Review of Ninganah No More Early Childhood Education program

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Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Early childhood is a vital period in children's learning and development. The development of strong self-identities, connections with communities and emotional, social and cultural wellbeing are significant aspects of children's learning and development. So too is the development of problem solving, communication and language skills. The Ninganah No More (NNM) program is guided by a recognition of the importance of Aboriginal culture and heritage and developing respect for diversity. The program aims to increase the level of Aboriginal languages being taught in early childhood education services across NSW and provide opportunities for Aboriginal culture and identity to be nurtured and developed in the earliest stage of formal education. The program aims to use a co-development and co-delivery approach with suitably qualified educators employed at participating early childhood services, as well as Aboriginal people who are supported by relevant Aboriginal organisations.

The NSW Department of Education funded 21 organisations in 2018 to deliver an NNM language program across multiple early childhood education services. A total of 30 early childhood services are participating in an NNM language program and 14 languages are being taught as part of NNM. Between 12 and 1,000 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children participated in NNM across all providers but one provider was unable to commence due to difficulties securing a language teacher.

Aboriginal Languages were taught and resources were available in: Gamilarraay, Gumbaynggirr, Bundjalung/Bandjalang (2 providers), Wonnarua, Ngunnawal, Dhurga, Yuin South Coast language, Wonnarua and Gatthung, Darug.

In April 2019 an Interim Report was written by CIRCA outlining what program delivery activities had occurred to date, the experiences of program implementation, and whether there had been any learnings thus far in terms of improving the program delivery. The Interim Report drew on information collected by the Department at the Yarn Up workshop for program providers. Now in December 2019 a final Outcome Report has been written to explore the outcomes and impacts of the NNM program on families and communities.

Method

This report focusses on the outcomes of the NNM program and reports against the five core objectives of the program. CIRCA used a mixed method approach for collecting data from NNM providers, families, community members, and Department of Education staff to shed light on the outcomes of the program. Aboriginal consultants conducted interviews with providers, families, community members and Department of Education staff, as well as conducted site visits to Menindee and Coffs Harbour. CIRCA staff also conducted and analysed an online survey of providers and analysed acquittal data from providers. This report is a synthesis of these qualitative and quantitative data collection efforts.

Findings

The program has five core objectives and survey data collected from providers showed that the majority felt they had made some or a lot of progress toward all five objectives, but they felt the most optimistic about their

progress supporting all children to learn Aboriginal culture and language. With respect to each objective, the following findings emerged:

◖ to increase the literacy and vocabulary skills of Aboriginal children in NSW

The majority of providers surveyed (9 out of 10) felt they had made some or a lot of progress towards increasing the literacy and vocabulary skills of Aboriginal children in NSW, but overall it was the objective the surveyed providers as a whole felt least optimistic about.

◖ to support Aboriginal children to develop into bilingual speakers

Providers were reserved in their assessments of the progress they had made towards supporting Aboriginal children to develop into bilingual speakers. Aboriginal children are gaining modest levels of language comprehension and use to date. Anecdotal evidence from six providers suggests children are independently using their language skills outside the classroom as fluidly as they might use English. For the goal of bilingualism to be achieved, parents and community stakeholders hope for language to be supported through all schooling and used in activities in and around the school as well as seeing support for the language in the local community.

◖ to develop stronger links between early childhood education services and their local Aboriginal communities

All nine NNM providers that responded to the online survey reported they felt they had made some or a lot of progress toward this objective, suggesting that the objective is on its way to being met. There is evidence that ties are being built and strengthened between early childhood educators offering the NNM program and the local Aboriginal community, and importantly that as a result of those connections these programs and organisations are being recognized and called to participate in the local displays of Aboriginal culture. They are being seen as part of the cultural heritage of the community.

◖ to increase and strengthen Aboriginal language programs being delivered in early childhood education services in NSW

Issues arose during the review regarding how to measure increased and strengthened Aboriginal language programs being delivered in early childhood education services in NSW. In order to assess the achievement of this outcome one needs to look at data across all language programs to determine the extent to which it has been met. With survey data from only ten of 20 NMM providers this objective was unable to be fully assessed at this time. However, it can be reported that all ten of the respondent NNM providers felt they had made some to a lot of progress within their services, as a result of NNM funding.

◖ to support all children in learning Aboriginal culture and language

All ten providers who responded to the survey felt they had made some to a lot of progress in this area, eight of whom felt they had made a lot of progress. There is evidence that through the NNM program, critical lessons about Aboriginal history, culture, and language are being instilled among young people who participate. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children demonstrate a consistent level of excitement and joy in speaking the Aboriginal language being taught. In addition, among Aboriginal parents there is a sense that their children's cultural identity and belonging is growing and there is a perceived belief their children's pride in their culture is

strengthening. A critical component of NNM supporting all children to learn about Aboriginal language and culture is that it appears to be de-stigmatising Aboriginal identity.

Compared to progress toward objectives, providers were less optimistic about their progress toward desired program outcomes. The greatest number of providers who felt they have made some to a lot of progress felt that they have done so in the area of increasing children's confidence and increasing the participation of local community members at their organisation. Increased enrolments were also attributed to NNM by some providers.

Additional outcomes for children from participation in the program included that children can use and understand words, phrases, instructions and songs presented in the Aboriginal language; they have increased pride in their heritage; they spontaneously and voluntarily use Aboriginal language words; and there is a more dynamic and engaged teaching and learning environment, which increases children's engagement in learning.

Parents and family members also recorded a growth in confidence as a result of the positive effects of NNM on their children. Parents were also increasing their involvement in the NNM program and becoming more engaged with the school/provider as well as sharing the Aboriginal language at home with the child as instructor.

Broader outcomes at the community level were noted as including the revitalisation and rebirth of local Aboriginal languages, and strengthening connections between service providers and Elders, which also included opportunities for Elders to reconnect with language and improve cross-generational interactions. A general strengthening of relations between community and providers was noted as well.

Outputs were hindered in some cases due to difficulties in securing local language teachers, the number of teachers available locally and a range of factors beyond the control of the providers, including ill health, family commitments and other competing commitments on the part of the small number of available language teachers. Alternate methods were pursued by two of three providers faced with these challenges, but one provider was unable to deliver the program.

The most important and foundational factor influencing program outcomes appears to be how established the language is in the area where the program is to be delivered and the status of that language i.e. how many speakers there are in the area and their availability to be involved, as well as whether there is agreement in the community about aspects of the language. Also important was whether or not there was a pre-existing relationship with an Aboriginal Language educator and then the length of that relationship. Another factor was whether or not the service was delivering a program in this language prior to receiving funding for the NNM program. The program timeframes were also commented on consistently in the qualitative research as a factor influencing outcomes, specifically that time was needed to identify appropriate language teachers, develop appropriate resources for the program and promote the program to parents.

Opportunities for improvement:

◖ Allowing more time at every stage of the program. More time for delivery; application; planning; and engagement with community.

◖ A longer program timeframe

◖ Improving access to resources. Providers cited challenges related to a lack of resources relevant to the local language, culture and stories, as well a lack of diverse resources for different kinds of learning styles.

◖ Ensuring access to local language teachers/consultants is in place to drive the development of the program from commencement.

◖ Allowing for NNM providers to be accountable to outcomes rather than outputs or activities and adjusting objectives two and four to address structural issues that arose during the review process.

◖ Increasing support to NNM providers to share information and best practice inter services via further meetings or Yarn Ups.

Some modifications of the current program are suggested to recognise the two distinct provider streams based on their access to local revitalised languages, language teachers and Aboriginal stakeholders and community organisations as well as an appropriate level of available language resources.

Overall, the Ninganah No More Program for early childhood education has made a positive initial contribution to the NSW Department of Education's commitment to increasing the teaching of Aboriginal languages in NSW public schools by providing fertile language accumulation ground in the pre-primary ages of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. Consider the proposed modifications and additions in terms of supports and resources.

Considerations for the future

Consideration 1:

Building more time into the application process to allow for better liaising with community organisations, elders, and possible teachers, may help services to identify relevant resources and share information with other NNM providers. Different implementation models may need to be applied in areas where the language is well-established versus areas where the language is less consolidated

Consideration 2:

Consider restructuring the NNM program to create two streams:

◖ **Stream 1** for providers who have access to a revitalised local language, local language teachers and resources and access to support from one of the five NSW Government Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests supported by the Department of Education in partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (SECG) as follows:

  o *Bundjalung*
    ▪ The Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest was launched in Lismore on 20 February 2014. The base school for this nest is Goonellabah Primary School. The Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest spans communities in Lismore, Kyogle, Tweed Heads, Ballina, Evans Head, Woodenbong, Grafton, Tabulam, Coraki, Casino and Bonalbo.
  o *Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuawaalayaay*

- The Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuawaalayaay Language and Culture Nest was launched in Lightning Ridge on 2 May 2014. Its base school is Lightning Ridge Central School. The Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuawaalayaay Language and Culture Nest includes communities in Lightning Ridge; Walgett, Collarenebri and Goodooga.
  - *Gumbaynggirr*
    - The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest was launched in Coffs Harbour on 19 February 2014. Its base school is William Bayldon Primary School, Coffs Harbour. The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest covers communities in Coffs Harbour, South Grafton, Macksville, Orara, Nambucca Valley, Sawtell, Toormina, Northern Beaches, Dorrigo, Urunga and Bellingen.
  - *North West Wiradjuri*
    - The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest was launched on 25 October 2013. Its base school is Dubbo Primary School. The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest has established strong links in communities in Dubbo, Narromine, Peak Hill, Trangie, Gilgandra, Wellington and Mudgee, and public schools located there.
  - *Paakantji/Baakantji*
    - The Paakantji/Baakantji Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest was launched on 30 April 2014. Its base school is Wilcannia Central School. The Paakantji/Baakantji Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest includes the communities of Broken Hill, Wilcannia, Menindee, Bourke, Mildura and Coomealla.[1]

- **Stream 2** for providers with limited or no access or relationships to local language teachers and resources. This Stream may require:

  - modified or additional supports at the planning or even pre-application stage of their programs;

  - the incorporation of longer periods for the program application process in order to ensure enough language teachers are in place; and

  - different expectations in terms of outcomes in those different areas as well.

Consideration 3:

That NSW Department of Education should consider supporting the development and sharing (where culturally appropriate) of teaching resources across NNM providers. This would include developing and sharing more diverse resources to match the diversity of resources used in early childhood education outside NNM. It may also be worth considering how to better support providers to promote their work across the community.

Consideration 4:

Consider supporting the idea from providers that an authorised language representative be part of each local NNM program from the beginning.

Consideration 5*:*

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[1] NSW Government Aboriginal Affairs, *Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests*, https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/policy-reform/language-and-culture/nests (accessed 6 December 2019)

Consider holding NNM program providers accountable to outcomes rather than outputs or activities, and create opportunities for providers to share strategies for achieving outcomes in the face of scheduling challenges, for instance alternative resources to bring to bear when and if it is impossible to find a local language teacher.

Consideration 6:
Consider adjusting the objective that all NNM programs support Aboriginal children to develop into bilingual speakers. For some communities this objective may be unrealistic, because those contexts may not be conducive to bilingualism, or it may not be the community's goal. In those cases, the objective may be more appropriately set at meeting the minimum standards to ensure the language remains used in the early education setting.

Consideration 7:

To improve the Department's ability to assess the achievement of the objective to increase and strengthen Aboriginal language programs being delivered in early childhood education services in NSW, consider including on the mandatory acquittal form questions about the extent to which and how NNM providers feel the Aboriginal language teaching within their service has been increased and strengthened.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

Early childhood is a vital period in children's learning and development. The development of strong self-identities, connections with communities and emotional, social and cultural wellbeing are significant aspects of children's learning and development. So too is the development of problem solving, communication and language skills.

Moreover, language plays a central role in shaping a sense of identity, ensuring the maintenance of cultural connections, and the sharing of cultural knowledge, history and heritage. It is more than just a means to communicate. Evidence shows that speaking and learning traditional languages improves the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by providing a sense of belonging and empowerment. Evidence also suggests that educational outcomes improve when children are taught in their first language, especially in the early years[2].

Australia's first national Early Years Learning Framework, '*Belonging, Being and Becoming'*, was developed to assist educators to provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning. The Framework places emphasis on play-based learning, the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social, cultural and emotional development. It also recognises the importance of Aboriginal culture and heritage and developing respect for diversity.

In 2017 the NSW Government adopted the *Aboriginal Languages Act 2017* recognising the languages of NSW's First Peoples are an integral part of the world's oldest living culture and connect Aboriginal people to each other and to their land. The Act also recognises that Aboriginal people will be reconnected with their culture and heritage through the reawakening, growth and nurturing of languages.[3]

The Act also constitutes the Aboriginal Languages Trust to provide focused, coordinated and sustained effort for language activities at the local, regional and State levels.[4]

In April 2018, the Minister for Early Childhood Education and Aboriginal Affairs announced the Ninganah No More (NNM) program. The word 'Ninganah' means 'be quiet' in the Bundjalung language from Northern New South Wales. The Minister noted in a press release that the goal of Ninganah No More was to help ensure Aboriginal languages are no longer unheard within communities through supporting Aboriginal languages to be taught in early childhood services. It is important to note that approximately 90% of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are considered highly endangered or, as some describe, 'sleeping'[5]. Many of these are in New South Wales.

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[2] Marmion et al (2014) Community, identity, wellbeing: The report of the Second National Indigenous Languages Survey. AIATSIS.

[3] NSW Government, *Aboriginal Languages Act 2017 No 51*, page 3

[4] Ibid, page 4

[5] Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), *Indigenous Australian Languages: Celebrating 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages*, https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/indigenous-australian-languages (accessed 5 December 2019)

Ninganah No More (NNM) is an Aboriginal language program that aims to increase the level of Aboriginal languages being taught in early childhood education services across NSW and provide opportunities for Aboriginal culture and identity to be nurtured and developed in the earliest stage of formal education. NNM aims to use a co-development and co-delivery approach with suitably qualified educators employed at participating early childhood services, as well as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who are supported by relevant Aboriginal organisations. NNM must be delivered to at least one mobile or centre-based community preschool service with a valid service approval.

The program has five core objectives:

- to increase the literacy and vocabulary skills of Aboriginal children in NSW

- to support Aboriginal children to develop into bilingual speakers

- to develop stronger links between early childhood education services and their local Aboriginal communities

- to increase and strengthen Aboriginal language programs being delivered in early childhood education services in NSW

- to support all children in learning Aboriginal culture and language.

There are 21 language program providers receiving funding through NNM, six of whom deliver their language program to multiple early childhood education services. A total of 30 early childhood services are participating in a language program and 14 languages are being taught as part of NNM.

