

# Goldfields Men's Wellbeing Project: What happens in Goldfield communities that creates wellbeing?

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Image 1: Communities Visited by the Puntu Pirni Palya Project.

## 1. Introduction

This paper seeks to understand what activities are undertaken in communities across the Goldfields region that creates wellbeing for First Nations men. The findings are informed by the voices and lived experiences of First Nations men participating in the Puntu Pirni Palya (PPP) Men's Wellbeing Project.

## 2. Method – Approach and Ways of Working

### 2.1 Communities and Participants

As of July 2026, 12 communities of the Goldfields region have been visited by the PPP project (see image 1) with a total of 31 trips. Following the release of the second Men's Wellbeing Paper *Goldfields Men's Wellbeing Project: What does men's wellbeing look, feel, and sound like in Goldfield's communities*, the project has visited an additional four towns; Southern Cross, Westonia, Merredin and Mukinbudin. Coolgardie and Norseman have been visited four times; Ninga-Mia, Menzies, Leonora, Laverton, Wiluna and Southern Cross three times; Jigalong twice; and Merredin, Westonia and Mukinbudin once. Typically, each visit runs for one week, Monday to Friday, 8.30-4.30. Across all trips there has been 624 participants, noting these are not all unique individuals, some men participate in several workshops. The demographic is First Nations men from the Goldfields region, over the age of 18, representing generations from Z to Interwar.

### 2.2 Data Collection

Data is collected throughout the workshops by the workshop coordinators in the form of notes taken from yarns. The purpose of the data collection is to understand how wellbeing is experienced and expressed by men in each community. At the start of each workshop the workshop coordinators inform the participants that notes will be taken during the day. However, the coordinator doesn't take notes in front of people, but makes them periodically during the day in a notebook.

Data is collected in three main forms:

#### 1. Letterbox How are you Feeling System

As participants arrive, they are invited to indicate how they feel using a five-point scale: *very unhappy*, *somewhat unhappy*, *ok*, *happy*, or *very happy*. Participants then repeat the same process when they leave the workshop. The process provides an indicator of mood change throughout the day which is measured from the morning and afternoon score (see table 1).

| Name               | Age Demographic |   |   |   |   | Morning Tally |   |   |   |   | Afternoon Tally |   |   |   |   | Score |
|--------------------|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---------------|---|---|---|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|-------|
|                    | Z               | M | X | B | I | -             | - | 0 | + | + | -               | - | 0 | + | + |       |
| Key Descriptor     |                 |   |   |   |   | 2             | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2               | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |       |
| Participant 1 (CS) |                 |   | x |   |   |               | x |   |   |   |                 |   | x |   |   | +1    |
| Participant 2      | x               |   |   |   |   | x             |   |   |   |   |                 | x |   |   |   | +1    |
| Participant 3      | x               |   |   |   |   | x             |   |   |   |   |                 |   |   |   | x | +4    |
| Participant 4      |                 | x |   |   |   |               | x |   |   |   |                 |   | x |   |   | +1    |
| Participant 5      |                 | x |   |   |   |               | x |   |   |   |                 |   | x |   |   | +1    |
| Participant 6      |                 |   |   | x |   |               | x |   |   |   |                 |   |   | x |   | +2    |
| Participant 7      |                 |   | x |   |   |               | x |   |   |   |                 |   |   | x |   | +2    |
| Participant 8      | x               |   |   |   |   |               |   | x |   |   |                 |   |   | x |   | +1    |

Table 1- Letterbox Feelings System (example data)

## 2. Yarning and Observational Notes

Coordinators engage in informal yarning sessions with participants that naturally occur during the workshops. They listen to men's conversations, stories, and reflections, rather than asking structured questions in an interview-like setting. Notes are recorded based on a set of wellbeing categories (see table 2). Often the Cultural Stewards are yarning with participants, and the coordinators make note of topics of conversation. Workshop coordinators *do not* record their interpretations of the men's conversations. Recording exactly what the men say ensures that First Nations men's voices and lived experiences remain central.

