



Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre

INDIGENOUS DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Report to the Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure
South Australia

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PREFACE

This report was commissioned by the Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure (DTEI) South Australia as part of the preliminary design process for the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. This report aims to provide deeper understandings of the Indigenous design issues for the design team including preliminary comments to inform the design process which are not exhaustive. This report is not intended to replace direct consultation or discussion on various aspects of the design.

This report was prepared simultaneously to reports prepared as part of the design processes for Aboriginal Children and Family Centres at Christies Beach and Ceduna. Sections for each report may include similar material where appropriate.

The terms 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' have been used throughout this report to refer inclusively to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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INTRODUCTION

This project involves the design and construction of an Aboriginal Children and Family Centre to be located on an identified site within the existing Hincks Avenue Primary School.

The final report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Commonwealth of Australia 1991) outlined the issues facing Aboriginal people in contemporary Australian society. Australian Aboriginal people generally experience poorer socio-economic and health status and lower levels of educational achievement than those experienced by the non-Indigenous population with resultant social and family issues. The *Bringing Them Home Report* highlighted the issues confronting Aboriginal families (Australian Human Rights Commission 1997). The report outlined the successive government policies which removed Aboriginal children from their families, resulting in an erosion of the integrity of the family and an undermining of the strength and capabilities of the Aboriginal community. The breakdown of Aboriginal family structure and a decline in parenting skills is generally viewed as trans-generational and the practice of removing children from their families over several generations has impacted attachment and parenting capacity in the Aboriginal community (Australian Human Rights Commission 1997).

One strategy for tackling Aboriginal disadvantage has been through education. From a health perspective, it has been found for every year of education an Aboriginal person receives one additional year is added to their life (NSW Department of Education and Training 2004) and education is seen as a mechanism to close the 17-year gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal life expectancies and improve the socio economic position of Aboriginal people in Australian society.

Participation in education from an early age can have a number of benefits. The Centre for Community Child Health (2000) reviewed studies of various methods in addressing the risk factors in early childhood associated with adverse outcomes and found that participation in a preschool program promotes cognitive development in the short term and prepares children to succeed in school (Boocock 1995) and preschool experience appears to be a stronger positive force in the lives of low income than advantaged children (Boocock 1995). The Victorian Government Department of Human Services stated:

Preschool is important because it provides developmentally appropriate programs that further the social, emotional, cognitive, physical and language development of children and encourages the involvement of families. International and Australian research indicates that attending preschool improves the quality of children's experiences in their later schooling. Participation in preschool ensures children establish foundations to assist them for life. Unfortunately, a disproportionate number of Aboriginal children do not have this early experience of such literacy precursors. They do not attend playgroups, early child care or preschools and might be severely disadvantaged in comparison with other ... children when they enter school after the age of five. Universal community agencies, such as preschools and schools, are uniquely positioned to effectively support parents in the task of raising children (Victorian Government Department of Human Services 2004 p. 30).

There were also other methods in addressing risk factors in early childhood that appear to have positive impacts. The Centre for Community Child Health (2000) found that:

- Maternal employment and participation in out-of-home care, even during infancy, appear not to harm children and may yield benefits if the child care is regulated and of high quality (Boocock 1995).
- Early childhood and development programs can produce large increases in IQ during the early childhood years and sizeable, persistent improvement in reading and maths, decreased need for grade retention and special education, and improved socialisation for disadvantaged children (Barnett 1995).
- Anticipatory guidance, a common feature of child health surveillance programs, can improve nutrition, some aspects of behaviour and development, and parenting (Dworkin 1998).
- Home visiting programs can be effective, particularly for very disadvantaged women, but there have been great difficulties in implementing and operating these programs (The Future of Children 1999).
- Group-based parenting education programs, particularly those taking a behavioural approach, can produce positive changes in children's behaviour (Barlow 1997).
- Community based group education programs for parents produce more changes in children's behaviour and are more cost effective and user friendly than individual clinic-based programs (Barlow 1997).

- Early intervention programs for children with a developmental delay or disability increasingly focus on broad family outcomes rather than specific developmental gains for children (Guralnick and Neville 1997).

The Council of Australian Governments has committed \$564.6 m over six years to improve Indigenous early childhood development across Australia. In partnership with the Commonwealth Government, the Department of Education and Children's Services (South Australia) have taken the role as the lead agency in establishing four Aboriginal Children and Family Centres in various locations in South Australia (Government of South Australia date unknown). The development of Aboriginal Children and Family Centres intends to provide a 'one stop shop' that delivers the programs and services to address the needs of the child from birth to 5 years and their family.

The Aboriginal Children and Family Centres will be developed as:

...integrated centres ...offer[ing] care, education, health services, family support and community development activities (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 2).

The design of the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre provides an opportunity to make a statement on the importance of education and caring for children.

There is also the capacity for the Centre to meet the socio-spatial needs of Aboriginal users. Indigenous people have differing and varying environmental needs. Understanding and translating the significant aspects of the culturally specific responses of Indigenous people to educational settings may produce educational environments which better meet the needs of groups and minimise the adverse effects commonly caused by poorly designed environments. For this to occur, a proficient knowledge of the relevant cultural properties of people, landscapes, objects, and buildings is a pre-requisite. A lack of such knowledge can potentially lead to culturally inappropriate design with resultant problems for the users. Environments can act as stress-modulating devices: preferences for particular environments can be partly interpreted in terms of stress reduction and poorly designed environments may lead the users to experience high degrees of stress. To successfully design environments for Aboriginal peoples, designers must understand the nature of Aboriginal lifestyles. It is not the aim to identify an architectural solution for individual behaviours, but to highlight a series of behaviours and the associated issues for the design of the project which may require consideration by a designer. At the same time, the design of appropriate educational environments may provide opportunities to address socio-economic marginalisation.

To understand the principles of designing in this context, it must be understood that Aboriginal child rearing practices vary significantly from the western tradition. Penman (2006) summarises reports of Aboriginal attitudes to children and child-rearing practices for Aboriginal people living traditional or semi-traditional lifestyles and those in an urban environment. Common themes include that:

- Children are not viewed as helpless and in need of adult-imposed routines.

As Penman notes Yapa¹ and Anangu:²

...see babies and young children as small adults who have a set place in the family and community with all the responsibilities of law and culture. This is reflected in how they are addressed from the very beginning - for example, as 'my young auntie' or 'my mother again' (Penman 2006 p. 33).

- Children are kept close and their needs met as they arise.

For example, Penman (2008) notes:

Anangu and Yapa children sleep, eat and play whenever and wherever they choose. If babies cry they are immediately picked up and held, it is considered cruel to do otherwise. Furthermore, the Kardiya (non-Aboriginal) practice of putting babies and young children to sleep in a room on their own is considered inhumane. Yapa children never sleep on their own, and it is rarely a quiet environment for sleeping because they are always with their mother and other family members (Priest 2008 p. 128).

- Children are cared for by the whole extended family.
For Yolngu, looking after children meant they were not left alone, that family members spent time with them, they were washed, kept clean and well fed, they were given what they wanted, and they were taught ceremony and singing. This looking after has to be done by the whole (extended) family: it is everyone's responsibility, but especially that of the mother and father (Penman 2006 p. 34).
- Cultural learning is on-going.

Penman (2006) concludes that traditional child-rearing practices are still used and valued and that the core of these values and practices are obvious in urban settings and states:

...while these traditional practices are being challenged and, in some instances, broken down by mainstream non-Indigenous culture, there is the capacity for them to re-flourish (*ibid* p. 35).

The Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre has the capacity to provide a setting that supports Aboriginal child-rearing practices, the complex family and kin relationships, and the on-going education provided by different community members. They may accommodate particular practices. For example, an existing child-care centre has adapted their sleeping area based on Indigenous sleeping practices.

[i]nstead of using cots, the centre has baskets on the floor and babies and young children choose when they want to sleep, crawling in and out of the baskets as they desire (Priest 2005 p. 22).

This project also presents excellent opportunities to address the often neglected design issues for Aboriginal peoples with the potential for the building to be designed, structured and staffed to promote and facilitate the enhancement of Indigenous wellness and provide improved outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.

¹ 'Yapa' means 'the people' (as distinct from animals, land, plants) in Warlpiri language (traditional lands located north and north-west of Alice Springs, Northern Territory) (Priest et al 2008).

² 'Anangu' (*alt sp* Anangu or Amangu) is the Western Desert language word for 'Aboriginal person'. The word 'Anangu' has come to be closely associated with the Western Desert language speaking people (e.g. Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Southern (Titjikala) Luritja, Pintupi Luritja, Ngaanyatjarra and Ngaatjatjarra) who use it to the extent that it is now commonly used to refer to them, both by non-Aboriginal people and the speakers themselves. Used in this way, the term appears to be never used to refer to any traditional grouping but rather to a collection of Western Desert language speaking people (Goddard 1992; Glass and Hackett 2003).

PART 1: PRECEDENTS AND 'BEST PRACTICE' DESIGN*The Design of Early Learning, Child-care and Children and Family Centres for Aboriginal People*

There is a wealth of material about policy and programs related to Aboriginal families and children: however there is a paucity of literature that specifically addresses the physical design for various services (Weeks 2004 p. 30) and material that evaluates the success of different environments.

A wide range of work related to Aboriginal early learning and child-care centres and children and family centres was examined to identify design precedents and examples of best practice. The information fell into two main categories:

- reports of Aboriginal views of what works and what doesn't, and of practices and beliefs that may have physical design implications, and
- images and descriptions of buildings.

This review focuses on Australian work but also includes examples from New Zealand and Canada. Both countries have examples of early childhood programs that cater for Indigenous children and their families, with similar aims, namely improving health and education outcomes. Often the New Zealand and Canadian models have additional aims such as the maintenance (or renewal) of culture and language.

In New Zealand, the *Te Kohanga Reo* ('language nest') centres began in the 1980s in response to fears that Māori language and culture was being lost. The centres cater for children aged 0 - 6 years of age with immersion language and cultural education. The centres are child-focused, community run and have had more than 60,000 children 'graduate'. These centres are seen as one of the most important Māori initiatives in recent decades.³

In Canada, the *Generative Curriculum Model* involves a team of university-based researchers and First Nation Elders delivering training to community members in early childhood care and development. The model is community-based and designed to incorporate cultural practices, values, language and spirituality.⁴

One of the central ideas of these approaches is that traditional values, culture and knowledge alongside the benefits of western education and health services.

The Warrki Jarrinjaku project team believe that if service models respect the cultural integrity of Indigenous communities then health and wellbeing indices for Indigenous people will improve. To do this, there must be 'both ways learning' (Penman 2006 p. 18).

Conceptions of Quality

A number of researchers have investigated Aboriginal attitudes to child-care and ideas regarding what constitutes 'quality' (Priest 2005; Hutchins 2007; 2009; Bowes 2010). Hutchins (2009) identified several different conceptions:

- A safe place,
- A respectful place,
- A child-centred place,
- A place that supports Indigenous cultures, and
- A culturally-safe place.

³ For more information see <http://www.kohanga.ac.nz/>

⁴ For more information see <http://www.fnpp.org/fnppov.htm>

Bronwyn Coleman-Sleep, a Gugada (*alt sp.* Kokatha, Kokata) woman says:
Important things to look at and make happen in an Indigenous child care service from an Indigenous way of seeing things are:

- Time,
- Space,
- Relationships,
- Family,
- Tjukulpa⁵ and
- Children's learning and giving and getting messages from other people

(Coleman-Sleep quoted in Priest, Coleman-Sleep et al 2005 p. 30). Coleman-Sleep described 'best practice' in terms of what the child care service environment stating:

[t]he environment needs to be uncluttered/not 'junked up', relaxed, friendly, warm, and trusting giving a feeling of being free and makes a person want to do things and learn (Priest 2005 p. 32).

Hutchins states "...culture is at the core of high-quality Indigenous services, without the acknowledgment and respecting of culture there is nothing" (Hutchins 2009 p. 15). This reflects the findings of Bowes et al (2010). They investigated the reasons for low representation of Aboriginal children in child-care and found that:

...the most highly discussed reason for not participating was lack of recognition of Aboriginal culture and negative attitudes towards Indigenous families (Bowes 2010).

This is a recurring theme in the literature: organisations that offer services to Aboriginal people need to recognise, respect and reflect Aboriginal culture (Bowes 2010; Hutchins 2007; Priest, Coleman-Sleep et al. 2005).

Signs of culture can be 'concrete and explicit' or 'implicit and subconscious' (Terreni 2003). It is the explicit signs of culture that we are likely to see referenced in examples of Aboriginal pre-schools and family and children centres in architectural books, magazines, and the websites of architectural firms. Features such as the physical form of the building, the materials used, the internal layout, colours and artwork are routinely depicted in images and textual descriptions of buildings. In contrast to explicit signs of culture, Terreni (2003) maintains that:

...the *implicit and subconscious* assumptions individuals hold about existence determine the beliefs, norms and attitudes of a culture. These lie beneath the concrete and explicit manifestations of the culture and are often more difficult to identify or be aware of (Terreni 2003).

This is certainly the case with representations of architecture where it is more difficult to illustrate these implicit signs of culture - the nuances of family relationships and obligations, avoidance behaviour,⁶ spirituality, law and custom etc. These issues may be manifest in the process of design (collaboration) and in the spatial relationships that underlie the design but need explanation to the observer.

⁵ Meaning the principles and practices handed down from generation to generation.

⁶ In many Aboriginal cultures, kinship rules dictate certain relatives must avoid one another, thereby strictly controlling personal relationships. The Australian Legal Reform Commission (1987) state that as children reach adolescence, brothers and sisters are expected to behave in a reserved manner towards one another. Similarly, brothers-in-law are expected to adopt a rather formal attitude to one another and maintain a degree of physical distance from one another (Fryer-Smith 2002). Fryer-Smith states:

The strongest kinship avoidance rule is that which exists between a man and his mother-in-law. In its strictest form this rule prohibits a man and his mother-in-law from seeing or speaking to one another, and even from uttering each other's name. The apparent purpose of this rule is to prevent a woman and her mother competing for the affection of the same man: there may be a risk of such competition where a man is approximately the same age as his wife's mother (Fryer-Smith 2002 p. 2.13).

Precedents: Pre-Schools, Kindergartens, Child and Family Centres

The precedents in the following pages were sourced from architectural journals and websites. The buildings often display explicit signs of Aboriginal culture in their form, the colours and symbolisms used and may provide visual statements about the importance to Aboriginal people of education, maintaining culture and caring for children.

In each of these precedents, collaboration with local Aboriginal people was an important component in the development of the design.

Kulai Aboriginal Preschool

The Kulai Preschool is located in Coffs Harbour, New South Wales and was completed as an extension to an existing preschool.

The architects state:

[t]he aim was to create an environment in which Aboriginal values and culture could be taught in a preschool context. The design is focused on providing a generous and organically shaped envelope in which the activities take place. The internal spaces were intended to give a strong sense of shelter and security, a feeling of roundness and a gentle flow of movements. The organic shape of the floor plan was inspired by Aboriginal paintings of Echidnas, which is the meaning of the word Kulai. Curved walls and a curved ridge beam form a wavy roof. A forest of tree trunks holds up the roof (Schimminger Architects 2011).



Figure 1: Kulai Aboriginal Preschool, Coffs Harbour (Architect Schimminger Architects) (Photograph: Schimminger Architects).

The Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School

The Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School is located in Picton, south of Perth, Western Australia and was designed by Edgar Idle Wade Architects. The architects note that:

[f]lora, fauna, art, music, performance, dance, language, fire and food - all elements that have been clearly used to define the place as a Noongar place for the children, the elders and the Bunbury community at large. Colours and textures of the land provide a back drop to an enriching learning environment, together with the maintaining and re-establishment of the bushland setting {Edgar Idle Wade Architects 2004 p. 20}.

The architects consulted with the Noongar community to represent their “aspirations and visions” and to “engender a sense of ownership.” Aboriginal culture has a central place at Djidi Djidi and to emphasise this, the architects have placed the cultural centre (offering music, art, language and large hall) in the middle of the school.



Figure 2: Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School (Photograph: Edgar Idle Wade Architects).