CIRCA was contracted by the NSW Department of Education to review the NNM program mid-way through its implementation (early 2019) and provide an interim process review report, as well as to review the program at the end of its funding period (mid to late 2019) and provide a final outcomes review report. This report presents outcome review findings that draw on information collected via site visits, an online survey of NNM program providers, performance acquittal data from providers, and interviews with Department of Education staff.

The outcome review was guided by the following review questions:

Program effectiveness:

1. To what extent has the program delivered its intended outputs and outcomes?

Program impact:

2. What has happened as a result of the program?

3. What were the unintended impacts?

4. What factors have influenced program outcomes?

Program appropriateness:

5. To what extent has the program been delivered in line with the principles set out in the program requirements relating to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities?

Program learnings:

6. What have been the key program benefits?

7. What have been the key lessons learned?

8. What are the implications of these lessons learned?

9. What are the key considerations for future program delivery?

2. Method

2.1 Data collection

We used a mixed method approach for collecting data from NNM providers, families, community members, and Department of Education staff to shed light on the outcomes of the program.

Online survey

CIRCA distributed an online survey via SurveyMonkey™ software to all providers of the NNM program in September 2019. The survey was designed in collaboration with the Department and included the use of closed and open-ended questions in order to provide an opportunity for program providers to fully describe their programs and their impacts. The survey was designed to explore the following topics with providers:

- Program background

- Program effectiveness

- Program outcomes and impact

- Monitoring progress and achievements

- Program appropriateness

- Improving Ninganah No More

- Support and resources

- Any other feedback or information they wished to share

See Appendix 9.1 for the SurveyMonkey™ version of the survey instrument.

CIRCA received a list from the Department of Education of 19 organisations funded to deliver NNM (two organisations were missing from the list), with the names and email addresses for the individuals responsible for administering the program in each. CIRCA then distributed the survey to those individuals via SurveyMonkey™. All recipients of the survey were asked to complete the survey as a collaboration among all NNM program staff, as only one response from their organisation would be accepted.

The NNM survey was sent out on 2 September 2019 to all 19 provider organisations, and non-responding providers were reminded on 5 September and again on 11 September. The survey was closed on 16 September, and by that time 10 providers had responded, yielding a response rate of 53%. It was out of scope for CIRCA to research why the response rate was so low, but it may have been the result of a request only in June 2019 for performance acquittal data from providers, which covered some of the same topic areas as the survey.

After the survey closed, CIRCA discovered that two organisations had not been included in the list of organisations to whom to send the survey: Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child and Family Centre and Dalaigur Pre-

School & Children's Services. Therefore, the survey results do not include those two providers of NNM as CIRCA was unable to invite them to participate.

Performance Acquittal Data

All NNM program providers were required to formally report to the Department about each of their individual provider activities and outcomes to date, in the form of performance acquittal data by June 2019. CIRCA received completed acquittal data from 20 NNM program providers. Ngayaamba Wluura Aboriginal Corporation was the only provider that was not included.

The performance acquittal form covered the following topics:

- Organisational and program details

- Delivery methods, approaches, and activities

- Program implementation as originally described in the funding application

- Program outcomes related to language comprehension and use among participating children; engagement of Aboriginal family members and community

- Suggested changes

- Additional information they wished to share

Providers completed the forms in hard copy or electronically, but CIRCA received all forms electronically.

Site visits

CIRCA carried out site visits to two NNM programs, one in Coffs Harbour and another in Menindee. The purpose of these site visits was to explore program implementation and outcomes by engaging and gathering data from program providers, educators, families, and relevant community stakeholders such as local Elders and other community organisations involved in the delivery of the programs. CIRCA employed a range of methods to collect data depending on the availability of stakeholders and their preferred mode of participation. This included a mix of yarning circles and in-depth interviews, led by highly skilled Aboriginal research consultants.

Sites were selected in a purposive manner, in collaboration with the Department, in order to collect information from a diverse group of NNM providers and their communities. Across the two NNM sites we sought to achieve a mix of providers based on their:

- Language stage

- ARIA classification e.g. 1 x major city/inner regional and 1 x outer regional/remote

- Program delivery by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation or a mainstream service provider

In consultation with Department of Education, two sites were ultimately selected and represented the following mix of providers.

Provider/location	Language stage	ARIA Classification	Aboriginal organisation
Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation, Coffs Harbour	More advanced	Inner Regional	Yes
Menindee Children's Centre, Menindee	Unknown to CIRCA	Remote	No

During site visits, consultations were undertaken with the following groups:

◖ Managers and staff delivering the program

◖ Community stakeholders (e.g. Community Elders, representatives of key partnering community organisations and other community representatives involved in the program)

◖ Parents whose children are receiving the program

Eight (8) interviews were conducted in Menindee: 3 with community stakeholders, 3 with staff and 2 with parents (both mothers). Five (5) interviews were conducted in Coffs Harbour, 3 with staff, 2 with parents (both mothers) and the researcher also attended a general conversation with 15 parents, family members and community members about the program.

The following tables set out the topics that were discussed with each of these groups, structured around the themes of the outcome evaluation questions. Detailed discussion guides were developed for each of the three interview groups by CIRCA and then revised based on feedback from Department staff.

Topics discussed with managers and staff delivering the program	
Program implementation	• General experience of implementing the program • Strengths and challenges to implementation (including resourcing, staffing, community/family engagement)
Program appropriateness	• Extent to which program is being delivered in line with the principles set out in the program requirements relating to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. • General views on cultural appropriateness of the program and how it is being received by families and communities.
Program outcomes and impact	• What have been the outcomes for individuals, communities and services? • What evidence of outcomes/impact is available? • What have been any unintended impacts? • What factors (both internal and external to the program/delivery organisation) have influenced program outcomes?

Topics discussed with managers and staff delivering the program	
Program learnings	• Key program benefits • Key lessons learned from implementation of the program and implications of these for future program delivery • Other key considerations for future program delivery

Topics discussed with community stakeholders	
Program appropriateness	• Observations around extent to which the program is being delivered in line with the principles set out in the program requirements relating to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and general views on cultural appropriateness • Level of involvement in the design and delivery of the program and satisfaction with this level of involvement
Program outcomes and impact	• Observations around the outcomes for individuals, communities and services? • What have been any unintended impacts? • What factors (both internal and external to the program/delivery organisation) have influenced program outcomes?
Program learnings	• Key program benefits • Key lessons learned from implementation of the program and implications of these for future program delivery • Other key considerations for future program delivery

Topics discussed with families involved in the program	
Program implementation and appropriateness	• How satisfied are they with the program they/their children have received? What did they like most/least about the program? • How satisfied are they with their relationship with the staff who delivered the program? • Extent to which program is delivered in line with the principles set out in the program requirements relating to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (e.g. is it flexible, responsive to needs and does it acknowledge the strengths of Aboriginal culture and language) • General views on cultural appropriateness of the program
Program outcomes and impact	• What do they see as the outcomes from their involvement in the program – for them, their children, their broader families and for their communities? • Were these outcomes in line with what they were hoping to get out of their involvement in the program?
Program learnings	• What changes/improvements would they recommend for the program in the future?

See Appendices 9.2, 9.3, and 9.4 for the Interview Guides that were used.

One of CIRCA's Aboriginal research consultants visited Menindee on 27th and 28th August 2019 to conduct interviews with nine stakeholders in the Ninganah No More program. Interviews were conducted at Menindee Children's Centre, AbSEC, Menindee Central School, and via telephone.

Another of CIRCA's Aboriginal research consultants visited Coffs Harbour at the beginning of September 2019 to conduct interviews and focus groups with nine stakeholders involved in the Ninganah No More program. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, observations were made about the program via direct observation

of the NNM classes and sessions held at three locations run by BMNAC. Data and information were collected at the Land Council building on the mission, Kulai Aboriginal Pre-school, Montessori school, and Goori Learning Centre at Yarrawarra.

Three interviews with Department of Education staff members involved in overseeing the administration of the NNM program across NSW were conducted by one of CIRCA's Aboriginal research consultants between 23 August 2019 and 10 September 2019.

2.2 Data analysis

Qualitative data

Qualitative data collected via interviews were collated and analysed against the key review questions as agreed upon by the Department and CIRCA at the review planning stage. Thematic analysis was carried out to identify patterns of meaning across data to provide detailed findings in relation to each of the review questions. This involved a process of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development. Once themes were identified, illustrative quotes or examples were selected for inclusion in this report.

Open-ended responses collected via the online survey were first analysed to identify themes across the data, then those themes were examined in relation to the review questions. For these responses, quotes or examples have been selected and included in this report to illustrate the ways the relevant themes are exhibited across NNM providers.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data collected via the online survey were analysed to generate descriptive statistics, relative to the review questions and to provide an overview of NNM providers.

2.3 Review limitations

CIRCA was only able to achieve 53% response rate to the NNM provider survey, therefore the survey data may suffer from non-response bias: the possibility that those who chose not to respond to the surveys had a different experience with the program from those who responded. All program providers were required, however, to formally report to the Department about each of their individual provider activities and outcomes to date, in the form of acquittal data by June 2019. This acquittal data complements the data provided via the online survey of program providers, thus compensating for the low response rate to the survey, but any conclusions we reach from data covered only by the survey may suffer from non-response bias. Conducting an analysis of non-response bias of the survey was out of scope for the CIRCA evaluation, however.

Quantitative findings of this review may also suffer from bias introduced through other aspects of the data collection methodology. As the survey questions and performance acquittal form fields were not tested for validity (that the questions yield accurate data about the thing they are trying to measure) or reliability (that all respondents interpret the questions the same ways) it is possible that respondents interpreted them inconsistently from one another or differently from the intended interpretation of the survey or form developers. Analysing the validity and reliability of the survey questions or acquittal form fields was out of scope

for the CIRCA evaluation, though in one case it became apparent that questions were unreliable. In particular, CIRCA's analysis of the acquittal data suggests that one question on the performance report form is not reliable. Our analysis of the data from the tables below revealed that respondents did not all answer the question the same way, so we advise that it be revised for future performance data reports.

2.4 Language Comprehension and use

The two tables below ask you to report on the language acquisition and development of children participating in your language program. Table 1 demonstrates comprehension of Aboriginal language words. For example, children pointing to their ears when asked to locate their mookas/binungs (ears). Table 2 demonstrates ability to use words. For example, children identifying the Aboriginal word for an object based on a picture of that object.

The reasoning around using the two tables is some children may understand a word once they have heard it, however they may not be at a stage yet where they are able to use the word without assistance or hearing it first. The two tables gives us an understanding of children's language development for both their comprehension and ability to use language.

Comprehension	1-10 words	10-20 words	20-30 words	30-50 words	More than 50 words	Understand meaning of words for body parts (head, shoulders, ears)	Understand meaning of words for relatives (nan, auntie, uncle etc)	Understand a sentence or very short narrative
No. of Children								

Word production or use	1-10 words	10-20 words	20-30 words	30-50 words	More than 50 words	Can use language to identify body parts (head, shoulders, ears)	Can use language to identify family members (nan, auntie, uncle etc)	Can construct a sentence or very short narrative in language	Can converse in language with another speaker
No. of Children									

Some providers repeated the same number of children across multiple columns in each table, suggesting that they thought each column was supposed to record the number of children who could comprehend or use that number of words, such that the total number of children summed across all columns was greater than the total number of children who were in the NNM program. Other providers left lower number of word columns blank and only inserted the number of children that could use or comprehend that number of words into a column. This meant that summing across all columns yielded the same total of children who were in the NNM program. CIRCA recalculated providers' responses to transform the number of children who comprehended or used a number of words such that summing across all columns for each provider would equal the total number of children in their NNM program. Consider revisiting the wording of this question if this form is to be used again for performance acquittals, to improve its reliability.

The final limitation of this review is that the qualitative findings of this evaluation are not generalisable to all families, program staff and managers, or community stakeholders involved in the NNM program across all sites; instead the findings provide context-specific insights into how the sampled NNM program sites affect and are affected by the particular participants, programs, and staff, which then relate to the effectiveness and impact of the program overall.

3. Program characteristics

Though not a key objective of the outcome review, it is possible to ground some of the outcome findings in the context of NNM program implementation. In this section we briefly outline the nature and characteristics of the NNM programs.

Models of NNM program delivery (Source: 2019 NNM Survey of Providers, n=10)

According to NNM providers who participated in the online survey and the acquittal data they provided, the NNM program is operationalised and delivered in a variety of ways across NSW, though all are based at the location of the provider organisation. Program models include a mix of lessons offered one-day per week for a full day (6+ hours), short (1-2 hour) lessons multiple times per week, and short (1 hour) lessons once a week. Providers vary in their use of immersive/integrated and stand-alone forms of delivery, where some providers seek to integrate language and culture education into multiple parts of their curricula while others set aside stand-alone time blocks in the overall curriculum for learning about language.

Providers tend to focus on visual- and experiential-based language learning through song and dance, painting and crafts, storytelling, and infusion of language into day-to-day activities, such as greetings, acknowledgement of country, and counting games. The most common theme for the language lessons tend to be animals in most of these approaches. In Braidwood, for example, the Dhurga language was learned and reinforced in an activity where children created wooden cut-outs of animals labelled with their Dhurga names and then entered them into the 2019 Braidwood Show. The approaches of all providers reflect the young ages of students involved, with many programs being delivered in pre-school settings.

According to acquittal data from 20 of the NNM providers, all except one mentioned face-to-face teaching and learning; only Evans Head Pre-school Association Inc utilised digital learning through their development of digital interfaces for interactive whiteboarding. In order to deliver these face-to-face learning opportunities, most NNM providers partnered with other organisations and Elders within the community to offer language development opportunities to their young students. Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC) used a model developed in the USA by a Native American anthropologist, called the Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA) model.

Structure of NNM provider organisations

Data provided about NNM provider organisations allows us to describe the structure of the organisations in a variety of ways. In particular, we are able to describe the types of organisations that they represent, as well as the number and types of staff who deliver the program, and the ways they have engaged with Aboriginal community stakeholders and partners in the delivery.

According to the 2019 survey of NNM providers (see Figure 1) the majority of organisations offering the NNM program in 2019 were early childhood education services, the rest were other types of organisations including two Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and two non-Aboriginal non-profits.

These data show there are a diversity of organisations involved in the delivery of NNM, suggesting they are likely to have a diversity of experiences delivering the program.