### Men's Wellbeing Project GALCAC Data Collection (example only)

**Date:** 01/01/2025

**Location:** Fantasy Town

| Topic                                                      | Data (example only)                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of people attended workshop                         | 8                                                                                                                              |
| Hour's workshop ran                                        | 8.30-4.30                                                                                                                      |
| Wellness or wellbeing discussion                           | <i>Yarning in general about hunting being good for the soul.<br/>Men spoke about music helping with their mood.</i>            |
| General issues discussed                                   | <i>New gun laws making it difficult to go out bush for hunting.</i>                                                            |
| Community issues discussed                                 | <i>Road conditions after recent weather.<br/>Limited youth programs running during school holidays.</i>                        |
| Family issues discussed                                    | <i>Balancing work and family life.</i>                                                                                         |
| Personal issues discussed                                  | <i>Stress related to finding a job.<br/>Wanting to reconnect with family.</i>                                                  |
| Legal issues discussed                                     | <i>Questions about licensing and fines.</i>                                                                                    |
| Healing discussions                                        | <i>Yarning about grief.<br/>Talking about importance of time out bush for healing.</i>                                         |
| Cultural discussion                                        | <i>Conversations about traditional tools and how they were used in daily life.</i>                                             |
| Artefact discussion                                        | <i>Men discussing selling artefacts.<br/>Talking about the correct woods for making Digeridoos.</i>                            |
| Men's wellbeing project discussion                         | <i>Feeling like being at the workshop helps them get things off their chest and relax for a while.</i>                         |
| Language discussion                                        | <i>Language was spoken throughout the day.<br/>Talks of concern about language being lost with the older fellas.</i>           |
| Comments by external agencies, organisations, people, etc. | <i>Local council stopped by and said they were really happy the truck is in town. They took posters to spread around town.</i> |
| Incidents                                                  | <i>Heated discussions about religion.</i>                                                                                      |
| Disclosures                                                | <i>One man disclosed on going fighting at home and feeling overwhelmed.</i>                                                    |
| Cultural Steward matters                                   | <i>Spoke about passing their cultural knowledge on to students at the school.</i>                                              |

Table 2- Daily notes taken during workshops (example data)

### 3. Cultural Stewards

In workshops where a Cultural Steward was present, they were invited to respond to four questions about wellbeing outcomes they aim to achieve. The questions include personal, community, and project, and an option to share suggestions for strengthening the project (see table 3). The input of Cultural Stewards offered insight and guidance from local leaders and knowledge holders.

**Cultural Steward Notes (example only)**

| Cultural Steward | Personal outcomes you are working towards.                | Outcomes you would like to see for your community.                     | Feelings on the project outcomes being met or not.                        | Suggestions of outcomes they would like to see.   |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Mickey Duck      | Would like to be recognised as a leader for my community. | Would like all men involved to reflect positively after the workshops. | Very pleased with the way the men like being involved and we all love it. | A similar project for high school kids and women. |

*Table 3 - Cultural Steward notes recorded at the end of visit (example data)*

#### 2.3 Setting

All data collection occurred during the workshop; the truck being the primary setting. Locations varied by community, typically, the truck was in central town spaces; in some cases, bush settings are chosen when access and community preference allowed. Each site provided a decolonised and culturally safe space (see image 2). In some locations, the truck was moved to a second, and even a third location as the cultural stewards evaluated the



*Image 2: PPP truck set up*

safety of a site, and the comfort of the men attending. For example, in Coolgardie, the original site chosen was found to be culturally unsafe for the participants, and the cultural steward chose to move the truck to a site that was part of the original Aboriginal reserve, which felt safer. The second site provided a buffer for the participants from the townsfolk who were unsupportive or openly hostile about the project.

## 2.4 Analysing Data

All notes and observations made by the workshop coordinators were read several times to gain an accurate understanding of what men were expressing during the workshops. For this paper there was particular focus on the 'Community Issues' and 'Comments by external agencies, organisations, peoples, etc' categories (*see table 2*). A Venn diagram was created to illustrate men's conversations relating to community wellbeing, organised according to Western influences, First Nations influences, and areas of overlap (*see figure 1*). These community topics were then put into a table along with external comments and interactions from each community visit (*see table 4*).

## 3 Findings

### 3.1. Community Wellbeing

Figure 1: Venn diagram illustrating men's conversations relating to community wellbeing, organised according to Western influences, First Nations influences, and areas of overlap

