
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGEING

2004 CROC FESTIVALS™ RESEARCH WEIPA, PORT AUGUSTA, ALICE SPRINGS, MOREE & THURSDAY ISLAND

FINAL REPORT



CULTURAL & INDIGENOUS
RESEARCH CENTRE AUSTRALIA

(formerly CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES)

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Croc Festivals™ are a vehicle for promoting positive health, education, social justice and reconciliation messages and an avenue for students, both primary and secondary, to present dance performances. The majority of students who participate are Indigenous. In 2004 the Croc Festivals™ were conducted in eight communities across Australia.

- Weipa (QLD)
- Derby (WA)
- Port Augusta (SA)
- Swan Hill (VIC)
- Moree (NSW)
- Geraldton (WA)
- Alice Springs (NT)
- Katherine (NT)

PAST AND CURRENT RESEARCH

Since 2000, the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) has jointly funded evaluations of the Croc Festivals™ with other Australian Government Departments, including the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), to assess the degree to which social, health and education-related objectives are achieved through each Department's involvement in the Croc Festivals™. Given the consistency of evaluation results between 2000 and 2003 it was felt that there was value in future evaluations moving away from the current format and concentrating on the following:

1. What makes the Croc Festival™ work and what leads to positive community impacts?
2. What characteristics of the Croc Festival™ are transferable to other festivals and community events?
3. How does the Croc Festival™ contribute to opportunities and strategies related to health and social capital (such as strengthening social relationships and trust) and general education skills (such as literacy and numeracy skills) and opportunities.

The Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) managed the research process on behalf of the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) and commissioned Cultural Perspectives in collaboration with the Australian Centre for Health Promotion, University of Sydney to undertake research to evaluate the 2004 Croc Festivals™.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was conducted during the Festival and in the months following the Festival. This allowed the evaluation to explore the community impact of the Croc Festivals™ in the immediate and longer term, to look at what makes the Croc Festivals™ work, and to understand the impact in relation to health and education outcomes.

Research was conducted in Port Augusta, Moree, Weipa, Thursday Island and Alice Springs. These locations represented a mix of communities who were hosting the event for the second time (Alice Springs), and communities who had hosted a number of Croc Festivals™ (Port Augusta, Moree and Weipa). Thursday Island and Weipa were also included to explore the impact of hosting the event every two years, instead of annually, and the impact on a travelling community.

Research was conducted during the Croc Festival™ in Alice Springs, Port Augusta and Moree. During the event qualitative research was conducted with students (group discussions and depth interviews), Croc trainees (group discussion) and teachers, activity supervisors and other stakeholders (depth interviews). In addition observational research was conducted for a number of activities.

In the months following the Croc Festival™ all locations were visited. Again depth interviews and group discussions were held with students and teachers. In addition a series of consultations were conducted with community members who could speak about the impact of the Croc Festival™ on the wider community.

OVERALL PERCEPTIONS

Satisfaction with the Croc Festival™ was extremely high across the research, with a strong perception expressed that the Festival offers a unique learning and social experience for students. In most cases community members also spoke of the Croc Festival™ as an event that was unlike any other in the community in the way it brought the whole community together in both organising and participating in the event. In addition the Croc Festivals™ were distinguished from other community based events, insofar as they provided a real experience for students and their families to have fun together without alcohol or other drugs.

The commitment to the event was very strong in all communities, and those involved talked about the time, energy and resources devoted to the event. For small communities this was seen to create challenges and considerable pressure, however the research demonstrates that communities are willing to dedicate the energy needed to make Croc Festival™ a success.

The research suggests there are opportunities for improving community ownership and participation, and it is important that initial consultations reach a wide cross-section of the community. Widespread promotion of the

events is necessary to increase awareness and encourage participation. As well, it may be possible for current community members to nominate other individuals and organisations that would benefit from their involvement, and that could bring their expertise and knowledge to the events (such as youth groups and other community organisations). Inviting a broader group would also increase the presence of local role models, which is an important component for the success of the Festivals. It would also be beneficial to develop a “how-to” manual for each community that could include a list of the contacts, timelines, information on how to arrange a press release, and logistical issues with setting up the activities (eg a map of the careers market venue with power points indicated).