Figure 1: Types of organisations delivering NNM
(Source: 2019 NNM Survey of Providers, n=10)
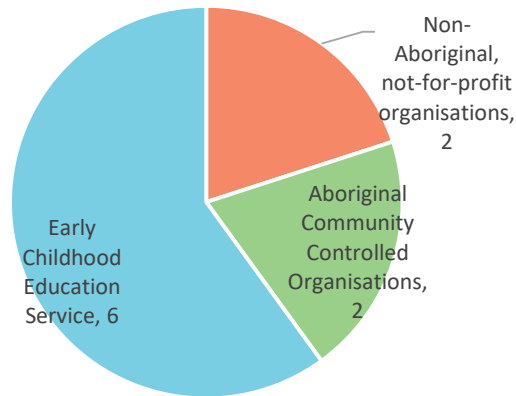
NNM provider acquittal data also reveal that the NNM provider organisations staff their programs differently (see Figure 2). Though seven out of the 20 relied on seven staff members to deliver the program, the remaining 13 had varying numbers of staff involved; one provider relied on 37 staff members (operating across three early childhood education services) to deliver NNM.

Figure 2: Number of staff involved in delivering NNM (Source: NNM provider acquittal data, n=20)
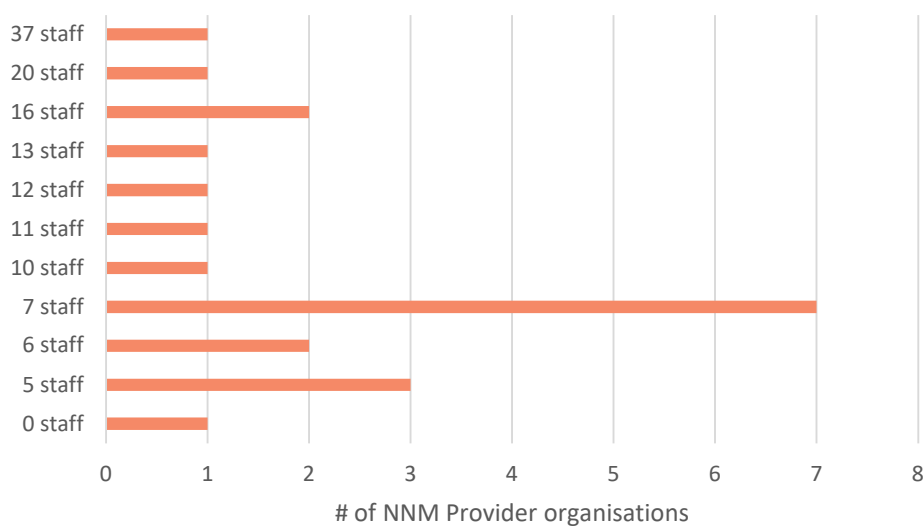
The NNM provider survey conducted in September 2019 conflicts slightly with the findings from the acquittal data regarding the number of staff involved in program delivery, which may be due to reporting error or may simply reflects changes in the staffing between June and September at the organisations. Table 1 shows the number of staff by type of NNM provider organisation, as well as provides a breakdown of the number of staff who are Aboriginal and how many are part of the local Aboriginal community.

Table 1: NNM Staff characteristics by type of NNM provider organisation (Source: 2019 NNM Provider Survey, n=10)

Type of responding NNM organisations	How many staff in the organisation are involved in delivering the program?	How many of these staff are Aboriginal?	How many of these staff are local to the Aboriginal community?
Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation	3	2	2
Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation	4	4	4
Early Childhood Education Service	5	0	0
Early Childhood Education Service	6	0	0
Early Childhood Education Service	5	1	1
Early Childhood Education Service	6	0	0
Early Childhood Education Service	3	3	1
Early Childhood Education Service	16	0	0
Non-Aboriginal, not-for-profit organisation	4	3	3
Non-Aboriginal, not-for-profit organisation	10	3	2

The ten organisational respondents to the NNM provider survey tended to have three to six staff involved in delivery, and just over half had Aboriginal staff involved in delivery, most of whom were local to the Aboriginal community.

Figure 3: Number of Early Childhood Education (ECE) services participating in NNM (Source: NNM provider acquittal data, n=20)
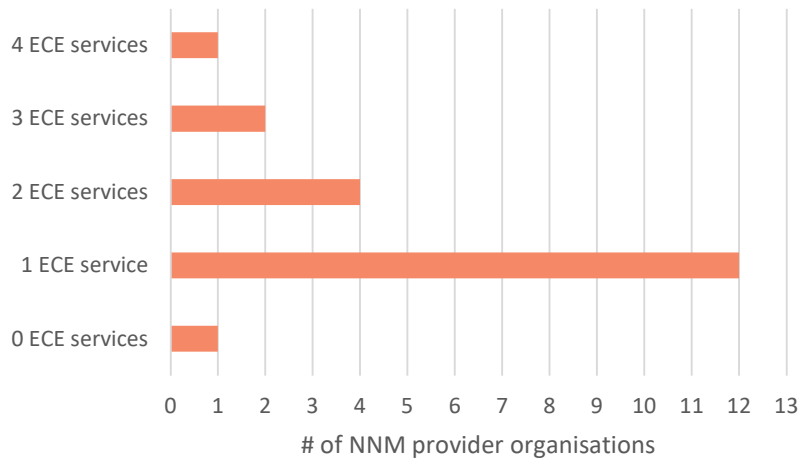
Figure 3 shows that all but one of the providers administered NNM through an early childhood education service, either their own or at neighbouring services. Most providers operated NNM through only one ECE service, however.

Figure 4: Number of Aboriginal community stakeholders or partners involved in delivering NNM (Source: NNM provider acquittal data, n=20)
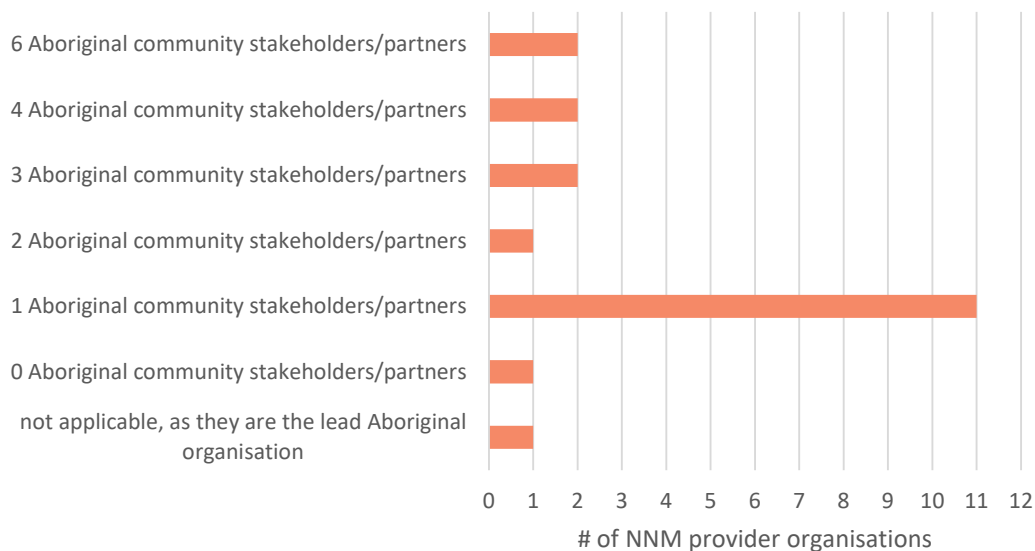
As Figure 4 indicates, the majority of NNM provider organisations (11 out of 20) relied on only one Aboriginal community stakeholder or partner to deliver their program. However, it is worth noting that there were six organisations that worked with three or more Aboriginal stakeholders or partners.

Geographic location of responding NNM programs

Unfortunately, the type of geographic area that NNM providers covered was only asked on the provider survey, so CIRCA was unable to get a complete picture of the urban, regional, and remote distribution of services. The following figure serves as a way of understanding the respondents to the survey, as opposed to describing the geographic diversity of all NNM providers.

Figure 5: Geography of NNM providers (Source: 2019 NNM Provider Survey, n=10)

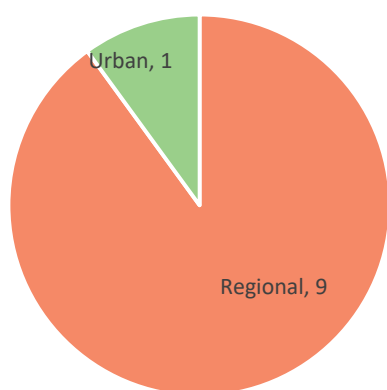Survey data in Figure 5 show that the majority of responding NNM provider organisations service regional NSW. Only one responding provider is located in an urban area.

Utilisation of NNM funding

NNM providers who responded to the online survey reported using their funding in a variety of ways, but all except one reported using it at least to employ a language teacher. Table 2 details the additional ways providers used their funding, according to their responses to the survey.

Table 2: What NNM funded providers did as a result of receiving funding (Source: 2019 NNM Provider Survey, n=10)

	Employed a language teacher	*Employed other program staff*	*Bought language program resources*	*Provided training for staff*	*Developed lesson plans*	*Expanded reach of existing program*	*Other (please specify)*
Mountains Outreach Community Service (MOCS)	✓			✓	✓		*Developing program resources for early childhood services*

	Employed a language teacher	Employed other program staff	Bought language program resources	Provided training for staff	Developed lesson plans	Expanded reach of existing program	Other (please specify)
Muloobinba - Nikinpa Aboriginal Child & Family Centre	✓		✓				*Documented teach lesson*
Rocky Hall Preschool	✓	✓	✓				*Excursions with language teacher to local bush and ocean environments*
Braidwood Preschool Assoc	✓						*Hired a bus to take the children out onto Country and learn Dhurga words and culture outside of Preschool.*
Uniting Preschool Grafton	✓			✓		✓	*It supported the development of an 'Acknowledgement of Country' that could support the children's awareness and development.*
Evans Head Pre-school		✓		✓	✓	✓	*Provided release time to develop resources and upskill staff and attend interagency meetings*
Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*Undertook two Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA) workshops for teachers. The developer of the method, Neyooxet Greymorning, attended Coffs Harbour on both occasions.*
Karabar Preschool	✓				✓		

	Employed a language teacher	Employed other program staff	Bought language program resources	Provided training for staff	Developed lesson plans	Expanded reach of existing program	Other (please specify)
Kurri Kurri District Preschool				✓			
Children's Services Community Management	✓						

Aboriginal Languages taught and resources available

- Gamilarraay
- Gumbaynggirr
- Bundjalung/Bandjalang (2 providers)
- Wonnarua
- Ngunnawal

- Dhurga
- Yuin South Coast language
- Wonnarua and Gatthung
- Darug

Most organisations that responded to the survey (8 out of 10) had access to language resources when they began delivering their NNM program, which included language cards, songs, story books, resource books from other education services, and local Elders. They also relied on existing online resources and information, including the Gumbaynggirr dictionary. Most organisations that responded to the survey also had existing relationships with language teachers before receiving NNM funding, from between six months and 20 years, with an average of six years among the eight providers who had those relationships prior.

Children served

The number of children served by each NNM provider varied widely across organisations. There were between 12 and 1,000 children who participated in NNM across all providers, and one provider did not serve any children due to difficulties they had securing a language teacher (to be explained later in the report). Figure 6 presents in detail the number of children participating in each NNM program, and how many were Aboriginal and how many were non-Aboriginal children.

Figure 6: Number of children participating in each NNM program, by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal status (Source: 2019 NNM Provider Acquittals, n=20)

Provider	# non-Aboriginal children participating	# Aboriginal Children participating
East Maitland Preschool Association Inc	0	0
Gulargambone Preschool	18	12
Uniting Preschool Grafton	22	3
Menindee Children's Centre	8	10
Karabar Preschool	90	6
Rocky Hall Preschool	14	1
Minimbah Preschool, Primary School Aboriginal…	47	50
Mountain Preschool Lowanna Inc	11	1
Kurri Kurri District Preschool	50	9
Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child and Family Centre	500	500
Coffs Harbour Preschool Association Inc	54	4
Braidwood Preschool Assoc	64	1
Junee Preschool	96	10
Evans Head Preschool Association Inc	78	16
Forbes Preschool Kindergarten	48	51
Mountains Outreach Community Service (MOCS)	289	38
Children's Services Community Management…	138	18
Dalaigur Pre-School & Children's Services	7	100
Muloobinba Aboriginal Corporation – Nikinpa…	9	31
Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation…	100	132

As Figure 6 shows, all providers (except for East Maitland) served a combination of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in their NNM program, though there were three in which only one Aboriginal child participated.

4. Program effectiveness:

4.1 To what extent has the program delivered its intended outputs, objectives, and outcomes?

4.1.1 Outputs

Of the twenty NNM providers that submitted acquittal data via the Department of Education performance reports in June 2019, twelve said they had implemented their NNM program as planned and eight explained they had been unable to implement the NNM program as originally outlined in their proposal to the Department of Education. Among those providers that deviated from their original proposal, most (five out of the eight) cited having to reduce the number of NNM lessons offered in the period due to difficulties they encountered securing local Aboriginal language teachers. Two of these providers still had not been able to secure a designated language teacher by June 2019. Both of these providers sought out alternative methods to expose children to language learning opportunities, such as through a local story-teller, the exploration of stories and language on display in public areas such as signage and information centres, and by utilising community dictionary resources, but one of the providers found this difficulty insurmountable (East Maitland) and they did not report delivering the NNM program to any children. Half of the eight providers who had been unable to implement their NNM program as originally proposed also explained that ill health, family commitments, and other competing commitments challenged scheduling with language teachers, which subsequently meant that there were delays to the delivery of all of their intended classes with children.