Figure 3: Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School (Photographs: Edgar Idle Wade Architects)

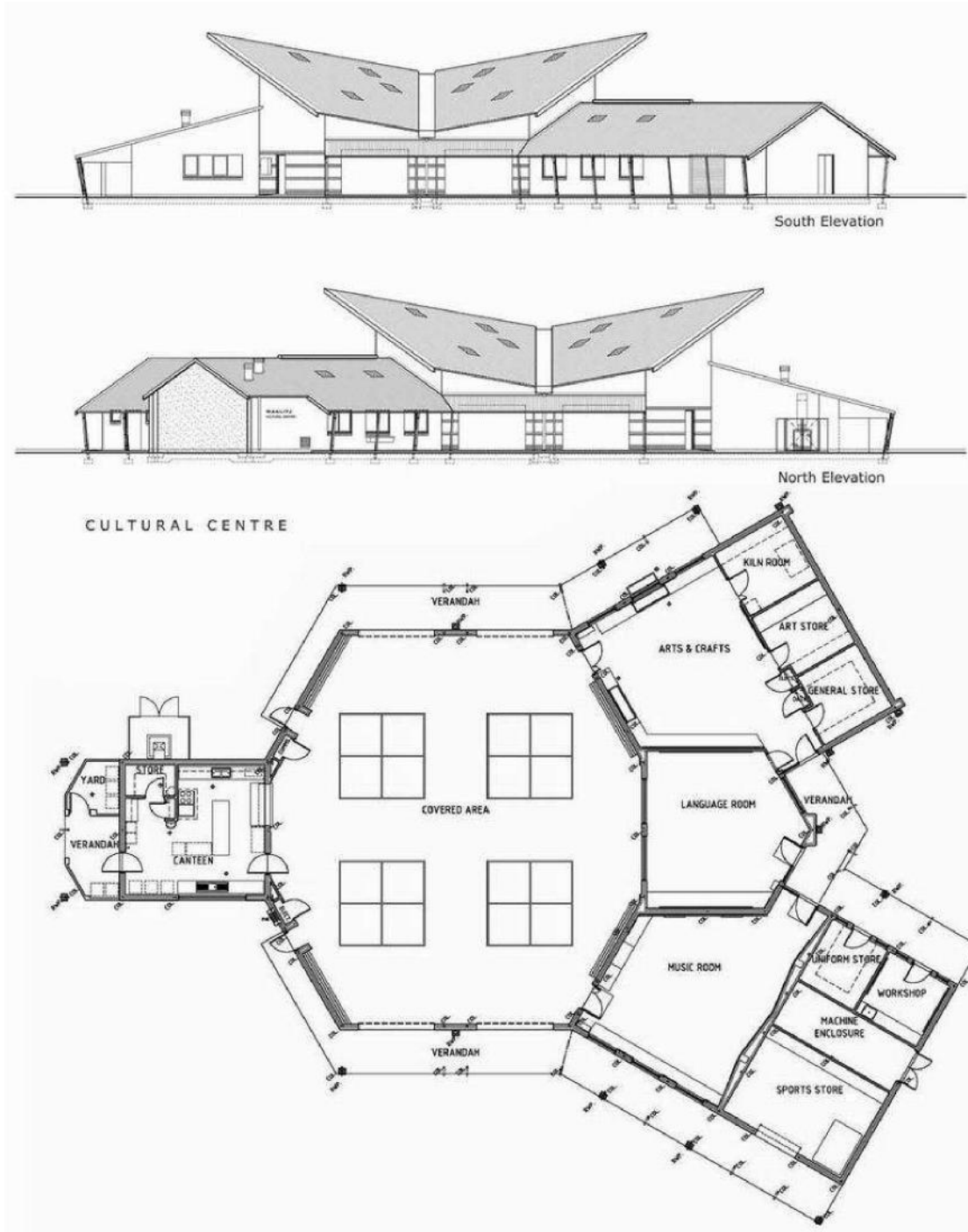


Figure 4: Plans and Elevations, Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School (Plans: Edgar Idle Wade Architects).

Waimea Kohanga Reo Victory School

The Waimea Kohanga Reo Victory School is a development under the Te Kohanga Reo or 'language nest' model and consists of a transformation of an existing hall in Nelson, New Zealand. The renovation incorporates symbols of Māori traditions and legends with a stained glass window, floor decorations and timber fretwork. The existing hall has been transformed to a "Marae inspired whare⁷ abounding with the Māori legends of the Creation" (Jerram, 2007).



Figure 5 Waimea Kohanga Reo Victory School (Photograph: Jerram, Baker and Barron Architects).



Figure 6: Waimea Kohanga Reo Victory School (Photograph: Jerram, Baker and Barron Architects).

⁷ 'Whare' is the Māori word for house. In the ethno architectural form, whare were traditionally small with a tiny door and as they were only considered as sleeping houses, the building was rarely tall enough for a person to stand upright. The ethno architectural form consisted of a wooden frame with walls and roof constructed of tightly woven dry grass and flax.

Mnjikaning First Nation Early Childhood Education Centre

The Mnjikaning First Nation Early Childhood Education Centre is located in Rama, Ontario and designed by Teeple Architects. The architects state that:

A circular playground is scribed onto the landscape. It forms the focal point of the design. The centre arcs gently about this central point with all playrooms facing eastward, overlooking this space. The building is envisioned as a canopy that is fixed to the ground along the road, while opening out to the playground along the opposite side. Indigenous mythical beliefs are subtly woven into the design; including the Circle of Life, the Fish Face and the association of children with the easterly axis of the Cardinal wheel (Teeple Architects, 2011).



Figure 7: Mnjikaning First Nations Early Childhood Education Centre (Photograph: Teeple Architects).



Figure 8: Mnjikaning First Nations Early Childhood Education Centre (Photograph: Teeple Architects).

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto

The Native Child and Family Services of Toronto Centre was designed by Levitt Goodman Architects. The project consists of the refurbishment of a four storey building in Toronto to contain a range of services for urban Aboriginal children and families.

The architects collaborated with Aboriginal artists, a graphic designer and a landscape architect to define the centre with art, environmental graphics, natural materials and plantings that are native to the Great Lakes region. These features give the building its cultural identity and also soften its institutional nature (Minner 2011).

Bozikovic notes:

[a]n important aspect of the building is the incorporation of a Longhouse near the lobby, and healing lodge and fire circle in the rooftop garden. These spaces traditionally accommodate important First Nation gatherings. In this building they have been given a modern interpretation. The Longhouse is constructed from computer-designed cedar lamellar sections. ...As you enter, you smell the sage and sweet grass that are burned during meetings and counselling sessions. The light comes from pendants ...that are made with burnt-out fluorescent tubes – a 21st-century substitute for the campfires that would traditionally burn within (Bozikovic 2010).



Figure 9: Reception area - Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (Photograph: Jesse Colin Jackson).



Figure 10: The Children and Family Centre in Toronto has incorporated healing lodge, a fire circle and native planting in rooftop garden (Photograph: Jesse Colin Jackson).



Figure 11: Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (Photographs: Ben Rahn).

Mana Tamariki, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Mana Tamariki was established in late 1989 as a te reo⁸ Māori speaking unit with the principle aim of developing Māori language skills in young children and their parents. The design incorporates Māori ethno architectural forms with themes commonly seen in marae⁹ such as a gabled archway faced with split ponga trunks; pou (pillars) around the courtyard and the carved figure with paepae (seats) at the front. Open central spaces were also a feature of the design. The built environment is linked to natural surroundings which are utilised for activities such as outdoor learning, sport, and hangi (Ministry of Education New Zealand 2006).



Figure 12: The playground at Mana Tamariki, Palmerston North is shared with the local community (Source: Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2006).

⁸ 'Te reo' literally means the language.

⁹ In Māori usage, the marae is technically the open space in front of a whareniui or meeting house (literally 'big house'). However, it is generally used to refer to the whole complex, including the buildings and the open space. An unambiguous term for the area in front of the whareniui is marae ātea. This area is used for pōwhiri - welcome ceremonies featuring oratory. The meeting house is the locale for important meetings, sleepovers, and craft and other cultural activities. The term used for the speaker's bench is paepae. The wharekai (dining hall) is used primarily for communal meals, but other activities may be carried out there. Many of the words associated with marae in tropical Polynesia are retained in the Māori context. For example, the word paepae refers to the bench where the speakers sit; this means it retains its sacred and ceremonial associations. The Marae can have special occasions such as weddings and funerals held in it, a Marae can also differ in size with some being a bit bigger than a double garage and some being as big a town hall or bigger.



Figure 13: Natural light and indoor/outdoor flow at Mana Tamariki, Palmerston (Source: Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2006).



Figure 14: Open central spaces are a feature of the design, as is the linkage of the built campus with its natural surroundings which are used for outdoor learning, sport, and hangi. Te Kura-a-iwi o Whakatapuranga Rua Mano (Source: Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2006).

Existing Aboriginal Children and Family Centres in South Australia

There are several existing Aboriginal childcare or parenting centres in South Australia servicing the needs of Aboriginal children and families. Examples include the Kurna Plains Early Childhood Centre, Kura Yerlo Children's Centre (Largs Bay), and Minya Bunhii (Ceduna). It appears that these precedents have not been specifically designed to take the socio-spatial or cultural needs of Aboriginal users into account. For the most part, Aboriginal users have attempted to change the environments by layering the environments with Aboriginal signs, colours and symbols (see below). The significance and appropriateness of the particular symbols and signs to the specific users are unknown.¹⁰



Figure 15: Children's sleeping room and outdoor area, Kura Yerlo Children's Centre (Largs Bay), where the environment has been acculturated with commonly used Aboriginal colours and symbols such as the Aboriginal flag.

Two projects, the Kurna Plains Family Centre, Elizabeth and Tinyeri Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting, Murray Bridge have been constructed under the same funding as this project. Another, project Pukatja Aboriginal Children and Family Centre is currently under construction.

Kurna Plains Family Centre, Elizabeth

This facility was one of the dedicated Family Centres developed for Aboriginal people in South Australia. It is co-located on a site with existing facilities (i.e. Kurna Plains Childcare Centre, Kurna Plains Preschool, and Kurna Plains School). The prefabricated building (reminiscent of architectural types found on remote Aboriginal communities in South Australia) also houses services for the local council. The project provides useful lessons for the design team of this project. According to anecdotal information, a breakdown in communications with the Aboriginal community led to adequate consultation in the project with subsequent design compromises being made. Deficiencies are evident in various areas. Waiting and reception areas designed are of an insufficient size and lack the socio-spatial aspects required by Aboriginal users. This has led to static security measures being installed in the post-construction period to provide staff with adequate security to enable them to handle stressed or aggressive clients. The crèche area does not have a visual link to the program area which appears to present operational difficulties. There are insufficient storage areas and no external area for community functions. The children's and program areas do not appear to meet

¹⁰ It should be noted while the use of the Aboriginal flag to acculturate environments is very common across Australia; the flag is protected by copyright and should only be reproduced in accordance with the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968* or with the permission of Mr Harold Thomas (Australian Government 2011). Permission however is not required to fly the Australian Aboriginal Flag.

the needs of the users and there are considerable constraints in the operation of the facility.



Figure 16: Kurna Plains Family Centre, Elizabeth (Adjacent to the Kurna Plains School) (Photograph: Grant).

Tinyeri Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting, Murray Bridge
 Tinyeri Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting, Murray Bridge was completed in 2010 (architects Hardy Milazzo). The centre is located on a discrete site on the easterly aspect of the Murray Bridge South Primary School. The centre was always recognised as an Aboriginal centre due to the high percentage of Aboriginal enrolments, the brief did not direct architects to address the cultural and socio-spatial needs of Aboriginal children needs in the design. While this created some limitations in the design, it is extremely important to note that staff and the Aboriginal community had input into the design and are extremely proud of their accomplishments including the Aboriginal influences throughout the complex.

The Centre has a large open reception and waiting area. The staff room is accessible from the reception point and functions as a community drop in area. Clients are distinctly directed to the family and children's services areas from the reception. The majority of the building is designed to operate as a pre-school facility. Co-located to the preschool facility is an occasional care area, sleeping/program room, storage and children's ablutions. A kitchen and wet/dry play areas form part of the large children's program area. There are several external areas for children. A discrete outdoor dining area is located on the southerly aspect of the building. The play areas are located on the westerly aspect. A bike track is located as a discrete area from other children's play areas.

Cultural representation is made within the centre through the colour scheme with Ngarrindjeri cultural beliefs and plant life being represented through the use of purple and green (purple representing the colour of native hibiscus and green providing a connection to outdoors). Staff at the preschool noted that the design of the Centre was broadly based on 'Pen Green principles'¹¹ where children are encouraged to develop a sense of value and are connected through play. They had hoped to instill a sense of calm through the centre. The design team used natural materials where possible.

There are a number of facilities within the family services section of the building. There is one shared office space, two consulting rooms (one operating as child therapy room), an access toilet and a community meeting space equipped with a kitchen. The northerly external aspect of the building is to be developed as a community space at a future time.



Figure 17: Children's Areas, Pen Green Centre for Children and their Families, Northamptonshire (Photographs: Pen Green Development, Training, Research Base and Leadership Centre).

There are lessons to be learnt from the development. The auditory performance of the children's program space may not suit the needs of people with fluctuating hearing loss (prevalent in the Aboriginal community), the air-conditioning units could have been located more sensitively and a more thoughtful choice or placement of fencing (perhaps with accompanying planting) may have diminished its visual impact.¹²

¹¹ For further information on Pen Green Development, Training, Research Base and Leadership Centre see <http://www.pengreen.org/pengreencenter.php>

¹² Note the fencing used in this project is to the DECS children's standard.



Figure 18: Tinyeri Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting, Murray Bridge (Photographs: Grant).



Figure 19: Reception/Waiting Areas and Staff Room, Tinyeri Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting, Murray Bridge (Photographs: Grant).

Pukatja Aboriginal Children and Family Centre

The Pukatja Aboriginal Children and Family Centre is currently planned for construction at Pukatja (formerly Ernabella), an Aboriginal community in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in far north South Australia. The new Children and Family Centre will be linked to the existing Child Care Centre and will match the colour and design of the existing buildings. The following images of the existing preschool were located online.



Figure 20: External and internal images of the Pukatja Child Parent Centre (Photographs: The Anangu Lands Paper Tracker).



Figure 21: External images, Pukatja Child Parent Centre (Photographs: The Anangu Lands Paper Tracker).

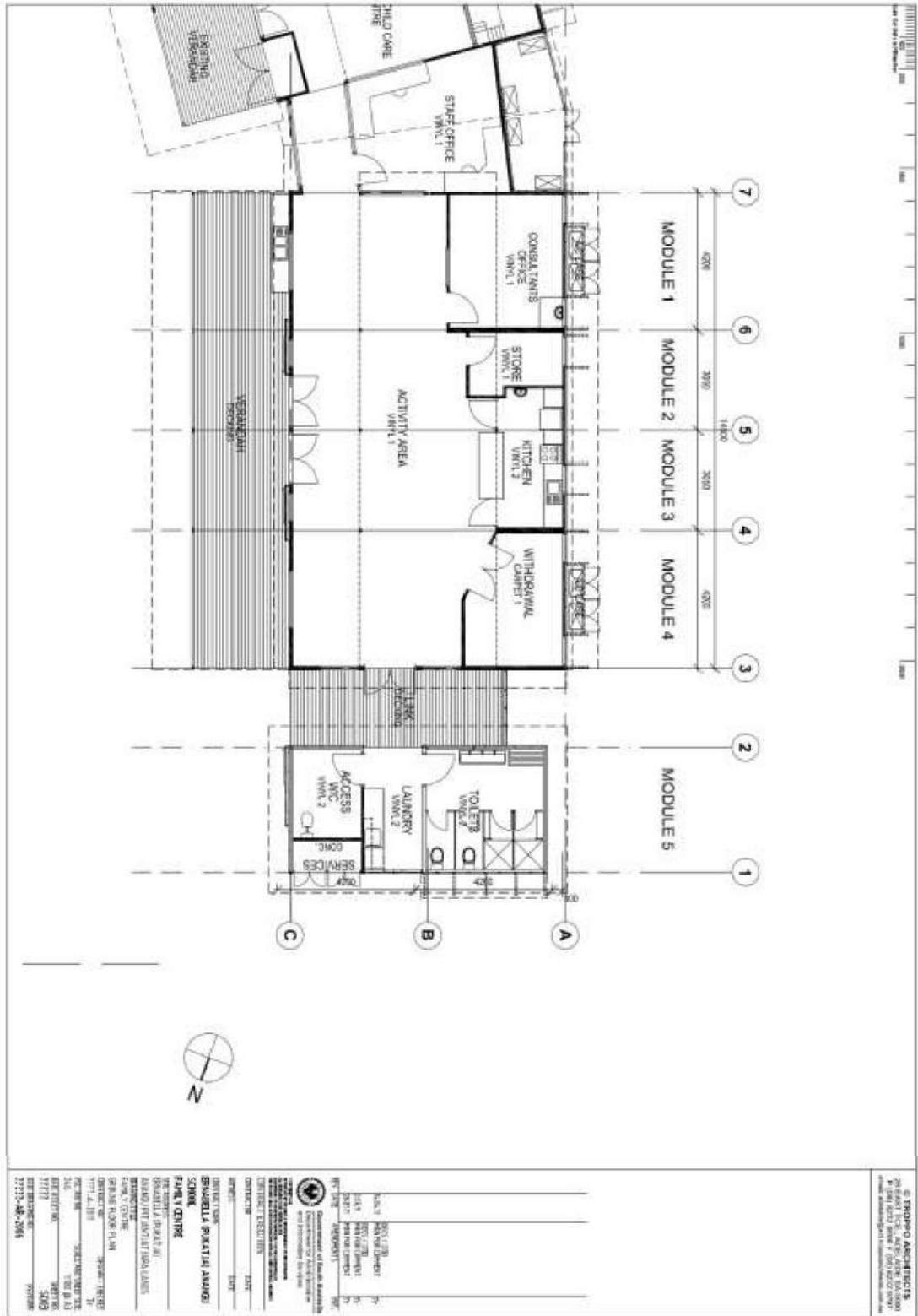


Figure 22: Plans Pukatja (Ernabella) Aboriginal Children and Family Centre to be linked to existing Child Care Centre (Source DECS).