Community members believe that the considerable commitment of the community, both financially and in-kind, was instrumental to the success of the event. There was some concern expressed that community volunteers and the communities themselves were not sufficiently recognised by Indigenous Festivals Australia (IFA). These discussions were often framed in a discussion about a perceived lack of transparency about how funding dollars are distributed in staging the event. It will be important that consideration be given to the level of recognition volunteers receive, so that their commitment is rewarded.

In interpreting this, it is important to note that community members, teachers and facilitators all commented on the sound organisational skills and professionalism displayed by IFA, and in most cases participants spoke positively about IFA’s support and commitment. There were several suggestions for improvements to facilities (such as toilets, showers, mattresses and available food), similar to those received in previous research, but overall perceptions of IFA were positive.

Most people identified a negative impact to their community should they cease to host the Croc Festivals™. While generally participants were pragmatic about the enduring loss to students health and education outcomes many children and the community would miss the event, and it “would take away a thread from the tapestry of the town”.

It was clear from the research that the Indigenous focus of the Croc Festivals™ is a major attraction, and all participants included in the research felt this focus should not be reduced. Most felt that the current balance of Indigenous-specific events and mix of Indigenous students to non-Indigenous students was appropriate, however there was some concern that the focus would diminish as the Festivals grow.

Overall, the reactions to the activities of the Festival were extremely positive, particularly towards the ‘I want to be’ workshop and the Croc future skills as they combined interactive, practical activities with career information. While there were some concerns about the lack of appropriate age tailoring of some activities, and catering for students for who English is a second language, these were overshadowed somewhat by a perception that students engaged strongly with the activities and they added to the wider learning experience of students. The research did highlight areas that could be improved, and these include increasing the level

of interaction of the careers market, increasing the presence of local role models, especially local Indigenous role models, and increasing the amount of Indigenous cultural activities included in the program.

HEALTH OUTCOMES

The sponsorship objectives of DoHA are to reduce the prevalence of smoking, drinking and other drug use in the community, to promote healthy lifestyles, as well as the relationship between positive choices and healthy lifestyles. There are clearly limitations on the ability of an annual event to significantly influence behaviour with regards to alcohol and other drug use, given the wide range of social, economic and environmental factors that impact on substance use. As well, changes in behaviour and identifying cause and effect relationships are difficult to measure, particularly through qualitative research.

Overall, as in previous research, it was clearly acknowledged that the Croc Festivals™ are one of many health education platforms that students are exposed to, and the messages promoted during the Festival complement other strategies in the area. The health activities were seen as beneficial because students engaged with the messages as they are delivered in a positive and different way. It is important to note though, that an analysis of the scheduling program suggests that only between a quarter and a third of students actually visited the health expo in Moree, Port Augusta and Alice Springs (at the time of writing the scheduling information for Weipa was unavailable).

Despite this, the results suggest that many students who participate in the Croc Festivals™ receive messages about the positive benefits of a healthy lifestyle, and the negative consequences of using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. It appears that these messages are delivered clearly across the Festivals, and that students are 'listening.' In terms of the behavioural objectives, research participants were hesitant to make any links between behaviour and participation in an annual event. We therefore suggest that the Festivals build on and reinforce messages that are already being delivered through schools and communities, and that the Festivals enhance the acceptance of these messages because of the interactive way that they are being delivered. As well, the broader impact of the Festivals on resilience and social capital offer opportunities for positively influencing health outcomes.

EDUCATION OUTCOMES

There is a wide range of literature on educational outcomes for Indigenous students, and there is considerable debate about how the differences in academic achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students can be addressed. This literature points to a vast range of factors that have an impact on educational outcomes, ranging from health and nutritional issues (eg hearing problems, poor nutrition, poor eyesight) to family, social and economic factors (eg parent's education level, parental discomfort with schools and cultural notions of shame and fear of failure, and socio-economic background).ⁱ

The objectives of DEST's sponsorship are to improve education outcomes for students by increasing awareness of the importance of school, linking education with future career opportunities, generating and reinforcing intentions to stay at school, and through this, improving attendance and retention in school. There are clearly limitations in the ability of an annual event to significantly influence school attendance and retention, given the range of factors that influence this behaviour. Given this, the specific sponsorship objectives with regards to awareness, attitudes and intentions were assessed, with an exploration of possible influences on literacy and numeracy.

