



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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WILTJA : MODEL OF EDUCATION DELIVERY

John Amadio *

The Pitjantjatjara people in the north west of South Australia and the Yalata Community in the far west of the state identify as Anangu (the people) Anangu culture is very different in many ways from the mainstream culture largely associated with urban centres but some of the aspects in common include a desire to maintain their culture and lifestyle, wanting a favourable future for their children and their communities, and a desire to be self managing.

Wiltja is an urban immersion program initiated and supported by Anangu with the express purpose of these students returning to their communities with an enhanced understanding of urban culture and success in mainstream education .

Anangu believe that success in education is crucial for their communities. They want their own people to be teachers, principals, doctors, nurses, lawyers and to fill other professional and para-professional positions in their communities. Anangu want their children to succeed at school and to be able to understand and work with non-Anangu.

To achieve these objectives some Anangu students must complete the South Australian Certificate of Education and pursue post secondary qualifications. No single educational option will be appropriate to all Anangu students. Therefore a range of options including the Wiltja Program is supported.

Wiltja was initiated by a group of community people from Ernabella. The Program began formal operation in 1980 with students attending short term programmes at Ingle Farm High School. In the early 1980s it was expanded to include Woodville High School and in 1990 it was consolidated on the Woodville High School campus.

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The emphasis of the Program has moved from that of social and cultural immersion in urban society (although these are still important) to a concentration on raising the achievement, participation and retention of Anangu students in the mainstream education process.

Two programmes are currently offered to Anangu students. A four week short term immersion programme is offered to female Anangu students as a means of identifying students for the long term programme. This initial programme involves students living in a hostel owned and managed by the S.A. Education Department. The girls become acquainted with daily urban routines, assist with routine chores, learn to live with other people from other communities and become accustomed to urban expectations and lifestyle. Students attend Wiltja on a daily basis at Woodville High School.

Relevant experiences include changing lessons, different teachers for different subjects, out of school experiences (e.g. School of the Future, Investigator Science and Technology Centre, Tandanya, Aboriginal Community College).

On the basis of adjustment to city life and its requirements some students return as long term students. Long term students are integrated as much as possible into mainstream Woodville High School classes. The students are supported in these classes by Wiltja staff and provided with extra bridging support in specific subjects in an enclave setting within the Wiltja classroom. Long term students are encouraged to stay for a year or more but because of a range of factors very few stay beyond a year. However, whilst the primary objective of the Program is to facilitate the achievement of S.A.C.E., many secondary benefits accrue along the way.

Considerable progress has been made by Wiltja staff in developing supportive relationships with secondary teachers on the land. Whilst the benefits of increased communication and liaison have manifested themselves in better prepared students, improved selection procedures and greater understanding of mainstream requirements, it has also facilitated greater consistency across the lands, and at Wiltja and Woodville High School in such areas as assessment and student behaviour

management. Comments and feedback from Woodville High teachers clearly demonstrate an attitude shift and change in methodology by a number of staff in the high school working with Anangu students. Reports from Woodville High School back to parents and schools in the communities have become increasingly positive, and Wiltja now has students who want to return for a second year, and who have expanded their options for the future to include education, a career and community leadership. In 1993 six of the eight students who attended for the full year in 1992 are returning for a second year.

As the parent community is so far away the girls with the support of the Wiltja A.E.W.s comprise the A.S.S.P.A. Committee. (Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness). This enables them to participate in discussions and decisions which affect them and helps them become more confident planners and decision makers whilst developing their understanding of formal mainstream meeting procedures .

Currently only one hostel is available and so only girls are involved in the Program. Hopefully a complementary boys' program will be available in the future as this is an Anangu priority.

Positive feedback from communities and teachers on the lands about girls returning clearly supports Wiltja's continuance and expansion, and points to the need to include boys. Anecdotal evidence indicates long term Wiltja students return to the communities more confident and more able in English and many other subject areas, and the children of past Wiltja students are regular school attenders on the lands .