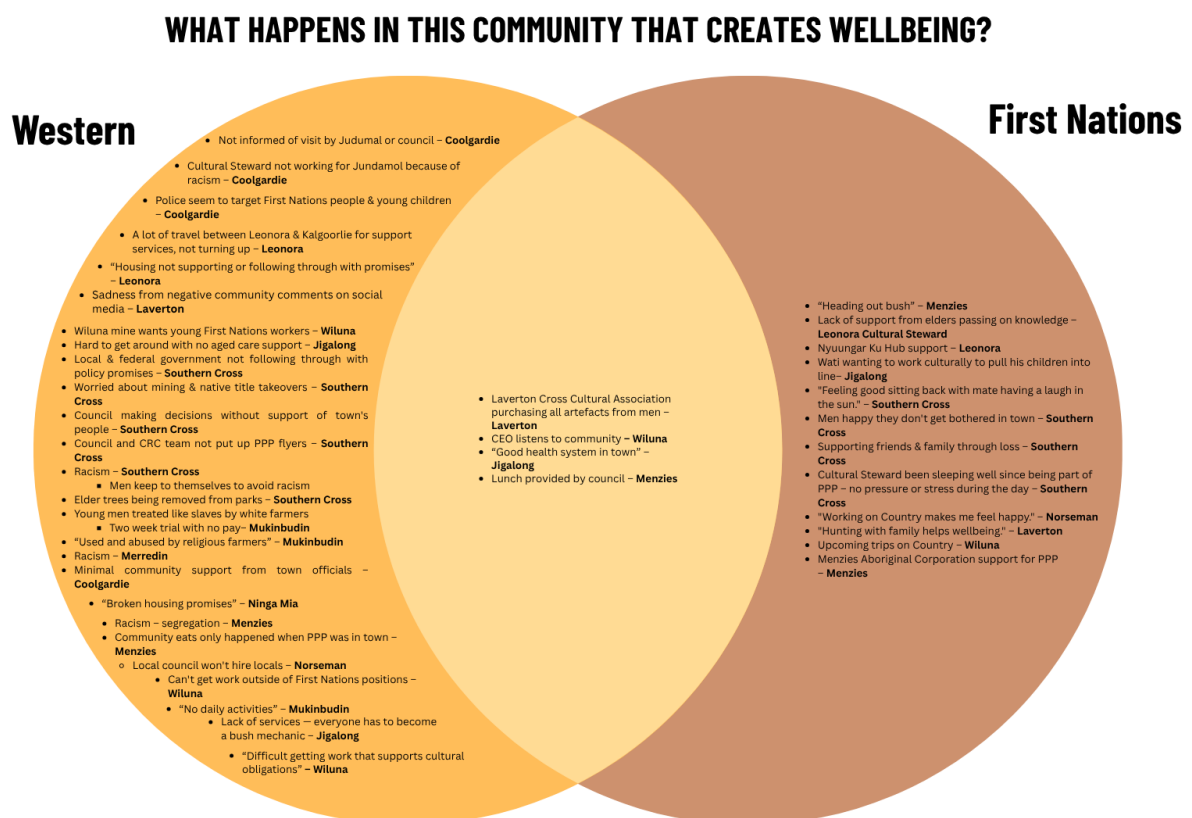


Figure 1 presents men's conversations organised according to whether they reflected Western world view, First Nations world view, or areas where these intersected in relation to community wellbeing. A greater number of recorded participant statements were situated within the Western domain, with many describing systemic and structural influences including racism, housing, employment, government services, and institutional relationships. In contrast, participant statements within the First Nations domain centred on Country, culture, kinship, community, and responsibilities as important contributors to

wellbeing. Notably, although this analysis sought to understand what creates wellbeing, participants' reflections frequently described factors that undermine or limit wellbeing. Rather than separating these experiences, men's conversations naturally encompassed both the conditions that strengthen wellbeing and those that threaten it.

### 3.2. Community Wellbeing

Table 4: Community specific topics relating to wellbeing and external comments and interactions recorded across communities.