Observation research of the 'I want to be' workshop found that there were high levels of engagement with the activity, which delivered messages about co-operation and teamwork, self-esteem, goal setting, risks associated with behaviours that limit life's choices and developing relationships. The activities within the workshop clearly emphasised the importance of school for the students' future.

Observation research of the careers market suggests that while the careers market was popular among students, the popularity seemed to be based on the fact it was an opportunity to gather give-aways rather than an opportunity to engage meaningfully with career-related information. This observation was shared by some of the careers market activity facilitators, as well as teachers. On the other hand there was also a number of businesses and organisations that saw the careers market as an opportunity to promote themselves as a career option. A number of teachers also saw value in the networking opportunities it provided them, especially those from remote areas who had difficulty accessing career-related information.

An analysis of the scheduling program indicated that a significant proportion of students did not attend the careers market or the 'I want to be' activities. Based on the scheduling program it appears that more students visited the 'I want to be' activity (around half for Port Augusta and Moree, and about 80% in Alice Springs) than the careers market (about 15% in Port Augusta and 28% in Moree). There was no careers market held during the Alice Springs Croc Festival™.

The research suggested that for many students messages about careers and the importance of school are delivered successfully through Croc Festivals™, although there are limitations in that not all students attend activities in relation to these objectives. As well, the success of these activities is influenced by the interest of the students themselves, and we believe the limited engagement of the careers market means that students who are not already contemplating their opportunities are unlikely to receive strong messages about different career options and what is required to realise these opportunities.

Research respondents, including teachers, activity supervisors and stakeholders, were reluctant to comment on the impact of student participation in the Festivals on school attendance and performance, although there were many examples of attendance increasing prior to the Festivals. This was particularly the case for some schools that used the Croc Festival™ as a reward for school attendance, thus improving overall school

attendance in the short-term. Indeed, many teachers commented that the Festival had a positive effect on school attendance both in the lead up to and directly after the Festival. The conclusion therefore is that messages about the importance of school are being heard by many of the students, but that it is not possible to link this with long-term educational outcomes with regard to school attendance and retention. However, there are opportunities to enhance the potential impact on these long-term behavioural outcomes by extending the reach of the Festivals beyond the three-day event, and encouraging schools to incorporate messages before and after the Festivals. While there were many examples of this happening already, this appeared to be very dependent on the individual teachers and schools. Consideration needs to be given to how this approach can be further encouraged. There appeared to be limited use of the teacher resource provided by IFA, so there is a need to develop these options further. One opportunity is to include a briefing for teachers during the Festival that provides suggestions and resources for teachers for extending the life and learning of the Festival.

ENHANCING RESILIENCE IN STUDENTS

Much has been documented about the notion of ‘resiliency’, which is made up of protective factors, found both within individuals and their environments, which impact upon the health and well-being of young people and consequently on their educational outcomes. The results of the research suggest that there are a number of protective factors for resiliency for which the Croc Festival™ has influence. While there were several examples provided of how Croc Festivals™ have contributed to strengthening the individuals’, families’, school/community’s social framework for fostering resilience, the extent to which this occurs was difficult to assess.

In relation to *internal* protective factors (personality, physical health and an individual’s interaction with their environment) the Croc Festival™ was shown to have an impact in the following areas:

- **Self-esteem:** This was seen as particularly important when viewed in the context of a student’s educational development.
- **Respect:** This was seen as an important building block in both personal and community development, particularly in empowering individuals to develop lifestyles conducive to health.
- **Motivation:** There were numerous examples of how the Croc Festival™ offers students something to work towards, which was seen as an important motivator with regards to school. Many believed that the Festival also offered opportunities to broaden horizons and encourage goal setting. Limitations were acknowledged by participants, as the motivation to stay at school was felt to be driven by many factors, including the need for this to be developed at home/in the family.
- **Social and communication skills:** This was particularly relevant to those students involved in traineeships, skills programs in the lead-up to the Croc Festival™, and those students for whom English is not their first language.

- **Pride and school bonding:** There was evidence of stronger school bonding among some students through improvements in student/teacher relationships, and the peer teamwork associated with practising and performing on stage.

The Croc Festival™ was also seen to influence the protective factors that exist in a number of external environments including the family, peer, school and community environments.

