaving for Work' program as the Clontarf Foundation matures.

## Integrated employment program

The Clontarf Foundation Graduate Employment Strategy, *Clontarf's Working*, has been developed to ensure that each school-leaver ('Leaver') makes a meaningful transition from school to work, training or further study. Whilst the goal is sustainable and meaningful employment, our strategy has been designed to minimise the barriers that can easily arise and jeopardize success for our Leavers.

As an extension of our school-based Academy program, Employment Officers work with students and Leavers to develop relationships that help build the support network in these young men's lives post-school.

Particularly during Years 10-12 at school, Clontarf Academy members will participate in a range of work-readiness activities including:

- Workplace visits to employers in the region;
- Talks and presentations from workers in a range of industries and jobs;
- Work experience;
- Vocational Education and Training courses through TAFE;
- Aboriginal School Based Traineeships;
- Obtaining Keys for Life, Learners' Permit and Drivers' Licence; and
- Acquiring and managing personal documentation including bank account, Birth Certificate and Tax File Number

Within 12 months of completing Year 12 in a Clontarf Academy, we aim to have 80% of our Leavers in either full time work or further training and education. We continue to mentor and support these young men, as well as work with those who are still looking for employment, to identify appropriate job and training pathways for them.




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## Who benefits

The Clontarf program directly supports school-aged Indigenous boys whilst at school and as they transition into work. Most Clontarf programs engage secondary school students and in some locations there are also full-time primary programs that support students in the upper primary years.

There are significant positive outcomes for the whole community when the young men complete school, participate in employment and improve their health and economic status. These young men become role models to their younger siblings and relatives, better partners and fathers, and ultimately better leaders in their community as they make a meaningful contribution to society.

## Outcomes

There are broad social impacts resulting from the Clontarf Foundation's programs, with statistical and anecdotal evidence of improved educational attendance and outcomes. Even with significant growth in recent years, the Foundation continues to achieve consistently good results.

Daily tracking of engagement and attendance occurs with measurable outcomes being:

- Engagement back in the school environment by students with a history of long absences
- Retention of students from one year to the next
- Attendance rates
- Behavioural changes as observed by the school and Academy staff
- Reduction in suspensions and truancy from school
- Participation in a range of Academy activities
- Completion of Year 12
- Transition into successful employment and/or further education and training

The Foundation's model aims to address a range of the root causes of social and economic disadvantage. The program promotes social connectedness, healthy lifestyles and physical and mental health, whilst supporting improved attendance and retention at school, and therefore affords students multiple benefits beyond the educational advantages of school attendance.

Our past experience shows improvement in the participation, retention and behavioural dimensions of students involved in the Clontarf Foundation Academies.

We believe that our program can play a significant part in reducing Indigenous disadvantage and the gap that currently exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Clontarf Foundation's approach has proven to be very successful, not only in attracting young men to school and retaining them, but also in having them embrace more disciplined, purposeful and healthy lifestyles.

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### Latest results

In 2010, 1,933 students completed the year in our network of Academies.

- 93% of Academy students completed the year or made a successful transition to another school, training course or employment (target 90%)
- Average school attendance for all Academy students was 76%
- 169 students completed Year 12 with 104 of these successfully achieving a recognised Year 12 graduation
- Nine of our 2010 graduates are studying at University in 2011

In 2011, around 2,500 students participated in our network of Academies.

- 190 boys completed Year 12 and will transition into employment or further education and training.
- 90% of our 2010 leavers have been placed into employment or training during 2011
- 79% of our 2010 graduates are currently engaged in a job or involved in further education.
- We continue to work with those who have left their initial jobs or are still looking for work

In 2012, we anticipate catering for over 3,000 students and closer to 300 boys will complete Year 12 in Clontarf Academies.