| Community                         | External Comments and Interactions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                  | Men's Lived Experiences                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2025                              | Positive/ natural                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Negative                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Coolgardie</b><br>24-28 Mar    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judulmul took posters from Workshop Coordinator and put around town</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact didn't promote PPP project prior to visit</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Norseman</b><br>31 Mar- 04 Apr | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highschool teach enquiry for Boys Club to make tapping sticks.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council won't hire locals.</li> <li>Lack of general support from council.</li> <li>No planned activities at youth centre.</li> <li>Services available don't support cultural needs.</li> <li>Bush trips with Centrecare helps with connection to country</li> </ul> |
| <b>Menzies</b><br>07-11 Apr       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M.A.C. gave project space and power and facility options for the duration of stay.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Racism and segregation.</li> <li>Community Eats was put on for the first time, men joked about the truck coming back more often.</li> <li>No crime in Menzies.</li> </ul>                                                                                           |
| <b>Wiluna</b><br>29 Apr- 07 May   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police passed by and passed on word about project.</li> <li>Community store manager expressed project to be a fantastic opportunity.</li> <li>Police invited to participate in PPP workshop.</li> <li>Ranger Coordinator involved with group.</li> <li>Visit from TMPAC Coordinator with CEO.</li> <li>Shed caretaker passed on keys of community shed to use facilities during stay.</li> <li>S04 Saltlake offered work to all men that would turn up on that day.</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO wanting to develop Wiluna with everyone's input. CEO is getting kids involved with community development.</li> <li>Men going out bush on the weekend.</li> </ul>                                                                                                |
| <b>Laverton</b><br>27-31 May      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LCCA offered to buy all produced artefacts.</li> <li>Centrecare dropped by and think the project is a good space for men.</li> <li>Pakaanu request for project to come to town for NAIDOC.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police entered decolonised space requesting 4 men to step out.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family in fighting.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Leonora</b><br>02- 06 Jun      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passing police said they will put the word out in town.</li> <li>Council officer took poster to pass around town.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locals said no one knew of the truck's arrival.</li> <li>Welfare dependency overtly evident.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Ninga Mia</b><br>16-19 Jun     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pediatricians visit to PPP and showing support put this onto social Media resulting in other enquires from Centrecare and a visit from a Pakaanu board member, looking forward to a revisit to Laverton during their NAIDOC week.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fire Brigade urinating on main road in community.</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broken promises of housing putting families in danger.</li> <li>No community security</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Norseman</b><br>30 June 4 Jul  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council worker happy to see the project in town again.</li> <li>Ampol donated water and hot drinks to participants.</li> <li>School Participation Officer enquiring about purchasing artefacts.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Happy with Meedac support helping to get work at Pandora goldmine.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Laverton</b><br>22- 25 Jul     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pakaanu asked about tools and advice to continue artefact making.</li> <li>LCCA purchased all made artefacts.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of work opportunities for young people.</li> <li>Total fire ban in area despite being winter.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Coolgardie</b><br>11-15 Aug    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Racist comment by council worker as passing by PPP truck</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Racism a really common issue in community and workplaces.</li> <li>Segregation.</li> <li>Feels like there is 'one law for white and one law for black'.</li> </ul>                                                                                                  |
| <b>Wiluna</b><br>26-29 Aug        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local police supportive.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hard to find work outside of First Nations identified roles.</li> <li>Lack of community support.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                         |

## Goldfields Men's Wellbeing Project: What happens in Goldfields communities that creates wellbeing?

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|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Jigalong</b><br>01- 04 Sept     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of work opportunities for locals.</li> <li>Good health system in town.</li> <li>Lack of services in town.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Menzies</b><br>29 Sept- 02 Oct  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M.A.C. visit to let PPP team know they put flyers out in town.</li> <li>Support staff from M.A.C. visit.</li> <li>Visit from Council Community Officer who is happy to see the project in town again.</li> </ul> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shortage of work positions- some men are job sharing.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Norseman</b><br>13-17 Oct       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HOPE wants to partner with project.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                   |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Leonora</b><br>10-15 Nov        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Campbells Transport took photos to spread around, very supportive of project.</li> <li>Support from women's group to spread the word of visit.</li> <li>Genesis Mining enquiry.</li> </ul>                       |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of housing not supporting or following through with promises.</li> <li>Theft from young gang.</li> <li>Political party wrong representation for the people.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Southern Cross</b><br>17-21 Nov | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town CEO enquiry</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                      |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men happy they don't get bothered in town. Some racism in locals- some men keeping to themselves to avoid it.</li> <li>Men sad about old growth trees being removed.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Ninga Mia</b><br>1-5 Dec        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit from police looking for someone.</li> <li>Taxi driver supportive.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                               |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only one bus service in the day at 9.30 am.</li> <li>Cars being dumped in community.</li> <li>Worried about mining takeovers.</li> <li>Lack of housing.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>2026</b>                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Laverton</b><br>19-23 Jan       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pakaanu, LCCA, and HOPE visit and support.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                            |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sadness from men from negative comments from social media- racial prejudice from community member.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Leonora</b><br>26-30 Jan        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nyuunga Ku Hub support.</li> <li>Shire put on a food van.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                             |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural Steward struggling to get support from elders to pass on cultural knowledge.</li> <li>Nguunga Ku Hub supporting local cultural development.</li> <li>A lot of travel between Leonora and Kalgoorlie for support services that sometimes don't show up.</li> <li>DV support wanted.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Coolgardie</b><br>2-6 Feb       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police offer visit and offer to promote the project.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No jobs for First Nations except for Meedac and Judumul.</li> <li>Men not informed of visit from Judumul or Council.</li> <li>Cultural Steward left job due to racism.</li> <li>Police seem to target First Nations people including young children.</li> </ul>                                        |
| <b>Menzies</b><br>9-12 Feb         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lunch provided by council.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                            |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M.A.C. and Council had put up flyers around town. Poster in local paper too.</li> <li>Several infrastructure issues throughout town.</li> <li>Supported by M.A.C. for work.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Southern Cross</b><br>2-6 Mar   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Club Hotel Support with advertising visit.</li> <li>Support shown by shire staff.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                     |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worried about mining takeovers</li> <li>Council making decisions without the support of locals.</li> <li>Council and CRC have not put of flyers around town.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Norseman</b><br>9-13 Mar        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advertising supported by Woodlands Centre.</li> <li>Visited by Ngadju Rangers.</li> <li>Financial Counsellor found interest and men wanted his support.</li> </ul>                                               |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of follow through in community.</li> <li>Lack of aged care support.</li> <li>Men living week to week and would like financial counselling in community.</li> <li>Support from Rangers.</li> <li>Men coming together to support family arts project in Perth.</li> </ul>                           |
| <b>Wiluna</b><br>31 Mar- 10 Apr    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visits and support from Northern Star, Shire, police, and GM Wiluna Gold.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                             |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficult to get work that supports cultural obligations.</li> <li>Wiluna mine wants young First Nations workers part-time.</li> <li>Laziness in children.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Jigalong</b><br>29 Apr- 8 May   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police visit.</li> <li>Visit from P.A.M.S.- offered support and to put up posters.</li> <li>Visit from Ranger group and community CEO.</li> </ul>                                                                |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of ages care support services.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

