New Practices in Flexible Learning

Closing the *Digital Divide*: increasing education and training opportunities for Indigenous students in remote areas

Evaluation report

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1 Executive summary

The project *Closing the Digital Divide: increasing education and training opportunities for Indigenous students in remote areas* has enabled a drilling down into the very real and practical issues associated with learning through application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) within the remote Titjikala Indigenous community. It is very apparent that learning occurred in many areas, and importantly, that the community of Titjikala, through those involved in the project, are beginning to identify how using ICTs can support their own aspirations and directions for learning. The project experienced many delays, conflicting priorities, and the gamut of issues that, to date, have prevented much take-up (or use) of ICTs across the board in remote Indigenous communities. The key learnings arising from this present project are summarised as follows:

- Onsite training support is crucial to enabling access to facilities, troubleshooting of difficulties and building of the confidence of learners in using ICTs.
- The supply side of working infrastructure and resources is only one aspect of the learning process, although this is the one attracting the most attention. The demand side — what community members, after experience and exposure to using a range of technologies, feel they want to do with these to meet their own learning and communication needs — is critically important. This project has highlighted how readily Indigenous peoples from remote communities will embrace new technologies if the use of such matches their own aspirations and needs.
- Externally defined timelines and expected outputs negate the well documented importance of establishing relationships and the time needed to explore, in cross-cultural settings, new concepts, ideas and applications.
- This project was built on prior and ongoing relationships with the community and this was critical to the outcomes it did achieve. Involvement of members of the project team across a number of projects occurring within the community also ensured that the value of ICTs to achieving community priorities in a number of areas, not only education, was explored. This has led to both greater community ownership of the possibilities and discussions of the directions, such as local resource development, community members would like to explore further.
- Institutional policies and priorities can often work against innovation, as does the numbers-driven funding regime of the VET sector.
- Educational practitioners working with remote Indigenous communities have had little professional development in the use of ICTs within educational delivery. Incompatibility between the priorities and practices of Registered Training Organisation (RTO) systems and those of communities such as Titjikala, further compound the issues.
- Infrastructure on communities is adequate, but interoperability issues exist. The issue is not broadband, but pedagogy.
2 Acknowledgements

The project team would like to acknowledge the input of the Titjikala community and the Tapatjatjaka Community Government Council into the work of this project. Also acknowledged are the efforts of staff from Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE), Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Waltja.
3 Background

The project was designed to look at issues relating to poor training outcomes in a remote Indigenous community and the uptake of flexible learning that, to date, has been very limited.

This is a widely identified problem and a priority issue at a national level, as well as within the Northern Territory. This project was focused on developing a ‘blend’ of flexible delivery techniques, suitable for students within a remote Indigenous community that has a training centre.

This specific blend of strategies was to support the identified community needs for training in relation to real employment outcomes within the community and to develop the ability to deliver a ‘learner-appropriate’ blend of training that included face-to-face, online technology and other stand-alone elements.

The project brought together students, the community, industry and a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), to focus on a real solution for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system.
4 Evaluation methodology and process

This evaluation used a grounded, action research approach involving critical moment interviews, participation in workshops and project meetings and ongoing review of the project team’s learnings and reflections.

Action research is both a recognised research methodology and a change process. It involves a collective approach to defining problems and issues, undertaking action planning, taking action and reflection. Given the diverse and multiple partners involved in this project, grounding the research process in participants’ perceptions and experiences of issues and opportunities was paramount.

The cross-cultural context in which the research project was embedded also required focused attention on the tensions between applied learning, innovative approaches and external accountability regimes affecting the RTOs in particular. Overall, the guiding framework for the evaluation was improving outcomes ‘on-the-ground’ for Indigenous communities across a range of variables identified by the participants.

The evaluation also recognised the convergence of action research and action learning, particularly in circumstances where organisational and inter-organisational change, or improvement, was mooted.
5 Project results

Key processes for the action/evaluation research cycle included a series of community visits, meetings and workshops, critical moment interviews (that were also taped for inclusion in the Case study CD-ROM), and a private notes area on the Digital Divide website. Whilst the evaluator was ostensibly outside the practicing team, involvement in professional development and other activities, integral to the project, somewhat diluted this separation.