Consideration for the future:

Consider holding NNM program providers accountable to outcomes rather than outputs or activities, and create opportunities for providers to share strategies for achieving outcomes in the face of scheduling challenges, for instance alternative resources to bring to bear when and if it is impossible to find a local language teacher.
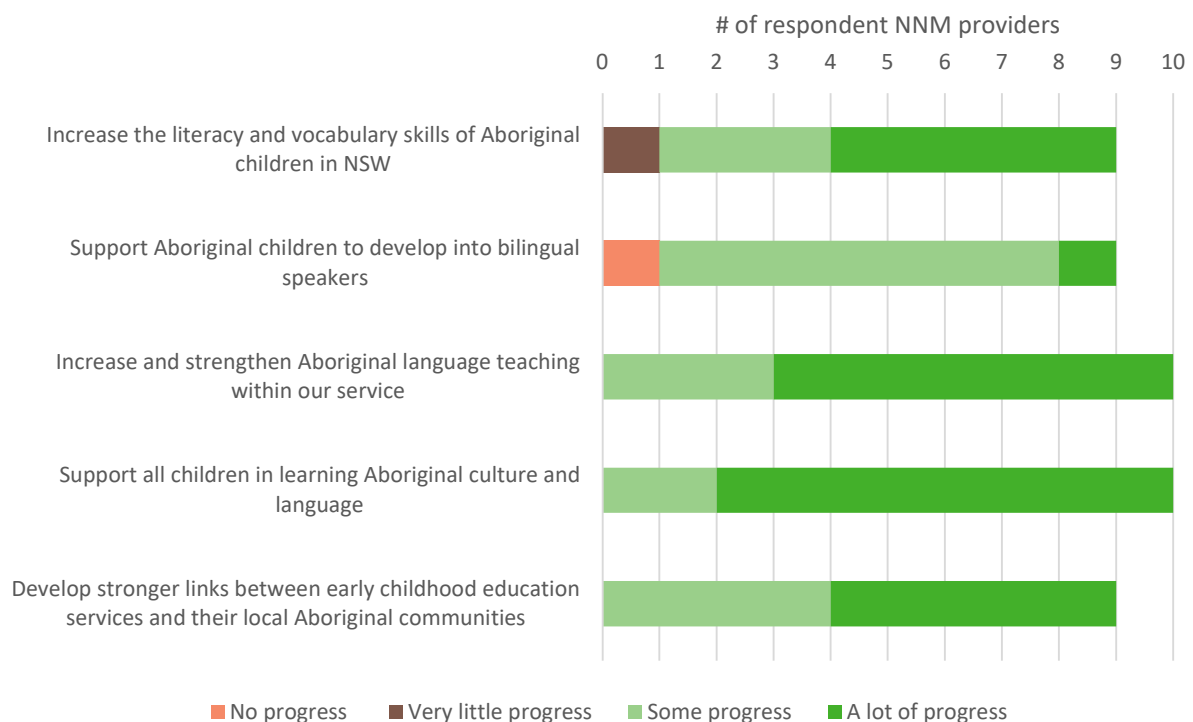
4.1.1 Objectives

The program has five core objectives:

1. To increase the literacy and vocabulary skills of Aboriginal children in NSW

2. To support Aboriginal children to develop into bilingual speakers

3. To develop stronger links between early childhood education services and their local Aboriginal communities

4. To increase and strengthen Aboriginal language programs being delivered in early childhood education services in NSW

5. To support all children in learning Aboriginal culture and language.

Survey data collected from providers, displayed in Figure 7, shows that the vast majority feel they have made some or a lot of progress toward all five objectives, and they feel the most optimistic about two objectives: their progress toward supporting all children to learn Aboriginal culture and language and their progress toward increasing and strengthening Aboriginal language teaching within their services.

Figure 7: The amount of progress providers think their NNM program has made toward the program objectives (Source: 2019 NNM Survey of Providers, n=10)

The three providers of NNM who felt they had made the most progress toward the objectives of the program were: Evans Head Preschool, Uniting Preschool Grafton, and Muloobinba - Nikinpa Aboriginal Child & Family Centre. These three providers shared some characteristics but differed from one another in key areas as well. These variations are as follows:

- Type of organisation they represented (Aboriginal Community Controlled, Early Childhood Education Service, and non-Aboriginal non-profit);

- Whether or not their organisation had an existing relationship with the local Aboriginal community prior to receiving funding for the Ninganah No More program and the length of the relationship if it existed;

- Geographic location;

- Number of NNM staff;

- Proportion of staff who are Aboriginal;

- Delivery of a language program prior to receiving NNM funding (as well as duration if they had);

- Availability of language resources; and

- Their language teaching delivery model (two were one day per week, but the other was four days per week in an immersion style).

The three providers shared similarities as follows:

- There were no other language programs, centres, or development activities in their chosen language prior to NNM funding;

- All three had an existing relationship with their language teacher prior to NNM funding (for anywhere from one and a half to six years); and

- All three served fewer than 100 children.

These factors may be associated with their perceived successes in reaching the program objectives.

Data from families, providers, and DoE staff provide the following insights into how the objectives have been met.

1. **To increase the literacy and vocabulary skills of Aboriginal children in NSW**

Eight out of nine providers that responded to the 2019 survey indicated that they had made some or a lot progress toward this objective (see Figure 7), though this statistic is positive overall it is the objective providers as a whole felt least optimistic about. Those who reported seeing improvements in Aboriginal students' literacy and vocabulary regarding Aboriginal languages talked about it in some of the following ways:

> "We have had lots of stories from families where children are spontaneously using Bandgalang language. They have excitedly told us that their child for example said, "oh look mum, Goorumun poo" when she saw kangaroo poo and a child announced to a visiting custodian that the "yelgun (sun) is out today"." (NNM provider, survey respondent)
>
> "The ASLA method allows us to continually assess exactly how much language our students have acquired. Therefore, we know that fifteen students at Kulai Preschool have the ability to speak more than 100 words and 100 phrases, many of these are complex phrases." (NNM provider, survey respondent)
>
> "Children using the words "wargan" and "kukundi" in the playground when they see crows and kookaburras (instead of using the English word). Children drawing a map and labelling different spaces, the child asked what the Darug work for fire circle is so she could incorporate this on her map." (NNM provider, survey respondent)
>
> "They have taught their parents and families the Dhurga words for local animals" (NNM provider, survey respondent)

> "We have noticed that the children have been able to incorporate Aboriginal language into their drawings as they reflect on the animals that we have learnt language for; we have also heard the children reciting the Aboriginal language version of the Acknowledgement of Country." (NNM provider, survey respondent)

These examples from providers illustrate that children are demonstrating increased literacy and vocabulary by **integrating the language into their day-to-day lives, both in and out of school**. And in one setting, providers are able to regularly assess the vocabulary of their students and are seeing marked progress.

Interviews with parents, community members, and service staff in Menindee and Coffs Harbour suggest that as a result of the NNM program, participating **Aboriginal children have become more confident to speak out in general, in NNM classes and in other contexts**. As one parent explained,

> "Our eldest son has had lots of speech problems so the language has been really good, it's helped him broaden his vocab, because he knows that he can speak two languages." (Parent, Coffs Harbour)

Participation in NNM appears to have helped this child with speech precisely because of the increased vocabulary the program has afforded him.

2. **To support Aboriginal children to develop into bilingual speakers**

Providers reported in their acquittal forms that significant proportions (and numbers) of children they served gained language skills as a result of NNM, based on the number of Aboriginal language words they comprehended and could produce or use. Figure 8 presents those figures from providers.

Figure 8: Language Comprehension and Use among NNM service providers
(Source: 2019 NNM Provider Acquittals, n=20)
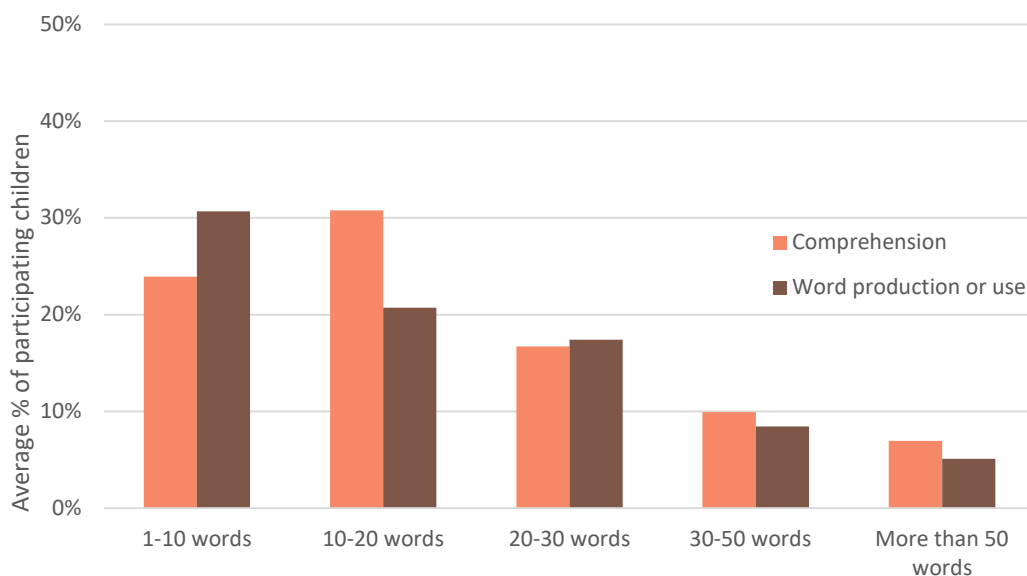
As Figure 8 shows, the majority of children across NNM programs could comprehend or use 1 to 20 Aboriginal language words, indicating a modest improvement in language skills for the majority of participating children. Across programs, there were small but notable proportions of children who NNM providers reported had acquired 30+ Aboriginal language words, indicating significant improvement in language skills as a result of the program.

Six providers gave insight into how children participating in NNM used their new language skills, and though none indicated that their children were becoming bilingual, their stories pointed to the ways in which **children were independently using their language skills outside the classroom as fluidly as they might use English**. These quotes illustrate some of the ways those providers saw changes in their children's language use.

> "Children greet others more often in Aboriginal language than in English. Children use Aboriginal words throughout the day, unprompted, in everyday conversation." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)
>
> "One family member came and told us about how their son was walking around home speaking language, and a sibling asked what he was saying. The child said he was speaking Dunghutti, and then retold it in English." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)
>
> "It was noticed that some children at the preschools have started counting in Gatthung during their play." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)
>
> "The other day, a quiet boy stood next to Uncle John and asked for the message stick. He then conducted the whole service by himself, introducing himself completely in language." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

These stories from a few of the providers who saw their NNM students integrating the Aboriginal language they were learning demonstrate that children are using language in contexts that are aligned with the words they have learned. Children are learning words that apply to them and their day-to-day lives, so they are able to use them accordingly.

Providers were reserved, however, in their assessments of the progress they have made toward developing bilingual speakers. Seven out of nine providers that responded to the online survey said they felt they had only made some progress toward this objective (see Figure 7), only one thought they had made a lot of progress, and one felt they had not made any progress at all. Among the 20 providers who submitted acquittal data, only one said that as a result of NNM they "have increased confidence [they] can turn [their service] into a truly bilingual service," and in this service they reported, "Students are increasingly able to string phrases together". This provider was an outlier, however, among the others who were not expressly striving towards bilingualism among their children.

It should be noted that **the extent to which the NNM program is supporting bilingualism can be a challenging judgement for providers to make**, given the basic and introductory nature of the language training being offered and the community contexts where further language training or language usage opportunities may be unknown or extremely limited. Interviews with service staff and community stakeholders in particular indicated that though they aspired to the goal of raising children to be bilingual, they believed that more needed to be done

to extend language throughout compulsory schools and improving the use of Aboriginal languages in other settings to truly support children to become bilingual.

> "We need language in all schools and people need to be paid to teach it. Some of the schools won't let the kids be involved in their dance and performance culture, because they believe the kids are too young. … And we need artwork around the town, for people to see Gumbayngir word. Getting the Elders and getting them to record in paint, so they can record stories in paint and then attach the story to out in words." (Parent, Coffs Harbour)

For the goal of bilingualism to be achieved, this parent's comment demonstrates the importance of language to be support through all schooling and used in activities in and around the school as well as seeing support for the language in the local community.

Consideration for the future:

Consider adjusting this as an expected objective. For some communities this objective may be unrealistic for the NNM program; an intervention that targets very young children with only introductory language training in contexts that may not be conducive to bilingualism. Bilingualism may not be the community's goal; it could be more around meeting the minimum standards to ensure the language remains used in the early education setting.

3. **To develop stronger links between early childhood education services and their local Aboriginal communities**

All nine NNM providers that responded to the online survey reported they felt they had made some or a lot of progress toward this objective (see Figure 7), suggesting that the objective is on its way to being met. Providers gave examples of why they felt these links were getting stronger on the acquittal forms they submitted. Two providers shared that they saw increased enrolment of Aboriginal children in their programs, which they attributed to word spreading about their NNM program and Aboriginal families taking the opportunity to enroll their children. Another provider commented,

> "We have noticed more interest in what we are doing by the local community and have been invited to perform at local events, with specific requests for some of the song's children are learning in the program" (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

This example illustrates how NNM providers can become increasingly recognized by the Aboriginal community as contributors to local cultural events.

Reports from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents, as well as Aboriginal community members and groups unaffiliated with the service providers also suggest this objective is being met. There was widespread recognition that NNM provided parents with a level of comfort and confidence in early childhood education. In addition, it was clear that **the way the early childhood education services were engaging with Elders and other services to deliver NNM built those ties**. Two examples from staff members further demonstrate how connections between providers and the local Aboriginal community are being built and the implications of those connections.

> "I feel like our Elders have gathered some strength and they are really proud of the efforts of our people. Not all the Elders have language. We are kind of racing against the clock to keep the language. The other Elders recognise that and they appreciate it. It gives them strength and energy to work with us. We have some Elders involved into our programs too. It's great to have knowledge and culture transfer, it's really special, for us and for our kids as well -- when they get time with the Elders." (Staff member, Coffs Harbour)
>
> "Obviously we work really closely with the school and I work with the health service and just all different Aboriginal organizations and I think there's a sense of pride within the community [about the program] because they will ring the preschool and say "look, we're having this event, can you come and present something in language?"(Staff member, Menindee)

These two examples highlight that ties are being built and strengthened between early childhood educators offering the NNM program and the local Aboriginal community, and importantly that as a result of those connections these **programs and organisations are being recognized and called to participate in the local displays of Aboriginal culture**. They are being seen as part of the cultural heritage of the community.

4. **To increase and strengthen Aboriginal language programs being delivered in early childhood education services in NSW**

This objective is worded in a way that makes it applicable more to NSW government than to individual providers because it is worded as a population-level outcome. Therefore, in order to assess the achievement of this outcome one needs to look at data across all language programs to determine the extent to which it has been met. NNM providers were asked on the online survey the extent to which they felt the Aboriginal language teaching within their service had been increased and strengthened, so the responses to this question can shed light on the extent to which this objective has been met. Unfortunately, however, these survey data come from only ten of the 20 NNM providers, so we cannot fully assess the achievement of this objective at this time.

According to the survey data, all ten of the respondent NNM providers felt they had made some to a lot of progress on increasing and strengthening their Aboriginal language teaching within their services, as a result of NNM funding (see Figure 7). This finding suggests that language programs being delivered in early childhood education services in NSW are being strengthened through NNM funding.

According to data reported in the survey, funding provided by Department of Education for NNM has gone toward **strengthening existing programs, hiring new staff and securing new resources for language programs** provided by organisations new to that area (see Table 2). Also, five out of nine providers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement on the survey that the 2018 Department of Education's Yarn Up event was a valuable learning opportunity, suggesting that this event helped them develop and deliver their NNM programs, which strengthened their own delivery of services.