## Goldfields Men's Wellbeing Project: What happens in Goldfields communities that creates wellbeing?

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Mukinbudin</b><br>24-26 May    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local enquiries.</li> <li>Visit from CRC.</li> <li>Enquiries and support from teachers, Men's Shed Coordinator, Water Corp, and Community Cultural Representatives.</li> </ul> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No daily activities.</li> <li>Work is hard to find as a First Nations person.</li> <li>Young men treated like slaves by farmers- two week trial with no pay and then no further employment.</li> <li>Genocide feels present.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Merredin</b><br>27-30 May      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit from Winyama Indigenous Geospatial.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                           |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outsiders causing problems and wrecking cultural sites.</li> <li>A lot of racism in town, especially with other generation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                  |
| <b>Westonia</b><br>30 May-2 Jun   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School and Mine Camp Manager visit and enquiry.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                     |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of awareness to wider community of visit.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Southern Cross</b><br>2-5 June | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council and CRC support and visit.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local and federal governments not following through with promises.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Ninga-Mia</b><br>15-19 June    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bega visit and support.</li> <li>Visit and support from Youth Justice.</li> <li>Visit from Safer Families from Department of Communities.</li> </ul>                           |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cars dumped and burnt out by visitors.</li> <li>Racism.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Coolgardie</b><br>22-26 June   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men not informed of project visit from council.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                              |

The previous paper on the Goldfields Men's Wellbeing Project explored what wellbeing is for First Nations men in the Goldfields region. It identified several concepts that men raised as contributing to their wellbeing:

1. community support – both wider community, and First Nations support,
2. opportunities for leadership,
3. employment,
4. health,
5. provision the next generation – concern for children and grandchildren,
6. empowerment, and, most importantly,
7. connection to Country through land, kin and language (Grubb et al., 2025).

These findings can be summarised as the 5Cs – *culture, capable, country, community, and confidence*.

**Culture** – kin, language, opportunity for leadership, community support, connection to Country.

**Capable** – employment, leadership, provision for next generation, community support.

**Country** – connection to Country.

**Community** – connection to kin, community support, sustained employment, connection to Country.

**Confidence** – opportunity for leadership, sustained employment, good health, provision for next generation, connection to Country.

This paper builds on the findings of paper 1 and 2, and examines whether, and how, communities and towns in the Goldfields region are supporting the priorities the First Nations men have identified as creating wellbeing. How do communities and towns support the 5Cs?

During most community visits, agencies, organisations and community workers who visited the PPP truck to express support for the project. Many took promotional material and indicated they would share information throughout the community. Others accepted invitations from the Cultural Steward to participate in workshops, explored partnership opportunities, or enquired about future workshops for students. Ranger groups also frequently expressed interest in having a permanent artefact-making truck in their community.