These above processes also firmly recognised the social nature of learning amongst practitioners, between practitioners and learners and amongst teaching, technical and community based staff. Opportunities to nurture these social aspects of learning (beyond intermittent contact amongst staff within their own organisations) are rare within the domain of remote Indigenous education. Most lecturers involved in remote delivery are ‘on-the-road’ covering vast distances and are accommodating diverse courses and learners. Consequently, there is little opportunity to learn, review and reflect about practice, or indeed new practice, in an ongoing and supported way. Whilst this project opened up such opportunities, the tight timeframes, competing priorities and the highly dispersed team limited the degree of learning and change that could occur within the project lifecycle.

Core-group workshops included the Charles Darwin University (CDU) Practices Workshop 1, the mid-term project review and the Toolbox training workshop. These workshops involved reflecting on issues, presentation of actions underway and an opportunity to develop and experiment with new skills and technologies. These workshops also provided the participants with an opportunity to build new skills, and indeed new identities as e-pedagogy practitioners, through being able to draw on the range of skills and experiences present within the team.

Individual interviews with team members were also undertaken throughout the project. These aimed to capture the learning acquired to date, the key issues being experienced and, importantly, to share and discuss the often divergent perspectives from the community, the learners, the practitioners and their organisations. Access to such pooled knowledge was critical in identifying barriers to, and opportunities for, change. These interviews also highlighted the importance of seeing these learning/research teams as organisational change agents and therefore of gaining the support and involvement of key decision-makers within the RTOs who can back innovation.

One of the key outcomes of the process described above was the enabling of a critical mass of innovation and new ideas around using ICTs within learning. By being broader than one institution, involving a diverse array of expertise and interest and aligning with directions already being explored by the community, the project has been successful in bedding-down the opportunities possible through ICTs — particularly in the minds of the community and the learners involved.

It takes time and multiple (and often parallel) effort to nurture the ideas and concepts of innovation through ICTs, both in the minds and skills of practitioners and in the minds and skills of learners. In the unique, cross-cultural contexts of remote communities, enabling the possibilities of utilising ICTs to support the direction and educational needs, ideas and aspirations emerging from the community, is critical. In the words of one learner from Titjikala, ‘we want to develop our own resources, using video, language and pictures and computers’.
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6 Training support

At the outset of this project, one of the key issues for Titjikala was exploring the ways-and-means to get onsite training support. In some ways, this would be like the old adult education model of the 1970’s — having someone to facilitate and coordinate on the ground who can gear-up quickly to provide ‘just-in-time learning support’. Whilst there has been much support for the idea across the lifecycle of the project, to date, dedicating the necessary resources to access funds and identify potential staff has been difficult.

Originally, some key people were identified to provide extra supports and some on-the-ground continuity for sustainability of the project achievements beyond the lifecycle of the project. The reality has been that many of these people have been caught-up in a range of other projects. Even for Titjikala itself, expanding enterprise, research and other activities have already taken precedence. The sheer complexity of the array of funded projects, training programs, research projects and enterprise that is occurring at Titjikala highlights the need for on-the-ground coordination, but unfortunately also works, in a practical sense, against securing such.

Organisations working on this project are themselves highly dispersed. This, in itself, highlighted the need for a key link into the community and educational follow-up for learners in between visits of training providers. However, competing work priorities, the complexity and geographical distribution of the workload of staff from RTOs similarly mitigated against leveraging the time and resources to make onsite coordination happen.

The reality would also seem to be that there is only a nine-month ‘window of opportunity’ available for gearing-up and undertaking effort/activities on communities. This nine-month timespan sits outside the summer months, when ceremony is most likely to happen and when most non-Indigenous staff take leave. The existence of this nine-month window is also reinforced by the transient nature of the commitment of most outsiders to working in the Outback, and is also reflected in generous leave allowances and yearly flights home. The legacy of high, net-out migration can be seen in the difficulty most ongoing programs have in securing sustainability, let alone short term projects. Ultimately, most projects need at least an 18-month timeframe to ensure some ongoing application.

6.1 Training centre access and use

There is a training centre (or what Titjikala community prefer to consider, and call, a Knowledge Centre) located at Titjikala. Early within this project, computer hardware was selected and has since been set-up and networked. There is one dedicated, satellite-connected computer. There is evidence of some basic IT training and other use beginning to occur in the Knowledge Centre, but such is sporadic.

The Knowledge Centre is located adjacent to the Titjikala Council facility and store. Whilst ostensibly a prime location, the lack of dedicated staff to coordinate use and to provide technical support, as needed, means that its use is greatly curtailed. The unfamiliarity of most community members with using computers means that access tends to be limited in order to ensure that equipment is protected and that technical ‘hiccups’ are avoided as much as possible.