Family

While participants found it relatively easy to discuss interactions between students, teachers and community organisations, it was much more difficult to discuss the link between the Croc Festival™ and improved interactions between family members. However there were some links made, particularly in relation to pride in their children's performance, and families' involvement with the school.

Many spoke of the opportunity for parents to get involved by attending the performances and the chance to watch their children perform as an important benefit of the Festival. This was seen as especially relevant for Indigenous parents who may have limited involvement with school activities, often attributed to parental discomfort with schools. It can be argued that the Festival is helping to break down historical barriers between parents and schools, merely by providing a school-based activity where parents feel comfortable and proud of their child's achievement.

While the impact of the Croc Festivals™ in relation to families is restricted because many parents have limited exposure to the event beyond the performances, the Croc Festivals™ are an example of a model of education that delivers learning in an interactive, fun way and enables student, parent and community involvement.

Social/peer

In relation to protective factors associated with students' social and peer relationships the Croc Festival™ was shown to have an impact in the following areas:

- Meeting and mixing with students from other schools and cultural backgrounds. The positive promotion of cultural diversity within communities is considered one of the protective factors influencing resiliency in young people.
- A sense of collective pride and achievement and positive peer bonding. This was considered a strong positive impact of performing at the Croc Festival™, as it was considered somewhat unusual given the general negative direction of peer pressure in relation to 'achievement' experienced in many of the school communities.

School

In relation to school based relationships, there were several examples of the Croc Festivals™ ability to ‘break down barriers’ and allow interaction in a more relaxed, informal and fun social situation, which resulted in enhanced trust in some student/teacher relationships. The number of students who did their performance practice outside school hours was seen as indicative of the increased student motivation toward school as a result of the Croc Festival™.

Students’ are exposed to new technologies, new activities such as sports and dancing, and have the opportunity to meet new people, and this was seen to bring a touch of ‘novelty and newness’ to the students’ learning experience, particularly relevant for students from rural and remote communities.

Community

The Croc Festival™ has been recognised as an important vehicle that encourages interaction between different sectors of the community, which has positive implications for resilience enhancement. Local role models are of particular relevance to Indigenous students as research into Indigenous school retention shows that students are more likely to stay at school longer when there is sustained contact with people of higher education levels.

Many people commented on the success of the Festival in being drug and alcohol free and it was seen to be an important community-supported message to provide to young people, which helped to strengthen the community’s social framework for fostering resilience

While there were several examples of the Festivals influencing each of these internal and external protective factors, it is difficult to assess the extent to which this occurred, and the impact this has on health and educational outcomes. The research however does suggest that this is an important outcome of students’ involvement, and that consideration should be given to how this can be enhanced further. As well, it is important to be realistic about what can be achieved from a three-day event. While many could identify immediate outcomes, in terms of long-term outcomes, the Festival was seen as “*a brick among many bricks*”.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Although it has been defined differently by different disciplines, the concept of ‘social capital’ is valuable in describing some of the complex pathways between social phenomena, and the education and health outcomes achieved by individuals and communities or populations. It is important to note that the evidence is of an *association* between these phenomena and educational or health outcomes – with some evidence that communities that have higher levels of social capital have higher rates of educational attainment and better health status than other communities. While it is difficult to define exactly what social capital is there is evidence to suggest that children and young people who are surrounded by families and communities that

are cohesive, connected and that share norms of respect, support and tolerance are more likely to stay at school and to be healthier throughout their lives. The research demonstrates a number of ways in which Croc Festival™ strengthens community relations and resources through greater interaction between different sectors that helps to create a more supportive community environment. There are a number of areas related to social capital and community resilience in which Croc Festival™ has some influence:

Local identity

Participants saw the Croc Festival™ as strengthening the communities in which they were held. They found the Festivals contributed to the community's positive self-image by offering opportunities to showcase their community in a positive way, and that they increased community supportiveness and unity by coming together to stage a large, professional, family event that was inclusive of all sectors of the community.

Trust

Similarly, the Festival was thought to build trusting relationships by opening up lines of communication between organisations, as well as making business related interactions easier. Trust is an important factor in helping to bond a community together and enable social interactions to take place with more ease.

High levels of trust in communities has been shown to enhance cooperation, interaction and engagement in community activities, and is associated with attitudes of altruism and reciprocity.

