



FUTURE FOOTPRINTS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Connecting the dots from 2004 to 2021

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The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA)'s constituent members include over 155 Independent Schools. The Independent School sector celebrates a rich cultural and educational diversity, providing for children of all abilities from all social and ethnic backgrounds. Independent Schools provide quality schooling for a wide range of communities, including some of Western Australia's most remote and disadvantaged Indigenous communities, communities in regional towns and cities and diverse communities in Perth. Many Independent Schools espouse a religious or values-based education while others promote a particular educational philosophy.

This document is also available on the Internet at www.ais.wa.edu.au/future-footprints-program



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Respect your past, Create your future.

Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) is committed to acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we all gather to continue our learning journey. We honour their heritage by building our young people's spirit and connection to the land through the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge and perspectives. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present, for they hold the cultures, traditions and vision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Nations.

WELCOME



Executive Director

The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) was established in 1962 as a non-profit organisation to support, represent and promote the interests of Independent schools. Our purpose is to support and serve our Independent Schools and their communities to be the best they can be. Through the Future Footprints Program we support hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families enrolled at Independent and Catholic boarding schools. Since its inception, Future Footprints has strived to ensure these young people and their families engage in education and prosper in the school of their choice. AISWA deeply recognises the role of education in transforming the lives of young people and empowering them to grow and thrive as confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community, as emphasised in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019).

AISWA acknowledges with gratitude the Australian Government which has supported Future Footprints since its commencement in 2004. As Executive Director of AISWA I would also like to acknowledge the wonderful work of staff at AISWA and participating member schools over the years as each of them have made a significant and real difference to the lives of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people that have been part of Future Footprints.

Valerie Gould



Deputy Director

This overview presents the framework for a range of supports provided by Future Footprints to participating Independent Schools in WA. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people that school away from Kin and Country, their connections with staff and peers, and access to relevant support networks and services while at boarding school are essential to their ongoing success, their continued engagement, and their personal well-being. The breadth of support offered by Future Footprints is closely aligned with the key agendas of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration and AISWA compliments this through a wide range of professional learning linked with the Western Australian curriculum. Future Footprints has a long history of celebrating and elevating the assets, strengths and rich cultural vibrancy that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families bring to their respective school community and society as a whole. Crucially, it has unyieldingly sought to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to define and determine their lives in their own terms. I commend it.

Ron Gorman

INTRODUCTION



Aboriginal Education Consultant

The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) recognises that all learners have strengths, skills, interests, abilities and aspirations. Moreover, effective schools have high expectations for all learners, and that all students have the potential to learn. Better outcomes are achieved at school when young people feel accepted and respected, a sense of belonging, safe, and the key people in their lives are genuinely engaged in planning and supporting their educational journey.

Even so, AISWA fully recognises that education systems continue to carry an overwhelming historical bias towards Western knowledges' and learning values, teaching pedagogies and measures of success. Despite much concerted effort, education in Australia fails to truly reconcile Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world views and the ongoing lived experience of colonisation, historical trauma, grief, loss, discrimination, social marginalisation and racism. It is well established that while at school Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people learn early in life that they are required to navigate the competing demands of Western learning expectations, whilst upkeeping important cultural knowledges and complex sets of relational bonds and reciprocal obligations within kinship systems. This life experience at the cultural interface means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people arrive at school with remarkable capabilities and skills, boundless potential and resilience, no matter what circumstances are thrown their way.

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019) states that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledge and experiences are fundamental to Australia's social, economic and cultural wellbeing. Further that across Australia the education community need to focus on imagining what is possible and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, knowledge, and learnings. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples must be empowered to achieve their full learning potential, shape their own futures, and embrace their cultures, languages and identities as Australia's First Nations peoples. Equally, the education community needs to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, their families and communities in all aspects of education.

I subsequently challenge both individual boarding schools and the wider education community alike to embed a dialogue of critical reflexivity about how they embrace and empower the rich cultural assets that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people hold safe for us as a nation. It is my firm belief that this first simple step is key to promoting acceptance and respect, forgiveness and integrity, but requires humility, honesty and courage if it is to be successful so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people thrive at school. It is only by working together in such ways, that as a society we will move closer to true partnerships and reducing the impact of intergenerational harms.

Lisa Fieldhouse
AISWA, Future Footprints

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



AISWA is the peak body representing Independent schools in Western Australia (WA) and is a non-profit body whose members are not-for-profit Independent schools. It supports and serves a wide range of member schools and communities across WA including some of the most remote Aboriginal communities in the State. Independent schools are autonomous education providers that are not run by government. They have earned a reputation for providing high-quality education services and are a vital part of the WA education system.