These interactions demonstrate strong verbal support for the project and its objectives of resourcing men to undertake cultural activities, undertake cultural discussions, engage men through culture, and to use and pass-on language, as a means to promote wellbeing.

Conversely, most people, agencies and workers who visited still perceive wellbeing as a health matter, and enquired whether the project was also testing blood sugar levels, taking blood pressure readings, offering needle returns etc. The perception is that the PPP project is an additive wellbeing activity, rather than a wellbeing project in its own right. The concept of wellbeing for First Nations men to be based in the 5Cs is often rejected.

However, the men's experiences of support for a culturally-driven project suggest a different picture outside the PPP project's visits. In several communities, participants reported they had not been informed that the truck was coming. Workshop coordinators also observed that project posters had not been displayed around some towns, despite the Project Officer distributing promotional materials to local contacts before each visit and requesting that posters be displayed and information shared through community networks. However, other communities have put the PPP project visit poster in their local papers and displayed brochures in their buildings. This typically happens when someone from the PPP team physically visits a town prior to the truck visiting. These examples suggest that local promotion and engagement were inconsistent across communities, regardless of the means of promotion.

Participants also described broader barriers to wellbeing within their communities. Many spoke about limited employment opportunities, particularly in positions that were not specifically designated for First Nations people. Others described the prevalence of racism, bigotry, and segregation in their communities, which lead some men to withdraw from community life. Others identified issues between several First Nations groups residing in the town, and the power-plays that caused. In one instance, these experiences contributed to a Cultural Steward leaving his employment as he experienced discrimination and racial bullying. Men also reported limited services, few daily activities and a general lack of community support. These conditions undermine the factors identified in the previous study as essential for wellbeing. In that paper, the provision of stable community support, activities, employment, and services was identified by participants as essential to men's wellbeing. Most communities identified the sporadic nature of services, community support, events, and employment which disempowered, de-spirited, and defeated the wellbeing achievements made during short intervals when services were operational.

Overall, the findings reveal a contrast between visible support for the project during its visits, and the ongoing support available to men when the project was absent. This contrast

was illustrated during the project's first visit to Menzies, when a *Community Eats* event was held while the truck was in town. Participants remarked that such an event had not occurred previously and joked that the truck should visit more often if it meant *Community Eats* would continue. While humorous, this comment reflected a broader perception that community activity and engagement increased during the project's presence but were not sustained once it had left.

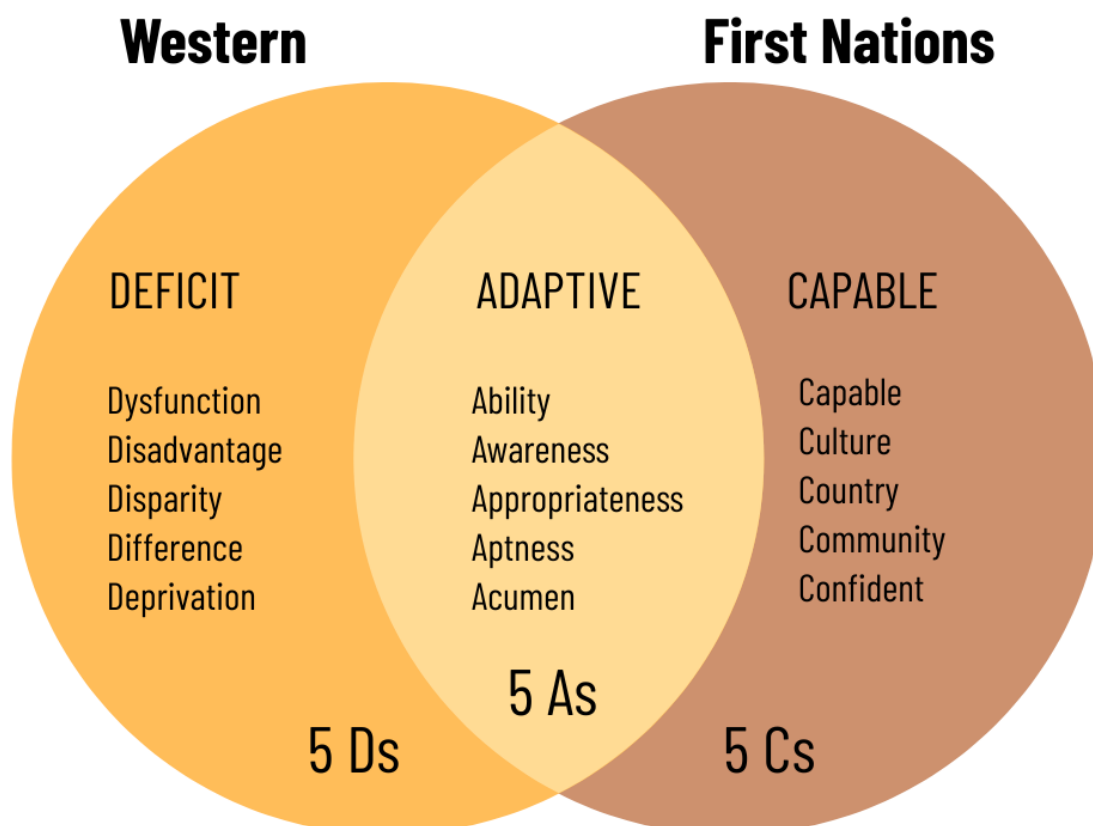
These findings suggest that while the PPP project is welcomed by communities, local support for the wellbeing priorities identified by First Nations men is often **episodic** rather than **sustained**. This highlights the importance of long-term, sustained community investment into wellbeing beyond the duration of project visits, with long-term, sustained activities, events, community support structures, and employment. The PPP project has identified long-term as 20 years, which is the span of one generation. The development of wellbeing is a generational matter.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. First Nations Adaptive Wellbeing Model

