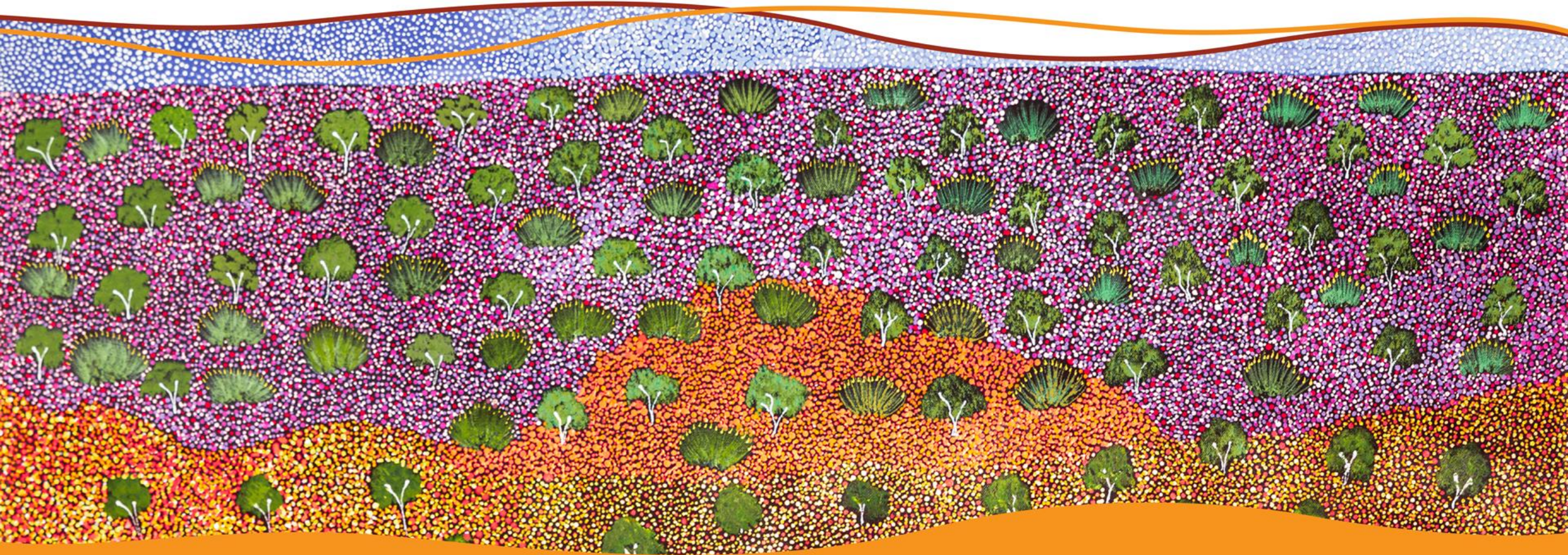


*Wilya manu marlungku-ku anyul nyirrinta mappungku akila-ka -  
Warumungu*

# Barkly Regional Deal



*Strong Barkly communities, together determining  
our future and thriving in both worlds.*