PART 2: SITE ANALYSIS

Introduction

The site for the proposed Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre lies within the boundaries of the city of Whyalla. Whyalla is located 388 kilometres from Adelaide and 76 kilometres south of Port Augusta on the Spencer Gulf.



The town area covers an area of 4.1 kilometres, the largest provincial city in South Australia and one of the three major centres on the Eyre Peninsula. Whyalla is divided into five 'suburbs': Whyalla, Whyalla Playford, Whyalla Norrie, Whyalla Stuart, and Whyalla Jenkins. Whyalla is driven by the local steel and petroleum industries and has a number of other industries including: fabrication and engineering industries, commercial salt and beta-carotene production, tourism and aquaculture (City of Whyalla 2009). A number of education facilities are located with the city (including campuses of the University of South Australia and TAFE). Whyalla has also established itself as a service centre and regional shopping hub for the northern and eastern parts of Eyre Peninsula (City of Whyalla 2009).

Whyalla has a relatively flat and weathered landscape bounded by Hummock Hill, Mount Laura and Mount Young (all primarily composed of sandstone). The landscape is characteristically includes low growing salt bush (*Atriplex vesicaria*) and blue bush (*Maireana sedifolia*). Trees included casuarinas (*Casuarina cristata*), sugarwood or false sandalwood (*Myoporum platycarpum*), myall (*Acacia sowdenii*) and red mallee (*Eucalyptus socialis*) (Lucas 1991). Whyalla has a semi-arid climate with an average annual rainfall of approximately 270 mms (Bureau of Meteorology 2010). The area averages around 65 rainy days per year with the remaining 300 days being usually clear and sunny with high evaporation rates (Friends of Whyalla Conservation Park 1991). Wind direction is predominantly southerly due to the sea-breeze generated by the warmth of inland South Australia and the temperature difference to the waters of Spencer Gulf. The sea-breeze extends up to 20 kilometres inland (Friends of Whyalla Conservation Park 1991).

The City of Whyalla had a population of 21,417 people according to the 2006 census. The Aboriginal population totals approximately 690 people making the proportion of Aboriginal people higher, per head of population (3.6%) than Adelaide (Nunyarra Wellbeing Centre 2007).¹³ The overall population of Whyalla decreased in the period

¹³ A discussion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Whyalla is presented later in this report.

from 1998 to 2006. Slight increases in the population from 2006 onwards are attributed to a development boom. Whyalla has a high concentration of people employed in trades, production and labouring, consistent with the manufacturing industries in the area (Government of South Australia 2008a). Levels of home ownership are well below the State average. There are large areas of Housing Trust housing and almost a quarter of the population occupies public housing (*ibid*).

Site Description

The Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre will be located on a green field site within the grounds of the Hincks Avenue Primary School. The school is bordered by Hincks Avenue, Clutterbuck Street and Schultz Avenue.

Hincks Avenue Primary School is a reception to year seven school located on a relatively large site with a range of existing infrastructure (see Appendix 2) and is described as:

...unique, in that all classrooms are of double size, the ideal physical environment for a range of teaching methodologies. ...A separate administration building is situated in the middle of the campus and includes The Meeting Place where staff, student and parent meetings are held. ...All buildings are both heated and cooled by reverse cycle air conditioners or split systems. All classroom blocks are accessed both by steps and ramps. There is a handicapped toilet situated near the canteen. In 1999 a large double teaching space was fully upgraded to be a computer room. This room is now fully equipped. Along with this we have a large six teacher unit, which in its entirety, is our well-resourced resource centre. Ample play areas are available within the grounds. A large oval, cricket pitch and nets, basketball court and 3 separate adventure play areas exist. [and the]school has a large gymnasium/multipurpose facility (Hincks Avenue Primary School 2010 p. 5 - 7).

The school has an enrolment of up to 240 students (30 Aboriginal students) and 25 staff members. Sixty percent of students at the school are enrolled under the school card scheme¹⁴ and the school is classified as 'disadvantaged' (Hincks Avenue Primary School 2010).



Figure 27: Entrance to Hincks Avenue Primary School on Schultz Avenue.

¹⁴ The School Card Scheme provides financial assistance towards the educational expenses incurred by families at government and non-government schools and who meet the eligibility criteria as low income earners (Department of Education and Children's Services 2011).

A separately managed pre-school is co-located on the school grounds. The pre-school is operated from a transportable building with a designated office, kitchen, children's and adult toilets. The grounds of the pre-school are a combination of bark chips, sand pit, cement and large lawn area (Hincks Avenue Children's Centre and Davison Street Occasional Care 2009). Services provided include a preschool program for children aged four years, pre-entry, three year old Aboriginal program, a multi-cultural playgroup, and a speech and language program (Hincks Avenue Children's Centre and Davison Street Occasional Care 2009). Children transitioning from the preschool do so to various primary schools around Whyalla (Hincks Avenue Children's Centre and Davison Street Occasional Care 2009). It is intended that on the completion of the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre, the Hincks Avenue Children's Centre will be closed and the building demolished. The Centre will remain operational during the construction phase of the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre.



Figure 28: Hincks Avenue Children's Centre is located at the Hincks Avenue Primary School. This centre will be closed and the building demolished when the Whyalla Aboriginal Children's and Family Centre is completed.

The site is located on the north-western corner (corner of Clutterbuck Street and Hincks Avenue) of the school site. It is bounded by roads on the westerly and northerly sides, the school oval on the southerly aspect and the existing pre-school/school play areas on the easterly aspect. The identified site is rectangular running east-west. Some discussion has been had on the appropriateness of this parcel of land with one proposal that a similar parcel of land orientated north-south in same corner of the school be substituted for the project.



Figure 29: Proposed site includes undeveloped corner of the school site. There are a number of mature trees situated along fence line and one mature tree within the site.

A Brief History of the Area

In order to understand the significance of the area to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people it is important to be aware of the historical context of Whyalla and surrounding areas. These will be briefly outlined in this section.



Figure 30: The view from Hummock Hill.

Pre European Aboriginal History

There appears to be information gap relating to Aboriginal heritage and history of the Whyalla region. No all-encompassing Aboriginal cultural heritage survey has been undertaken across the region, which would greatly increase understandings of Aboriginal heritage, history and values in the Whyalla region. There is a small amount of material to draw on regarding pre-European Aboriginal history.

It is known that Aboriginal peoples occupying the Whyalla area were identified as Malkaripangala, a subdivision of Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) (Mazourek 2005). This group occupied the area around Whyalla (meaning 'place of deep water' (Encyclopædia Britannica 2011)) with culturally links to Aboriginal people occupying

Lake Eyre and Lake Torrens regions. Seasonal patterns of mobility occurred based on trading, ceremonial, and kinship obligations and in regard to the maintenance of country. Mobility occurred in small kinship groups potentially providing risk management benefits in an environment with low rainfall and limited supplies of surface water.

It is thought that trading routes allowed goods to be exchanged over large distances. Items traded included raw materials for making everyday goods and some decorative objects. Tools could have been made from quartzite that was readily available in the area. An archaeological study in the Stony Point area demonstrated the existence of stone artifacts in dune areas (Wood 1991). Plant material was used to provide the raw materials for tools such as fish traps and spears. The Barngarla were known to have established fish traps with a timber made 'gates' (the bushes or branches) used instead of stones at the mangrove inlets south of Whyalla. The Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) were also known to 'sing' to the sharks and dolphins at Fitzgerald Bay and Point Lowly to help them to drive the fish towards the shore where they could be either caught in the fish traps or speared (Mazourek 2005). While fish were caught, oysters and shell fish were not included in traditional diets. Larger animals such as kangaroos were hunted for food and clothing (the skins utilised as cloaks). Protein sources included a wide range of birds, smaller animals, including reptiles and eggs. The importance of reptiles as an element of diet is seen in the Dreaming story of the Moon leaving carpet snakes on Hummock Hill so that people would never go hungry. Children assisted women gathering plant foods such as berries, roots and seeds. Plants were also used medicinal purposes to make containers and appear to have used for resins. Learning by generally observational, with children learning hunting skills and other skills while accompanying older people (Foster and Gara 1988).

Post - European History

Dutchman Peter Nuyts sighted Eyre Peninsula in 1627, but the substantial European interaction with the region didn't begin until 1802 when Matthew Flinders spent three months mapping the coastline. Flinders named Hummock Hill on this exploration. Shortly afterwards, Frenchmen Nicholas Baudin and Louis Freycinet visited the area. Sealers and whalers visited the region in the early 1800s, but this industry did not last long, collapsing within a few decades because of depleted stocks. The first permanent European settlement was at Port Lincoln in 1839. Edward John Eyre was the first person to extensively map Eyre Peninsula in the 1840s. By the 1870s much of the region was being grazed. By the middle of the century pastoral leases had been taken out on land in the areas including Iron Knob and the renamed Mount Hummock (The City of Whyalla 2008).

As across other parts of South Australia exposure to tuberculosis, influenza, measles, mumps and chicken pox resulted in decimation among the Aboriginal population in the area (Mattingley and Hampton 1998). Closer European settlement combined with periods of drought meant Aboriginal people were forced to abandon traditional hunting and gathering patterns and were increasingly placed under restrictive Government policies. Family groups moved to European settlements, missions and reserves or depots where food was more readily available. Some Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) families camped at the ration depot established at Iron Knob or at the settlement at Hummock Hill while other Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) families migrated to the outskirts of Port Augusta (Wood 1991). A number of Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) people were moved to the Poonindie Mission (set up at Port Lincoln in 1850). When the Mission was disbanded in 1896 people were sent to Point Pearce Mission.

A number of men found work worked assisting graziers. Some later gained employment on the trans-continental railway line. Some girls worked as domestics for European families. The disruption of traditional life and the reduction in the population led to cessation of many traditional ceremonies and it is reported that the last initiations of Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barnkala) men occurred in the period from 1938 - 39.



Figure 31: Statues of Matthew Flinders holding the sextant, gazing over Spencer Gulf and Louis Freycinet who explored Spencer Gulf in *Le Casuarina*, Jan 1803 located at Whyalla. The statues were produced for 2002 Bicentenary of Flinders' exploration of Spencer Gulf in *HMS Investigator* (Photograph: Grant).

The Development of Modern Day Whyalla

In 1878, iron stone samples were assayed and shown in London. Although there had been earlier mining permits issued, it was not until BHP registered their claim in April 1897 that mining began in earnest. The ore from Iron Knob has a high 68.5% metallic content (Sumerling 2011). It was transported by barge to be used in the Port Pirie smelters. A 33½ mile railway (known as a tramway) was opened in 1901 to transport the ore to the coast. A 900 foot jetty was also built (*ibid*). A small settlement of tents and basic houses began to grow up around the jetty. By 1914, Hummock Hill (as it was then known) included community amenities such as a shop, school, post office, telephone service and the services of a police officer. Water, a scarce commodity was brought in from Port Pirie. BHP also began transporting ore to Newcastle, where it had begun to build its steelworks (The City of Whyalla date unknown: History 1910-1940 date unknown). BHP also provided housing, a gift of a church and medical facilities (Sumerling 2011). Hummock Hill was renamed Whyalla in 1914, when it was proclaimed a town (The City of Whyalla date unknown).

The town continued to grow in accordance with the development of the mining venture. In 1937, the BHP Indenture Act saw an area of land being assigned for the building of a blast furnace and construction of a harbour. The Second World War was a catalyst for the establishment of ship building facilities, with patrol boats being built for the Royal Australian Navy (Sumerling 2011; The City of Whyalla date unknown). In 1944 the Morgan to Whyalla pipe-line was opened, ensuring a steady supply of water for the town (The City of Whyalla date unknown). Although the town was essentially a company town, this was changing with the establishment of the Town Commission in 1944, which included three elected members, three company representatives and government chairperson. After the war, ship building continued, with much of the labour force coming from migrants, many recently arriving from war-torn Europe (*ibid*).

In 1946, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester visited Whyalla as part of celebrations to mark Victoria's Centenary. A photograph is displayed at Hummock Hill indicating the involvement of Aboriginal people in the visit however there appears little background information of the language groupings of the Aboriginal people involved beyond the general proceedings of the visit.



Figure 32: Aboriginal peoples participating in the celebrations as part of the royal visit of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester to Whyalla in 1946.

Encouraged by Premier Sir Thomas Playford, BHP began to build its integrated steel works at Whyalla in 1958. The ship building boom continued with 63 ships being built between 1940 and 1978. The population also grew, with Whyalla being declared a city in 1961 (The City of Whyalla date unknown). By 1976 the population had peaked at almost 34 000 (Sumerling 2011). A second water pipeline from Morgan was also established, as were further community amenities such as schools, shopping centres and medical facilities (The City of Whyalla date unknown). BHP, the Housing Trust of South Australia and private companies such as AV Jennings began housing developments to cater for the rapidly growing population (Sumerling 2011).

In 1976, the economic recession hit Whyalla. The ship building yards were closed in 1978, with the blast furnace closing in 1981 (Sumerling 1981). The lack of employment saw a fall in population, with the 2006 census showing a population of approximately 25 000 (The City of Whyalla date unknown). Although mining and steel production still takes place at Iron Knob and Whyalla, the region has diversified its industry base, with Santos operating a crude oil and LPG facility at near-by Port Bonython and aquaculture at Fitzgerald Bay (The City of Whyalla date unknown).

Cultural Significance

The author has reviewed the available published literature regarding Aboriginal historical, social and cultural knowledge of Whyalla and adjacent areas to assess knowledge which may be used as design generators for the project.

In the first instance, it is appropriate to consider Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) cultural knowledge as the traditional owners of the land for the project. Significant oral traditions of the area include the Seven Sisters and the Rainbow Serpent (Potter & Jacobs 1981).

Curnow (2005) states “Barngarla people share a very close relationship with the landscape of the region and the area is also significant to the cosmology of the local people, other Indigenous groups and beyond”, with the Seven Sisters (or Pleiades constellation) having an integral place in oral tradition and beliefs of the Barngarla. The Seven Sisters story connects Barngarla people to other Aboriginal people in the form of dreaming trail, in this instance connecting people from Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Many interpretations of the Seven Sisters story have similarities and generally relate to the sisters fleeing across the landscape from the unwelcome advances of an unwanted mystic man. The man is known by a number of names (Nijiru and Jula being two of the most common). The mythic man is most commonly associated with the constellation Orion but in more southerly versions with the moon, and various versions end with the women ascending into the sky to become the Pleiades.



Figure 33: The Seven Sisters (or the Pleiades Constellation). The mythology of the Seven Sisters varies but is shared by many Indigenous cultures across the world, including the oral tradition of a number of Aboriginal cultures (Photograph NASA 2009).

Significant sites include Hummock Hill where the moon (portrayed as male) was said to have camped and released carpet snakes. It is also believed that the Seven Sisters came to the base of Hummock Hill, to be closer to the Wimboo the Spider Lady. Their spirits are said to be grounded at the base of the hill and their hand and foot prints are seen in the eroded rock there. Wild Dog Hill, close to Mount Young was apparently the site where Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) boys were said to be taken for initiation rituals (Curnow 2005).