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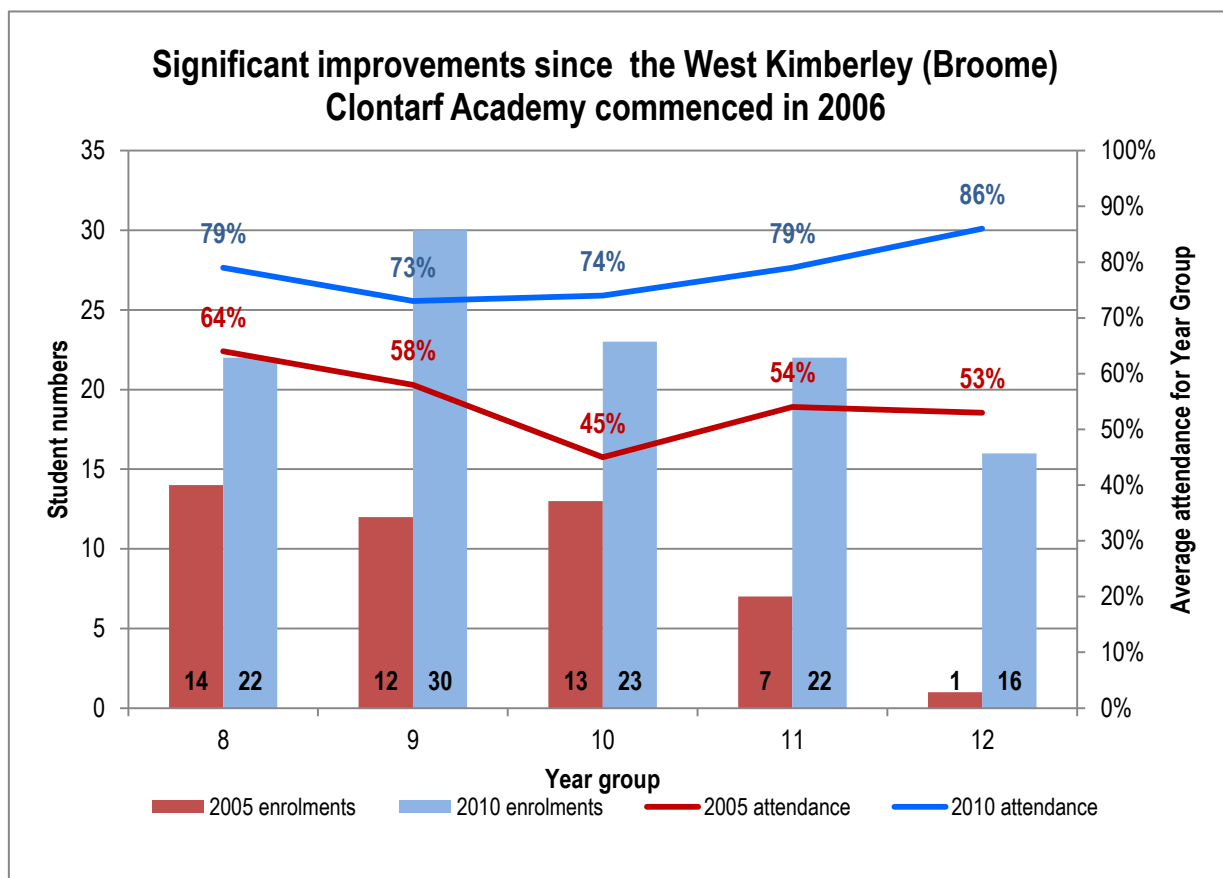
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### Case study: Broome, Western Australia

Prior to the establishment of a Clontarf Academy in Broome there was rarely an Indigenous student, male or female, who completed Year 12 at Broome Senior High School. The attendance and retention rates were appalling and we see similar trends in most communities where we first start Academies.

Since starting the West Kimberley Clontarf Academy in 2006, the school has seen a significant positive change in the enrolments, attendance, school completion and graduation rates for Indigenous students.

The chart below shows that in 2010, 16 male students completed Year 12. There were also 23 female students in Year 12. Over the five years that the Clontarf Academy has been operating in Broome, we have 'normalised' school. That is, most school-aged Indigenous young people go to and complete school.



### **Our focus is on boys**

The young men targeted by our programs are considered one of the most at-risk groups in our contemporary Australian society. Young Aboriginal men drive a cycle of disadvantage with the impacts on girls being significant.

Our work in many communities has revealed that it is the senior women who are often leading the drive to have a Clontarf Academy established and operating in their area. These women advise us that many of the men in their communities are 'absent' and often lead a negative lifestyle that impacts on all members of the family and community.

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The need to develop the next generation of strong young men is vital.

We have seen that an increase in the attendance and retention at school of young Aboriginal males has, in most cases, shown an improvement of young Aboriginal females at school.

The development of healthy, strong and motivated young Aboriginal men can have significant direct positive impacts on the young Aboriginal women in the community, particularly where the young men are focussed on building a stable home life with healthy relationships and secure jobs.