## Report on Community Consultations for the Student Boarding Facility Initiative, November 2023



# Background

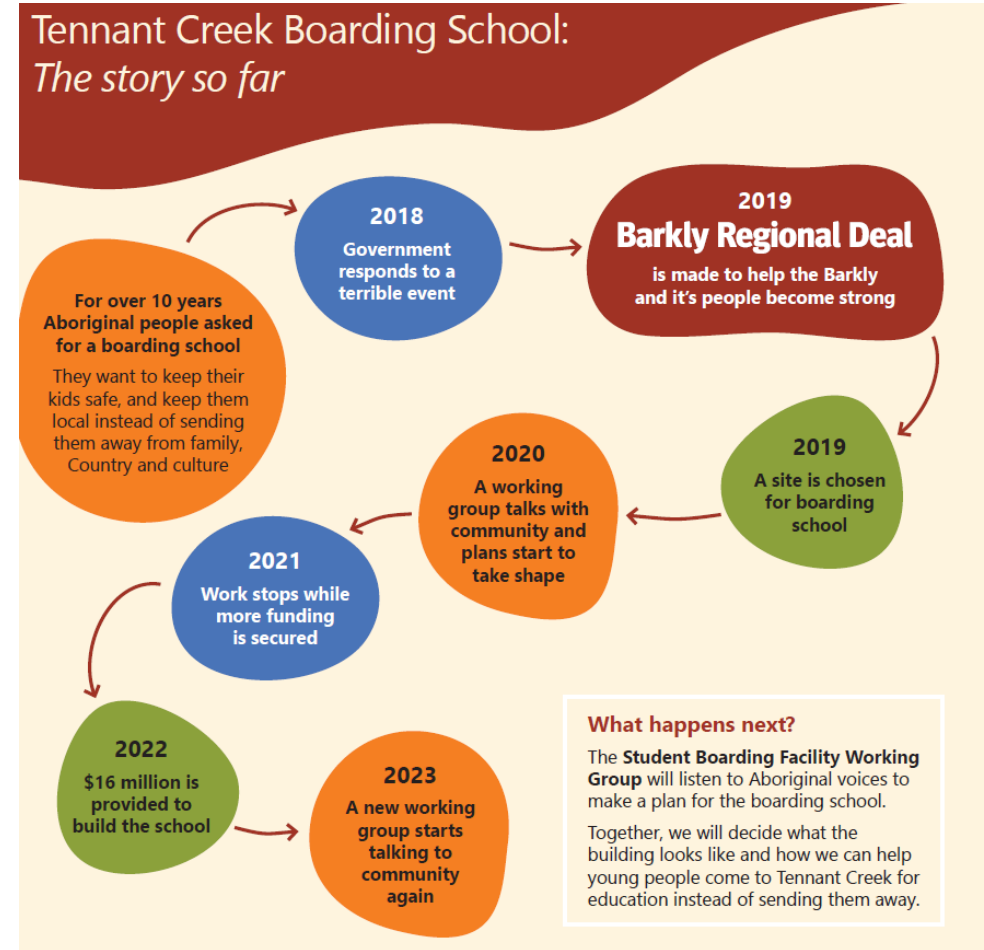
The Tennant Creek Student Boarding Facility is initiative 18 under the Barkly Regional Deal, funded by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments.

As part of the new, collaborative way of working under the Deal, a Working Group is ensuring that community members have input to the initiative. The Working Group includes a community Chairperson, community members and representatives from DIPL and the NTG Dept of Education.

The Working Group has terms of reference, a workplan to guide and monitor its progress and has met 16 times since March 2023.

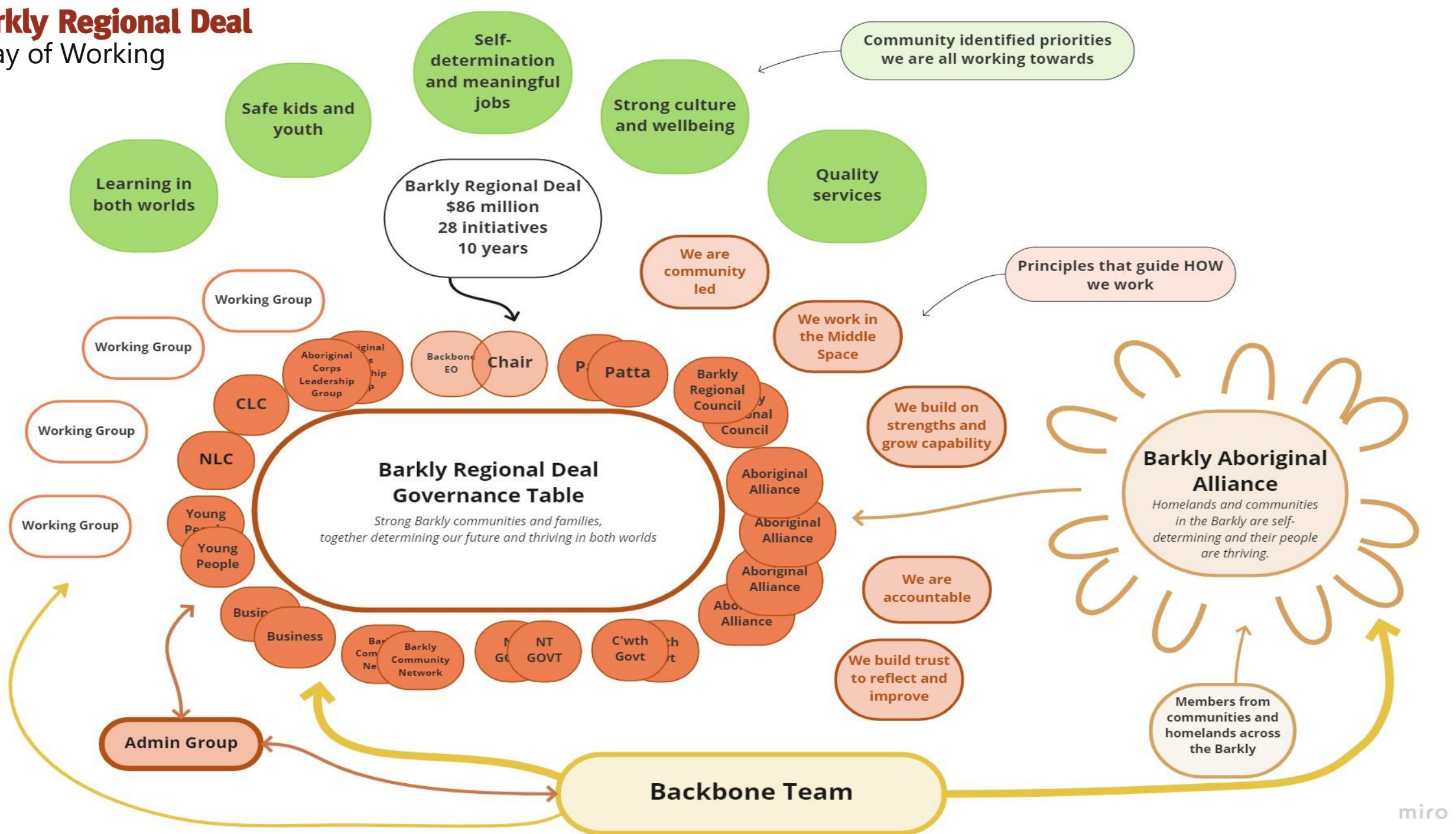
A key responsibility of the Working Group is to oversee community consultations about the Boarding Facility.