Social networks

Educational outcomes and health outcomes are determined not only by personal decisions made by individuals, but by the physical, social and economic environments within which people live, work, and play. When environments are supportive it is easier for children and young people to make positive choices about education, careers and health. For this reason it is vital that all sectors work together to improve children and young people's life chances.

The research demonstrates many examples of a range of sectors and organisations within host communities joining together to stage the event, even if only for a defined period. Building good working relationships among different groups and organisations is a necessary first step in developing effective longer-term partnerships – and the Croc Festivals™ appear to have been a useful platform for such relationships.

Cultural context, social norms and values

The Croc Festival™ was shown to create opportunities for dialogue and partnerships between different sectors of the community. It also promoted reconciliation by bringing the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities together in a way that no other community event was shown to do.

The literature around social capital shows that communities in which prevailing social norms and values support dialogue among people from different cultures and in which difference is not only tolerated but valued are more cohesive, and provide all their members with the confidence and support they need to grow and flourish – physically, psychologically and socially.

Employment

The Croc Festival™ provided some, although limited, employment opportunities for community members, especially Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) workers.

In relation to students, the careers market provided some opportunity for local businesses to promote themselves as an employment option for school leavers, although there were only a few examples provided where a direct relationship between school-leaver employment and the Croc Festival™ could be made.

While examples of enhancing social capital are present, the research does not provide information on the extent to which this is happening within communities, and whether these benefits are evident in the long-term. We believe there is an opportunity to improve the impact that the Festivals have on social capital by increasing awareness among community members of the benefits that this interaction and networking offers individuals, organisations and the community overall, and by providing guidance on how these benefits can be realised. Examples identified in this research can be used in the implementation of this strategy. While we acknowledge that the outcomes in this regard depend heavily on the community themselves, IFA, through their engagement with community representatives, has an opportunity to enhance the capacity of communities to develop social capital and therefore extend the long-term impact of the Festivals on communities.

2. BACKGROUND

The Croc Festivals™ are a vehicle for promoting positive health, education, social justice and reconciliation messages and an avenue for students, both primary and secondary, to present dance performances. The majority of students who participate are Indigenous. In 2004 the Croc Festivals™ were conducted in eight communities across Australia. Several of the communities had previously hosted Festivals. These were:

- Weipa (QLD)
- Derby (WA)
- Port Augusta (SA)
- Swan Hill (VIC)
- Moree (NSW)
- Alice Springs (NT)

Croc Festivals™ were held for the first time in the following two locations:

- Geraldton (WA)
- Katherine (NT)

2.1 PAST RESEARCH

Since 2000, DoHA and DEST have jointly funded evaluations of the Croc Festivals™ with other Australian Government Departments to assess the degree to which social, health and education-related objectives are achieved through their involvement in the Croc Festivals™. Research was conducted with students, teachers and stakeholders.

In 2000, the evaluation employed a two stage research design, involving interviews during the Festival and a three (3) month follow-up. In 2002 and 2003, the research design included an additional stage where benchmark measures were identified prior to the Festival and tracked during the follow-up stage.

Over the years findings have been consistent and include the following:

- Festivals motivate students, teachers and community members alike and provided a platform for information to be imparted in a fun and exciting way, resulting in a level of receptivity to health messages not usually associated with health messages;
- There was a very high reported intention of participating in future Festivals;

- It was perceived that Croc Festivals™ allowed a first-hand experience of the benefits of a healthy, alcohol and drug free environment. There were high levels of health message recall, as well as the self-reported impact of the Festival on student attitudes towards using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and their impact on restricting future life choices;
- Teachers believed that the concept of the Croc Festivals™ demonstrated potential to increase students' awareness of the negative consequences of using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and their impact on restricting future life choices, and the availability of different career opportunities and the importance of school;
- Teachers highlighted the importance of providing teachers' resources to be used both prior to, and after, the Festivals to connect and follow up Festival messages. Teachers also suggested incorporating 'real' community role models, and providing more opportunity for interaction between students and teachers from different schools;
- Community members expressed the importance of retaining an Indigenous focus and community involvement as the Festivals gain momentum and increase in student participation. The inclusion of an Indigenous person in the role of Community Liaison Officer was also considered an important element;
- The vast majority of respondents felt the tagline "Respect Yourself, Respect Your Culture" resonated strongly with cultural maintenance, cultural pride and reconciliation and was an all encompassing message which covered various aspects of the Festival including health, education and social issues. This finding informed the whole-of-government branding strategy for 2003;
- Teachers and community members highlighted self-esteem and confidence building, and the associated flow-on effects in terms of better education outcomes, as benefits associated with the Festival. Linked to this was the perceived impact that the Festival had on fostering improved community relations. The Festival was seen as a vehicle for Indigenous peoples to showcase their abilities and achievements. Some also saw it as an important forum for the development of community partnerships. The Festivals were seen as a forum that provided positive role-modelling for students, particularly Indigenous students.