Figure 34: Sacred Site on the foreshore of Whyalla. The eroded rock contains the hand and foot prints of the sisters within the Seven Sisters Dreaming Story (Photograph; Grant).

More detail is provided by Lucas (1991) who draws heavily on the work of Potter and Jacobs (1981). Gara (1989) has observed that the area at the head of Spencer Gulf is noted as a point at which many Dreaming tracks intersect. Dreaming tracks run northward to Central Australia, eastward to the Flinders Ranges and westwards to the Gawler Ranges and the west coast. Important sites are often associated with unusual natural features. One is an unnamed salt lake about eight kilometres northeast of Tregalana homestead. This lake, which receives the drainage from Myall Lake when it is in flood, is believed to be the home of the Rainbow Serpent, which is also seen as the creator of Myall Creek. Soaks and minerals found along the banks of the creek are seen as the places where the great snake came to the surface" (Potter & Jacob 1981 cited in Lucas 1991).

Potter and Jacobs (1981 cited in Lucas 1991, p. 57) also note several journeys of the Moon. In one version the Moon travels down from the north and camps on a chalk hill at Port Augusta, and then travels down the coast through Point Lowly and Stony Point to a black mushroom shaped rock that used to stand in the water below Hummock Hill. The Moon and the Seven Sisters camped for a long time at Hummock Hill and the Moon left carpet snakes on the hill so that people would never go hungry. The group then travelled to Pine Hill, across to Lake Gillies, and Nonning then reached Emu Rocks near Buckelboo. Another version has the Moon going further from Yardea through Yarnia to Tarcoola and east through Roxby Downs, south to Port Augusta, following a chain of waterholes and on to Cowell where there are more high white sand hills, then to Port Lincoln, across to Streaky Bay and back to Yardea. In this way the journey circumscribes the limits of the area traversed by the Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) in their seasonal travels.

There is a great deal of Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) cultural knowledge which may be used as design generators for the project. It may be very pertinent for the designers to also consider the use cultural knowledge from other language groups who may be potential users of the project. In particular, the project may be layered with cultural knowledge from Adnyamatharna (*alt spelling* Adynyamathanha), Gugada (*alt spelling* Kokatha, Kokata) and people from other South Australian language groups. Western Australian groups such as Nyoongars, Yamitji, Wongatha; and groups from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (Anangu and Luritja), New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria who also reside in Whyalla. Indigenous people in Whyalla are fragmented into relatively small family groups and are likely to be urbanised Aboriginal people and may have strong links with their traditional community and a mixture of traditional and modern ways. It may be pertinent to consider layer the oral traditions of

other language groups to local knowledge. It is however, imperative that traditional owners and custodians of cultural knowledge are involved in any process in using cultural knowledge as a design generator for the project.

Identification of Existing Community Capacity

As part of the preparation of this report, the Department of Education and Community Services (DECS) requested that existing Indigenous community capacity in terms of licensed tradespeople, skill sets in other areas of construction, artists and artisans be identified.

There are few Indigenous people engaged in the building trades operating in Whyalla. A carpenter/builder identified was:

Mr Stuart Ed
423 McBride Terrace, Whyalla (Carpenter/Builder)

It may be useful to contact the Aboriginal Workforce Participation Strategy in regard to trainees, apprentices and other tradespeople who could be employed on the project. The contact is:

Mr. Trevor Lovegrove
Senior Consultant
Private Sector Aboriginal Employment
Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology
11 Waymouth Street, Adelaide
Telephone: (08) 8463 5607
Email: trevor.lovegrove@sa.gov.au

The Bungala Aboriginal Corporation operates from Port Augusta and employs Aboriginal people in the Whyalla region on various projects and community works. It may be possible to source skilled labour via the Corporation. Their contact details are:

Bungala Aboriginal Corporation
1-3 Young Street, Port Augusta.
Telephone: (08) 8643 5500
Postal Address: PO Box 1996, Port Augusta, SA 5700 Australia

There are no Aboriginal community art collectives located in Whyalla. The Enabling Group identified a number of Indigenous artists living and working in the local area. These were:

Ms Sonia Champion
41 Quirke Avenue, Whyalla Stuart
Telephone: 0437061347
Medium: Dot Painting
Previous Experience: book illustrations and covers, murals for schools, and kindergartens (e.g. Whyalla Stuart High School, Ramsey Street Kindergarten).
Background: Ms Champion is a Noongar Woman originally from Western Australia who lived in Alice Springs for 25 years before moving to Whyalla 24 years ago.

Ms Laurresha Champion
41 Quirke Avenue, Whyalla Stuart
Telephone: 0417952339
Medium: Dot Painting
Previous Experience: Has completed a number of posters for health promotion.
Background: Ms Champion is a Noongar Woman originally from Western Australia. She has lived in Whyalla for over 20 years.

Ms Vivien Durkay
35 Taylor Street, Whyalla
Telephone: 0437 164 322 Work: (08) 8640 4900
Email: vdurkay@centracarecdpp.org.au
Medium: Dot Painting

A number of other artists were mentioned. These were:

Terry Coleman,
Juanada Coleman,
Chelsea Treloar, and
Lynton Hirschen.

It may be useful to get contact details for this group and discuss other potential artists with the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre Community Coordinator, Ms. Anita Taylor and liaise with the:

Nunyarra Health and Wellbeing Centre
17–27 Tully Street
Whyalla Stuart SA 5608
Telephone: (08) 8649 4366

PART 3: PROFILE OF THE USER GROUP

Introduction

At the 2001 census, it was estimated that there were 22,003 Aboriginal and 778 Torres Strait Islander people living in South Australia (ABS 2002). By 2006, the figure had increased to 24,080 Aboriginal people and 1,045 Torres Strait Islander people (ABS 2007). The increase is partly due to improved identification and enumeration of Indigenous people and high mortality rates, but also represents a resurgence of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. If the growth is projected forward the estimated Aboriginal population of South Australia in 2007 is approximately 26,000 and growing at about 1000 persons per year a growth rate in excess of 3% per annum. The Aboriginal population in South Australia in 2007 is approximately 26,000, with almost 60% under the age of 25 years.

Approximately half of the Aboriginal population in South Australia (12,500) live in the greater metropolitan area with the balance of the population is split evenly between rural centres and the remote areas of the State.

There are slight variations in the total reported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Whyalla. Whyalla's Aboriginal Health Service suggests that the population of Whyalla is approximately 21,417; of whom 690 are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people making the proportion of Indigenous people higher, per head of population than Adelaide (Nunyara Wellbeing Centre 2007). Gregor McTan Research (2006) note that there are difficulties in reporting an accurate and consistent demographic profile of the Indigenous population as the census data relies on self-identification of Aboriginality. However in a conservative projection, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Whyalla constitutes 3.4% (Gregor McTan Research 2006 p. 122) to 3.6% of the total population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006) and from all indications is growing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander users of the project are likely to live locally and may be disadvantaged. Whyalla and the surrounding areas are a mix of 'blue collar' and 'lower middle income' households with significant pockets of under and unemployment. There are indications that a number of Indigenous families in Whyalla suffer inter-generation unemployment (Gregor McTan Research 2006). There are some positive social indicators of Whyalla's Indigenous population. The rate of Indigenous imprisonment is relatively low and approximately quarter of the rate across the rest of State (Gregor McTan Research 2006). This may indicate that exposure to the criminal justice system is lower and/or crime rates in Whyalla are low in comparison to the rest of South Australia. This may be an indicator of lower levels of social exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Whyalla area.

The Indigenous community has reported that there are specific issues in Whyalla with a:

- lack of services for primary mental health care, prevention and support programs,
- lack of employment opportunities, poor education outcomes and risky behaviours resulting in overrepresentation across all types of income support, and, a
- lack of advocacy organisations (Gregor McTan Research 2006).

Gregor McTan Research (2006) noted that Whyalla's Indigenous community has concerns that it does not have "...a cultural centre to practice and showcase their art and culture [and this was particularly] ...important in terms of passing on stories, skills and culture to following generations and impart a greater sense of identity and pride in young Aboriginal [people]" (Gregor McTan Research 2006 p. 127).

Regional Mobility Patterns

It is important to understand the regional mobility patterns of potential users of the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre to ascertain the numbers, needs and characteristics of users of the centre. Understanding regional mobility patterns allows greater understandings of the specific needs of the user groups (including their health, access, socio-spatial and domiciliary needs). The range of local factors such as history, geography, regional mobility patterns, and regional facilities (Habibis et al 2010 p. 2) needs to be understood to appreciate users' needs in regard to the project.

The geographical movement of individuals and groups impacts the level of demand for various services. Demand for services will change dependent on "...the spatial and temporal dimensions associated with how and where people move, for what purpose, and for how long" (Habibis et al 2010 p. 2). There is a high degree of mobility among the Indigenous communities. Memmott et al (2004) note:

[t]he lives of Aboriginal people in rural and remote Australia are characterised by marked inter- and intra-community mobility, with circular movements within a 'mobility region', and a high rate of travel to places (including regional centres) within the region for relatively short periods of time (Memmott et al 2004 p. 1).

Memmott et al (2010) found that the design of services needed to consider the basis of visitation and use by residents. Generally, there are ten areas of service provision which have been found to be intertwined with mobility patterns. These areas are identified as: recreation and sports, shopping and store services, employment, training and social security, visiting traditional country, health services, education services, police, court and correctional services, housing and accommodation services, aged care and funerals, transport and road services (Memmott et al 2010 p. 4).

There are links between the government policies and migration patterns of Aboriginal people in South Australia. For example, in the 1950s and 60s processes began which led to the removal of controls over aspects of the lives of Aboriginal people. Under *the Aborigines Act 1934 -1939* (SA) the State was the guardian of all Aboriginal children. Guardianship reverted to the parents of Aboriginal children in 1962 with the legislating of *the Aboriginal Affairs Act 1962* (SA) (*Trevorrow v State of South Australia* (No 5) [2007] SASC 285). Until the 1960s, all mainland states and territories had legislation forbidding the consumption of, or the supply of alcohol to Aboriginal people (McCorquodale 1985), such as *the Licensing Act 1908* (SA). The Native Welfare Conference adopted a policy of assimilation in 1951 which led to many of the restrictive laws being repudiated and repealed (McRae et al, 2009 p. 39). While earlier government policies relocated Aborigines from their homelands to reserves and missions, under assimilation policies many people were moved into rural towns and to the fringes of urban areas. A small number of Aboriginal families were housed in Whyalla under the transitional housing program where 'select' Aboriginal families were relocated into housing in rural towns (Grant and Memmott 2007; 2007). The moves were assisted by a housing initiative between the South Australian Housing Trust, the Aborigines Protection Board and the Department of Community Welfare. The latter Department hand-picked "part-Aboriginal couples living on the reserves who were considered to have reached a reasonable enough standard of living to move from the missions and reserves" (Marsden 1986) and the couples were accommodated in South Australian Housing Trust housing. Other Aboriginal families were moved to Whyalla from the 1970s onwards, driven by the availability of public housing and employment opportunities. Migration appears to have been partly driven by family connections resulting in an Aboriginal community which fragmented into relatively small family groups from a number of different language groupings. One may conjecture that regional mobility may occur in response to family and health obligations and therefore the regional mobility pattern may include Adelaide and other regional centres in South Australia, Western Australia and other destinations. The urbanised nature of the Aboriginal population along with employment participation rates of people in the area suggests that

regional mobility patterns are likely to be short time spans with destinations related to the locations of other family members, health services and recreation and sports.

Whyalla also appears to have relatively small transient and homeless populations. The homelessness rate is 46 per 10,000 people (Gregor McTan Research 2006). The data indicating Indigenous homelessness is generated from the 2001 census data indicates that 184 people reported being homeless, 14 of whom reported that they were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This relatively low figure which does not take into account the transient population who move through Whyalla and stay temporarily with relatives.

Age Demographics of Users

The Enabling Group defined the target group for the Centre as people aged between 0 - 100 years. More precisely it could be stated that there are a number of identified user groups for the project. These are:

- Children 0 - 6 years in age,
- Families and caregivers of the children, and
- Employees of programs delivered through the Centre.

Age demographic data indicates that Whyalla’s population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is predominantly young, with 55.1% of Indigenous persons aged under 20 years, and 30.1% of the population aged under 10 years of age (Gregor McTan Research 2006). The median age of the Indigenous population in Whyalla is 16 years of age compared to the non-Indigenous median of 35 years. Gregor McTan Research (2006) suggest that in South Australia, the median age of the Indigenous population is 20 years of age, compared with a non-Indigenous median of 37 years of age. Nationally the picture is similar, with the median age of 20 among Indigenous people, compared with the non-Indigenous median of 36.

<i>INDIGENOUS POPULATION - WHYALLA</i>				
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>0-4</i>	35	51	86	13.7
<i>5-9</i>	50	53	103	16.4
<i>10-14</i>	36	45	81	12.9
<i>15-19</i>	35	41	76	12.1
<i>20-24</i>	29	16	45	7.2
<i>25-29</i>	25	28	53	8.4
<i>30-34</i>	19	29	48	7.6
<i>35-39</i>	17	15	32	5.1
<i>40-44</i>	14	21	35	5.6
<i>45-49</i>	10	14	24	3.8
<i>50-54</i>	7	10	17	2.7
<i>55-59</i>	5	5	10	1.6
<i>60-64</i>	3	5	8	1.3
<i>65 years and over</i>	3	8	11	1.7
Total	288	341	629	100

Figure 35: Indigenous Population Whyalla - Age Demographics (Source Gregor McTan Research 2006 sourced from Australian Bureau of Statistics).

The overall proportion of the population in Whyalla aged 65 years or older is 13.1%, lower than the proportion this age or older in metropolitan Adelaide (15.0% in 2005 and continuing to grow). It is important to note that the region has a high proportion (5.3%) of Indigenous people aged 45 years or older (0.6% in Adelaide). Nearly three in every four Indigenous people over 45 years has been diagnosed with kidney disease. Diabetes (types 1 and 2) constitute 40% of hospital separations for Indigenous people over 45 years and 12% of hospital separations were for treatment for heart disease. The comparative life expectancy figures disparity in life expectancy (a gap of some 20 years) contributes to only 3% of all Indigenous people in Whyalla being over the age of 60 years.

Language Groupings of the Users

It is important to understand the socio-spatial and domiciliary practices, preferences and cultural norms of the potential users of the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre Project. This is generally conducted by developing a profile of the numbers of people from different language groupings for a project by user consultation (Zeisel 1993) and overlaying empirical research with user consultation to understand the socio-spatial requirements, domiciliary practices, preferences and cultural norms of the particular group/s. Developing a user profile of Indigenous users is particularly complex. Government agencies do not generally collect statistical data regarding the specific language groupings of Indigenous users.

Users for the project will come from a number of language groupings including: Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala), Adnyamatharna (*alt spelling* Adnyamathanha), Gugada (*alt spelling* Kokatha, Kokata) and South Australian Aboriginal people from other language groups. Western Australian groups such as Nyoongars, Yamitji, Wongatha and groups from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (Anangu and Luritja), New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria also reside in Whyalla. Indigenous people in Whyalla are fragmented into relatively small family groups. Most users are likely to be urbanised Aboriginal people with English as their first language and are likely to may have strong links with community in a mix traditional and modern ways.

Characteristics of the Users

The main users for the project are children up to five years of age. Various sources note a number of characteristics of young Aboriginal children suggesting that they are a vulnerable group. The Australian Bureau of Statistics notes:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children generally experience poorer health than their non-Indigenous counterparts in Australia. Several factors contribute to this outcome including the relatively poor socioeconomic status and social disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families as well as the health-related behaviours of the mother during pregnancy (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010).

The MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education (2001) developed a discussion paper, which examined a range of health, education and wellbeing issues for Aboriginal children. Following high level advice, the report summarised nine health issues that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged from birth to eight years. Those issues are:

- lower life expectancy at birth,
- low birth weight and failure to thrive,
- poor quality diet,
- high disease rates, especially chronic ear and respiratory infections,
- social and emotional wellbeing,
- substance misuse,
- childhood trauma, and

- childhood injury (MCCEETYA 2001 p. 15).¹⁵

The parents of Aboriginal children tend to have a number of commonalities. Generally it is shown that people may come from a background of socioeconomic disadvantage with significant issues with housing. The MCEETYA Taskforce noted that parents of Aboriginal children are likely:

- to be a single parent,
- to have a young maternal age,
- to suffer from depression or other mental illnesses,
- to live within a environment of family disharmony, conflict or violence,
- to lack housing security or live within crowded or substandard housing,
- to abuse alcohol or drugs,
- to have rapid successive pregnancies, and
- to come from a large extended family (Centre for Community Child Health 2000).