> "The yarn up in Sydney with the Department was great. It gave the opportunity to share stories, resources, and strategies with other experienced language teachers and services" (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

Providers and community stakeholders also reported in interviews that the NNM program provided **an avenue for the identification of future language teachers in the area**, which is also likely to have a long-term impact on the number and the capacity of Aboriginal language programs across NSW.

In addition, **providers' reliance on Aboriginal language educators, Elders, and resources developed for the local Aboriginal language** is likely to have an effect on language programs in the community, by **increasing demand** for them in the long run. This will likely further strengthen language programs in the community and increase the number offered in the community.

Consideration for the future:

To improve the Department's ability to assess the achievement of this objective, because it is a population-level goal, consider including on the mandatory acquittal form questions about the extent to which and how NNM providers feel the Aboriginal language teaching within their service has been increased and strengthened.

5. **To support all children in learning Aboriginal culture and language.**

NNM providers that responded to the online survey were the most optimistic about the progress they have made toward supporting all children to learn Aboriginal culture; all ten felt they had made some to a lot of progress in this area, eight of whom felt they had made a lot of progress (see Figure 7). This finding, though not inclusive of all NNM providers, suggests that this objective is progressing positively towards being met. In addition, as discussed earlier in the report in conjunction with Figure 6, all but one provider is offering NNM to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, which further provides evidence that this objective to support all children in learning Aboriginal culture and language is being met.

Some providers offered examples of how they have seen the learning and understanding of all children regarding Aboriginal culture and language manifest. One provider explained on the survey,

> "We have noticed a greater awareness of Aboriginal Culture within all of our centres. There was also a greater understanding with all children that Aboriginal people were the first inhabitants of our country, and that they spoke different languages to what we speak." (NNM provider, survey respondent)

This example shows that **critical lessons about Aboriginal history, culture, and language are being instilled** among young people who participate in the NNM program.

Parents, service staff, and community stakeholders in Menindee and Coffs Harbour were all impressed by the extent to which the program, in such a short period of time, had shown the benefits of exposing Aboriginal culture and language to non-Aboriginal children. According to interviewees, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children **demonstrate a consistent level of excitement and joy in speaking the Aboriginal language** being taught, especially if they are learning names of animals they often see in community or when travelling. And as a result of learning about culture and language, feedback from Aboriginal parents indicate their **children's sense of cultural identity and belonging is growing** and there is a perceived belief their children's pride in their culture is strengthening.

> "Since learning the language I would say that they are more interested in culture, the dignity in being Gumbayngir, which is good. They want to know language, they want to know dance, they want to know how to make things." (Parent, Coffs Harbour)

This example illustrates that **a critical component of supporting all children to learn about Aboriginal language and culture means de-stigmatising Aboriginal identity**. This creates a space for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children to want to participate in learning about culture and language.
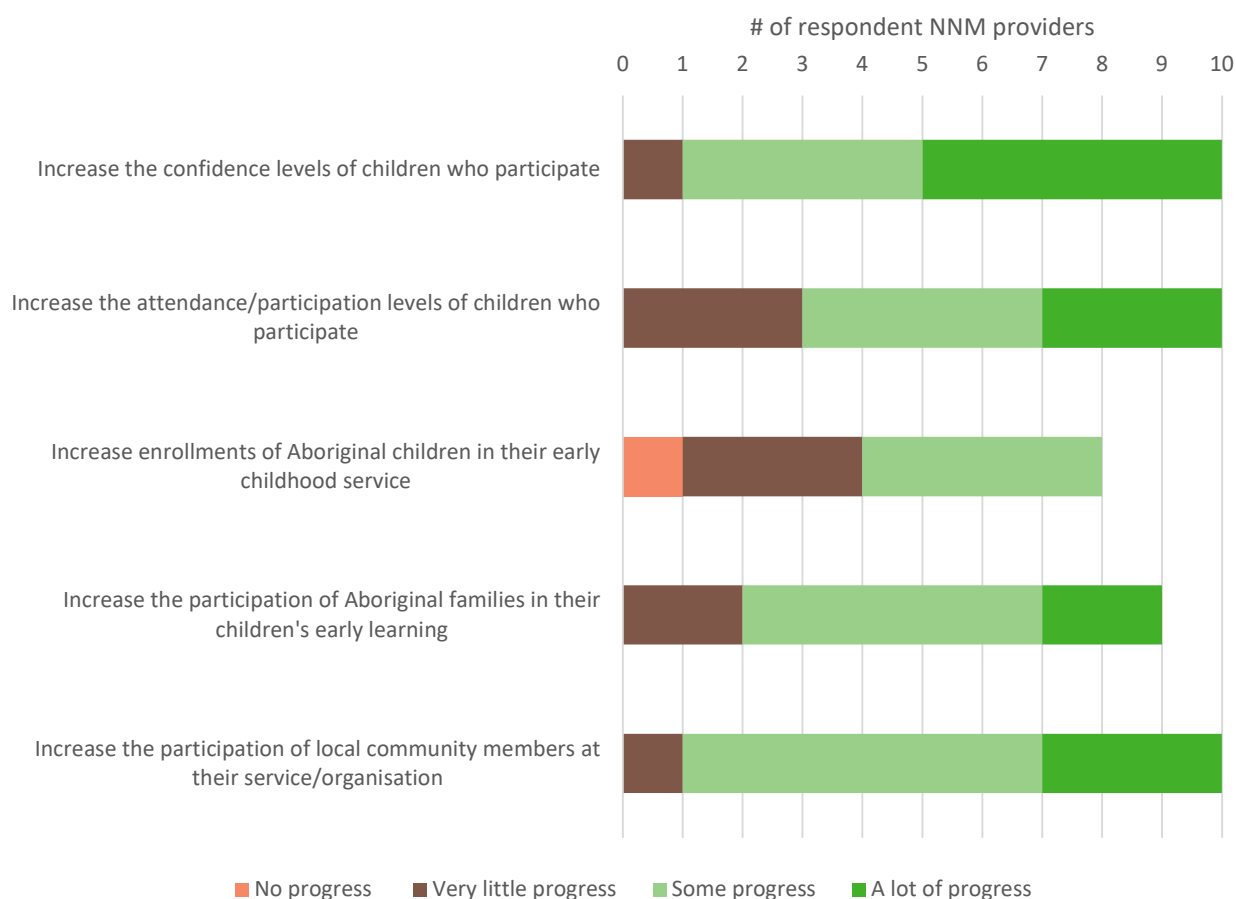
4.1.2   Outcomes

There were five program outcomes that NNM providers were asked about on the online survey. Providers were asked the extent to which they felt they had made progress toward increasing:

- confidence levels of children who participate
- attendance/participation levels of children who participate
- enrolments of Aboriginal children in [their] early childhood service
- participation of families in their children's early learning
- local community members at [their] service/organisation

The greatest number of responding providers felt they had made some to a lot of progress toward increasing children's confidence and increasing the participation of local community members at their organisation (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: The amount of progress providers think that their NNM program has made toward the desired program outcomes (Source: 2019 NNM Survey of Providers, n=10)

As Figure 9 shows, four to seven of the responding providers felt they had made some to a lot of progress toward the outcomes of increasing attendance/participation of children, increasing enrolments of Aboriginal children, and increasing the participation of Aboriginal families in their children's learning. Interestingly, compared to progress toward objectives, providers were slightly less optimistic about their progress toward desired program outcomes.

The three organisations that reported seeing the most progress across all outcome dimensions were Evans Head Pre-School Association Inc, Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation, and Uniting preschool Grafton. These three NNM providers shared some characteristics, but also differed from each other in some ways. All three providers were regional, all three had been delivering a language program for at least one year prior to receiving NNM funding, and all three had an existing relationship with their language teacher prior to receiving NNM funding (but the length of that relationship varied between one and a half to six years). In addition, all three reported that 100% of the children they worked with could understand and use at least 10-20 Aboriginal language words. Two of the providers also were teaching the same language: Bundjalung/Bandjalang. This is where the similarities, observable from the acquittal and survey data, ended, however. The three organisations

had varying numbers of children they reached, represented different types of organisations, and were in different language contexts (one was in a community where there already were other language programs, centres, or development activities in their chosen Aboriginal language, the other two were not). The three organisations also had different staff sizes overall and proportions of staff who were Aboriginal. Some of these factors may be associated with their perceived successes in achieving outcomes.

Outcomes for Children

Three of the five desired outcomes for the NNM program explicitly relate to outcomes for children and the survey results presented in Figure 9 show these outcomes have been achieved, to an extent. The interview data and open-ended responses to the survey and acquittal form shed some light onto some of these experiences.

Increased confidence

Ten providers of the twenty who completed acquittal forms talked about the confidence among children in their NNM programs increasing. Some providers simply stated that they had seen the confidence of their children grow, but others provided some insight into what that increased confidence really looked like and why they thought it had grown. These providers shared the following stories:

> "Children, families and educators use local Yuin language daily. This has provided greater participation that has extended to our community with children's confidence growing as they become the teachers of language." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)
>
> "Performing at events has given children pride and self-esteem, and increased confidence." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)
>
> "[Children] become more confident in themselves when they are able to use words in context." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

These examples demonstrate that **children's confidence appears to grow through opportunities for language application** – through performance, use of the language they are learning, and through teaching the language to others. Each of these examples represent application opportunities that providers or the community have offered to children, but children are also reported by providers to create their own opportunities for language application, which also build their confidence; as these two examples illustrate:

> "Shy child spoke up to correct visiting librarian's pronunciation of Paakantyi book and was proud he did so." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)
>
> "Children take the lead in teaching non-Indigenous staff to speak Paakantyi" (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

In these two examples we see how **confidence among children can manifest and build when they spontaneously and voluntarily teach others** the Aboriginal language they have been taught.

Other providers pointed to more nuanced displays of increased confidence. These examples show how children's participation in NNM has not just built their confidence to use their new language skills, but the **program has instilled in them confidence in their own self-worth**.

> "We noticed some children that had previously not told us that they were Wiradjuri (although we knew it from their records), became very proud to tell everyone that they were Wiradjuri, like [the Aboriginal language teacher]. It made a big difference in all the students' engagement with Wiradjuri cultural activities and our Welcome to Country. The children were interested and empowered through knowing more about the culture and having that link to [the Aboriginal language teacher] and their Wiradjuri class mates." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)
>
> "This program has really increased the children's self-esteem. Previously about half of the children were not able to stand in front of a group now most of them can." (NNM provider, survey respondent)
>
> "Our children are strengthening their cultural knowledge and their self-esteem and identity is increasing with it." (NNM provider, survey respondent)

Though not all providers said they had made progress toward the goal of increasing children's confidence, as a result of the NNM program, these examples illustrate the powerful ways that those who have achieved this outcome have done so.

Increased attendance/participation

Only one provider talked about their NNM program improving the attendance for children, when they explained in the online survey they had,

> "Another child who has significant behaviour challenges [who] rarely attends any group time or table activities at all, he is now beginning to attend the language group, asking the teacher 'is it your talking day today?' As we allow ample time for planning the language groups the language teacher always has a visual cultural item prop or 'hook' that engages the children." (NNM provider, survey respondent)

This story illustrates how **engaged teaching entices a reluctant child to actually attend and participate** in group learning activities, a pedagogical approach that other providers cited as encouraging engagement among children in the learning. This provider's example illustrates this point nicely,

> "We have some children with additional needs who are very hard to engage in teacher-directed learning, but who thrive when [Aboriginal language teacher] floats around and engages with them during their play." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

And illustrates the dynamic way that NNM providers and their Aboriginal language teachers are **using age- and developmental stage-appropriate methods for NNM child participants** to increase their participation in learning.

Other providers gave examples of how NNM is increasing the level of engagement among children in the NNM program itself:

> "Children who were generally shy and did not engage in group lessons normally, showed greater confidence in our language classes. Children who normally wouldn't, wanted to get up the front and share their knowledge of the Anaiwan language with their peers and teachers." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)
>
> "Children are interested in what they're learning and they're engaged in small groups, so they've embraced NNM" (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

These examples illustrate how NNM providers are seeing their participating children engage more deeply than they normally would – NNM is prompting them to **embrace learning and engage with their peers and teachers at a new level**.

Increased enrolments

Though four providers on the survey indicated they had made some progress toward the goal of increasing enrolment of Aboriginal children in their service, only two providers who completed the acquittal form specifically cited **increased enrolments as the way they are seeing greater engagement of Aboriginal families** since starting NNM. These two providers unfortunately did not give much insight into how or why their enrolments have increased.

Challenges with getting increased enrolments was only discussed by one provider:

> During the period of time for the Ninganah No More program, our cohort of children and families has changed. As a result, we have lost connections with some Aboriginal family members but gained levels of engagement with new families. Beyond this, we have begun to build engaging relationships with new community members as we search for authentic and relevant cultural and language support. (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

It appears that this provider struggled with enrolment of Aboriginal children, but it is unclear exactly why – if it was a natural demographic change or if it was caused by something else.

Additional outcomes for children

In addition to the desired outcomes, children are achieving other important outcomes as a result of participating in NNM. According to providers and parents, **children can use and understand words, phrases, instructions and songs** that are presented in the Aboriginal languages. For example, BMNAC assessed their children and found that they could speak more than 100 words and 100 phrases, many of which are complex. Additionally, there are examples of children casually using Bandgalang language in Evans Head, such as "yelgun (sun) is out today". And data collected from providers via the acquittal form further corroborates the finding that children are achieving language-related outcomes as a result of the NNM program. Figure 10 presents the average proportions of children that can comprehend and use Aboriginal language words, across all NNM providers.