# ADAPTIVE WELLBEING MODEL

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The term '5D data' was coined by Walter (2016), who identified that data about First Nations peoples is done so through a *deficit discourse*. Deficit discourse can be described as disempowering patterns of language, practice and thought that represents people in terms of deficiencies and failures (Lowitja Institute, 2018). The five 'Ds', *dysfunctional, disadvantage, disparity, difference and deprivation* are typically used in statistical data, policy, funding, and service systems to highlight inequality between First Nations Australians and the rest of the population (Walter, 2016). The 5D data model is indicative in the premise that the First Nations population experiences *entrenched disadvantage*. The 5D model evaluates First Nations peoples from a Western perspective, and drives the government wellbeing investment.

The first paper produced from the Goldfields Aboriginal Language Centre's Puntu Pirni Palya project discusses the Western perception of the deficit narrative and entrenched disadvantage as applied to First Nations peoples. Whereas First Nations men have indicated they believe the opposite, that they experience advantage as they are connected to country, culture, language and kin. (Goldfields Men's Wellbeing Project: Creating a decolonised space 2025)

The 5Ds are contrary to the 5Cs. The 5Cs represent capability and strength-based language experienced by First Nations people, in particular those people who live on country, in communities and amongst kin. The 5-Cs are *culture, capable, country, community, and confidence*. First Nations men of the Goldfields region indicate they experience these 5 positive traits when living on traditional land, in their community, and in fact believed they are advantaged rather than disadvantaged.

The 5As form the interface between the two. The 5A's are adaptive, and represent actions and approaches that create genuine First Nations wellbeing. When the capability of First Nations society is harnessed through projects and programs that enable the 5Cs to flourish, the **A space will develop and grow**.

The A space creates *ability, awareness, appropriateness, aptness and acumen*. The A space leads to the A-game.

The Puntu Pirni Palya Project is grounded in the 5Cs, having been created and led by First Nations men, and operating in a purely decolonised space. It is informed by First Nations worldview and embodies *capability, culture, Country, community, and confidence*. However, the project's funding comes from programs based on the deficit narrative presented by the 5Ds, reflecting policy frameworks that position First Nations people through narratives of entrenched disadvantage. As part of its funding agreement, the project is required to report data to the Federal government using systems embedded in deficit discourse.

By carefully balancing the roles of team members operating the project, so that each manages the world view that they come from – that is, the First Nations male coordinators and Cultural Stewards operate purely in the C-space, and the Western project staff operate and manage the D-space, the project has been able to promote the adaptive A-space for participants. The project has very successfully operated to create the adaptive, the *A Space; the adaptive environment between deficit-based system (5D) and strengths-based practice*

(5C). The PPP project has fostered *ability, awareness, appropriateness, aptness and acumen* not only for First Nations men, but for the wider community observing the project. The project has encouraged the wider community to understand that when the men live in the 5C space, and can undertake the activities identified by them as leading to wellbeing, it promotes adaptive capability. Support for First Nations men's wellbeing, *culture, capable, country, community, and confidence*, will lead to an adaptive interface, the 5As *ability, awareness, appropriateness, aptness, and acumen*.