Socio-spatial Needs of Users

There is a large body of research which indicates that there are common socio-spatial needs shared by many Aboriginal people. These included:

- The need to have an environment which supports people focused on living within a pre-existing social/family group that promotes continuing contact with family and kin,
- Maximum contact with the external environment while retaining comfort,
- The need for appropriately designed spaces to avert feelings of 'shame' and the need for appropriate spaces to retreat when feeling 'shame',
- A need for private spaces when dealing with 'private' matters.

There is a paucity of research on the environmental needs of Aboriginal children, women or family groups in public settings. The socio-spatial and domiciliary needs of Aboriginal children and Aboriginal families in early childhood educational settings cannot be identified through the literature. The socio-spatial and domiciliary needs of Aboriginal women may be partially identified or implied from research in other settings. For example, Bell (1998) provided descriptions of various camps established by single Warlpiri women. The various groupings of camps occupied by single women fell into a number of categories which included:

- Single girls who were reluctant or too young to go to their promised husbands.
- Women who were seeking a safe environment while visiting the community without their spouses.
- Women who, following a dispute had temporarily vacated the camps of their spouses.
- Women who were ill, or in need of emotional support.
- Those not yet through the final stages of mourning.
- Women's children and dependents (Bell 1998).

Keys (1995; 1996; 1998; 1998) conducted research on the socio-spatial and domiciliary needs of Aboriginal women. While much of the research is fieldwork in desert regions of Australia (and in particular within the traditional lands of Warlpiri People) and it is not known if the work is transferrable to other regions of Australia, there are salient points which may be useful in the consideration of women's areas

¹⁵ The MCEETYA report highlighted the impact of new evidence of the importance of early childhood and the impact a poor beginning to life has on children. It proposed strategies to improve outcomes for children aged from birth to eight years. The general evidence base does not separate the needs of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children; however, research notes the risk and resiliency factors and the impact of multiple risk factors on child development which many Aboriginal children in South Australia experience.

within the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. Keys articulated that Warlpiri women required various areas to meet their social, cultural and spatial needs. Central to this was an external flexible area which functions included:

- A focal point for contacting and gathering together of women.
- A place for women to meet and discuss ceremonial responsibilities.
- An area for food preparation and cooking (Keys 1995 p. 4).

Keys (1995) notes women required gathering areas for "...resting, talking, teaching, cooking and caring" (Keys 1995 p. 5) and were best placed in areas for good visual surveillance of arriving visitors with some areas that were 'very private' to allow women "...to talk and prepare for women's business" (Keys 1995 p. 6).

From examining the age demographics and characteristics of the specific user groups it appears likely there are a number of shared socio-spatial needs. These will include:

- The need to have spaces which allow people to dissipate or be separated quickly and discretely at times of conflict.
- The need to have flexible spaces which can be used by several smaller or a larger group of people.
- The need for spaces specifically designed for people with fluctuating hearing loss, foetal alcohol syndrome, cognitive impairment or suffering trauma (e.g. people in cycles of grief and loss, and victims of domestic violence).
- The need for spaces to be designed for people with complex health issues.
- The need for spaces to be designed to take into account the needs of bariatric users with consideration of how environmental characteristics present barriers that hinder or support healthy habits.
- The need for spaces to be designed for people with a range of mobility issues.
- The need for way finding mechanisms throughout the building to support young users.
- The need for spaces to be adequately supervised without intruding on personal privacy.
- The need for flow between internal and external areas and flexibility in use.

In summary, the data and anecdotal information indicate a number of characteristics of the users which need to be taken into account as part of the design process.

PART 4: DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The project brief devised by the Government of South Australia directs that:

[t]he planning and design of the centres provides an aesthetically pleasing physical environment for children from birth to age five that supports children's learning. This includes a focus on providing natural light, connection to outdoors, natural outdoor play spaces and ecologically sustainable principles and initiatives (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 6).

The project brief indicates the centre needs to accommodate a range of functions including:

- Child care,
- Preschool,
- Early years for schooling (where possible),
- Health service provision,
- Family and community programs, and
- Administration (*ibid* p. 4).

The project brief also contains an identification of facilities requirements. The Government of South Australia (date unknown) indicates that the project will need to include the following:¹⁶

- Reception,
- Staff Room,
- Children's Space,
- Learning Together/Community Room,
- Consulting Rooms,
- Meeting Room,
- Drop in area/resource area,
- Laundry,
- Kitchen,
- Outdoor Space, and
- Car Park (*ibid* p. 6 - 7).

The following sections will present guiding principles for the design of Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. Further sections will review the current literature, precedents and present the results of consultation with local users to develop some 'best practice' design recommendations in relation to the design of each proposed area for Aboriginal users.

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A design team to work with the architectural design team for the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre project was decided during the user consultations. This group was chosen for its knowledge of the project in hand, experience with similar projects and experience and knowledge of early childhood learning environments and the local conditions. The team is to include:

DECS Community Coordinator (Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre):
Ms Anita Taylor,
Assistant Regional Director (DECS): Mr Rob Harkin,
Principal, Hincks Avenue Primary School: Ms Linda Weetra,
Senior Project Officers (DECS): Ms Deb Moyle

¹⁶ The project brief states that "...[t]hese requirements will be discussed with the Enabling Group and may be modified to reflect the needs of each location" (Government of South Australia unknown p. 6)

DECS Project Manager: Ms Libby Sowry,
Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre Enabling Committee
members: Mr Larry Higgins (Aboriginal Education Coordinator, DECS) and
Ms Brenda Carter (Senior Aboriginal Health Worker).

In sessions with the author, the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre Enabling Group defined their vision for the centre. They envisaged a place that would be:

- Welcoming with a sense of belonging,
- A secure and safe environment,
- Inclusive of people from all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in an environment which achieves sense of unification, belonging and trust,
- Free Flowing with seamless indoor and outdoor connections,
- A place for children to be experimental & active & risk takers in a stimulating learning environment,
- A place for Aboriginal people to drop in and feel welcome,
- A showcase for Aboriginal cultures, values, traditional and contemporary customs,
- A place that reflects the natural world,
- Child friendly and focused,
- A place for the Aboriginal community to come together,
- Committed to student learning and welfare,
- Culturally appropriate design,
- A beautiful exemplar design (both the building and landscape),
- A showcase and statement on the importance of the early learning years to the community,
- Responsive and proactive to community and individual needs,
- A 'one stop' shop for health, education and other services (including social) which had a holistic approach.

The Enabling Group also envisaged that the Centre would promote:

- A sense of belonging, and
- Aboriginal cultures and child rearing practices and values through its design.

The Whyalla Enabling Group has a clear vision of the new Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. They envisage a rounded, blunt boomerang shaped building much like a pair of hands cupping as the form for the building. This was explained as a metaphor for holding the child and family close. The group described how they envisaged the internal and external building materials and cladding to be two dimensional and textural and reflect the colours of the earth and the sea around the Whyalla area. They envisage that the design, colours, landscape design will be based on Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) Dreaming of the Seven Sisters and Rainbow Serpent histories and could possibly include the theme of the 'land meeting the sea'.



Figure 36: The Whyalla Aboriginal Child and Family Centre Community Coordinator, Ms. Anita Taylor demonstrating the metaphor developed by the Enabling Group for the building Photograph: Grant).



Figure 37: Gunada Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University. This Aboriginal Learning Centre is located adjacent to the main entrance of Curtin University in a purpose designed building. The position of the building, its architectural form and its contrast to the surrounding buildings makes a very visible statement about Curtin University's commitment to Aboriginal education and social justice outcomes (Source: <http://karda.curtin.edu.au/about/place.cfm>).



Figure 38: Riawunna Aboriginal Education Centre Launceston (Peter Elliott Pty Ltd Architects). The architectural form of this building makes a very visible statement about the commitment to Aboriginal education (Source: <http://oak.arch.utas.edu.au/projects/aus/479/default.htm>).

The project brief indicates the centre needs to address the requirements of a range of functions including:

- Child care,
- Preschool,
- Early years for schooling (where possible),
- Health service provision,
- Family and community programs, and
- Administration (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 4).

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The following sections will present guiding principles for the design of Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. Further sections will review the current literature, precedents and will present the results of consultation with local users to develop some 'best practice' design recommendations in relation to the design of each proposed area for Aboriginal users.

¹⁷ The project brief states that "...[t]hese requirements will be discussed with the Enabling Group and may be modified to reflect the needs of each location" (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 6).



Figure 39: Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Enabling Group meeting to discuss the project (Photographs: Grant).

General Principles

There are general principles that can be gleaned from the literature. The contrast between Aboriginal child-rearing attitudes and practices with the structured routine of traditional early learning settings may be unsettling for Aboriginal children. Creating visual connections to the surrounding community may be one aspect of addressing this.

[S]ervices could be seen, by both children and staff, as somewhat separate and alien places to the rest of the community. Some of the services considered their community to be embedded in terms of what children and staff could see through the fences and what other community members could see of the service from the outside, overcoming to a degree any feeling of separateness. When they were consulted, communities helped to design their children's service to be 'open', emphasising visual and physical access to the surrounding community. This openness allowed local community people walking by to call out to the children or staff inside, to drop in spontaneously when it was morning tea time or to chat through the fence about community business (Fasoli, 2007 p. 268 - 69).

This idea of transparency also allows people approaching the centre to know what is going on and who is inside in case avoidance relationships need to be observed

The Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre will accommodate a range of services and this can foster informal connections between family and community members.

The services created space for engagement around community issues related to child rearing. For example, mothers attended one service to access community education programs even when they had no children currently attending the service. Fathers came to one service to eat lunch with the children. A group of young people undertaking a tourism training program in one community made regular visits to the child care service. They brought animals and fish they had caught on field trips for the children to eat and as a way to share their knowledge with the younger children (*ibid* p. 270).

At another site, the community noted that:

The wonderful thing about having many different programs offered in the one centre is that we can work together. An example of this is when the Aboriginal Elders work with the children. Elders show the children some traditional cooking such as how to cook kangaroo tail and fish on a camp fire, and then share food for lunch afterwards (White 2008 p. 14).

Fantin (2011) notes that there are a number of essential elements to the spatial design of Aboriginal environments which include:

- Socio-spatial groupings, location and orientation considered in dwelling and settlement design.
- Visual and aural surveillance of local and broader external environment maximised.
- Avoidance relations considered in organisation and placement of ablutions and other areas including access and egress to public areas and amenities.¹⁸
- Security of personal possession against access and misuse by others (reduce potential for sorcery).¹⁹
- Embodiment of cultural reference or identity: if appropriate (Fantin pers. comm. quoted in Grant 2011).

It is strongly suggested that by supporting and responding to cultural imperatives in the design, a more supportive environment that generates less stress for users will be created.

To expand on the concepts, the socio-spatial groupings, location and orientation should be considered in dwelling, institutional and settlement design in terms of orientation to country and orientation to family/kin. Visual and aural surveillance of local and broader external environment should be maximised to allow the:

- Ability to see/hear other dwelling/activity,
- Ability to see/hear other kin activities,
- Ability to use sign language, and
- Ability to see/hear/smell/feel country, weather, fauna and flora.

Avoidance relations should be considered in organisation and placement of ablutions and other areas including access and egress to public areas and amenities and include

- No dead hallways,
- Multiple entries and exits to all communal spaces sleeping areas, and
- Screened and separated ablutions (gender specific),

The embodiment of cultural reference or identity should be included if appropriate and in particular take account of language groups associated with specific buildings references to ancestral histories may be relevant, however this should be used with caution and understanding and always in consultation with custodians of cultural knowledge.

There are guiding principles for designing 'best practice' environments for Aboriginal users which have been formulated in the institutional and housing context (see Memmott 1998; Memmott and Reser 2000/01; Memmott and Chambers 2002; Memmott et al. 2003; Memmott 2007; Memmott 2009) which the architects may consider as guiding principles for the design process.

- Recognise that the Indigenous users for the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre Project will be diverse and contain people from a number of distinct language groups with varying needs. The architectural scale and forms, and choice of materials and finishes should be informed by knowledge of preferred Indigenous lifestyles. All spaces should allow Indigenous users an acceptable degree of personal control over their immediate environment with regard to natural ventilation, views out, temperature, illumination and privacy. Different kin/language groups generally wish to gather as distinct social groups. It is important that the design allows opportunities for people to socialise in pre-existing social/family groups and there should be sufficient separation to

¹⁸ This is not relevant to all Aboriginal user groups and avoidance relationships may not be practised by the user groups of this project. However, a consideration of the elements such as avoiding dead hallways, multiple entry points and screened and gender specific ablutions are very useful for the socio-spatial planning of this project as levels of conflict between users are likely to be defused.

¹⁹ This is not relevant to all Aboriginal user groups and is unlikely to be relevant for this project.

dissuade mixing between social groups and the design should allow visual separation and some acoustic privacy. Consider the use of external private spaces for Indigenous users experiencing shame²⁰ and/or in need of stress relief. Particular regard should be paid to the significant impact that being 'out of country' may have upon some Aboriginal users. Consideration should be given to areas being planted with a range of regional plants and vegetation, the use of regionally specific artwork which connect people to traditional lands.

- A large number of the users will have a range of complex pre-existing health and mental health conditions affecting general health, mobility and feelings of well-being. There will also be a significant proportion of older users coming to the centre as employees, relatives and carers of children. Given the significant gap between the life expectancies of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, the design requirements of this group should be identified and incorporated into the project. The centre needs to have adequate heating and cooling. Poor temperature control can frustrate users and in severe cases contribute to temperature-related sicknesses. Most Aboriginal users will choose radiant heat (wood burning ovens are generally preferred option although this may not be possible). Note: thermal preferences are likely to be different for Aboriginal people from other user groups (Grant 2008; Hansen et al. in review).
- Recognise the ability to embrace Indigenous spirituality and culture as a key design trigger. Built environments can respond to the cultural identity, history and spirituality of Indigenous users. Design generators can incorporate relevant aspects of contemporary Aboriginal cultures (e.g. sport, music, etc). While the design should be characterised by Indigenous symbolism and meaning, integration with the landscape should occur to show Indigenous connectedness with the land. It is important to note that architectural symbolism (literal or implied) should only result from an informed and culturally-appropriate design process and avoid tokenism in the design process (i.e. building in random Indigenous symbols simply for the sake of having them) (see Memmott and Reser 2000/01).

²⁰ Aboriginal constructs of shame are markedly different from the western norm (Hutchings 1995) and those experiencing feelings of shame may display a range of behaviours.



Figure 40: Kalkadoon Aboriginal Sobriety House, Mount Isa (architect: Deborah Fisher). Using appropriate signs and symbols is crucial. Often the most appropriate symbols are not elaborate. An archway of crossed spears is located above the Kalkadoon Aboriginal Sobriety House entrance gateway as a modest monument. The Kalkadoon are described as the people of the Eyre region, well known for the ferocious and courageous 1884 battle fought against the Native Police (Photograph: Architecture Australia).



Figure 41: Wilcannia Hospital Redevelopment (Merrima Indigenous Design Unit) Architecture Australia noted “[t]he architects designed the new building as an insertion into the story of the river landscape, with tectonics developed from the river’s “living qualities” (Photograph: Power House Museum).

- The use of natural materials and organic designs may promote positive links with the natural environment, and are generally worth exploring as an architectural approach. However, the use of natural surfaces, natural materials and finishes needs to include due consideration of other factors such as dust²¹ control. Consider locating the building to take advantage of maximum breeze but it is important to avoid strong winds and again, dust.

²¹ High levels of dust in the air cause abrasion and inflammation of soft tissues of the body. The soft tissues are more likely to get infected. Dust in the air contributes to respiratory, skin and eye diseases; for example, dust aggravates the eyes, causing inflammation of the conjunctiva. Dust also carries bacterial and viral infections, so levels of respiratory disease, skin infection, TB and asthma are also affected.



Figure 42: *Gunung-Willam-Balluk Koorie Learning Centre, Kangan Batman TAFE (Architects: Greg Burgess)* This precedent demonstrates the use of cultural knowledge to generate form and the extensive use of natural materials. The description of the building states “[i]t was requested that the building forms express something of the local Wurundjeri Culture, which can be seen in the eagle like form of the roof, and to celebrate water, canoes, as these are river people. Rain water free-falls from the large beak spout onto rocks, and inverted-canoe skylights cast pool patterns under the entrance canopy. The building opens out on to landscaped gathering spaces in the north and a public park in the south” (Photographs: Greg Burgess).