Titjikala Council staff are very aware that, at this stage, the Knowledge Centre is not being used to its capacity or potential, and are investigating long term and sustainable solutions to this. In a sense, it has taken 12 months to develop the technical set-up and capacity desired (and able to be afforded) in terms of online access. It is likely that the
systems for coordinating use of the Knowledge Centre will take a similar timeframe to develop and will, of course, be dependent on securing appropriate funding. Furthermore, the ongoing financial viability of the Knowledge Centre will rest on securing ongoing commitment to supporting upgrades, technical services and other recurrent costs.

Discussions with Titjikala Council staff indicated that they believe that the premise for building the necessary skills and capacity of community members in the use of ICTs is the finding of the links between interest and need, and the ways in which ICTs can be the medium for meeting these links. In practice, this means that effort has to be directed towards developing an understanding of the concept of using computers and online services, and that this directly relates to developing an understanding of the benefit of such use.

Thus, building understanding moves from the familiar and personally relevant (for example, banking services, football scores, websites of other communities) and ICTs as a means to enable communication with, and knowledge of, extended family, kin and culture. ‘Hooking-people-in’, by enabling local information flows, can then be the stepping-stone to using ICTs for less directly personal purposes, such as study.

Many discussions were held during the course of this project regarding the issues of poor English literacy and numeracy fluency and their role as a barrier to the use of ICTs. Also discussed was the potential of ICTs, along with appropriately designed resources, to provide an innovative means to build such fluency.

One of the objectives of the project was to customise resources (such as Toolboxes) and to develop locally designed resources that could be explored on a ‘just-in-time’ basis by interested community members. The rationale underpinning this objective was that the opportunity for ongoing immersion in English literacy activities would (during the long in-between times of visits by lecturers that tend to occur) support the retention of skills that had been acquired by learners, within the community, during training workshops provided by visiting lecturers. Whilst some progress in this area was made by the project team, the complexity of issues impacting on what would seem to an outsider to be a rather simple task, are compelling (Toolbox issues are discussed further in section 10 of this report).

The advantage of having a dedicated Knowledge Centre at Titjikala is yet to be more fully realised. However, it is also critically important that use of the Knowledge Centre is expanded in line with community-led interest and need, rather than the good ideas or educational solutions conceived externally. In a sense, the lead-in time for developing the nature of how and for what the Knowledge Centre will be utilised, is responsive to the strategic direction that the community has developed for itself through training and enterprise plans, and through a considered and strategic approach to accumulating the resources and links most viable.

The sheer complexity of community life and parallel activities occurring means that sometimes development waxes and wanes within the calendar of community priorities. For example, the recently launched Deluxe Tourism Enterprise (developed in association with a private company) has taken precedence over many other community development activities. This enterprise builds on the assets, skills and strengths of community members and provides real work. It is not surprising that this assumed priority over other projects occurring within the community, particularly with respect to those where the benefit of involvement is not immediately tangible.

It is also apparent that despite the plethora of social issues evident on communities such as Titjikala, community-building does not have to be a slow and painful process. If the ‘bricks-and-mortar’ of the enterprise or activity capture the support and imagination of community members, and are not thwarted by a need to ‘learn this first before you can do that’ approach, success can be quickly evident. However, the extreme realities
of remote communities can be stark. Whilst Titjikala can run an innovative cultural tourism enterprise, the Knowledge Centre can, for example, be commandeered by the Northern Territory Police for accommodation purposes or to process ‘grog runners’ caught the previous night.
7 Infrastructure and learning

In terms of general infrastructure, Titjikala (like many other small, discrete, desert communities) has a scattered array of houses (many in need of substantial repair), a store, a council office, a school, a women’s/arts centre and a clinic. With a population of around 250 (and a predicted rapid demographic increase in the under-15 age group population), existing infrastructure is likely to come under increased pressure. A new childcare centre is nearly complete.

For a remote community such as Titjikala, the provision of technology access has been difficult because of the cost of the information technology (IT) systems themselves and also the cost of providing a suitable location where the computers and related technology can be set-up to provide access to community members.

A purpose-built Knowledge Centre (described within the previous section of this report) centre is now operational within the community — with the technology elements having been added as a part of this project.

While the specific focus of this project was on training delivery and support, this focus is viewed as a broad, community-based process rather than a specific, formal VET process.