Figure 10: Language Comprehension and Use among NNM service providers
(Source: 2019 NNM Provider Acquittals, n=20)
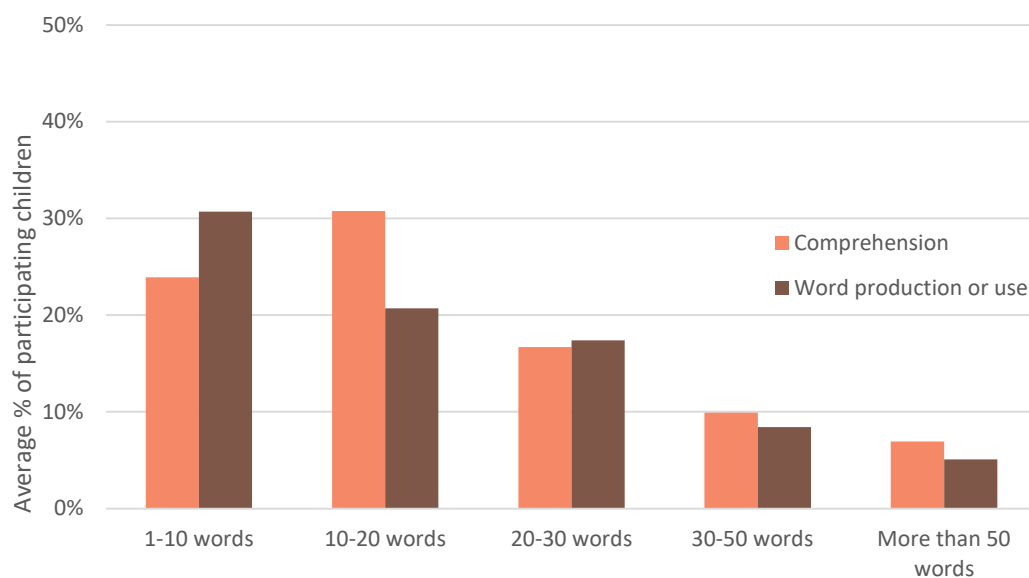
From Figure 10 we see that the majority of children across NNM programs could comprehend or use 1 to 20 Aboriginal language words, indicating a modest improvement in language skills for the majority of participating children. Across programs, there were small but notable proportions of children who NNM providers reported had acquired 30+ Aboriginal language words, indicating significant improvement in language skills as a result of the program. Across all NNM providers, on average, the distribution of the language comprehension and word production/use among participating children was skewed toward lower numbers of words (as displayed in Figure 10), but the percentages of children who understood and used a large number of words was still marked.

There were three programs that reported children were capable of more than 50 words of comprehension or use: Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC), Muloobinba Aboriginal Corporation – Nikinpa Children's Services, and Dalaigur Pre-School & Children's Services. Though in some ways these three organisations differed (such as in type of organization, number of staff, number of Aboriginal staff, length of time previously delivering a language program, the types of language resources previously available in the community, amount of funding received, and geography), the characteristics they shared were most notably in their delivery model, namely four or more hours over four or more days per week. These three programs also sought to integrate language across the curriculum, to create more of a language immersion experience for children. These three programs also had three or more years of a relationship with their language teacher before receiving NNM funding, and in one organization one of the language teachers was a permanent staff member.

Further outcomes among children, noted by parents, service staff and community stakeholders (also cited previously in the report), were pride in heritage; spontaneous and unprompted use of Aboriginal language words among other students, with teachers and with parents; and a more dynamic and engaged (two-way) learning and teaching environment. This provider's story illustrates how this two-way learning and teaching environment has played out at their service:

> "We have observed a very dynamic relationship between participation in our program and learning amongst our cohort of children. The more our children and families share, the more we can plan for as teachers and engagement levels of children increase. As the children become more engaged, their enthusiasm and participation continues to increase and gives more provocations for teachers to follow with intentional planning and teaching. While our language program has yet to unfold as we envisioned, this dynamic relationship between participation and learning is fueling the momentum that is building in our amended program." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

Here, as a result of children becoming increasingly engaged in learning they are able to reap further benefits from a **program that becomes increasingly tailored to their learning needs**, which will likely have benefits for their ultimate learning outcomes.

Finally, one provider shared a story that their NNM program seems to have **improved a child's overall speech**.

> "Anecdotal feedback from the parents of one student was that their child's speech impediment has improved since learning and speaking Gumbaynggirr" (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

Though unclear how widespread this type of outcome can be or is, this example illustrates another positive outcome for children participating in NNM that may arise for others.

Outcomes for Families

Data from providers, community stakeholders, and families indicated that families have grown in confidence and increased their involvement with the program; asking their children about the words they are learning, sharing stories and reporting back on the songs they sung at home. Parents who were not as involved in the pre-school previously are now participating in the program to make sure their children are pronouncing the words correctly and becoming more engaged with the learning of their children with staff, joining in with excursions and staying more often for meetings. It has resulted in greater acknowledgement of Aboriginal heritage by families. This included greeting school staff using Aboriginal language words.

> "They're going home and they're using these words and phrases, so they're teaching their parents. So the children are feeling very empowered to tell their parents but it's also engaging parents. Talking to their children, finding out, engaging and having that shared experience and shared learning together." (Staff member, Menindee)

This example illustrates **the positive effect that achieving child outcomes has on achieving parent outcomes for the NNM program**. Getting children excited about learning and using Aboriginal language and culture is helping get their parents involved in their learning process.

Outcomes for Community

The outcomes for Aboriginal communities as a result of the NNM program have included reinvigorating the Aboriginal language, strengthening connections with Elders, allowing opportunities for Elders to reconnect with

their language, and improving cross-generational interactions with and children more broadly. As one staff member at the NNM program in Menindee put it,

> "Our languages have been sleeping, and I like to say lost. And it's [NNM] just trying to reawaken our languages. And what better way to do it than with our youngest, younger kids in community." (Staff member, Menindee)

Though still early in its implementation, this provider's example demonstrates the potential very significant impact the NNM program can have on communities, namely **the revitalization and rebirth of Aboriginal languages**.

Providers explained in the interviews that the need for local and relevant language resources suited to the NNM program has prompted providers to develop their own unique resources, which has contributed to preserving language, stories, and culture. In addition, at one NNM program service,

> "The children, and families noticed that our council does not have signage recognising the land we sit on. Under the guidance of local custodians and year 5/6 mentors, children painted signs acknowledging the local custodians in Bandjalang language. We presented one to the local school at their NAIDOC celebrations. This was featured in the local newspaper … and on social media. We have called upon families and the community to send messages of support and have used these to lobby [the] Council to install signage acknowledging the traditional owners of the land in each of our local townships. The children and educators wrote letters to advocate for the changes. We are hopeful that we will be able to liaise with the council to see this project through to fruition." (NNM provider, survey respondent)

Examples like this illustrate that as a result of the NNM program, community and provider relations have been strengthened, and they are using their **partnerships to further contribute to the development of the community as a whole**.

5. Program impact:

5.1 What has happened as a result of the program, beyond outcomes?

Impacts of NNM that extend beyond changes to the knowledge, understanding, awareness, ability, skills, or behaviours of individual NNM stakeholders outlined above as outcomes are, at this point, limited.

Many organisations did state, however, that as a result of forging connections between their services and the local Aboriginal community, they have **developed a greater cultural awareness within their organisation and formed respectful relationships with the local Aboriginal community**. Many cited these as some of the greatest achievements of their NNM program to date:

> "Developing a greater awareness of Aboriginal culture for all children and educators within our services. Educators report greater confidence to incorporate Aboriginal awareness and culture into everyday practices." (NNM provider, survey respondent)
>
> "Continuing to make respectful connections to our local community despite challenges. Challenging and developing the understandings of staff around the importance of language and its connection to culture." (NNM provider, survey respondent)
>
> "The relationships and respect that children and families have for our local Aboriginal community. The way language has fostered connections between children, families and community. Sharing language and culture with the broader community." (NNM provider, survey respondent)
>
> "This was a wonderful program that really helped to bring Aboriginal culture into our services more." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)
>
> "Educators seeking out info to increase their knowledge of Aboriginal Australia." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

These examples illustrate the impact of the NNM program on organisations and on staff within those organisations, improving the cultural competency and cultural respect of non-Aboriginal organization staff within the Aboriginal communities of which they are a part.

5.2 What were the unintended impacts?

According to our analysis of the NNM provider acquittal data and provider responses to the survey data as well as the qualitative research, the unintended impacts of the NNM program include:

◖ an increased sense of empowerment and confidence among Aboriginal educators at the service in their cultural heritage and their ability to advocate for their communities, as well as language acquisition among them (as many were not allowed to learn Aboriginal languages when they were growing up)

> "The Indigenous staff have really been able to take the lead and they're now very much taking the lead, very empowered to go "no, we want it to go this way, this is how we want it to look, this is what we want from it." So for them it's that up-skilling and that empowering them to have the confidence to take the leadership role in the program." (Staff member, Menindee)

> "When I look at the Ninganah No More, for me myself, I feel confident now I belong to this program and that I can deliver it. And I can see change within community and kids and stuff like that. So it's really empowering as an Aboriginal woman." (Staff Member, Menindee)

◖ reflection on, and in some cases action on, how to incorporate Aboriginal culture, language, and recognition into multiple parts of the learning curriculum

> "Rather than develop a separate program, Gamilaraay language resources have been developed and integrated into many different programs" (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

◖ increasing the demand for Aboriginal language educators and language resources in the community (but also, stretching thin the limited capacity of existing Aboriginal language educators)

> "Term 4 2018 ran as planned, but Term 1 and 2 of 2019 proved difficult for our Gumbaynggirr teacher to commit his time to the program due to his competing priorities." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

> "Originally [Aboriginal Language teacher 1] was to deliver the program 1 day/week for 30 mins; this changed to [Aboriginal Language teacher 2] because [Aboriginal Language teacher 1] was too tied up to deliver the program. [Aboriginal Language teacher 2] fitted [our] Preschool into his schedule on the same days that he visits the public schools. Additionally, [Aboriginal Language teacher 2] has not been able to attend each week, so has only delivered 16 sessions as at 30 June instead of the 40 proposed sessions" (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

> "Wonnarua language is being rediscovered and only a few people hold that knowledge and are recognised to share the language. As a result, we haven't been able to move beyond the development stage of the program." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

> "The demand for language learning among many early childhood centres is a challenge for us. It is a challenge because we don't have many trained teachers available. So, when a teacher is sick or too busy at their usual place of work we are often stretched for time." (NNM provider, survey respondent)

◖ development of local resources for teaching (to meet the growing need for different and culturally appropriate resources to be used as part of the program)

Two providers who responded to the survey cited using NNM funding to pay staff to develop new resources and one provider who only submitted acquittal data explained they used their funding to enable the development of resources:

> "Paakantyi speaking preschool staff have taken the lead in supporting the development of resources to reflect the community and its diverse heritage as well as the development of books and stories which showcase the Paakantyi language. This has enabled the program to grow in strength and is now part of the daily program delivered at the preschool" (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

◖ improvements to the local community signage about Aboriginal history of places

◖ increasing the visibility of strong Indigenous role models, particularly men, in the education setting

> "One success has been that one worker is a young Aboriginal man, who is passionate about sharing his culture and language. We have found that this is providing a much-needed strong male role model for the children." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

◖ recognition that the accessibility of an Aboriginal language consultant is key, but also that there may be other language resources available that can be tapped

> "Though we haven't been able to develop or deliver program, we are utilising some community resources like the Wonnarua dictionary to share some basic words with our children. We have also strengthened connections with a local Wonnarua business which provides an artist who comes to preschool each week to share culture and art." (NNM provider, acquittal form respondent)

5.3 What factors have influenced program outcomes?

The most important and foundational factor influencing the basic achievement of program outcomes appears to be **how established the language is in the area where the program is to be delivered and the status of that language** i.e. how many speakers there are in the area and their availability to be involved, as well as whether there is agreement in the community about aspects of the language. Organisations that did not have any language resources established and a very limited number of available speakers, had the most trouble achieving outcomes.

Among those organisations that were in contexts that had some language resources and capacity, there were other factors that seemed to set some providers apart in their ability to excel in their achievements of objectives, overall outcomes, and language comprehension and use outcomes.

The three organisations that reported the greatest perceived successes in reaching program objectives were similar in that there were no other language programs, centres, or development activities in their chosen language prior to NNM funding, all three had an existing relationship with their language teacher prior to NNM funding (for anywhere from one and a half to six years), and all three served fewer than 100 children.

The three organisations that reported the greatest perceived successes in reaching overall program outcomes were all regional, all three had been delivering a language program for at least one year prior to receiving NNM funding, and all three had an existing relationship with their language teacher prior to receiving NNM funding

(but the length of that relationship varied between one and a half to six years). In addition, all three reported that 100% of the children they worked with could understand and use at least 10-20 Aboriginal language words.

Finally, the three organisations that reported children in their programs could understand and use more than 50 Aboriginal language words shared similar delivery models, namely four or more hours over four or more days per week. These three programs also sought to integrate language across the curriculum, to create more of a language immersion experience for children. These three programs also had three or more years of a relationship with their language teacher before receiving NNM funding, and in one organization one of the language teachers was a permanent staff member.

Across objectives, overall outcomes, and language outcomes the only shared factor, however, was **having an existing relationship with their language teacher prior to receiving NNM funding**, suggesting this factor is important to program success, regardless of the way success is defined.

The **program timeframe** was also commented on consistently as a factor influencing outcomes, among interviewees in Menindee and Coffs Harbour. The difficulties that services had engaging teachers with the appropriate and necessary cultural knowledge and developing appropriate resources meant that some of the funding period was spent setting these two aspects up. This seemed to sacrifice momentum of the program and reduced the number of children who could be exposed to language through the program.

> "Longer term funding also would benefit the program and the community. It would give us the opportunity to grow the staffing and then offer more to the schools, which would benefit the children with continuity all through the schooling years." (Staff member, Coffs Harbour)
>
> "My main concern is that it's not sustainable, it's just a short term, band-aid approach. I think the funding should be spread out over a long term because a one-year program only hits one cohort of kids." (Community stakeholder, Menindee)

These suggestions and concerns from providers and stakeholders point to factors that will affect the success of the program in the longer term, as opposed to this current pilot.

**Considerations for the future*:*

Consider supporting programs in areas with limited existing language capacity to spend time identifying and developing language teachers and developing resources within their funding period as an explicit aim of the funding.

Though some program factors appear to be associated with greater levels of objective and outcome achievement, these factors do not guarantee success so future iterations of the program should not seek to fund only providers that meet those criteria. Providers that indicate they do not have meet those criteria, however, are likely to simply need guidance on how to navigate the challenges of having limited language resources available and time to achieve high levels of the objectives and outcomes.

6.   Program appropriateness:

6.1 Delivery in line with the principles relating to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities

Understanding the appropriateness of the NNM program means considering the extent to which the program has been delivered in line with the principles set out in the program requirements relating to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Neither the interview, acquittal, nor survey data revealed any concerns about the cultural appropriateness of delivery of NNM. The strengths of the program were seen to be that it was delivered by Aboriginal people local to the area with authority to speak and teach the language, that it had the involvement of Elders, and that it had the support of local Aboriginal community organisations. In addition, parents and community stakeholders indicated in the qualitative research that the close and open relationship with service providers meant that they felt comfortable raising any issues that might have come up around program appropriateness.

> "It's a really grassroots program because it's come from the ground up. That's pretty lovely to see that our local people created that, and owned it." (Parent, Menindee)
>
> "It definitely is being culturally meaningful [because] it's come from our community. We're not just trying to adapt something that was from somewhere else. We're making our own stories." (Staff member, Menindee)

Interviews and data from providers suggest that it is critical for the language program to be embedded in an organisation that has respect for and understanding of Aboriginal culture. It was important for the non-Aboriginal teachers to be across the content and progress of the NNM program so that it could be factored into the broader activities of the service. If there were to be a lack of resources that reflect local requirements, it may limit the extent to which the program can be delivered in a culturally appropriate way in some contexts.