- Consider domestic-scale buildings and outdoor settings in order to humanise scale, rather than large-scale complex types. There is some evidence to suggest that Aboriginal users may be architecturally conservative in relation to residential buildings (Memmott 2003) but it is unknown if this extends to public buildings (the conservatism generally does not extend to the selection of colour for external finishes).
- Views to natural landscape (both inside and beyond the perimeter of the complex) from all spaces will be beneficial. Visual and aural surveillance of local and broader external environment should be maximised, allowing users to see/hear other dwelling/activities, the activities of other people in the language group cluster, to see/hear/smell/feel country, weather, fauna and flora and allow the users to use sign language (Indigenous people generally prefer to maintain adequate sight lines from all spaces in their day-to-day activity pattern).²²²³. Consider orientation to the potential views when positioning and orientating buildings and other spaces. Generally the preferred view is to the horizon (although this is not always possible). Maximise users’ access to external environment, allowing users to experience climatic elements. Feeling the sun on one’s face is important. Check whether the Centre provides a place where the Aboriginal user can choose to sit/lie and feel the sun on their face if they choose (Grant 2008).

²² Much on the emphasis on sight lines is related to hearing loss as well as cultural preference. Aboriginal people are likely to experience up to 10 times the prevalence of ear disease compared to the male non-indigenous population. By adulthood hearing loss can be present in up to 70 per cent of Aboriginal people in a community.

- The height of accommodation buildings to accommodate the various groups should be ascertained through direct consultation (if possible) or investigated through other means. Generally it is advocated that low ceiling heights are avoided (Memmott and Eckermann 1999). Accommodation for desert people should be single storey and provide a strong visual connection to the ground. The use of decks is possible but their application should be consulted with the users (Grant 2008).



Figure 43: Warriparinga - Kurna Living Cultural Centre, Marion (Architects Phillips/Pilkington Architects Pty Ltd in association with Habitable Places) A number of features in the building ensure the user stays firmly connected with country. Boardwalks are integrated into the flooring providing a physical, visual and sensory link to the ground below, as well as operating as a way-finding mechanism (Photograph: Grant).

- Internal layout, circulation and links between major spaces need to be easily read for way finding and orientation. Blind corridors are best avoided. Include external spaces when developing relationship diagrams. Any rooms or spaces that are intended for the joint use of both men and women must be planned with at least two entry points to allow the continuance of avoidance behaviours. Consider multiple entries and exits to all communal areas. Consider apertures in doors or close to doorways that allow some form of transparency allowing occupants or new entrants to be recognised prior to physically meeting. Consider providing sight lines between rooms so Indigenous users can keep visual contact when confined in room. At the same time, privacy should be provided (Grant 2008). Ablutions should be screened and provide privacy.
- Provide continuous internal spaces with distinct thresholds and clear visual links.

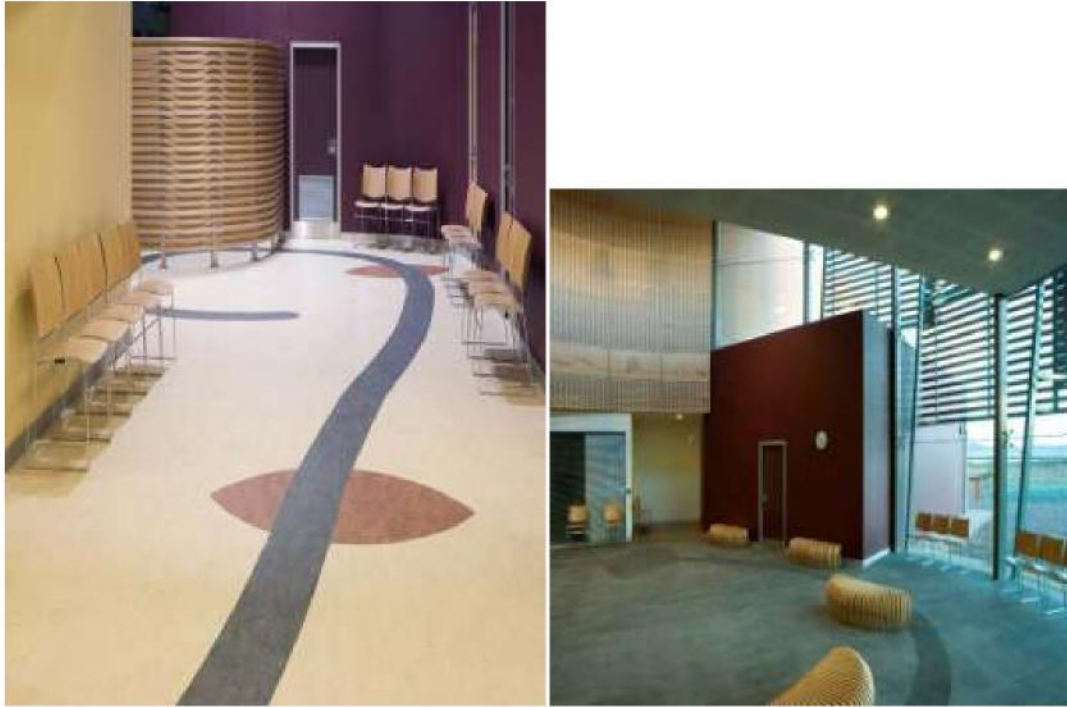


Figure 44: Port Augusta Court Complex (Architect: Denis Harrison, Government of South Australia). The Indigenous artists employed on the project used a representation of a serpent (chosen through consultation) and depicted it in the external areas continuing to the interior of the building to increase legibility and way-finding. This is an example only and more appropriate approaches may be found for the project (Photographs: Ben Wrigley).

- There are indications that Aboriginal involvement in colour selection may lead to interesting results.

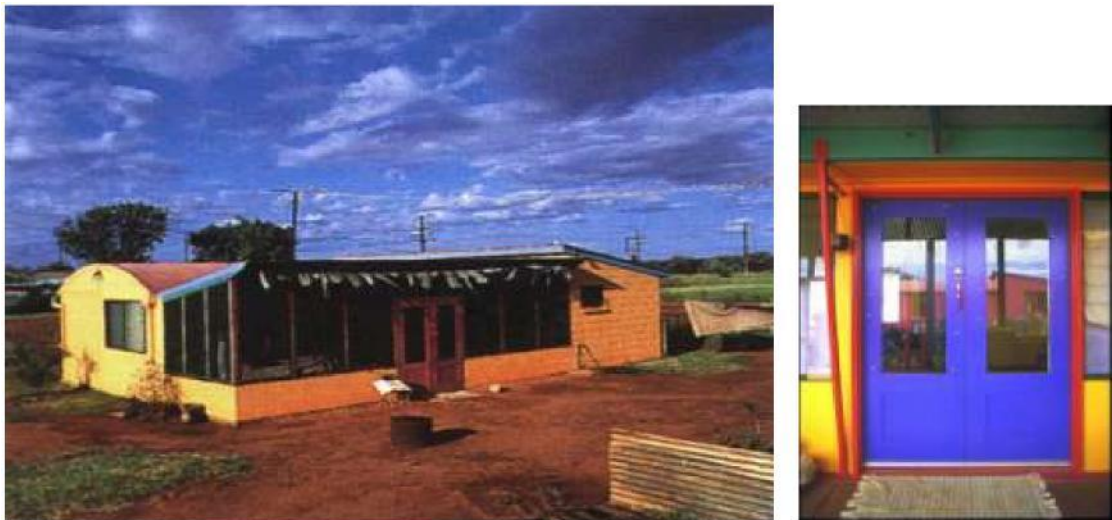


Figure 45: The Lolly House (Architects: Tangentyere Design, Alice Springs). The Aboriginal design experience has shown that Aboriginal users when consulted tend to select a range of colours for external areas of buildings outside those generally seen in public architecture (Photographs: Tangentyere Design).

General Design Recommendations ascertained through user consultation.

The potential users for the centre stressed that:

- The building should be circular shape (people consulted ranged from having the view that the building should have a circular shape to having an organic form).
- The centre should include visual signs of Aboriginality including: flags, symbols, artwork and natural fibres (especially weaving to represent the tradition of Ngarrindjeri cultures). Children consulted felt the building should be acculturated with the symbol of the Aboriginal (and to a lesser extent the Torres Strait Islander Flag) and other Aboriginal signs and symbols. Children commonly thought the flags should be flown from the top of buildings and items such as swing seats should be acculturated.
- The inclusion of verse in the interior design of the centre may provide excellent prompts for cultural learning.
- Relationships between the internal and external environment should be strong and allow internal areas to fully open out to external areas (use sliding or bi-fold doors or similar).
- The building should have lots of windows (children consulted this particularly stressed this element).
- The building and landscape should have a strong link to Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) culture. The connecting theme of land, river, sea, sky, plants and animals should run through the design of the building and landscape.
- The design should be unique.
- The design should be showcase the principles of environmentally sustainable design and include water tanks (could perform a dual use as wind breaks), a vegetable garden.

Design Recommendations for areas within the Aboriginal Children and Family Centre Entry

The project brief does not outline requirements for the entry area to the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. This is a critically important area and it may be useful to consider the following points in the design of the approach and the adjacent external area:

- Consider developing a hub for public transport and passenger drop-off points next to the entrance. Consider visitors with children, elderly family members, those with mobility impairment, etc.
- Considering having discrete sheltered waiting areas for visitors outside where people can gather and have some visual and auditory privacy (consider families in conflict when designing). Sometimes people may wait for extended periods outside (being dropped off too early, awaiting transport etc).
- Consider incorporating a grassed area with shady trees if possible.

- Consider having a safe place for children to run around outside the centre. Having to closely supervise children in public places due to inappropriately designed environments can be highly stressful.
- Consider how users may access a telephone (to arrange pickup or to contact family).
- Consider incorporating a series of way-finding mechanisms for visitors from the external to the internal environments.

Design Recommendations for Entry ascertained through consultation with potential users

- The entrance should be welcoming and provide a focus for children.
- The vegetation should be native to Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) lands.
- The centre should be appropriately designed with consideration that a Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) name will be given to the centre. Users want to be highly involved in the design of signs and signage and are considering dual language signage throughout the complex.



Figure 46: Port Augusta Courts Complex (Architect: Denis Harrison, Government of South Australia). The external areas designed around the courts complex provide discrete waiting and gathering areas for traditionally oriented Aboriginal people. Note: Photograph taken prior to vegetation being planted (Photographs: Ben Wrigley).

- A number of the potential user groups identified that the entry would also have to act as hub for transport and allow users' convenient and safe access to the Centre.
- The location of the main entry point should be carefully considered. An entry point off Clutterbuck Street is preferred.
- The entrance should be provide shelter allow people to have a 'yarn' outside while being protected from elements.

Reception

The project brief indicates that the reception area should contain two work stations, storage and a manager's office (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 6). In consideration of Aboriginal people's requirements, the design of the reception area needs to be handled with considerable sensitivity as this is often the first point of contact between staff and families/caregivers and children and where users are likely to be most apprehensive and potentially stressed. There are a number of areas for consideration:

- The reception area should be designed to promote a high degree of human interaction between staff, children and families/caregivers.
- Provide view of external waiting areas from the reception area.
- Minimise static security elements and soften environment to promote meaningful human interaction.
- Consider the way different user groups may be streamed at reception. It may be useful to conceptualise users into two streams being those accessing children's areas and those using family services. Some people using family services may need to have limited or no contact with children using the centre.
- Consider employing appropriate Aboriginal signs, colours and symbols in the area so it may be viewed as an Aboriginal friendly space.



Figure 47: Waiting Area, Balgo Airport. Soft furnishings, staff interaction and appropriate Aboriginal signs and symbols may be used beneficially in the reception and induction areas (Photograph: Grant).

- Consider incorporating furniture and furnishings with a high degree of comfort and access to beverages within the reception area.
- The design of the reception area should have strong relationship with the external environment and have adequate natural ventilation.
- Consider vantages from the entrance perspective. Providing an internal view into the children's play area may provide a vantage and emphasise the importance of children.
- Consider the acoustic environment. Ensure it is not too sharp and consider features which will allow the entrance of natural sound. Consider the needs of people with fluctuating hearing.²³
- Consider seating in regard to the size of family groups and the possibility of families in dispute being present at the same time.
- Consider how people can be adequately separated led into other areas discretely should family conflict occur.
- Design the area so children do not have to be highly supervised (e.g. consider how to minimise 'escapes' by young children).

Local consultations introduced a number of additional design recommendations for the reception area.

- It should present the image of an Aboriginal person at reception as the first visual contact (this requires placing the emphasis on the reception point as the first visual contact for the user).
- Potential users suggested the reception must be spacious and welcoming and offer a high degree of human interaction.
- It was suggested that groups should be streamed at reception into two groups – those using areas connected with family services and children/parents accessing children's areas (e.g. preschool and occasional care areas).
- Reception should have an informal area where parents and others can have a 'cuppa'.
- Areas should have access to storage for personal possessions should parents require this service.
- The reception area should focus on the importance of the child - visual links to the children's areas and display areas for children's artwork.
- Some users envisaged a half-circle (or moon shaped) reception area that was large, 'airy' and open and provided different seating area in comfortable lounge areas.
- Automatic doors (with sensors at adult height).

²³ The users consulted for the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre suggested that their project be fitted with a T Coil network. This may be worthy of consideration for this project.

- Wall space in the reception area to house an electronic notice board and community events display board.
- Large mosaic on the floor and the design throughout the building.
- Provision for toy and book library (adult and children's resources) adjacent to the reception area is required.
- A separate laundry area (facilities and storage) is to be located adjacent to the reception.
- Users wondered if the architect could incorporate the theme of 'land meets the sea' into the entrance. Users conceptualized an 'under floor water feature' in the entrance area of the Centre.
- The reception should be large enough to allow the 'parking' of prams and strollers.

Staff Room

The project brief indicates that the staff room should accommodate up to 15 adults in a shared space (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 6). There is a potential for the staff room to also be used as an informal meeting area for community (see the example of the Tinyeri Early Children's Centre at Murray Bridge). As noted in the literature, it is planned that a variety of services will be delivered from the Centre which will bring:

...different people into them [the centre] in addition to the parents receiving care for their children. This was seen in the way meetings that involved the whole community occurred in some services or, more informally, when people dropped by to have a chat or cup of tea (Fasoli, 2007 p 270).

There are no design recommendations in the literature however it should be noted that: staff members may require a discrete 'time-out place' or place to retreat should a user come into the centre that a staff member does not wish to have contact with. It is also assumed that the general principles relating to design in an Aboriginal context also relate to design for Aboriginal employees.

Local consultations introduced a number of design recommendations for the staff room.

- Users consulted felt that the staff room should be a separate non-public area for staff and be out of the public eye.

Children's Space

The project brief indicates that the children's space should have capacity to accommodate 50 children with the capacity to divide areas to two areas: area one to accommodate 15 children aged under two years and 35 children aged over 2 years of age). The areas are to comply with child care licensing requirements and have a withdrawal sleeping room, staff preparation area, office, kitchenette, bottle preparation area, store, nappy changing facilities, toilets, direct access to outdoor play, verandah and shade (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 6).

Consideration should be given to the criteria set out in this brief and adjustments made wherever possible. The centre will operate a pre-school and occasional care/crèche and may not have to fit the requirements of long day child care (although it may be useful to consider designing the building so child care being delivered at a later stage).

It was noted through the consultations that separate areas for babies may not be required as users would prefer that children and babies and not physically separated.

In general, education areas for Aboriginal people tend to be less formalised and provide more opportunities for social interaction than settings designed for non-Aboriginal users. Much of this is about reducing the often negative experiences of traditional class room settings, a preference for the 'hands on learning style' and the need for users to be socially connected prior to undertaking education. Much emphasis is generally placed on interlinking learning and social spaces and the connection to the external environment as being integral to the learning experience.

Most 'best practice' educational programs delivered to Aboriginal people are not delivered solely from a literacy and numeracy perspective. For example, many remote and rural community schools retain a community advisor or Elder to direct and advise teaching staff on the direction of their teaching. Many schools often split teaching periods to include cultural learning either as a distinct period of teaching or may integrate cultural learning into mainstream teaching. Many schools in urban centres retain the services of Aboriginal liaison officers (or similar) to advise teaching staff and provide support for students. Over the last decade, there have been attempts to integrate cultural learning into the mainstream education of Aboriginal people and to deliver programs in appropriate spaces and places. There seems to be a very valid case for considering this perspective in the preschool context.