Our model works for boys

Football has great 'pulling power' to get the boys to attend school. Young Aboriginal males often value football above all else. Using the existing passion that the boys have for football remains a strong attractor to a comprehensive and intensive program of support and guidance.

There are many complex influences and motivators in young girls' lives. However, this is not to say that girls can't be attracted to school, or that programs specifically targeted at girls are not needed, just that the Clontarf Foundation's current focus remains on the boys who are most at-risk and the ones who historically have driven the cycle of disadvantage.

While it is obviously necessary to address the effects through investment in health, housing, welfare and justice systems, the Clontarf Foundation focuses on addressing the causes which perpetuate this cycle.

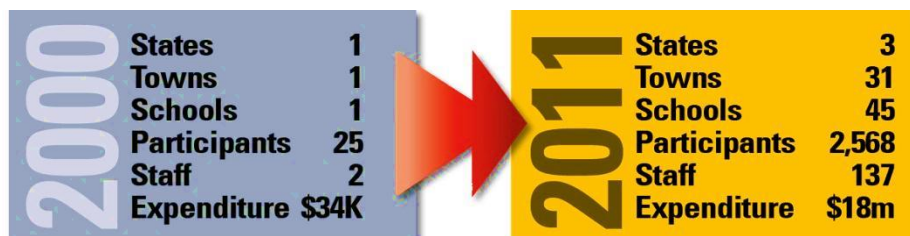


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## How we've grown

Since opening our first Academy for 25 boys on the campus of the Clontarf Aboriginal College in Perth in 2000, the Foundation has grown rapidly and has been consistently successful. We have strong relationships with Federal and State governments as well as a diverse mix of corporate partners.



## Our funding model

The Clontarf Foundation is a charitable not-for-profit organisation registered as an Unlisted Public Company Limited by Guarantee which complies with the relevant Federal Government Acts in Australia.

It currently costs approximately \$6,900 per student, per year to operate our Academies. The Foundation endeavours to source its funds in approximately equal proportions from the Federal Government, the relevant State or Territory Governments and the private sector. The Foundation has a strong working relationship with all levels of government.

Our operating revenue provided by the private sector is an important source of funds but our private supporters also –

- allow us to maintain a high degree of flexibility;
- help us retain our independence;
- serve as sources of influence and advice; and
- provide jobs for our graduates.

## The need: our growth potential

The Foundation has been successful in achieving its aims and as a consequence continues to receive numerous requests to expand its existing operations as well as to extend them into other states. Many of these requests come from Aboriginal people.

Our experience has shown that for every community with 3,000 Aboriginal people, an Academy of 75 boys can be supported. Given Australia's Aboriginal population of around 520,000 people, many Academies could be established around the country, increasing the reach of the Foundation and the positive impact of the outcomes for young Aboriginal men and their communities.

Our five-year growth objective is to satisfy 70 per cent of the theoretical demand. With minor adaptation, the successful approach used to expand our network in WA, the Northern Territory and Victoria will be used to implement this plan.

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Prior to the commencement of any new Academy, a detailed and comprehensive scoping study and development program is undertaken. These activities include:

- Scoping - to confirm the feasibility of opening Academies in a particular region
- Relationship Building - involves negotiating and reaching agreement with the Education Department, other relevant government departments, school principals, the Indigenous people, the business community and the wider community.
- Establishing Academies - during this stage service agreements are signed with schools, "in school" accommodation (the Academy Room) is acquired, teachers are briefed and local fundraising commences. Meetings are also held with families of potential Academy members.
- Recruitment and Training of Staff - Academy staff are recruited locally or relocated from elsewhere. Each Academy has an Academy Director and Operations Officers staffed at a ratio of one staff members per 25 students.

Following the successful implementation of this five year plan Clontarf will have operating Academies as shown below:

STATE	NUMBER OF ACADEMIES	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS PER YEAR
Western Australia	22	2,090
Northern Territory	19	1,490
Victoria	8	550
New South Wales	44	2,820
Queensland	30	1,740
South Australia	8	400
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>9,090</b>

*Table: Clontarf Foundation growth potential*

As we continue to grow, and the longer we operate our Academies in each location, more young Aboriginal men will complete Year 12 with the support of our program.

With the ongoing implementation of our Development Plan, the number of Aboriginal boys successfully completing Year 12 and transitioning to further study or meaningful employment will grow even further.