This report summarises the methodology and results of community consultations held from July- Nov 2023 which enabled community members from across the Barkly to have input to elements of the design and operations of the Boarding Facility.



# Barkly Regional Deal

## Way of Working





# Methodology: How we did our community consultations

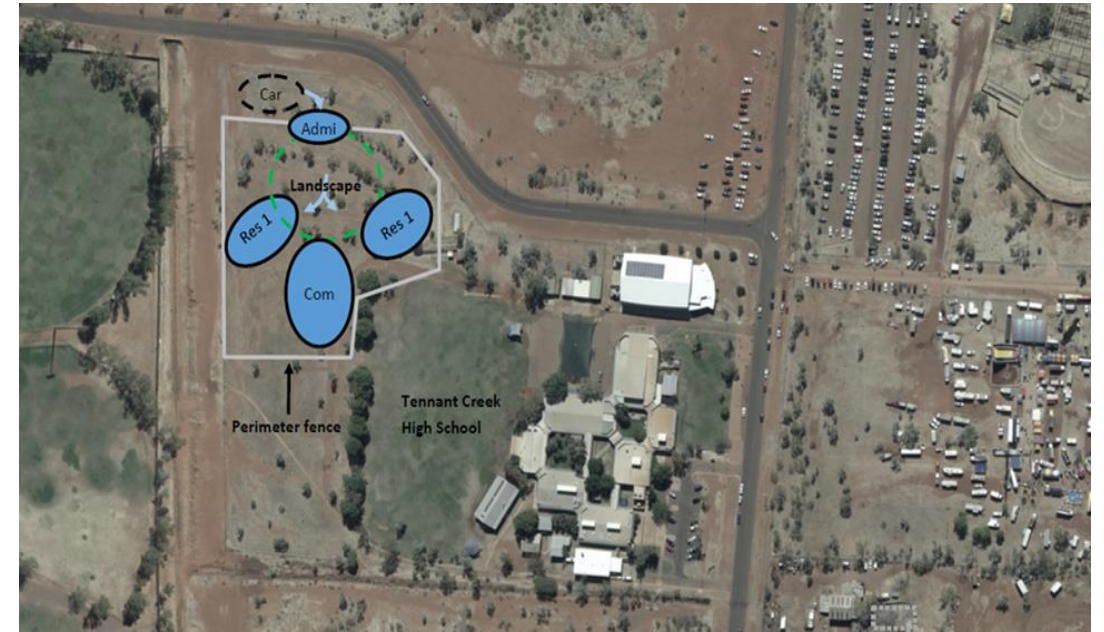
1. **The working group co-designed**, tested and improved the following tools:

- Data collection tools- the focus group and survey questions we need to ask community members
- Communication tools- info graphics and photos to provide community members with key information about the Facility (for example the site and funding) to support focus group conversations in communities

2. **The Backbone led face-to-face focus groups** across the Barkly, supported by the Department of Education staff on the ground in communities.

- Three focus groups were held on line with Elliot School and 12 people completed an online survey.