The integration of cultural knowledge into the education area may significantly enhance this project. Mainstream education could complement cultural activities. There may be a potential for both to be integrated. It should be noted that cultural learning in structured environments is often difficult and many early learning centres noted that they took

...children 'out bush' to swim in water holes, to teach them about bush tucker, to share knowledge of country or simply to get away from the centre and spend some time in the bush was a common practice undertaken in diverse ways depending on the context. These trips were much more than mere 'excursions': they were considered to be critical opportunities for cultural learning (Fasoli 2007 p.268).

Parents and staff at child-care centres also commonly state children often prefer to be outdoors (Rogers 2004). It is stated that:

Many Indigenous children and adults find the bricks and mortar place of learning stifling/choking [and] ...unhelpful for learning to happen at its best. There is a preference for the outdoors (Priest 2005 p. 31).

It seen that:

[i]mportant to the development of the child's 'spirit' is the ability to relate to the physical worlds including the land, water, air, bush, sky, rocks and weather patterns (Hutchins 2007 p. 41).

Images of outdoor areas associated with family and children's centres illustrate plantings of bush tucker plants or native species, use of natural materials and the incorporation of outdoor meeting spaces. There are also many references to having good visual connection between indoors and outdoors.



Figure 48: Otaki Kindergarten, New Zealand- outdoor play area with natural materials (Photograph: Meade 2006).

General Recommendations – Children's Space

- The children's area should be a calm and soothing area. The planning design, and fit out should attempt to achieve a calm environment. Consider the use of colour, acoustics and other aspects of the design to this aspect.
- The appearance of this area should look 'Aboriginal' to show the importance of education. Consider cultural knowledge as the basis of the design (consider spaces as story telling opportunities and consider putting prompts and links for children to engage in using language, use of colour palette from the local environment).
- Provide areas for cultural activities (e.g. fire pit, and external gathering area).
- Major spaces should link to the external environment. Consider the free flow between spaces required to manage children with foetal alcohol syndrome and other cognitive impairments.
- Maximise the use of natural materials. Use natural materials wherever possible in preference to resorting to other finishes
- Maximise the sensory environment. The use of elements which engage the child with sound, smell (plants etc), tactile elements through the natural environment are to be encouraged. The use of elements such as water course, and textual/sensory plantings were seen as very important.



Figure 49: Warriparinga - Living Kurna Cultural Centre, Marion (Architects Phillips/Pilkington Architects Pty Ltd in association with Habitable Places). Part of the walking path around the building incorporates the re-telling of an important oral history through various sculptural pieces, vegetation and the walking trail itself. At the entrance to Warriparinga is the Tjilbruke (or Tjirbruki) Gateway. This 'forest' of dead tree trunks was created by Margaret Worth and Gavin Malone working with Kurna artist Sherry Rankine and tells the story of the Kurna ancestral being Tjirbruki. Materials used include coloured sands from the Red Ochre Cove area, morthi (Stringbark) trunks salvaged from plantation timber and other gums felled for the Southern Expressway. Circles around the tree trunks symbolise the fresh water springs formed from Tjirbruki's tear drops. The flow patterns on the ground refer to the gully winds for which the area is known, as well as the flow of the river and of life (Photograph: Grant).

- Consider the acoustic needs of children with fluctuating hearing loss. This is a highly neglected area.
- Limit the use of obvious barriers such as fences. When fencing is required consider sensitive choice, placement and plantings so that external area does not look like a series of yards.
- The joint use by Aboriginal male and female parents from traditionally oriented backgrounds of facilities should be carefully assessed to ensure that traditional avoidance practices are not breached and do not act to deter people's participation.

Local consultations introduced a number of design recommendations for the children's space/s.

- The spaces should be organically planned.
- Play areas should be designed as the 'best of their type' and be constructed of natural materials while adhering to the highest safety standards.
- A small forest should be planted to give children a variety of seasonal experiences of plants (e.g. plant with deciduous and evergreen trees).
- The play area should provide hiding areas for children.

- The inclusion of sculpture elements into children's outdoor areas would be seen as beneficial. Musical elements could be included in such sculptures.



Figure 50: Designers should consider play equipment constructed of natural materials that connects the child with the natural environment (Photograph: unknown).

- The outdoor area should include a digging patch, an area to keep small animals, a vegetable and flower garden for both adults and children.
- The external play area should contain be designed with a water course to appear as a natural element,
- The inclusion of mounds for rolling, rocks for climbing and large trees for shade would be seen as favourable.
- There should be internal and external quiet and noisy spaces for and children.
- The children consulted emphasised the importance of the development of the external play area. This was seen as the most important element of the children's area. Children consulted generally stated the design should include the following essential elements: swings (various heights), a sand pit, water play, slides, and some grass.
- Windows at children's height should be incorporated.
- Users consulted stated that it was important that parents would like to come and observe children participating at preschool and not be separated from the child. Seating to allow several family members to sit and observe indoor and outdoor play would facilitate this. Other measures to include the family where possible should be considered.

- Colours should reflect local area and nature and connect children with the sea, land and sky. The use of primary colours (including the play equipment) was not seen as appropriate all colours should be drawn from the local environment.



Figure 51: Nunkuwarnin Yuntji, Adelaide. The frontage of the building (a former retail showroom) has no signs indicating it is a community controlled health centre, but instead is decorated in specific colours and layered with symbols and icons (Photograph: Grant).

- External area should be able to be supervised (by both direct/indirect supervision) easily by staff.
- Community members noted all external areas should be planted with Indigenous plants. Where possible plants with particular uses should be used as teaching tools (e.g., medicinal plants and bush tucker foods)
- Almost all children consulted emphasised that the children's area should have lots of windows and allow the user to move between the internal and external areas easily.
- The users would like a lockable secure covered bus bay to be constructed adjacent to the program area of the building which allows direct access into the preschool area from the bus bay.
- The users would like consideration given to ensuring site leadership team working areas are closely linked to program areas
- External storage areas should be developed.
- Provision of adequate storage for installation of compactus.
- Adequate storage for administration area.

Withdrawal/Sleep Room for Children

It is important to question whether a separate withdrawal /sleep room is necessary given the current practices in Aboriginal child care centres and the body of literature which supports Aboriginal children being part of a group and not separated while sleeping.

- Many Aboriginal children sleep on mattresses at home and sleeping in a cot is likely to be a frightening and alien experience. Consider very low beds or mattresses on floor for resting or sleeping. Consider how an adult would lie/sit next to the child.
- Accommodate choices of sleeping arrangements if possible i.e. (a) orientation of body, (b) elevated or on the ground. Avoid sleeping direct on uncomfortable or thermally unsuitable surfaces (Grant 2008).
- The position of the beds/mattresses should be flexible if possible.
- Aboriginal users generally prefer to have natural air flow over the head while sleeping.
- Consider a communal padded area for rest/sleep.
- The provision of an outdoor sleeping/rest area may be advantageous (note this may not be possible with the current brief).

Children's Ablution Areas

- The majority of children consulted indicated that separate toilets for boys and girls were preferable.
- It should be noted that toilet partitions may need to be higher than generally used in such centres to ensure privacy and dissuade children from climbing the partitions.
- Childcare staff indicated that a bath, shower and change areas were necessary inclusion into the children's area.
- The laundry areas should not be incorporated into the children's ablution areas for washing clothes for this project but be a separate entity.

Kitchenette in Children's Space

The brief has a kitchenette listed. It is wondered if the kitchenette is proposed for the staff area and a full kitchen is proposed for the children's area?

- Consultations noted that the kitchen should also be able to be used for cooking and dining with children and incorporated into the main learning space. The incorporation of workbenches and eating areas designed appropriately for children of preschool age should be included into the kitchen.
- An adjacent external dining area for children with servery and access from kitchen would be seen as an asset.
- The use of drawers rather than cupboards were preferred by the user group

Learning Together/Community Room

The project brief indicates that a 'learning together'²⁴/community room should be included in the design. The room should accommodate up to 30 adults (with the capacity to divide the space). There should be direct access to outdoor play and shaded adult seating. The area should contain a verandah, kitchenette and wet area, data points, storage, four workstation office, access to public toilets and nappy change facilities (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 6). The literature notes that flexibility of such a space is important.

Priest notes that:

[s]pace for people to be on their own where there is freedom to do what they want without worries. To think what they want to think without anyone else 'poking their nose in'. To give space that lets people make up their own mind where there does not have to be an answer or action coming from the thinking. Space to let people feel powerful inside themselves and do things in a way that is special to them, and space to share with others when ready to do so.

Talking together (dialogue) - Time to talk with others either by using body signs or talking words without feeling 'no good' or rushed. When talking it is important a person finishes what they are saying and never walk between people talking. This is rude: it is better to go behind and around. Truth, humour and indirect talk that leave out direct questioning are critical to quality talks (Priest 2005 p. 30).

Discussions with potential users around the learning together/community room presented the space as a flexible space where a number of activities could be conducted. Note some of the discussions around the various areas placed the 'drop-in area as connected to the reception. The type of activities suggested for this area ranged from cooking classes for parents to meetings and community celebrations. With these discussions in mind it may be useful to:

- Consider having a flexible internal/external area to celebrate community events and for other ceremonies such as NAIDOC, memorial services, musical performances and as an exhibition space.
- Consider incorporating a larger external space (perhaps incorporating decks or wide sets of stairs with a dual function to act as a stage or podium to overlook the external area) for NAIDOC and other such events.

²⁴ 'Learning Together' is a DECS program for families with children aged birth to four, which has operated in South Australia since 2003. The program is based on national and international research affirming the crucial importance of the very early years of life in laying the foundation for children's learning and well-being.



Figure 52: Decks on Girrawaa Creative Work Centre (Architects: Merrima Indigenous Design Unit) provide Aboriginal users a place to sit in the sun and observe the surroundings and provide a podium for other events (Photograph: Grant).

- A cultural area should be developed adjacent to the community room. This should include a fire pit and Indigenous plants.



Figure 53: Fire Pit Area, Kanggawodli Caring House, Dudley Park Note Whyalla users would like the design seats or benches to be innovatively designed and incorporate artistic elements (Photograph Grant).

- A kitchen where cooking classes can be conducted is envisaged by users for this space (note kitchenette listed in brief).
- A storage area for chairs and tables should be located adjacent to the learning together/community area.

- Good connections with the external environment are paramount.
- Separate gender specific toilets with discrete entry points. It was requested that a shower be installed for the occasional user who may require a shower.
- A separate external access to the community area may be useful so that people who may have issues can access programs discretely.
- Consider how ambulance service may access this area at times of emergency.

Local consultations brought additional design recommendations for the learning together/community room and adjacent external community area.

- The community area will need to be able to cope with large events - natural building resources that can be transformed into a stage area (not an amphitheatre effect).
- The use of bi-fold doors or similar should be used between the learning together/community room to allow the room to be opened out to the external area.
- Outdoor speakers could be installed.
- A 'men's shed' should be developed in conjunction to the community room.
- A community vegetable garden and rainwater tanks should be incorporated into the planning of the external community area.
- External storage areas should be developed.
- Secure access to community area if required for lockdown procedures.
- Opportunity for more than one controlled egress point in the community area to allow for controlled handovers [custody issues] or safe egress.
- The users would like consideration given to ensuring site leadership team working areas are closely linked to program areas.
- Crèche to be located adjacent to learning together/community room with external play area able to be accessed from the crèche area.

Consulting Rooms

The project brief indicates that two consulting rooms should be included in the design and these should be suitable for use for consulting, counselling and office functions. They should contain a hand basin, data points, adjoining door and store area. (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 7).

There is a paucity of published material and evidence based research which can be applied to this part of the project. No design guidelines have been devised, although a number of Aboriginal medical/health centres have been designed both for urban, rural and remote Aboriginal contexts. Given the little that is known about the design of consulting rooms for Aboriginal people, information about the design of such a building was sought. Local consultations introduced a number of design recommendations for the consulting areas

- Consideration should be given to having multiple entry points to be able to access the consulting rooms to cater for the cultural mix and age issues. Design would have to allow staff to be responsive if this is taken as an option.
- Consider providing one consulting room with direct access to the exterior to allow patients to leave (or arrive) very discretely as required.
- Consider providing external private court yards for consulting rooms.
- It is noted that the use of screens in waiting areas are generally pointless. Full walls offering acoustic and visual privacy are preferable.
- Consider providing audiovisual capacity to waiting areas to deliver preventative health information.
- Entrances to consulting rooms should not be visible from reception
- Consider providing a consulting room with a separate examination room (each with its own entrance and a door between) for increased confidentiality and to reduce feelings of shame by users.
- If hard copy files are to be used ensure it is preferable that there is a separate enclosed area where people can work on the files without being seen.
- Consider providing the capacity to allow the operation of a range of appropriate software packages (the facility should allow the use of the Communicare Package or other software).
- Consider how ambulance service may access the consulting rooms in an emergency.
- The environment should promote a high degree of human interaction between clients and staff.
- One consultation room needs an examination room.
- Consultation rooms need to be fitted with hand basins
- There needs to be transparency into the room when children are being serviced by agencies.
- Both consulting rooms need to be big enough for family groupings and fitted with adjoining doors.
- At least one consulting room is to be acoustically treated to allow hearing testing and other similar activities.

Meeting Room

The project brief indicates that the meeting room should accommodate up to six adults, and be suitable for use for meetings, counseling and meetings of small groups (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 7). There is no literature relating to Aboriginal use of such an area and local consultations did not specifically address this area.

Drop in area/resource area

The project brief indicates that the drop in/resource area should accommodate 8 - 10 adults, and be suitable for informal adult learning. It should contain comfortable seating, tea/coffee making facilities, accessible resources and data points (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 7).

Local consultations suggested that the drop in resource centre should be incorporated into the reception area for use by parents and families. It is unsure whether the brief intended that the drop in area be an area for visiting service agencies or for use by the general community (e.g. office space at the Centre). This should be clarified.

Laundry

The project brief indicates that the laundry should accommodate a industrial washer and dryer, a trough and shower (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 7). The literature notes that Children's Centres often offer laundry services:

... aimed to reduce scabies and other skin infections by washing all the children's clothes every morning and changing them into centre clothes which were then washed at the end of the day. This was a very time-consuming practice but one that everyone agreed was vital. In one centre it took a year to build up the children's health to the point where they were able to devote effort and attention to other areas of priority (Fasoli 2007 p. 268).

Note the users desired that this area be incorporated into the children's ablutions area. It may be pertinent to consider in remote housing design that the:

- Laundry should provide individual access to laundry washing and secure drying (to reduce potential for sorcery) (Fantin and Greenop 2009).

Kitchen

The project brief indicates that the kitchen area should be suitable for the preparation of meals for children and cooking classes for adults (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 7). Improving children's health outcomes is an important aim of the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre and the size, location and access to facilities for cooking and cleaning facilities are important concerns. Within the literature there was some mention of the capacity of improving health outcomes and it was noted that:

The types of kitchen equipment and food found in a remote Indigenous children's service are often not available within people's homes, making the service very attractive places to both adults and children (Fasoli 2007 p. 268).

These centres found that fundamental concerns about nutrition and health had to be addressed before more 'traditional' concerns of child care centres.

Anaemia, gut infections, dietary insufficiency and food affordability are also well-documented challenges to children's development and create constant stress for families. All of the children's services focused on reducing this stress through programs directly targeting childhood nutrition (Fasoli 2007 p. 268).



Figure 54: Mana Tamariki, Palmerston North (New Zealand) (Architects: Tennent and Brown) kitchen and alcove for hand washing next to kitchen (Photographs: Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2006).

Within the local consultations the users and enabling group identified that three separate kitchens should be incorporated into the project - a kitchenette for staff, a full sized kitchen for cooking classes and food preparation for children, and a full sized kitchen for adult cooking classes. These areas have been discussed in other parts of this report.

SUMMARY

This project presents excellent opportunities to address the often neglected design issues for Aboriginal people in a project which has the potential to have very positive outcomes for the Aboriginal users. There is a capacity to achieve an exceptional design outcome which could be ground-breaking in the design of early learning environments and more generally in the genre of Aboriginal architecture and design.

The team should understand first and foremost that the Centre is located on Barngarla (*alt sp* Pangkala, Barngala) Land and acknowledgement should be made of this in the design. A number of other language groups (i.e. Adnyamatharna (*alt spelling* Adnyamathanha), Gugada (*alt spelling* Kokatha, Kokata) and South Australian Aboriginal people from other language groups. Western Australian groups such as Nyoongars, Yamitji, Wongatha and groups from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (Anangu and Luritja), New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria) live in the area with area and their stories and cultural histories should be represented and may be usefully employed as design generators. There is a variety of Dreaming stories, and elements of the various cultures which may also serve usefully as design generators. The Enabling Group is very keen that Aboriginal people from other areas and should be welcomed and their cultural backgrounds and history respected and included. Designers should further consider appropriate signs, symbols and colours to acculturate the building and landscape.