> "I would say we probably need some more resources. If we could get some more funding to be able to have enough resources to go where they need to go. (Parent, Coffs Harbour)
>
> "One of the challenges that I have found trying to start the program is the resources. There's just absolutely no resources out there from this area and I didn't realize. At first, I thought, oh yes, we will deliver the language program for 12 months and then we will try and figure something else out but because it's been extended, we want to really embed it into the service and make sure that we're delivering it every day. We're constantly have to make the resources ourselves and that's time consuming so if we had a change we would possibly review the funding because it's taking myself away from other duties that I have." (Staff member, Menindee)
>
> "We've been very careful to make sure that we go, what is relevant to Mungindi? How do you do this in Mungindi? So not just Barkindji as a whole but relevant to within Mungindi itself as well. So they

may do it slightly differently somewhere else, which is okay. Because every area is slightly different with how they practice and we're being very careful to do that working with Barkindji people who can take the lead because they know their culture, they know their community best. Hence why we've focused a lot more on creating our own resources." (Staff member, Menindee)

Consideration for the future:

Consider offering support for the development and sharing (where culturally appropriate) of teaching resources to support this objective as well.

7. Program learnings:

7.1 What have been the key program benefits?

The evidence presented in this review suggests that the key benefits of the NNM program are:

◖ Increasing the Aboriginal language literacy and vocabulary skills of Aboriginal children in NSW, which they go on to integrate into their day-to-day lives, in and out of school

◖ Developing stronger links between early childhood education services and their local Aboriginal communities, and as a result service organisations are being recognized and called on to participate in the local displays of Aboriginal culture

◖ Supporting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in learning Aboriginal culture and language, by

  o De-stigmatising and celebrating Aboriginal identity

  o Instilling confidence among Aboriginal children to speak out in general

  o Teaching critical lessons about Aboriginal history, culture, and language in a way that is engaging and memorable

◖ Encouraging children to independently use their language skills outside the classroom as fluidly as they might use English, which may support children to become bilingual

◖ Increasing and strengthening Aboriginal language programs being delivered in early childhood education services in NSW, by

  o strengthening existing programs, hiring new staff and securing new resources for language programs

  o providing an avenue for the identification of future language teachers in the area

  o increasing demand for language programs in the long run

◖ Increasing the pride in cultural heritage among Aboriginal children, their parents and family members and the Aboriginal service staff, by

  o increasing the visibility of strong Indigenous role models

  o incorporating Aboriginal culture, language, and recognition into multiple parts of the learning curriculum

  o improving the cultural awareness within their organisation and forming respectful relationships with the local Aboriginal community

◖ Increasing children's confidence, by

- o Providing them opportunities to apply language learning

- o Encouraging them to spontaneously and voluntarily teach others the Aboriginal language

- o Instilling in them confidence in their own self-worth

- Starting the process of 'waking up' sleeping languages, by

  - o Developing local resources for teaching the local Aboriginal language

  - o Increasing the demand for Aboriginal language teachers and language resources

  - o Encouraging changes to local community signage regarding Aboriginal history and legacies

- Increasing the cultural understanding of non-Aboriginal children and service staff

- Increasing children's engagement and participation in learning, by

  - o Using age- and developmental stage-appropriate teaching methods

- Getting children excited about learning and using Aboriginal language and culture helps get their parents involved in their learning process

7.2 What have been the key lessons learned?

Looking across the findings discussed throughout this report regarding how and if objectives, outcomes, and impacts have occurred, the following lessons about the NNM program seem apparent:

- The NNM program is meeting its five objectives although two of the five may need modification to allow for the success of the program to be fully recognised at the reporting level;

- The NNM program is resulting in participating children integrating the languages they are learning into their daily lives in and out of school, with Aboriginal children more confident speaking out in general in NNM classes and other contexts;

- All but one provider reported they have made progress towards all five objectives;

- Where objectives are not clearly being met it is due to the wording or population level of the objective rather than the outcomes measured at the provider level. For Objectives 2 (support Aboriginal children to develop into bilingual speakers) and 4 (increase and strengthen Aboriginal language programs being delivered in early childhood education services in NSW) adjusting the wording of the existing objective or including on the mandatory acquittal forms to allow for data collection will strengthen the ability of providers to meet these objectives;

- Overall, when NNM providers have the language teachers in place, they are able to achieve the desired program objectives in the current program implementation model;

- NNM providers struggle to achieve the desired outcomes for children, families, and communities if they do not already have prior a local connection/s and resources;

- Where a pre-existing relationship is not present, providers need more time to build contacts and relationships with Aboriginal language teachers and develop appropriate resources to strengthen program implementation and outcomes;

- Successful outcomes are linked to the embedding of the program in cultural appropriateness, delivery by local Aboriginal people who have strong connections to community including Elders and good relationships with parents;

- Additional supports and program timeframes would be beneficial to program outcomes if the program continues and expands. These supports would help providers find and access appropriate local resources that meet community needs and that continue to support the cultural appropriateness of the program, which providers have spent significant time and energy establishing.

- Having an authorised language representative and multiple back-up language teachers to provide support to that representative from program commencement, possibly from the initial funding application, would assist overcoming some of the implementation challenges faced by some services.

- Barriers to meeting program outputs/activities due to challenges beyond the control of the provider would be resolved if NNM providers are accountable for outcomes and given the opportunity to share strategies for achieving outcomes in the face of challenges.

7.3 What are the implications of these lessons learned? What are the key considerations for future program delivery?

This review has found and articulated that there are many benefits of the NNM program, to children, families, communities, and service providers. The review has not found any children, families, communities, or service providers to suffer any negative outcomes as a result of the NNM program, though some services have struggled to implement the program in the face of some challenges.

Consideration 1:

In this section we outline the ways it seems that the program could be modified, to improve the extent to which desired objectives and outcomes are achieved across existing and any future providers.

7.3.1 Time

Across both the survey and qualitative research among parents, service staff, and community stakeholders, there was a desire for more time at every stage of the program. More time for delivery, for application, for planning and for engagement with community. Across the board there was a hope that the program would be extended to continue to develop the language skills of children, foster relationships with Aboriginal community organisations and leaders, develop the skills of teachers current and potential and continue to develop resources. Some participants indicated that a 'slow down' of the program was necessary as 'some communities aren't quite ready' to deliver NNM as intended.

Consideration 2:

Consider building in more time into the application process to allow for better liaising with community organisations, elders, and possible teachers, to allow services to identify relevant resources and share information with other NNM providers. Toward this end, different implementation models may need to be applied in areas where the language is well-established versus areas where the language is less consolidated.

7.3.2   Categorisation of provider programs

Following on from the findings discussed previously, two distinct streams of providers are apparent through the review – one stream of providers with access to revitalised local languages, consistent access to Aboriginal language teachers, and access to resources through a range of local Aboriginal stakeholders or partners to deliver the program, and another stream of providers who face challenges establishing these key program components and may need additional supports to assist successful program delivery.

Consideration 3:

Consider restructuring the NNM program to create two streams:

◖ **Stream 1** for providers who have access to a revitalised local language, local language teachers and resources and access to support from one of the five NSW Government Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests supported by the Department of Education in partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (SECG) as follows:

  o   Bundjalung

   ▪ The Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest was launched in Lismore on 20 February 2014. The base school for this nest is Goonellabah Primary School. The Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest spans communities in Lismore, Kyogle, Tweed Heads, Ballina, Evans Head, Woodenbong, Grafton, Tabulam, Coraki, Casino and Bonalbo.

  o   Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuawaalayaay

   ▪ The Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuawaalayaay Language and Culture Nest was launched in Lightning Ridge on 2 May 2014. Its base school is Lightning Ridge Central School. The Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuawaalayaay Language and Culture Nest includes communities in Lightning Ridge; Walgett, Collarenebri and Goodooga.

  o   Gumbaynggirr

   ▪ The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest was launched in Coffs Harbour on 19 February 2014. Its base school is William Bayldon Primary School, Coffs Harbour. The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest covers communities in Coffs Harbour, South Grafton, Macksville, Orara, Nambucca Valley, Sawtell, Toormina, Northern Beaches, Dorrigo, Urunga and Bellingen.

  o   North West Wiradjuri

- The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest was launched on 25 October 2013. Its base school is Dubbo Primary School. The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest has established strong links in communities in Dubbo, Narromine, Peak Hill, Trangie, Gilgandra, Wellington and Mudgee, and public schools located there.

  o Paakantji/Baakantji

  - The Paakantji/Baakantji Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest was launched on 30 April 2014. Its base school is Wilcannia Central School. The Paakantji/Baakantji Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest includes the communities of Broken Hill, Wilcannia, Menindee, Bourke, Mildura and Coomealla.[6]

◖ **Stream 2** for providers with limited or no access or relationships to local language teachers and resources. This Stream may require:

  o modified or additional supports at the planning or even pre-application stage of their programs;

  o the incorporation of longer periods for the program application process in order to ensure enough language teachers are in place; and

  o different expectations in terms of outcomes in those different areas as well.

7.3.3   Resources

Lack of resources was another issue cited across all participants in the site visit interviews. In those sites, stakeholders talked about limited resources relevant to the local language, culture, and stories but also limited diversity of resources for different kinds of learning. There was a need for books, flashcards, colouring-in exercises, and more tactile objects.

Consideration 4:
That NSW Department of Education should consider supporting the development and sharing (where culturally appropriate) of teaching resources across NNM providers. This would include developing and sharing more diverse resources to match the diversity of resources used in early childhood education outside NNM.

7.3.4   Teachers

The quantitative and the qualitative data showed that a critical challenge for providers is any lack of an accessible language consultant in the area. Delivery of NNM needs a language representative to drive the development of the program from funding application to implementation, and this person needs to be recognised with the authority within the community and by the Department to be a language representative.

Consideration 5:

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[6] NSW Government Aboriginal Affairs, *Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests*, https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/policy-reform/language-and-culture/nests (accessed 6 December 2019)

Consider supporting the idea from providers that an authorised language representative be part of each local NNM program from the beginning.

7.3.5   Information sharing

Across the board there was a strong desire for more connections with community organisations, opportunities to promote their work across the community, and more information sharing and understanding of best practice from other services. The Yarn Up session was seen as particularly useful and should be replicated on a regular basis in order to share learnings particularly on the development of resources and how to promote the program in the early learning community. Service providers were particularly interested in regular face to face meetings to understand similar initiatives elsewhere.

> "The Yarn Up was really good. Especially seeing people who were at the beginning it was awesome for them to engage, see what others were doing, share ideas, talk to people and share. It would be good to have that again but not necessarily a whole state one, if we could have a local or north coast region even and to make the meetings more regular. If the program was extended, it would be good for regular info and catch ups. Talking about the bigger stuff would be good too, what's happening elsewhere, what is our purpose, what we could change." (Staff member, Coffs Harbour)

Consideration 6:

It may be worth considering how to better support providers to promote their work across the community.

7.3.6   Adjustment of program outputs, objectives and outcomes

The structuring of program outputs, objectives, and outcomes has left some providers (those unable to secure local Aboriginal language teachers or faced with other challenges in program scheduling and delivery beyond their control) unable to meet program targets as they are currently articulated. In addition, two of the current objectives are written in a way that makes it challenging for providers to succeed or report in these areas. Allowing for NNM providers to be accountable to outcomes rather than outputs or activities and adjusting objectives two and four would address these issues.

Consideration 7*:*

Consider holding NNM program providers accountable to outcomes rather than outputs or activities, and create opportunities for providers to share strategies for achieving outcomes in the face of scheduling challenges, for instance alternative resources to bring to bear when and if it is impossible to find a local language teacher.

Consideration 8*:*

Consider adjusting the objective that all NNM programs support Aboriginal children to develop into bilingual speakers. For some communities this objective may be unrealistic, because those contexts may not be conducive to bilingualism, or it may not be the community's goal. In those cases, the objective may be more appropriately set at meeting the minimum standards to ensure the language remains used in the early education setting.

Consideration 9*:*

To improve the Department's ability to assess the achievement of the objective to increase and strengthen Aboriginal language programs being delivered in early childhood education services in NSW, consider including on the mandatory acquittal form questions about the extent to which and how NNM providers feel the Aboriginal language teaching within their service has been increased and strengthened.

8. Conclusion

The Ninganah No More (NNM) program is guided by a recognition of the importance of Aboriginal culture and heritage and developing respect for diversity. Broadly speaking, the program is meeting its aims to increase the level of Aboriginal languages being taught in early childhood education services across NSW and is providing opportunity for Aboriginal culture and identity to be nurtured and developed in the earliest stage of formal education.

On the whole, the core objectives of NNM have been met, albeit with more progress towards some goals (i.e., supporting learning of Aboriginal language and culture) than others (i.e., supporting Aboriginal children to develop into bilingual speakers). In addition, some factors appear to support basic achievement of those goals and other factors seem to support even greater achievements, but they do not individually guarantee success, instead appear to cumulatively support providers' achievements.

There are opportunities to capitalise on the progress to date by developing diverse and culturally appropriate reaching resources, identifying appropriate language teachers and possible future language teachers and consolidating relationships forged between providers and community organisations and Elders.

Consider different program streams for areas with established and less well-established language teachers. This includes incorporating longer periods for the program application process in order to ensure enough language teachers are in place. There should be different expectations in terms of outcomes in those different areas as well.

Overall, the Ninganah No More Program for early childhood education has made a positive initial contribution to the NSW Department of Education's commitment to increasing the teaching of Aboriginal languages in NSW public schools by providing fertile language accumulation ground in the pre-primary ages of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children.

9. Appendix

9.1 SurveyMonkey™ Survey

9.2 Interview Guides – Families

9.3 Interview Guides – Managers/Staff (Service Providers)

9.4 Interview Guides – Community Stakeholders

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Welcome to the Ninganah No More provider survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, which should take about 25-35 minutes to complete. It will be open from 2 Sept to 16 Sept.

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The Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) has been independently commissioned by the NSW Department of Education to conduct this survey. Your answers to these questions will inform an independent evaluation of the Ninganah No More program. Your responses will remain confidential and any data provided to the Department will be de-identified.

-

The purpose of this survey is to capture the views and experiences of Ninganah No More program providers in relation to the outcomes and impact of the program and what could be improved going forward.

In order to ensure that your survey response reflects the views and experiences of your organisation to the greatest extend possible, we suggest that this survey be completed in a collaboration between all program staff.

-

If you would like support to fill out this survey, please contact Lena Etuk by phone on (02) 85851330 or by email lena@circaresearch.com.au

-

Please click on the 'NEXT' button to start the survey.