3. Data from the focus groups and surveys was analysed to identify demographics of participants and key common themes and differences in their views



# Who was included in community consultations?

In total the consultations included:

- 120 people reached via 21 focus groups/interviews (80% Indigenous, 60% female);
- 12 online surveys (55% Indigenous, 80% female)
- 7 Barkly communities:  
Ali Curung, Mungkarta, Canteen Creek, Wakurlpu, Ampilitwatja, Elliot and Tennant Creek
- 6 language groups and English  
Warumungu, Warlpiri, Alywarr, Kaytete, Mudburra, Jingili





# Who was included in community consultations?

Stakeholder groups included:

- Families (parents, grandparents aunties/uncles), current students, teachers, ex-students, Elders, Lead committees, ex-staff of other student hostels, Aboriginal Alliance members, youth service providers
- 16 Working Group meetings where members shared perspectives and experiences about what works/doesn't work



# What questions did we ask people?

The **Focus group guide** asked 11 questions including:

- Families' experience with boarding schools- what worked and didn't work?
- Views on whether they would attend/send kids to a facility in Tennant Creek
- Views on what could help them feel the facility would keep them/their kids safe
- Views on activities, supports needed for students and families
- Views on the building design, spaces, what it should look like

The **online survey** included more and specific questions about design and operation elements

*The Student Boarding Facility Working Group would like to talk with Aboriginal people about the boarding school design*

The working group includes people from the Barkly Backbone Team and the Department of Education Transition Support Unit. We will sit down and talk face to face, talk at meetings and ask questions for a survey.

Flyers and community school notices will let you know when we are coming to talk. We will come back to let you know what we heard and what this means for the boarding school.

**We want to know what these things should look like:**

- cultural ownership
- safety and security
- Aboriginal governance and employment
- a place for visiting parent

**We also want to ask:**

- Who will use it?
- What help do families need to use it?
- What does it need to look like?
- How does it need to be run?
- What does it need to be safe?
- How to keep families involved and talking to people?

**We will be visiting the following communities over a 4-month consultation period:**

- |               |                 |                     |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| • Alekarenge  | • Canteen Creek | • Murray Downs      |
| • Ali Curung  | • Elliot        | • Newcastle Waters  |
| • Amplatwajwa | • Epenarra      | • Rockhampton Downs |
| • Arpurrulam  | • Mungarta      | • Tennant Creek     |

**We want to hear from:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Barkly leaders, Elders and mentors  | • Staff of hostels and boarding schools               |
| • Barkly Aboriginal Alliance  | • Barkly youth groups, service providers and agencies |
| • Current and former primary and high school students, families, teachers and staff | • The people who spoke last time we visited.          |

To find out more talk to your school office or contact the Barkly Backbone Office:

0427 193 469 | [info@barklybackbone.com.au](mailto:info@barklybackbone.com.au)

1/163 Patterson Street, Tennant Creek



# What people told us

## Would you send your kids to a Boarding facility in Tennant Creek?

- 50% yes

### If no, why not?

- Too much drinking and fighting in Tennant Creek
- Too much trouble with young people in town
- Risk of students being bullied and fighting with town kids
- Too easy for students to wander off with family/friends
- Not enough subjects or learning supports or leadership or consistent processes at Tennant Creek High School
- Not enough activities and opportunities
- Location of the facility next to the high school and in town
- Family members already board elsewhere and it's working well





# What people told us

**What would change your mind and make you feel safe to send your kids there?**

- Strong relationships, trust and communication with staff at school and boarding house
- Strong supervision and rules at facility and school: e.g families need to give permission before students are able to leave
- Aboriginal staff who understand issues in communities and families and speak Language
- Clear leadership and quality, resourced teaching at the school
- Structured activities after school and weekends, excursions, and work experience opportunities
- Learning support and a long transition period so kids can settle in
- Cultural mentors/Elders/respected graduates helping sort out fighting/tensions between students
- Strict rules about and limited times for phone and wifi use





# What people told us

## What should the design of the building be like?

- Two students to a room was the most common choice. Possibly four for younger students and two for older students.
- Curtains for privacy, lockable cupboards and wardrobes were important to everyone
- Security needs to be considered in all design elements- lots of break ins in Tennant Creek
- However, people don't want the building to look like a prison or have too much grey concrete or barbed wire
- Spacious, open and light
- Common room with games area
- Eating/cooking area separate to lounge/common area to keep it clean
- Everyone wanted to see fire pits and shady garden areas
- Some suggested bush medicine/tucker garden
- Separate girls and boys hang out space
- Quiet, study spaces needed inside and outside
- A sensory room for students to regulate/process emotions
- Some people wanted a place for families to stay onsite. Others suggested the Visitor Park as a better option
- Wheelchair access is needed