One of the challenges remaining however is what to do with Wiltja students who return to their communities after one, two or three years attending school in Adelaide but who have not completed S.A.C.E. Post secondary school options need to be available for these students.

The Wiltja Program enjoys very strong widespread support in the communities. This is largely a result of the dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of past and present staff members. The communities are a long way from Wiltja, but parent and community participation is strong as evidenced by the number of parents who visit Wiltja, community members

who travel down and participate and support the programmes offered and the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee which is recognised as the school council of Wiltja. The importance of involving the communities in the Program is further evidenced by the position of key teacher at Wiltja for parent and community participation.

Wiltja is one model for providing access to mainstream education and urban cultural immersion within a limited time frame. Communities as far afield as Blackstone in Western Australia and Finke in the Northern Territory have sent people down on formal and informal visits to see what is done at Wiltja and there have been indications that they desire to be included in the Program. Despite its uncertain future Wiltja has enormous potential. The ultimate objective is for Anangu students to return to their communities with the mainstream educational skills necessary to make self determination a reality. It cannot work without strong support from the communities involved but with their support the possibilities are enormous.



INFORMATION PACKAGE

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)/YWIP Secretariat, has prepared preliminary information material, on a cost recovery basis to help support activities for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People.

THE PACKAGE (KIT) — Posters, Activities and Information

The complete package consists of
a folder,

list or contents,

a letter from the Prime Minister,

an invitation from the Chairperson of ATSIC,

a bookmark,

promotion stickers,

a booklet on selected Commonwealth Portfolio activities,

suggested reading,

information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags,

suggestions for things to do to help plan activities,

a sample media release to help promote your activities,

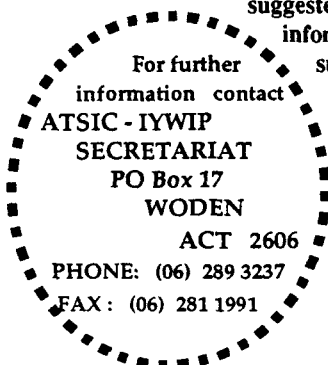
a brochure from the United Nations,

information on ATSIC and a list of contacts,

a planner/calendar to help plan the year's events.

a map of the world's indigenous peoples and

a large poster



**1993
INTERNATIONAL YEAR
FOR THE WORLD'S
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**



'A NEW PARTNERSHIP'

1993 International Year for the
World's Indigenous People
Young people all over Australia are
encouraged to take part in the celebrations.

Design a bumper sticker
Catchy slogans Tell the story
1993 the International Year
of the World's Indigenous
People

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE - A NEW PARTNERSHIP

Run a poster competition
Schools and community
groups could run a poster
competition, but get
ideas firstly by inviting
Indigenous people to speak
to your group. Run the
competition and then
invite your speakers
back as judges!

Story telling

Invite indigenous people to your school
or community meeting to tell the
stories that explain the histories and
beliefs of Aboriginals and Torres Strait
Islanders. See who can tell the best
stories in your class, without writing
them down. Discover how stories change
when retold by many people.

Write a play

Find out how indigenous people live by talking
to them about lifestyles, and cultures, then script
a short play which shows the differences and
similarities between your life and theirs.
Act out the scenes with an audience that includes
the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders
who helped you.

Organise a Celebration

Come together with local
Aboriginals and Torres Strait
Islanders and organise a
party to mark the Year of the
Indigenous People celebrate
with the food, music and
dance of Australia's first
people

Murals

Design and paint a mural
at school or in local your
community, get Permission first.
"A New Partnership" for
Aboriginal Australia,
Torres Strait Islanders
and all Australians

FLAG PAINTING

Paint the Aboriginal - Torres Strait
Islander and Australian flags.
Fly them together in your
classroom - school grounds,
community centre or in
your home.