#### 4.1. The Value of Consistency for Wellbeing

The PPP project demonstrates the value of consistency and reliability which can be demonstrated by the experience of the project in visits to the town of Leonora. During the first two visits, no men attended the workshops, with a few visiting and asking about payment to participate. Some men told the coordinators to make artefacts for them. And no man stayed or participated during those first 2 week-long visits.

However, by the third week-long visit, 30 men attended the workshop for between 1 and 5 days. The PPP project continued to show up for the men's wellbeing, and that consistency enabled men to discuss the opportunity, and prepare, modify, and organise themselves to attend the workshop. The project maintains a consistent presence, returning several times each year to each community in the Goldfields. However, this consistency is threatened by the reality of short-term funding. This raises an important question for the external agencies, organisations, and community members who express support for the project: *how will men's wellbeing continue to be supported when the truck is no longer present?*

Given that participant frequently described barriers to men's wellbeing within their communities as short-term, unsustained investment, and a lack of First Nations-led project planning and management, the concern is that the PPP project is yet another short-lived support mechanism. Project coordinators are working hard through the life of the project, to equip the cultural stewards with knowledge, experience and understanding that the 5Cs, *culture, capable, country, community, and confidence*, as the mechanisms for the continued support of men's wellbeing. A great deal of discussion is undertaken about how to establish and protect a decolonised space to enable the 5Cs to flourish, and how to manage intrusion from agencies, organisations and programs into that space.

## 5. Limitations

### 5.1 Dataset

Some communities have had more visits from the PPP project compared to others, meaning they had more opportunities to contribute their voices to the data collection. This is a result of additional communities being visited in 2026. For example, Merredin, Westonia, and Mukinbudin have had only one visit. See table below:

*Table 5: Number of PPP project visits to each community since launch of project*

| Community      | Number of visits |
|----------------|------------------|
| Coolgardie     | 4                |
| Ninga-Mia      | 3                |
| Norseman       | 4                |
| Menzies        | 3                |
| Leonora        | 3                |
| Laverton       | 3                |
| Wiluna         | 3                |
| Jigalong       | 2                |
| Southern Cross | 3                |
| Merredin       | 1                |
| Westonia       | 1                |
| Mukinbudin     | 1                |

### 5.2 Community Administration Capability

The project continues to be rejected by Ngaanyatjarra Council, despite ongoing requests for the project from communities in the NG Lands. The project is unable to operate in the seven NG Lands communities as permission is required from Ngaanyatjarra Council for the truck to travel into the Lands. The Council has stated that a men's wellbeing project is not required, despite written requests received from Tjukurla, Irrunytju, Papulankutja, and Wanarn communities

A similar issue is being faced with Tjuntjuntjarra Community. The staff initially refused the project in early 2025 despite community members calling for the project. Requests to meet with the board of directors to outline the project, have not been successful. However in late 2025, staff changeover meant that the project was then requested to visit. In June 2026 the PPP project was set to travel to Tjuntjuntjara for a two-week visit. The PPP team liaised with community members, planning and organising the logistics of the trip for several months. A week's notice from the trip, GALCAC received a call, the trip had been cancelled by Tjuntjuntjarra staff. There would be nowhere for the team to stay, a result of the PTAC coordinator not supporting the PPP project.

The staff who are responsible for blocking the PPP project visiting communities are disregarding the very people they are supposed to be representing. This demonstrates

failures at many levels. Successful community development empowers people to make decisions for themselves and their community (Bell & Reed, 2021). The men living in these communities made a decision; they want the PPP project in their community; and this decision has not been honoured by staff. Preventing the PPP project from engaging with the community has over ridden the community member's choices, and prevented the PPP project from providing an opportunity for men to engage with culture and language wellbeing discussion, activities, and empowerment.

## 6. Conclusion

Goldfields First Nations men identify wellbeing as *culture, capable, country, community, and confidence* (Grubb et al 2025), the 5C model. The Western deficit narrative indicates that First Nations people and community are perceived as *dysfunctional, disadvantage, disparity, difference and deprived* (Walter, 2016), the 5D model.

Resourcing First Nations men in the 5C framework raises wellbeing and the capacity to be adaptive. Resourcing First Nations men using processes that are many millennium old, ensures the men's world view, values, attitudes, and practices are actively supported and from this wellbeing is developed. From wellbeing arises adaption to a changing world. Adaptation is *ability, awareness, appropriateness, aptness and acumen*.

As one of the First Nations men's coordinators observed when the above model was development, *'This project enables us First Nations men to get into the A-space and to be on our A-game.'*

## 7. References

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