As of August 2020, AISWA represents member schools covering more than 170 campuses across the state and with over 85,000 student enrolments, 6,900 teaching staff and 4,200 non-teaching staff. Membership of AISWA includes schools of many different types and sizes, educational perspectives, and philosophies. To support member schools, AISWA provides a wide range of services as well as administers and manages a range of government

funded programs that collectively seek to promote the delivery of high-quality education within Independent schools in WA. AISWA has a long-established history of advocating and representing at both State and Federal levels the educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families, and especially Aboriginal Independent Community Schools in WA.

For further information about Independent schools and their contribution to the Western Australian Economy see: <https://www.ais.wa.edu.au/news/just-released-economic-significance-independent-schools-western-australian-economy>

FUTURE FOOTPRINTS



Future Footprints began in 2004 as the Residential Schools Support Network. With encouragement from families and community representatives of the Kimberley region of WA, and through close consultation with member schools and the tertiary education sector, AISWA sourced funding from the Department for Education, Science and Training (DEST) to pilot a transition support service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people enrolled at boarding schools in Perth. This 12-month pilot project employed one full-time Aboriginal Liaison Officer to support an estimated 33 Year 7 to 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people across five boarding schools. By the end of 2004 it was supporting 76 Year 7 to 12 young people across 16 boarding schools. Renamed the Future Footprints Program in 2005, but quickly referred to as simply 'Future Footprints', a second Liaison Officer was employed to meet the needs of young people and families, and member schools.

These foundational years were largely shaped by five national priorities:

- (1) Enhancing attendance;
- (2) Improving literacy and numeracy;
- (3) Improving the retention of young people from Year 10 to 12;
- (4) Increasing the number of successful Year 12 completions;
- (5) Access to post-school destinations.

However, several issues existed with these priorities determining operational practices and moreover, the program advisory group of parents, community representatives, member schools, tertiary and DEST delegates further emphasised the importance of embedding a relational, family and kin centred approach into the delivery of a transition support service by Future Footprints. AISWA took this opportunity to commit Future Footprints towards grassroot consultation and deep listening, and advocacy that elevated transition support solutions identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, families, and communities.

Further, AISWA correspondingly promoted with participating member schools the strengths of a collaborative approach that brought together their collective knowledge and experience.

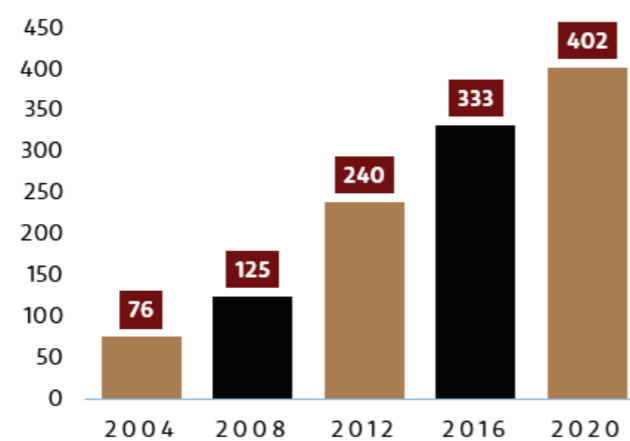
These early actions and initiatives have since underpinned many far-reaching educational benefits for Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander young people and families living in regional and remote WA. Notably, over the last 16 years since its establishment in 2004, Future Footprints has supported participating member schools to graduate over 640 Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. A brief snapshot of this journey of success (see Figure 1).

Many lessons have been learnt through this journey. While there is significant state and federal policy focussed on the benefits of early positive engagement with education (K-6) and investment in post-school pathways, there is still a great deal to do in the secondary schooling domain. There remains a continued need to untangle the many different factors that impact on engagement, retention, achievement and wellbeing during Year 7 to 12, as well as what actually constitutes a culturally safe school environment, including how best to support participating member schools to grow their cultural capabilities and responsiveness. What is known, is that having a child attend a secondary boarding school away from kin and Country remains a significant and often emotional parental and family decision, as well as major life experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Indeed, Future Footprints was founded in response to the experiences and insights of parents and their clear assertion that schooling away from home holds both risks and benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families.