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1. What is the name of your organisation that delivers the Ninganah No More program?

2. What is the structure of your organisation?

○ Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation

○ Non-Aboriginal, not-for-profit organisation

○ Early Childhood Education Service

○ Other (please specify)

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3. Approximately how long did your organisation have an existing relationship with the local Aboriginal community prior to receiving funding for the Ninganah No More program?

4. What is the geographic classification of where your Ninganah No More program operates?

◯ Urban

◯ Regional

◯ Remote

5. We want to know a bit more about your Ninganah No More program staff.

How many staff in your organisation are involved in delivering the program?

How many of these staff are Aboriginal?

How many of these staff are local to the Aboriginal community?

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6. Which Aboriginal language does your Ninganah No More program teach?

7. Was your organisation delivering a program in this language prior to receiving funding for the Ninganah No More program?

◯ Yes

◯ No

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8. Approximately how long was your organisation delivering a program in this language for before you received the Ninganah No More program?

9. Were there any other language programs, language centres or language development activities in your chosen Aboriginal language when you began delivering the Ninganah No More program?

◯ Yes

◯ No

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10. Please tell us what these other language programs, language centres or language development activities were and a bit about them, including how long they have been running.

11. Were there any language resources available in the Aboriginal language your organisation is teaching when you began delivering the Ninganah No More program?
(e.g. language dictionaries, language teachers, language speakers in community)

◯ Yes

◯ No

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12. Please tell us a bit about what Aboriginal language resources were available.

13. Did you have an existing relationship with your language teacher before receiving Ninganah No More funding?

◯ Yes

◯ No

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14. How long did you have a relationship with your language teacher before receiving Ninganah No More funding?

15. Please tell us what approaches and methods are being used in your Ninganah No More program to support Aboriginal language learning and increase the literacy and vocabulary skills of children.

16. What did you do as a result of your Ninganah No More funding? [choose all that apply]

☐ Employed a language teacher

☐ Provided training for staff

☐ Employed other program staff

☐ Developed lesson plans

☐ Bought language program resources (e.g. language dictionaries, picture books, signage, music)

☐ Expanded reach of existing program

☐ Other (please specify)

17. How have you promoted your Ninganah No More program with local families and communities? [choose all that apply]

☐ Interagency meetings

☐ Social media, e.g. Facebook

☐ Local Aboriginal Advisory Groups

☐ Promotional materials, e.g. posters, brochures, pamphlets

☐ Elders Groups

☐ Word of mouth

☐ Other (please specify)

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18. Please tell us how much progress you think your Ninganah No More program has made against the program objectives and expected outcomes.

	No progress	Very little progress	Some progress	A lot of progress
Increased the literacy and vocabulary skills of the Aboriginal children who participate	◯	◯	◯	◯
Supported Aboriginal children to develop into bilingual speakers	◯	◯	◯	◯
Increased and strengthened Aboriginal language teaching within our service	◯	◯	◯	◯

19. Please tell us how much progress you think your Ninganah No More program has made against the program objectives and expected outcomes.

	No progress	Very little progress	Some progress	A lot of progress
Supported all children who participate to learn Aboriginal culture and language	◯	◯	◯	◯
Increased the confidence levels of children who participate	◯	◯	◯	◯
Increased the attendance/participation levels of children who participate	◯	◯	◯	◯
Increased enrollments of Aboriginal children in our early childhood service	◯	◯	◯	◯

20. Please tell us how much progress you think your Ninganah No More program has made against the program objectives and expected outcomes.

	No progress	Very little progress	Some progress	A lot of progress	N/A
Encouraged us to develop stronger links between our organisation and local Aboriginal communities	○	○	○	○	○
Increased the participation of Aboriginal families in their children's early learning	○	○	○	○	○

21. Please tell us how much progress you think your Ninganah No More program has made against the program objectives and expected outcomes.

	No progress	Very little progress	Some progress	A lot of progress	N/A
Increased the participation of local community members at our service/organisation	○	○	○	○	○

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22. How has your Ninganah No More program improved outcomes for families? Please provide any examples or stories of success.

(e.g. a time when you observed more involvement from parents as a result of the Ninganah No More program)

23. How has your Ninganah No More program improved outcomes for children? Please provide any examples or stories of success.

(e.g. a time when you observed children's Aboriginal language skills improve)

24. In your view, what has been the greatest achievement of your Ninganah No More program to date?

25. How are you collecting feedback and/or data from families to monitor their progress and achievements? [e.g. online family surveys, feedback forms, assessments]

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26. How have Aboriginal families and/or community members been involved in the development of your Ninganah No More program?

27. What else have you done to ensure your program is culturally safe for families and communities?

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28. What has been the most significant challenge you have faced in delivering the Ninganah No More program?

29. Going forward, are there any changes or improvements you would make to the Ninganah No More program you are delivering?

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30. Please tell us the extent that you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
We have the support needed to deliver the Ninganah No More program	○	○	○	○	○
We have the resources needed to deliver the Ninganah No More program	○	○	○	○	○
The 2018 Yarn Up workshop was a valuable learning opportunity	○	○	○	○	○

31. Please tell us what additional support and/or resources you need to deliver the Ninganah No More program.

32. Please share with us any other feedback or comments you have.

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33. Please upload any files you would like to share with us.

This could include: data you have collected about your Ninganah No More program, monitoring and evaluation tools, promotional materials, images, newsletters stories etc.

Choose File   No file chosen

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34. Finally, we want to know a bit about who has contributed to filling in this survey.

Please tell us how many program staff have contributed to filling out this survey.

Please tell us the roles of those who have contributed to filling out this survey.

How many of the program staff who have contributed to filling out this survey are Aboriginal?

35. If we have any further questions to ask you, can we get in touch?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Discussion guide for families

Ninganah No More (NNM)

Introduction

I am from the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) and we are doing this research to explore the benefits of the Ninganah No More program for children, families and communities and to understand how it could be improved. The Ninganah No More program aims to increase the level of **Aboriginal languages** being taught in early childhood education services across NSW and provide opportunity for **Aboriginal culture and identity** to be nurtured and developed in the earliest stage of formal education. The feedback you give us will provide important information for the review of the program.

Explain:

◖ We hope to keep our discussion today as informal as possible.

◖ The feedback you provide is confidential - we don't record any of your personal details so anything you say will not be linked to you, you will remain anonymous - only the researchers (i.e. the CIRCA team) will have access to information about participants.

◖ I would like to record the discussion on a digital recorder. The recording is just for the research team to help us with our notes so that the report includes all your thoughts/ideas. Are you happy for me to record the group?

◖ Participation in the discussion group is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate in part or all of the discussion.

◖ If you don't want to or can't answer any questions, you don't need to worry about it, we will just move on. This is an open discussion and all comments are welcome – there are no right or wrong answers.

Do you have any questions before we begin? *(If Yes, answer questions)*

Consent:

Do you agree to participate in the group discussion? Yes/No

Are you happy for the interview to be recorded? Yes/No   If no I will take notes.

Introductions and awareness of NNM program

We want to get to know a bit about you and your family and what you know about the NNM program being delivered in the service your child/ren attend.

1. How many children do you have and how many of your children attend the service? What are their ages?

2. Do you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander? Do your child/ren?

3. Are you aware that the NNM program is being delivered in the service your child/ren attend?

    i. If yes, how did you hear about it?

    ii. If yes, can you tell me what you know about the NNM program? E.g. what are your children learning? How many times a week?

4. What do you view as the benefits of your children learning Aboriginal language and about Aboriginal culture?

Appropriateness

We want to know a bit about how the NNM program is meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

5. If participant is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander: In what ways has the NNM program been culturally relevant and safe for your family?

6. If participant is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander: Do you know of any connections the NNM program has with local Aboriginal community members, groups or organisations?

Impact

We want to know a bit about the benefits and impact of the NNM program for your children, family and community.

7. Have you noticed any improvements or changes to your children's Aboriginal language skills since the NNM program has been delivered in the service?

    Please tell us about how this has this has impacted family, community and relationships.

8. If child/ren is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander: Have you noticed any differences in the level of awareness your child/ren have about their cultural identity and history?

    Please tell us about how this has impacted on family, community and relationships.

9. If child/ren is non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander: Have you noticed any differences in the level of awareness your child/ren have about Aboriginal languages, cultures and history as a result of participating in the NNM program?

    Please tell us about how this has impacted on family, community and relationships.

10. Have you noticed any improvements or changes to your children's overall literacy and numeracy skills since the NNM program has been delivered in the service? Please tell us about this.

11. Have your children given you any feedback about the NNM program? Please tell us about this.

12. Is there anything that you have learnt about Aboriginal languages and/or cultures since the NNM program has been delivered in the service? Please tell us about this.

13. Do you think the NNM program has had any benefits for the local community? Please tell us about these.

Overall views

To finish, we want to know more about your overall views about the NNM program.

14. Overall, how happy are you with the NNM program that is being delivered in your service?

15. Would you recommend the NNM program to other families? Why?

16. Are there any changes or improvements you would recommend for the program going forward?

Thank you and close

Discussion guide for managers and staff delivering the program

Ninganah No More (NNM)

Introduction

I am from the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) and we are doing this research to explore the benefits of the Aboriginal Families as Teachers program for children, families and communities and to understand how it could be improved. The feedback you give us will provide important information for the review of the program.

Explain:

◖ I would like to record our discussion on a digital recorder. The recording is just for the research team to help us with our notes so that the report includes all your thoughts/ideas. Are you happy for me to record the interview?

Consent:

Are you happy for the interview to be recorded? Yes/No   If no I will take notes.

----

1. Can you tell me about how the Ninganah No More program developed here and how it operates now, including your roles in the program?

2. Can you describe the key activities of your program?

3. What do you see as the objective of the Ninganah No More program? (e.g. strategies to increase vocabulary and literacy, links with early childhood education services, support for all children in learning about Aboriginal culture and languages, increasing and strengthening Aboriginal language programs in early childhood education services).

4. Were Aboriginal languages being taught in your service prior to the Ninganah No More program? (If yes) Can you tell us more about this?

5. What programs/activities were happening in Aboriginal language development and promotion in your local area/community prior to the implementation of the Ninganah No More program?

6. Have there been any developments/changes in this context since the implementation of the Ninganah No More program?

7. Have there been any local collaborations and partnerships that support the implementation of Ninganah No More program? (e.g. collaborations with existing organisations that promote/develop Aboriginal languages)

8. How have you worked with local families, including Aboriginal families and communities to engage them in the Ninganah No More program?

9. What approaches and methodologies are being used to deliver the program?

10. How often is/was the program being delivered to children?

11. Overall, are children more engaged in their learning when they are doing the language program?

12. Have you noticed that families have shown interest in, or engaged with the language program?

13. In your view, what have been the benefits of the Ninganah No More program for children and families? Specifically, for Aboriginal children and families?

14. In your view, as a percentage of the class how many children:

    • Know less than 10 words

    • Know more than 10 words

    • Know more than 30 words

    • Can construct a sentence in language or very short story

    • Converse back and forth in language

    • Know language words for either or both body parts/family members

15. In your view, what have been the benefits of the Ninganah No More program for the local community? For other staff?

16. How have understandings/attitudes of the Ninganah No More program changed over time? (Probe: among children, families, staff, local communities).

17. What do you see as the main achievements/successes of the program?

18. Have you noticed children gain confidence in their education?

19. Has there been any increase in class participation for some children since delivering the language program?

20. Have enrolments of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children increased since delivering the language program?

21. Has there been an increase in Aboriginal community members participating in the service since delivering the language program?

22. What other impacts have you seen as a result of the Ninganah No More program?

23. Do you have any stories/evidence of these results that you can share with us?

24. In your view, is the Ninganah No More program being delivered in a culturally safe and meaningful way? (Prompt: meeting cultural needs, providing a culturally safe environment)

25. What strategies have been used to promote an understanding of the Ninganah No More program to families/communities/other staff?

26. What have been the most significant challenges in establishing and delivering the Ninganah No More program?

27. Is there anything you would do differently? Are there any changes or improvements you would recommend for the program going forward?

28. Are there particular stories that highlight the importance of the Ninganah No More program in your service/community? (Collect stories)

29. What are your hopes for the future in relation to the Ninganah No More program here?

Thank you and close.

Discussion guide for community stakeholders

Ninganah No More (NNM)

Introduction

I am from the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) and we are doing this research to explore the benefits of the Ninganah No More program for children, families and communities and to understand how it could be improved. The Ninganah No More program aims to increase the level of **Aboriginal languages** being taught in early childhood education services across NSW and provide opportunity for **Aboriginal culture and identity** to be nurtured and developed in the earliest stage of formal education. The feedback you give us will provide important information for the review of the program.

Explain:

◖ We hope to keep our discussion today as informal as possible.

◖ The feedback you provide is confidential - we don't record any of your personal details so anything you say will not be linked to you, you will remain anonymous - only the researchers (i.e. the CIRCA team) will have access to information about participants.

◖ I would like to record the discussion on a digital recorder. The recording is just for the research team to help us with our notes so that the report includes all your thoughts/ideas. Are you happy for me to record the group?

◖ Participation in the discussion group is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate in part or all of the discussion.

◖ If you don't want to or can't answer any questions, you don't need to worry about it, we will just move on. This is an open discussion and all comments are welcome – there are no right or wrong answers.

Do you have any questions before we begin? *(If Yes, answer questions)*

Consent:

Do you agree to participate in the group discussion? Yes/No

Are you happy for the interview to be recorded? Yes/No   If no I will take notes.

1. What is your connection to the Ninganah No More program? e.g. you have family members who attend a service where NNM is being delivered, the organisation you work with has a relationship with the program, you have met program staff at local advisory group meetings.

2. What kind of involvement or input have you had in the design and delivery of the NNM program?

3. What is your understanding of what the program is trying to achieve? [e.g. increased awareness of Aboriginal languages/cultures, increased skills in an Aboriginal language, cultural sharing/safety]

4. In your view, what have been the benefits of the NNM program for Aboriginal children and families?

5. In your view, generally what have been the benefits of the NNM program for non-Aboriginal children and families?

6. What do you see as the benefits of the NNM program for your local community?

7. In your view, is the NNM program being delivered in a culturally safe and meaningful way?

8. Have you discovered new information about Aboriginal languages/Aboriginal language learning since being involved in the NNM program?

9. Has your view of the importance of language learning in early childhood changed since being involved in this program?

10. Are there any issues / challenges to Aboriginal children and families participating in the program? If yes, what sort of issues/challenges have you identified?

11. Are there any changes or improvements you would recommend for the NNM program going forward?

12. What are your hopes for the future of the NNM program in your area?

Thank you and close