With 9,090 boys in our Academies around the country, we anticipate around 1,500 Aboriginal boys every year will complete Year 12 having been involved in our full-time mentoring programs for up to six years of their secondary schooling.

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## NSW potential and plans

In NSW, there is potential for up to 44 Clontarf Academies catering for around 2,820 participants as outlined above.

The Western region of NSW has the highest proportion of Aboriginal people of all the regions at 16.8%. The issues of poor attendance and retention of Indigenous students apply across the State and are highlighted in the Two Ways Together Regional Report 2006 completed by Murdi Paaki. We are yet to find anywhere that the issues confronting young Indigenous people are not the same and our investigations into NSW have already confirmed this.

Whilst there are various targeted programs supporting Indigenous students, with some successes notable, there remain many Indigenous students that do not complete school and hence are not equipped to enter the workforce or participate meaningfully in society. The Murdi Paaki Assembly voted unanimously to support the establishment of Clontarf programs in their region.

At the time of compiling this submission, there is agreement in principle from the parties consulted to date. Two key stakeholders in the State, the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and National Rugby League have committed their considerable support to the programs.



Map: First stage of development in NSW proposed for 2012

The first locations proposed to commence in 2012, based on the scoping work undertaken to date, are in Western NSW and could include 300 students in the region encompassing Bourke, Brewarrina, Coonamble, Moree, Inverell, Armidale and Tamworth. Subject to the commitment of all stakeholders and availability of funding, it is proposed to reach our target of 44 Academies in NSW by 2015.

## We are unique

The Clontarf Foundation's programs are focused on long-term behavioural change – assisting and supporting young Aboriginal men to develop skills, make good decisions and enjoy a positive life outcome. Fundamental to achieving this is having a locally based, long term program as opposed to a fly-in-fly-out part-time 'mentoring' model.

We believe that building value in education that transfers to the next generation is key to ensuring that Aboriginal people are able to enjoy improved social and economic development that is sustainable in the long-term from generation to generation.

Our robust model ensures that funding is obtained from the Federal government, state/territory government and the private sector in equal proportions. This also ensures a collaborative approach to supporting the participants in our programs.

Clontarf's Academies are relationship-based programs. The strong bond and mutual respect between the students and Academy staff are pivotal to the achievement of outcomes for the students. Our people act like family and stay in the lives of our boys.

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In summary, the Clontarf Foundation programs are successful due to -

- Consultation with and acceptance by the community prior to the establishment of a Clontarf Academy
- Agreement and acceptance of the Clontarf program by the school, Principal and teaching staff who share the vision and commitment of the Academy.
- High quality Clontarf staff who are highly functional and able to deal with the most at-risk group of people in Australia: young Aboriginal men
- Consistent, structured and proven model which has been developed, evolved, documented and continuously improved by the Clontarf Foundation
- Robust business model with a clear mission statement that has guided all decisions and the implementation of the program
- Demonstrable results over an extended period which have created a highly identifiable and reputable brand that is well-known by the Aboriginal community
- Contractual arrangements with the State and Territory governments to deliver the Clontarf engagement programs in schools
- Scalable model with broad reach and footprint. Attractive workplace and easy to retain quality staff who see many opportunities within the organisation
- Network of Academies to support students and graduates even if they move to other locations
- One-third funding contribution from the private sector which brings important diversity, opportunities, experiences and employment for the Clontarf students
- Integrated employment program that extends throughout each student's schooling and into workplace mentoring for as long as is required. A Clontarf Alumni group exists to continue support of younger students.
- Active engagement of other parts of the community including females, families, businesses and community service providers – this has a positive impact on others beyond the immediate student group
- Every Academy has its own dedicated Academy Room within the school grounds. This is a vibrant, welcoming environment where students and parents/carers can feel comfortable.

While central to the Clontarf Academies, football is not the primary focus. Our programs are primarily about improving educational outcomes, school completion, lifestyle, health and fitness, employment, positive and informed decision making and life skills.

A major strength of our Academies is that they are run by men who have the respect of the students, the families and the school. They are role models for the boys, and are important figures in the lives of each student across so many different communities.

The Clontarf Foundation has experienced and continues to experience measurable success in working with the most at risk group in our society to break the cycle of disadvantage by equipping young Aboriginal men to participate more meaningfully in the social and economic development of society.

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