Importantly, what we have learnt is that the notion

of transition is best conceptualised as a continuum rather than as a single point in time. That is, preparation for transition starts long before, and extends well beyond, the first and last day at a secondary day and boarding school. The delivery of a successful transition support service depends on a systems level approach that emphasises the centrality of family and prioritises the cultivation of meaningful relationships. Similarly, actively nurturing a community of collaborative member schools to form a sustainable and effective professional network that support each other, is equally fundamental to promoting transition continuity and reducing the risk of early disengagement. These factors continue to sit at the very heart of Future Footprints as it operates today and shapes the focus and spirit of work it undertakes to promote positive educational and learning experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families, and participating member schools. Crucially, it is this underpinning approach that empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with educational choice for their children and supports engagement with learning.

Figure 1



IN PRACTICE

The mandate of Future Footprints is to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families with the transition experience to boarding school. Equally to support participating members boarding school in their efforts to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families with the best secondary education experience possible. It is not intended to replace existing transition support provided by participating members schools but rather to compliment them. The provision of support services is multifaceted, and this next section aims to provide a brief overview of the levels and type of support services Future Footprints offers. Given the breadth of transition support work undertaken by Future Footprints, it has historically embraced a systems level approach embedded around an Aboriginal family model to providing support to students, schools, parents and families. In doing so, AISWA identifies four interconnected levels of transition support service offered by Future Footprints.

- 1 **Direct service:** This involves working directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, parents and families to collaboratively meet an identified support need. This includes, for example, supporting young people with the adjustment to boarding school routines; guiding parents and families with enrolment, travel and ABSTUDY requirements; and running student specific events such as mid-term camps.
- 2 **Indirect service:** This involves not working directly with young people and instead fostering close working relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and families, teachers and boarding

staff that support young in their respective school. This includes, for example, providing informed consultation and professional learning opportunities to teachers on enriching pedagogy and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledges and histories as well as effective, strengths-based strategies and planning that positively realises the ability and potential of young people in the classroom.

- 3 **Whole school service:** This involves supporting schools with preparing, implementing, and critically analysing and evaluating school wide practices, processes, and policy. This includes, for example, supporting schools with the development and review of Reconciliation Actions Plans; mapping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures across learning areas (K-12), as well as with strategies to maximise ABSTUDY entitlements over the late Year 6 to 12 period to help build meaningful two-way relationships with parents and families.
- 4 **Systems service:** This involves advocating for the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, parents, and families as well as participating member schools with state and federal government departments (i.e., ABSTUDY) and non-government bodies (i.e., tertiary sector, scholarship providers). It includes forging innovative collaborations across education sectors and building relationships with local community representatives, external support agencies and providers, research projects and individual researchers, and other peak institutions.