Given the consistency of evaluation results between 2000 and 2003 it was felt that there was value in future evaluations moving away from the current format and concentrating on the following:

- the development of health enhancing social capital within the 'Croc Community';
- the development of health and education enhancing social capital within the 'Croc Community'; and
- the creation and maintenance of protective factors in the community necessary for health promotion, prevention and education efforts to be effective.

The Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) managed the research process on behalf of the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST), and commissioned Cultural Perspectives in collaboration with the Australian Centre for Health Promotion, University of Sydney to undertake a case study research to evaluate each Department's sponsorship of the 2004 Croc Festivals™.

3. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

This section outlines the research objectives for this project. The table below also identifies the relevant sections of the report that address each objective.

The three primary objectives for this project were as follows:

Primary Objectives	Relevant Section in Report
1. What makes the Croc Festival™ work and what leads to any positive community impacts:	
a. What infrastructure is required?	6.1, 13.1
b. What partnerships are required for health promotion and education/career messages to be effective?	6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 8.5, 9.1, 10.4
2. Determine what characteristics of the Croc Festival™ are transferable to other festivals and community events?	6.2, 12
3. To explore how the Croc Festival™ contributes to opportunities and strategies related to social and general education skills and opportunities:	
a. Networking	9.1.4, 9.1.5, 10.4, 12, 13.5
b. Co-operating with others	9.1.1, 10.3
c. Reinforcing positive benefits such as improved self-esteem, self-concept, bonding to school, self-efficacy, confidence, co-operation, social skills, self control and communication skills	8.1, 8.3, 8.5, 9.1.1, 9.1.3, 10.2, 10.4.3, 10.5, 12
d. Goal-setting	8.1, 9.1.1, 10.1
e. Problem solving	8.5
f. Teamwork	9.1.1, 10.3
g. Literacy and numeracy	8.5, 11.4

These objectives focus on two key areas, namely the impact of the Croc Festival™ in relation to **community**, and the impact in relation to **social** and **general education skills**. The table below details the specific requirements for this project with regards to community impact and the impact on social and general education skills.

Community Impact Objectives	Relevant Section in Report
<p>1. The development of health enhancing social capital within the ‘Croc Community’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increases in sense of local identity b. Increases in levels of trust c. Levels of interaction between different sectors of the community d. Improvements in the use of local facilities 	<p>10.2, 13.6</p> <p>8.4, 9.1.1, 9.1.4, 10.3, 10.4.1, 13, 13.6</p> <p>10.4.1</p> <p>10.4.2</p>
<p>2. The creation and maintenance of protective factors in the community necessary for health promotion, prevention and education efforts to be effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The factors that put community members at risk of adopting behaviours that limit life choices b. Quality of relationships between young people and their friends, family, school, and community members and existing organisations c. Development of and improvements in relationships d. Links between schools, community and family that create opportunities for young people to participate actively and meaningfully in life and support students to develop their personal resilience 	<p>9, 9.1</p> <p>7.1, 7.2, 8.1, 13.3</p> <p>8.4, 9.1.2, 9.1.4 10.4.3, 13.6</p> <p>8.1.1, 8.4, 9.1.2, 9.1.4, 10, 10.3, 10.4.1, 10.4.3, 13.6</p> <p>9</p>
<p>3. The ability of the Croc Festival™ to help create and maintain the positive factors and overcome the barriers that influence health behaviour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identified factors that provide opportunities to develop personal autonomy, skills and self-efficacy (developing a sense of self-efficacy and opportunity) b. Croc Festival™ as a vehicle and enabler for achievement of prevention behaviour and health outcomes across the community, both during and beyond the Festival 	<p>7, 7.1, 7.2</p> <p>7, 7.1, 7.2</p>