A key issue for the technology system within the Knowledge Centre was to access information online and so some form of Internet access was required. Two-way satellite has been installed due to its ready-availability and its cost.

7.1 Computer network

There are currently eight computers located in the main room of the Knowledge Centre and two additional computers located in the ‘office’ area.

For further specific details regarding components and specifications of the computer network and associated components, see section 10 Technology infrastructure in the Project report document.

7.2 Software suite

The use of a constructivist model of operation for some of the literacy and learning activities requires and ability for students to not only access resources, but also to make changes in order to ‘customise’ resources located on the computer system. The computers therefore require audio software, some form of hypertext marker language (html) editing capability as well as a browser.

For further specific details regarding the software suite, see section 10.10 in the Project report document.

7.3 Training centre access

The community is currently working through the issues relating to operational models for the Knowledge Centre. This will include development and implementation of access times and conditions. A coordination position is an obvious need referred to repeatedly during this project. The community is investigating ways to fund such a position during 2005.
8 Technology findings

The relationship between available infrastructure and learning is complex. Overcrowding (as is often endemic on remote Indigenous communities), alongside poorly functioning health hardware, has been correlated with poor health and, by association, poor educational outcomes. However infrastructure alone cannot be assigned a driving role for the development of human and social capital. The best buildings, houses and IT connectivity in the world will not necessarily result in social cohesion, employment, well-being or a thriving local economy.

The unique settlements patterns of remote Australia that have emerged during the past 50 or so years are directly related to Indigenous affairs policies and their associated physical manifestations. Mission settlements, ration settlements and, more recently (due to changes in Land Rights legislation), settlements on pastoral lease excisions (such as Titjikala) and the homelands movement are a few examples of such.

As none of these Indigenous settlements were established with an economic base, most remain dependent on welfare transfers. During the past or so twenty years, communities themselves have directed effort and energy to developing livelihoods and activities unique to their locations and directly linked to Indigenous knowledge systems. For example, Indigenous art has become a significant activity as are the income substitution activities of wild food harvesting, hunting and the associated caring for country activities of fire management and biodiversity conservation.

Whilst mainstream investment in communities has been largely focused on capital infrastructure development and transferring education and employment activities from the mainstream, communities themselves are exploring new and emerging activities that mesh the traditional and contemporary in an effort to sustain both culture and future.

Most recently, the capital infrastructure being rolled out to communities is in relation to ICT hardware and connectivity. This is being hailed as both a new pedagogical tool for learning and an opportunity to address the ‘tyranny of distance’. While such potential remains largely dormant, the opportunity to use such tools to support emerging livelihoods, enterprise activities and ‘just-in-time’ learning is emerging. This project has attempted to ‘draw out’ the complexity of issues impacting on such opportunities.

The new childcare centre at Titjikala will provide improved capacity for learners in terms of:

- demonstrating understanding of select competencies, and
- a context for lecturers to link learning to learner’s real-life experiences.

Lecturers participating in this present project consistently expressed difficulties with teaching units of competency (such as hygiene and nutrition) to learners/workers in the old childcare centre — given that the centre was an ‘old donger’ with no food storage or preparation areas or washing facilities.

Despite the improved capacity for learners provided by the new childcare centre, with lecturers getting out to the community perhaps only once every six weeks, the consistency of learning and assessment remains an issue. Many discussions were held regarding installation of a computer within the childcare centre (complete with webcam and microphone) to enable inter-visit communication and assessment. As simple as this may sound, it would require problem solving of:

- connectivity issues (for example, the childcare centre has no satellite dish)
- an assessment of affordability
• upskilling of child care staff in utilising the system
• technical support
• similar infrastructure and broadband availability at the RTO end, and
• a rearrangement of the lecturers’ yearly planned schedule.

Whilst none of these are insurmountable issues in themselves, together they present a complex web to be sorted without any real indication of whether such a process would indeed achieve the outcomes intended.

Discussions also occurred about the potential of linking childcare centres across such communities, using webcams to facilitate peer learning and an online community of remote childcare practice.

Given the success to date (for example, Tanami Network) with ICTs in remote areas that have been built on the desire to, and interest in, communicating with family and kin across distance, there may be great benefit in exploring this concept further. Such an initiative may also work to reduce the dependence of childcare staff upon external advisors and organisations and may also develop confidence and capacity of local people.

An Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) system was installed at Titjikala as part of the National Communications Fund monies won by the Northern Territory and New South Wales Governments in 2002. This was installed in the community school office and networked into the LATIS system. Prior to this project, this IDL system had not been used.