# What people told us

## What should the design of the building be like?

- Strong consensus on the following interior design elements:
  - Display logos from schools in the Barkly as well as photos, paintings and words in Language from Barkly communities and homelands
  - Students could do a big mural, make metal animal sculptures and help set up garden etc to build ownership
  - Colours should be engaging and earthy- desert and ochre colours, calming colours in quiet zones
  - Private outside and inside areas for family visits are needed and places to cook outside too
- Other suggestions:
  - No over stimulating lighting
  - Indoor plants
  - Flexible furniture that can be joined/separated
  - White tiles in kitchen and bathroom so calcium doesn't show up
  - Louvre windows no good with the Barkly dust





# Key themes

Safety in Tennant Creek is a bigger concern now, than 5 years ago when a boarding facility was first suggested. The design and operations of the facility need to respond to this.

Trusting relationships with staff at the school and boarding facility, and staff retention are key.

Families need regular communication, strict supervision over students' movements and general security of the building in order to feel the facility would be safe. There rules need to have flexibility for new students who are adjusting to everything,

A mixture of staff is needed: Aboriginal staff who are from communities and understand language, family/community tensions and cultural issues (like if boys have been initiated) and non-Aboriginal staff who are not directly involved or obligated in family/community dynamics.

All staff need cultural safety and trauma informed care training. It would be good to have some house parents from Barkly communities.



# Key themes

There needs to be good communication and consistency between staff at the school, boarding facility and families.

It was suggested that parents and families be encouraged to get involved in the school and invited to visit for assemblies and awards ceremonies- (not just when the kids are in trouble!)

Families suggested that there should be open days for Barkly and Tennant Creek families to come and have a look around the facility.

When students start at the facility (Year 8 was considered the best age), families should come in and meet all the house parents and teachers and for the kids to have a few weeks to settle in.

Cultural mentors, learning Language, dance, painting, hunting, campfire, storytelling, bush trips and access to Elders is important

Students need to have access to learning support (after hours too), structured activities, life skills and other opportunities like excursions to other places and work experience.





# Key themes

The facility needs to make the most of Tennant Creek facilities and services like the Youth Centre, Juno, Clontarf, Stars, John Moriarty, the pool, sports, Purkiss Reserve, MaryAnn Dam, Language centre, Barkly Arts.

This facility could be a good option for students and families not comfortable with going interstate or to Alice or Darwin who prefer a closer option with more opportunities for visits.

Some families want kids to visit home regularly (for example a bus to bring them home every few weekends), other families, teachers and ex- students say only in school holidays, so students keep a consistent routine and structure.

Most people felt it was better for parents to visit the students and wanted to know if there will be somewhere for them to stay onsite or elsewhere when they visit students. Some ex-students feel that an onsite facility for families can create jealousy and tension amongst students so staying somewhere like the Visitor Park would be better.



# Quotes from the community

*[The kids] should only come home in holidays. if they come home too much it will be hard to get them back and they don't get in their routine.*

*A fire pit is great for sitting around having a yarn and bonding, also need outside cooking place and BBQ, need a pretty, shady garden area for quiet time- kids could be part of looking after the garden.*

*Have paintings from countrymen from the Barkly, artefacts like boomerang and coolamon. Language classes at night. Fire pits for visiting families and cooking kangaroo tail on weekends. You'll need windbreaks and stainless-steel benches to sit on.*

*Have a counsellor so kids can express feelings. Clean warm beds, entertainment - sports, educational, electronic. Healthy tukka and kids helping to grow food and cook. Chores to give kids ownership and responsibility. Teach culture. FASD training and awareness*





# Quotes from the community

*House parents have to be very strict. Families need to have strong connection with the staff/house parents.*

*They need to have lots of rules and local Language speakers, and supervision all the time so they can't just leave with anybody and then not come back. Someone needs to know where they are all the time.*

*Work with the school and teachers as well to ensure the students there feel a part of the school community and not just boarding house.*

*The staff don't all have to be Aboriginal but they have to work there a long time so families can build relationships and trust them and communicate directly with them.*

*What will be the recruitment process? Hiring the right staff is paramount to the success of this. How will staff wellbeing be cared for as well? All of these things are just as important if not more important than the design of the building.*





# Next steps:

DIPL has awarded the contract for the design of the Student Boarding Facility to Ashford Lamaya Architects (ALA).

The Working Group will have its first workshop with ALA in Tennant Creek on Dec 13 2023.

Working Group members have agreed on the importance of ALA meeting with Traditional Owners and Custodians at the site of the Boarding Facility on Dec 13.

This meeting will ensure that ALA is properly welcomed to the area and hears about the history and context of the area and the site. Traditional Owners and Custodians may raise specific cultural elements that need to be reflected in the design and operations of the facility.