Social and general education skills objectives	
1. Whether the Croc Festival™ has contributed, both during and after the Festival, to the school or community’s capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Stress the importance of school attendance for future life skills for students both during and after the Croc Festival™ b. Provide motivation to students to make positive choices about their careers and education c. Bridge the formal in-school curriculum with informal out of school experience d. Introduce students to positive role models 	8, 8.3, 8.4, and 8.5 8.2, 10.4.3, 10.6 and 11.2 6.6, 7.1 and 8.1 8.3, 9.1.5, 11.1, 11.2, 12, 13.1 and 13.2

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology involved in-depth and group discussions with students, teachers and other stakeholders, which allowed the gathering of information during the Festival and in the months following the Festival. This allowed the evaluation to assess, to some extent, the community impact of the Croc Festivals™ in the immediate and longer term, to look at what makes the Croc Festivals™ work, and to identify the characteristics that are transferable to other community events.

4.1 LOCATIONS

There was a need to conduct comprehensive research in a range of locations to determine the immediate and longer-term community impact of the Croc Festivals™, as previous research has largely concentrated on the effects on students, teachers and schools rather than the wider community. The selection of the five locations: Weipa (QLD); Thursday Island (QLD); Port Augusta (SA); Moree (NSW); and Alice Springs (NT), was based on the following rationale:

- One of the objectives was to explore differences by location due to varying levels of experience in hosting the Festivals. The range of locations reflected a range of experience of hosting the Festival, from second time hosts (Alice Springs) to communities who had hosted the Festival more than five times (Moree).
- Thursday Island was included as it allowed the evaluation to explore the impact of the Croc Festival™ on communities that travel to attend a Croc Festival™ (i.e. travel to Weipa). In addition Weipa and Thursday Island alternate hosting the Croc Festival™, so the impact of this arrangement was also explored.

The locations also offered variety in terms of the composition of the audience, especially with regard to the number of Indigenous students attending the Festival, community infrastructure, and remoteness of the locations.

The following table details the fieldwork that was conducted as part of the evaluation:

STAGE 1: IN-FESTIVAL RESEARCH (ALICE SPRINGS, PORT AUGUSTA and MOREE)

- 2 group discussions with students
- 4 depth interviews with students
- 1 group discussion with Croc Trainees (where applicable)
- 5-10 interviews with activity facilitators & other stakeholders
- 5-10 interviews with teachers
- Observation research

STAGE 2: FOLLOW-UP RESEARCH (WEIPA, THURSDAY ISLAND, PORT AUGUSTA, MOREE, ALICE SPRINGS)

- Community meeting
- Follow-up consultations with people attending the meeting/identified through meeting
- Consultations with organisations not involved in the Croc Festival™
- Follow up group discussion with Croc Trainees (where applicable)
- Follow up interviews with teachers and principals
- One group discussion with students
- 3-4 depth interviews with students

5. COMMUNITY PROFILES

5.1 ALICE SPRINGS

Size of community	26,799 (ABS, 2001 Census)
Employment profile	Main industries are Retail Trade, Health and Community Services, Govt. Administration and Defence and Education.
Local industry	A variety of work opportunities exist within Alice Springs with a number of apprenticeships, full-time and part-time positions available across a number of fields such as wholesale and retail trade, recreational and personal services, agriculture, mining, construction, transport, public administration and defence. Alice Springs boasts one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country at 3.5%.
Proportion of Indigenous people in the community	16%
Existence of an Aboriginal Community within the vicinity of the town	Alice Springs and the East MacDonnell Ranges are the traditional lands of the Arrrente people.
Number of schools	There are 13 primary schools, two high schools and two preschools.
History of Schools' participation in Croc Festival™	2004 marked the second Croc Festival™ in Alice Springs.
Other community festival and events	Local tennis competition, regatta on Todd River, Alice Springs Masters Games, Festival of the Desert, rodeos, National Dance Week, International Short Film Festival, Imparja Cup, Rock Alice Concert and Dinner, Heritage Week, Top Half Folk Festival, Alice Springs Show Day, The Camel Cup, Schweppes OpenTennis Cup, Alice Springs Cup Carnival. Alice Springs also has a variety of meetings, activities and social clubs held weekly such as dance lessons, crafts and theatrical performances.
Higher Education opportunities in the community	Charles Darwin University has both VET and undergraduate degree programs, as well as the local TAFE.
Community infrastructure	Public pool, skate park, youth centre, senior citizens centre, a Cultural Centre, ballet school and dance company, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs Convention Centre, Alice Springs racecourse, a range of sporting teams and associations.
Distance from regional centre	Alice Springs is located 1316 km from Adelaide and 1305 km from Darwin.
Local media infrastructure	CAAMA radio, Alice Springs commercial broadcasters Pty Ltd, Imparja Television, Radio 8CCC FM.