The user group is predominately comprised of urban Aboriginal people with the Whyalla Indigenous population is fragmented into relatively small family groups. Most users are likely to have English as their first language and are likely to may have strong links with their traditional community and a mixture of traditional and modern ways. A wide range of age groups are represented in the potential user group and will require special consideration. From the needs analysis of the user groups, it is evident that the users are likely to have complex physical and mental health issues which need to be included in the design. The design will have to cater for users with fluctuating hearing loss, cognitive impairment, varying levels of disability and mobility. Some users will be suffering trauma in various ways (e.g. as a result of domestic violence and grieving and loss) and therefore it is very important that it is a calm place which welcomes Aboriginal children and their families.

The inclusion of art is critical to the success of the project. The involvement of local Indigenous artists will add considerable value to the project. Developments in recent years have included artists moving between mediums. To maximise the design outcomes, it is suggested artists be involved from the preliminary design process and work with the architect, landscape architect and other designers through an experienced coordinator.

There are some areas in the brief which may require clarification. The brief does not include a first aid room, a necessary addition considered by the enabling group. The brief also needs to detail other facilities. It does not detail change rooms and gender specific toilets for adults and children. The function of the 'drop in' centre is not clear and there is no reference to housing for the 12 person bus which will service the project. There also seems to be some confusion regarding the number and placement of kitchens. It would appear very prudent that the brief is revisited and clarified by the architect with design team appointed for the project.

The design of the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre has the potential to accommodate environmental preferences of Aboriginal users. The design recommendations presented in this report focus on the importance of Aboriginal domiciliary practices, lifestyles structured around the social group and the need to

maintain connections to country and kin for all Aboriginal people. The users of the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre represent some of the most marginalised members of Australian society. There is a capacity to improve the outcomes for Aboriginal people through design. Indigenous users have differing and varying cultural needs for the built environment. Understanding and translating the salient aspects of the culturally specific responses of Indigenous peoples to environmental settings may produce environments which better meet the needs of groups and in this instance enhance learning outcomes. To successfully design environments for Aboriginal people, architects and other designers must understand the nature of those lifestyles. It is not the aim to identify an architectural solution for individual behaviours, but to highlight a series of behaviours and the associated issues for the design of the project which may require consideration by a designer. Whyalla does not have an Aboriginal Community Centre and this project is seen as a mechanism to bring the community together. The design of appropriate environments for the Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre provides excellent opportunities to address socio-economic marginalisation and to make an architectural statement on the importance of the Aboriginal child and the family.

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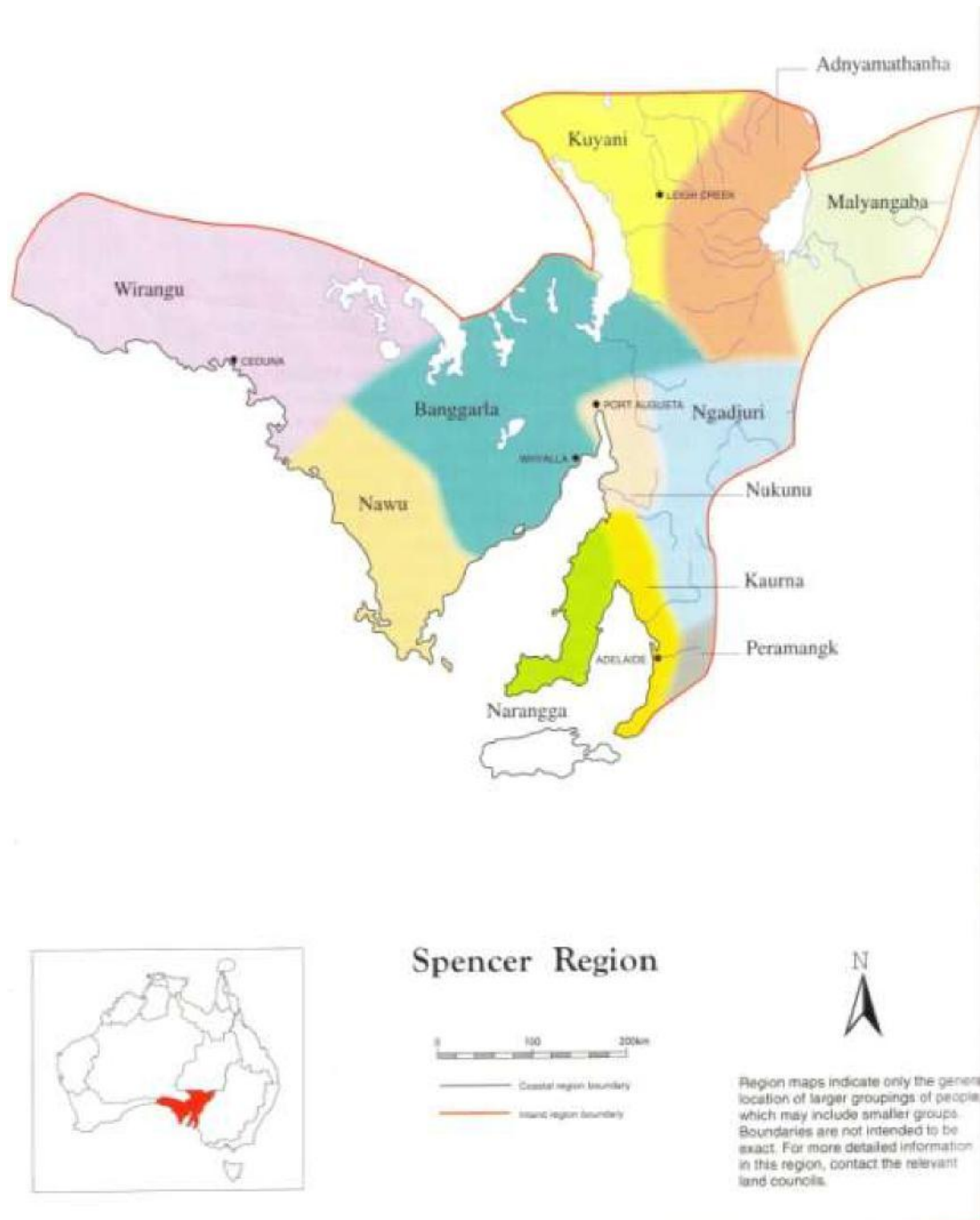
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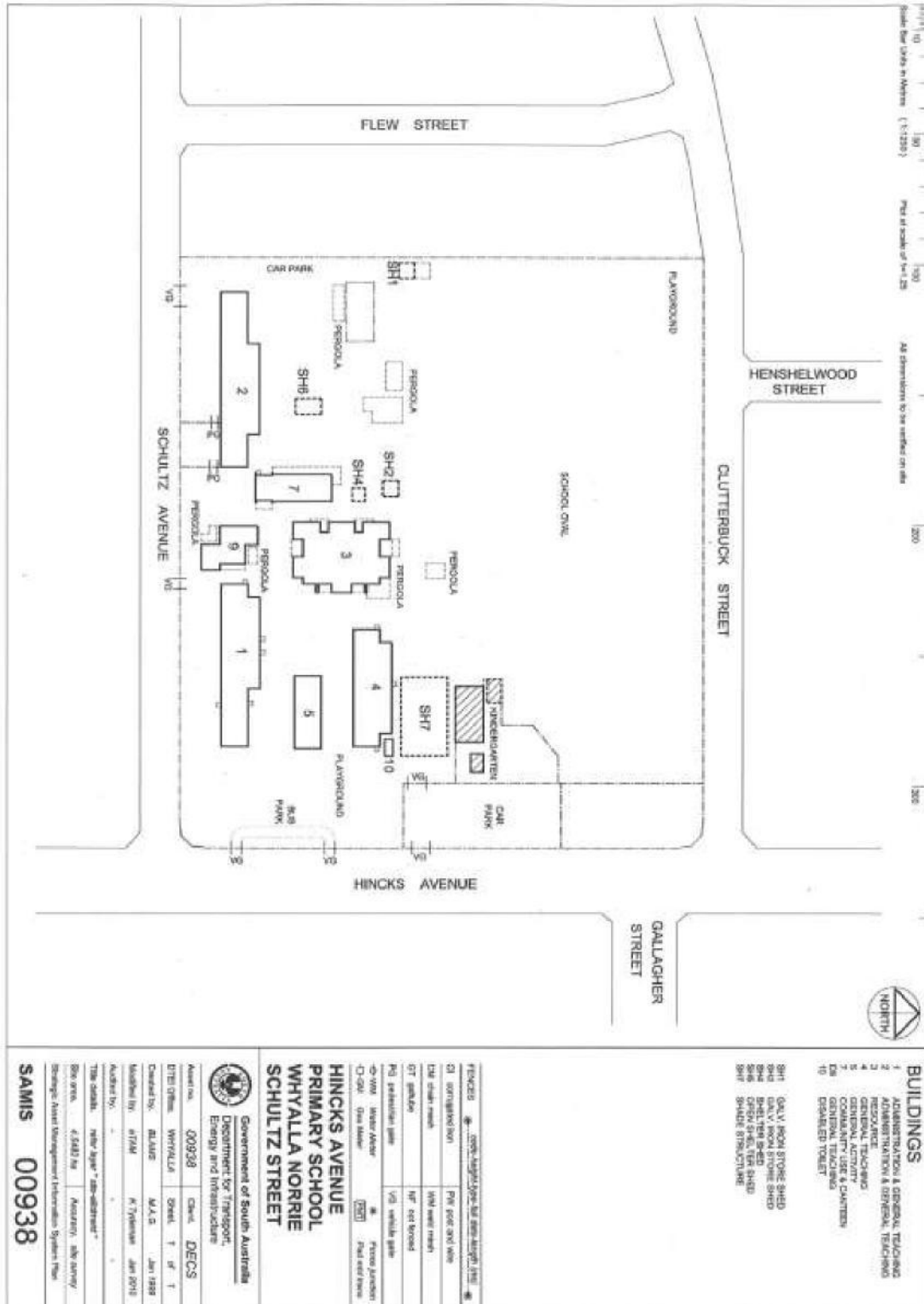
APPENDIX 1: ABORIGINAL REGIONS & LANGUAGES - SPENCER REGION

Source: Horton 1994



APPENDIX 2: SITE PLANS

Source: Department of Education and Children's Services



APPENDIX 3: WHYALLA SWOT ANALYSIS GENERATED BY ENABLING COMMITTEE



**Aboriginal
Children
and Family
Centres**

A Council of Australian Governments Closing the Gap initiative



**Whyalla Aboriginal Children and Family Centre
ENABLING GROUP MEETING**

Summary of “Make a Wish” and SWOT analysis Data received so far:
[from **Enabling Group meeting**]

From your perspective (organisation, community knowledge etc), what would you recommend be included in the building brief for the proposed centre?

- Large screen in foyer area – Rolling Ads (information for uses)
- Large entrance foyer
- Large training room (s) – multiple cooking areas to enable group cooking classes to be conducted (family nutrition)
- Area for CAFHS nurse
- Men’s shed area
- Outside –fire circle- community gathering area
- Community garden
- Interactive white boards/ IT connectivity – training room (s)
- A4 minimum clinical screening room
- Well lit
- Clinical chair
- Consider dental health promotion
- Small sinks for tooth brushing
- Consider full dental clinic suitable for appropriate procedures-
- Clinic room with client table for ante natal checks
- Sound proof room for hearing assessment
- Training room for adult learning
- Outside area for adults/ training/ relax
- Wheelchair access/ wide doorways
- Play areas for allied health therapists to work with children

What joint user group arrangements would consider it might be useful to explore?

- Tjurni Mininis birthing program
- Child and Family Health – Health checks and Hearing checks
- Nunyara – health services and immunizations

SWOT analysis: [Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats]

Strengths:

Funding
DECS leadership
Local input into design of services

Weaknesses:

Community loyalty to Nunyara and Wynbring Jida

Opportunities:

Child and adult education facility
Partnership with Nunyara and Wynbring Jida
Tafe connections

Threats (risks):

Primary health care funding diminishing – focus as an active centre could limit health opportunities to be involved in the centre.

Any “political” considerations?:

Need to ensure cooperation with Nunyara
Nunyara has health focus and community engagement
Children’s Centre can have education first- linked to Nunyara health services

APPENDIX 4: INTENDED OUTCOMES GENERATED BY ENABLING COMMITTEE



**Aboriginal
Children
and Family
Centres**

A Council of Australian Governments Closing the Gap Initiative

WHYALLA INTENDED OUTCOMES



Government of South Australia
Department of Education and
Children's Services

OVERARCHING OUTCOMES:-

1. Aboriginal Children are born and remain healthy;
2. Aboriginal Children have the same health outcomes as non-Aboriginal Children;
3. Aboriginal Children acquire the basic skills for life and learning; &
4. Aboriginal Families have ready access to suitable and culturally inclusive early childhood & family support services

SPECIFIC OUTCOMES:-

1. Increased proportion of Aboriginal children participation in quality early childhood education, development and child care services;
2. Increase proportion of Aboriginal people using parent and family support services;
3. Increase proportion of Aboriginal children's / child health checks completed each year
4. Increase proportion of Aboriginal who are fully vaccinated each year
5. Increase Proportion of pregnant Aboriginal woman aged under 20 years with an antenatal contact in the first trimester of pregnancy each year
6. Increase proportion of Aboriginal teenagers accessing sexual and reproductive health programs each year.

IDENTIFIABLE NEEDS IN WHYALLA	POSSIBLE ACTIONS/PROGRAMS TO MEET NEEDS	FACILITIES IMPLICATIONS	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS AGREEMENTS? MoU's?*
<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wellbeing issues Improve Aboriginal Children's Health Hearing Screening Immunisation Health Checks Dental Sexual Health Nutrition Program / Healthy Eating Programs for parents of teenagers Family Relationships *Building Relationships *Supporting reconnection with Children/Parents Access to CYHS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYH CHAD Team Nanyara "<i>Lift the Lip</i>" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program 0-2yrs Referrals <i>Promote</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centre Attendance DECS Service OPAL <i>Community Garden</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing own food Budgeting Cooking foods / Cooking Programs <i>Antenatal Classes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Postnatal Support Birthing Program <i>Groups</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parenting Groups Breast feeding / Introducing Solids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age appropriate Toys Dental Facilities Chair <i>ICT Technology</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TV Computers Phones White Boards Fax / Photo Copier <i>ROOMS</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community room Staff meeting room Training rooms Private consult rooms Private Breast Feeding Area Plenty of Storage Resource area Crèche Pre-school Directors / CDC Office Public & Children's Toilets <i>Group Space</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cater for 25 Adults <i>Kitchen</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tea / Coffee facilities Kettle/urn Fridge/microwave & cooking utensils ect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OH&S Policies Facilities matching Hospital Dietician Professionals / Doctors ect Council Police
2			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to Education • Learning together at Home <p>LEGAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Support • Legal Support • Domestic Violence • Drug & Alcohol • Preschool? • Safe Environment <p>OTHER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Outdoor Meeting Place • Drop-in - Meeting Place • *Recreation Equipment • Physical Activity Programs • Homelessness • Transportation issue – demographics • Employment of Aboriginal People • Mentoring Support • Gathering Area • Sports Library • * Toy Library • Community Information • Men's Shed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Young Mums * Toddler * Dads / Grandparents * All Family <p>Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Personnel best ○ Helpers / Mentoring ○ Reconnect ○ Develop specific programs to meet required needs ○ Jumpstart for Life <p>Centralink access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Points - Computer interface <p>Housing Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FACS Welfare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reception & Cultural Implications • Shaped like a Boomerang • Connection to water ("land meets the sea") <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can the architect incorporate an under floor water feature in the entrance area of the centre • Outdoor Space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physical activities ○ Grassed / Synthetic area ○ Playground ○ Shading area * Lounge * Reflection area ○ Safe sensory ○ Plants safe ○ Sandpit ○ Swings ○ Quiet area ○ Sensory path ○ Culturally inclusive environment ○ Artwork ○ Sculptures & ○ Landscaping culturally appropriate 	
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WILD PEACH TREES IN THE FAMILY GATHERING AREA

FIRE ACCESS & BBQ