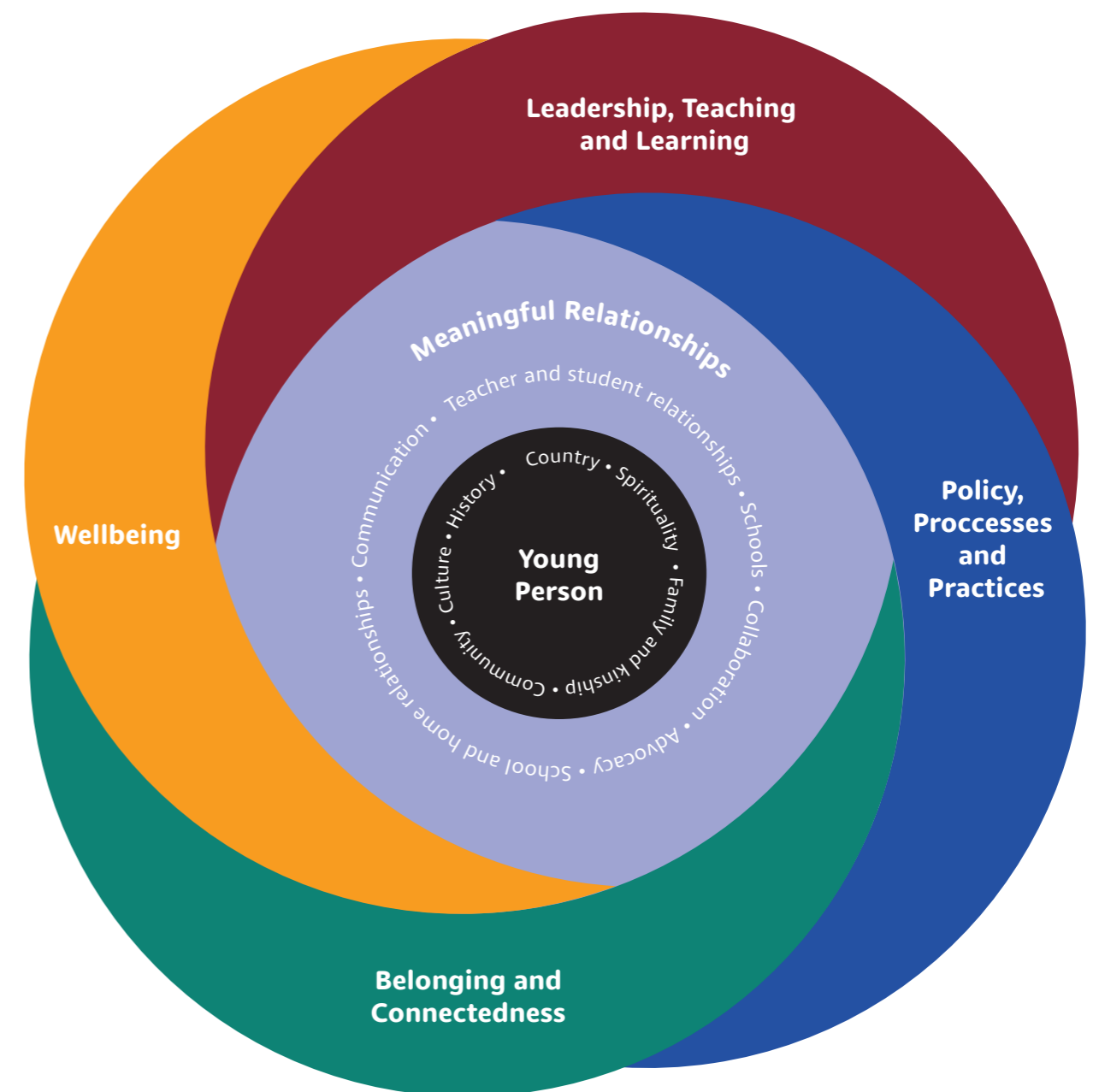
2021 AND THE YEARS BEYOND

Moving forward into 2021 and the years beyond, and through close consultation with key stakeholders, Future Footprints will grow its vision to target the follow five areas when delivering transition support services and the promotion of positive school participation and educational success:

- 1 **Meaningful relationships:** Genuine partnerships and authentic communication between schools-teachers-students-families builds meaningful and relational learning environments of trust that deepens shared agency and cultivates opportunities to exercise choice and the exchange of two-way reciprocal knowledge and understanding.
- 2 **Leadership, teaching and learning:** Active principals and visible teachers confident in culturally and evidence-informed practices, are pivotal to embedding quality pedagogical practices and learning experiences, and to sustaining respectful and safe school environments which inspire, challenge, and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to flourish.
- 3 **Policy, processes and practices:** Monitoring and critically evaluating policies, planning and practices strengthening the capacity of schools to grow their curricular, co-curricular and pastoral care program offerings to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families while fostering a genuine sense of reconciliation.
- 4 **Belonging and connectedness:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people learn best when they feel connected, respected, and valued, all factors that when leveraged promote positive school engagement and retention, as well as promote healthy growth, development, and academic motivation.
- 5 **Wellbeing:** Wellbeing is essential to thriving at school and is a holistic notion that extends well beyond the absence of disease or physical illness. Rather, it encompasses both social and emotional domains, but particularly connection to and caring for land or 'Country', culture, spirituality, ancestry, family, and community. Wellbeing is a strong determinant of school engagement and educational success.

Practices and resources developed in response to the above five areas of focus will be produced in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families, community Elders, knowledge holders and representatives, participating member schools, educational and other relevant experts, as well as through the work of AISWA and other peak bodies.

Young Person: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people arrive at school with remarkable knowledge, capabilities and skills, boundless learning potential and resilience, and a desire to explore and understand the world without compromising their sense of self. These assets and strengths are deeply connected to family and kinship, community, Country and culture, history and spirituality, which are protective factors that enable the forging of a strong and positive sense of identity and purpose in life.





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Artist

Kamsani Bin Salleh (Kambarni) is descended from the Ballardong Noongar people and Nimunburr and Yawuru people of the Kimberley region in Western Australia. He is an artist who reflects the natural world with his intricate designs and graphically interprets designs from both pre-colonial and post-colonial Australian histories. Re-telling old stories or creating new narratives through community engagement.

In 2018 Kamsani Bin Salleh was named WA's Young Person of the Year and was awarded the Mission Australia Cultural Endeavours Award.

Kambarni has created for the West Coast Eagles, created artwork for Aboriginal storytelling event, the Woylie Festival, and has several murals around the State.

Kamsani Bin Salleh is a 2010 Future Footprints Alumnus.



est. 2004

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