One of the explorations in this project was the use of the IDL system at the Alice Springs School of the Air to deliver a lesson to childcare worker students at Titjikala. One such lesson occurred and, although more were planned, access difficulties and other community priorities prevented this occurring.

It is important to note the time and effort required to deliver this one session. Firstly, due to booking issues and broadband limitations, the session had to be delivered in the evening. As the system at Titjikala is located within the school, and as the school is locked after 3.00pm, access to the IDL facility required negotiation of access and key collecting. There was also need to arrange for a suitable ‘student mentor’ to be onsite at the community end in order to assist students with the IDL session as necessary. A lecturer from Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education was identified as the most suitable, available option to undertake this role.

Some time prior to the commencement of the scheduled IDL sessions, the lecturer from Charles Darwin University who would be delivering the IDL lessons travelled out to the community along with the technical person from the School of the Air. Unfortunately the lecturer was unable to meet the students during this visit — a situation that raised concerns for her as a teacher in that she did not know the students, was not used to teaching cross-culturally and was worried about the educational level she should pitch her lesson at. During this visit, the technical support person reconnected and set-up the IDL system at Titjikala.

On the occasion of the first IDL session, a 40-minute lesson was delivered (in the evening) to three students and the student mentor/lecturer. Due to limitations of available broadband width at the time of this IDL delivery, the delivering lecturer (transmitting from the School of the Air studio located in Alice Springs) was unable to see the visual feedback of the Titjikala students at her end, although she did have audio capability (in contrast, the students were able to see and hear the delivering lecturer at their end).
The students from Titjikala were unfamiliar with both the IDL technology and the delivering lecturer, were very quiet during the lesson delivery and tended to use a lot of non-verbal communication (for example, head nodding) as is consistent with their culture. Consequently, the responses of the students had to be ‘interpreted’ by the mentor/lecturer onsite and relayed verbally back to the delivering lecturer.

The responses to the lesson were, however, very positive — although this did not enable the trial to be sustained. Arguably, the investment in time, energy and technical support (as well as having a lecturer onsite to act as a student mentor) indicate that, at this point in time, IDL is a very resource-consuming tool. Key issues are the location of the system in the school, and the need for onsite support to utilise the system. In a sense, IDL is rather like going to the cinema rather than watching TV or yarning on the phone. As such, IDL represents a valuable supplement to learning delivery, but it is not an easy tool, at this stage, to embed into everyday learning.
9 RTO and VET system issues

The tension between the need for RTOs to ‘recruit numbers’ (that, in turn, translate into actual hours of contact and therefore funding), and the actual needs of learners (for example, the ‘just-in-time’-matched training strategy being deliberately pursued by Titjikala), is very evident.

Typically, most RTOs have a range of courses within their scope that are offered to such communities, usually with conditions such as minimum numbers of students and levels of access to training facilities. Whilst this approach is possible at the pre-vocational Certificate I and II levels, it raises considerable issues at Cert III and IV levels where there are often only one or two students enrolled.

Titjikala community has utilised some innovative mechanisms to progress one or two learners through to Certificate III and IV, including mentoring and support programs through Indigenous Community Volunteers and the Structured Training and Employment Projects (STEP) program. Whilst such ‘alternative’ pathways are possible, the amount of organisation required by the community is substantial.

In terms of cost effectiveness and organisation performance indicators, it is understandable that RTOs plan their training activities and lecturer workloads in advance. This often means that an individual lecturer may be delivering across multiple remote sites, and even interstate, in order to meet required targets and outputs needed by their RTO. In a very real way, this limits the flexibility of RTOs and their lecturers to respond to community needs, let alone the needs of individual learners — such as providing sustained contact, even by phone, in-between visits. While some RTOs are more likely to undertake training that has been funded through the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training’s Flexible Response Funding, the extent of need, combined with the multitude of requests, means their responsiveness is only able to ‘touch the tip of the iceberg’.

These above issues were raised consistently throughout the project by the participating lecturers, Titjikala Council staff and the learners themselves. In this sense, the opportunity for ICTs to make a difference was acknowledged by all. However, difficulties associated with access to broadband (at the RTO end), having and being able to operate the correct software, being able to negotiate around institutional IT policies, and the capacity to develop the necessary ICT skills and confidence, all remain significant issues.

RTOs operating within remote Australia (and with learners from discrete communities) have invested significantly, although perhaps more belatedly than those on the coastal fringes, in ICT systems. In many ways, for RTOs operating from multi-sites across remote outback Australia, the need for ICTs to facilitate communication is paramount.

However, the experience of this present project team has been that the very innovation, adaptivity and flexibility required by the teaching and learning contexts is thwarted by current ICT policy regimes within RTOs. Keeping systems working, limiting breakdowns, managing the substantially higher costs of service delivery within remote Australia, and managing software and licensing purchases are critically important. However, the extent to which these policies limit interoperability (for example, a lecturer’s being able to print from their work laptop using the Knowledge Centre’s printer) directly influences the opportunity to realise their potential with Indigenous learners.

In some ways, it would seem that current practices of managing and maintaining IT systems within RTOs are technology-driven rather than purpose-driven. Framing institutional policies around educational outcomes is a critical first step in fostering
innovation within remote contexts and professional development through practice. For example, given the literacy and numeracy issues and cross-cultural realities of remote Australia, it would make good sense for lecturer’s IT equipment to be able to record and edit video and audio files in order to develop locally relevant resources.
10 Toolbox applicability for a remote training centre

With a new childcare centre nearing completion within Titjikala and the pressure to have trained locals on-hand who are able to assume the running of the centre, appropriate resources could arguably value-add to the training already underway. However, the available childcare Toolbox resource had not been used as it was deemed contextually inappropriate for Titjikala and, indeed, other remote communities. The childcare Toolbox is a highly text-based resource and one that is developed upon Western cultural assumptions such as child-rearing practices and what constitute ‘correct foods’.

In light of the above issues, the need for customisation of the Toolbox was raised. Unfortunately, investigation into the process of customisation highlighted both the limited available skills of lecturers to transform such resources and the types of institutional policies that work against both the development of such skills and the provision of the right software.

Whilst the project was able to facilitate a training session in customisation, it became very apparent that the limited exposure of the participating lecturers to web-editing software, combined with the effort required to set up and network computers, were huge barriers to any customisation process. Furthermore, the travelling schedule of lecturers was such that finding time for one workshop, let alone any follow-up workshops, was extremely difficult.

Ultimately, whilst customisation of the Toolbox was seen as a great idea, technical skills, resources issues, time and management support remain big issues. Consequently, bottom-up enthusiasm and innovation needs to be supported from the top. In this regard, innovation, perhaps, needs to been seen as core business for RTOs.
11 Other resources

The use of other resources, such as the Equity and Access Toolboxes, was also to be explored within this project — in particular, the uploading of these resources onsite to support learning activities in-between lecturer visits. Unfortunately, the difficulties of locating an ‘onsite’ person to facilitate this prevented exploration of the applicability of, and enthusiasm for, such resources from being undertaken to any substantial degree.

Nevertheless, it is very evident that the project’s focus on learning with ICTs has, across the project lifecycle, begun to find resonance and enthusiasm amongst learners within the community. By way of illustration, one of the childcare students within the project talked about the importance of learning to make their own resources using video and audio recording (in both local language and English) and of developing and presenting culturally appropriate learning content/concepts of such resources in culturally appropriate ways.
12 Recommendations

The following recommendations have arisen in response to the experiences gained by the project team within the course of the project.

1. As the funding model that is currently used to fund training delivery needs does not meet the expectations of students or the Indigenous community where these students are located, it is recommended that the funding model be revisited in terms of the way it encourages RTOs to operate. In particular, for training delivered to contexts such as Titjikala, greater flexibility is needed with regard to how funded training can be delivered, as is a lesser focus on the exclusive attainment of formal qualifications or complete courses.

2. RTOs need greater support, in terms of funding, to address innovation and staff training needs. At the same time, a mechanism to allow time to address issues related to the provision of training is also vitally important.

3. Teachers delivering training need support to build new models of operation for training delivered within remote Indigenous community contexts. This requires both training and time to reflect on pedagogy and teaching practice, as well as ICT skills development. The teacher’s present level of enthusiasm for these innovations does not currently receive system-wide support to this end.

4. Timeframes for the conduct of Indigenous projects, especially those involving remote communities where English is not the primary language, need to be longer than the effective six-month timeframe and funding parameters of this project. The interwoven complexities of issues within such communities need integrated solutions, and these cannot be effectively put in place under the timeframes currently available.

5. Follow-up work on some of the key aspects of this project, especially the learning delivery blend model, should be pursued to see if the positive energy developed within this project is able to be transferred into long-term learning gains.
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