5.2 MOREE

Size of community	17,200 within the Moree Plains region with over 10,000 within the Moree township. (ABS, 2001 Census)
Employment profile	Main industries include Retail Trade, Health and Community Services, Property and Business, Manufacturing and Agriculture (particularly cotton).
Local industry	Job opportunities and apprenticeships primarily exist in the Agricultural (particularly cotton) industry, such as labourers and farmhands. These opportunities are often seasonal. Apprenticeships are available in a number of trades such as Automotive, Hospitality, Plumbing, Electrical, Building and Construction. There are also some traineeships available in Retail and Hospitality. An important partnership also exists between the Aboriginal Employment Strategy and the cotton industry.
Proportion of Indigenous people in the community	17%
Existence of an Aboriginal Community within the vicinity of the town	The Indigenous population is approximately 2,807 people, or 17% of the Shire. The majority of the Aboriginal people live in Moree, with other substantial populations in Mungindi and Boggabilla. The Aboriginal villages are at Mehi Crescent and Stanley Village in Moree, and at Toomelah 10 kilometres outside of Boggabilla. The Kamilaroi people are the traditional land-owners of Moree and the surrounding areas.
Number of schools	Eleven State primary schools, two state high schools and three church schools.
History of Schools' participation in Croc Festival™	Moree and Moree East Public schools and both high schools have participated since 1999 – the first year of the Croc Festival™. All other schools had participated since 2001.
Other community festival and events	NAIDOC week, Golden Grain Festival, Murri Idol, Moree Show, Heritage Festival, Multicultural Festival, Youth Week, Seniors Week, Moree on a Plate. A – Day (Aboriginal Day) and on this day Moree East hosts a mini-croc with CDEP, Police SES and other organisations giving workshops to students.
Higher Education opportunities in the community	TAFE NSW – New England Institute located in Moree that offers full-time and part-time programs in cotton production, agriculture, small business, arts and transport and building.
Community infrastructure	Local pool, PCYC, Moree Plains Gallery, RSL club, sporting ovals and a range of competitive sporting clubs such as netball, cricket and football.
Distance from regional centre	Moree is 647km north-west of Sydney and 444km south west of Brisbane.
Local media infrastructure	Local newspaper – Moree Champion, ABC radio and local radio station 2VM.

5.3 PORT AUGUSTA

Size of community	13,475 (ABS, 2001 Census)
Employment profile	The four largest industry employers include Retail Trade, Health and Community Services, Education and Construction.
Local industry	Apprenticeships are available in retail trade and government services. There are many job opportunities in a variety of industries such as Building and Construction, Office Administration, Hospitality and Sales.
Proportion of Indigenous people in the community	15%
Existence of an Aboriginal Community within the vicinity of the town	Davenport Aboriginal Community – located on the outskirts of Port Augusta, where approximately 300 people live. Port Augusta and the surrounding area is traditionally a meeting place for a number of Aboriginal communities such as the Nukunu and the Banggarla people.
Number of schools	Port Augusta has five kindergartens, seven primary schools, one Government high school with two campuses, Seaview Campus 8-9 and Stirling 10-12, one special school and one private school, offering education from K-12.
History of Schools' participation in Croc Festival™	Augusta Park Primary School, Port Augusta Special School and Willsden Primary School have all participated since 2000. Flinders View Primary School, Port Augusta West Primary School and Carlton Primary School have participated since 2001. Port Augusta Secondary School has participated since 2002.
Other community festival and events	The Eremophila Festival 2004. Promotion of Arid Land Plants in home gardens as a means to save endangered species, and to promote the saving of water. The Outback Surf Boat Carnival, Racing Cup Carnival, 3-on-3 basketball competitions and Show Day.
Higher Education opportunities in the community	Spencer Institute of TAFE and the Adult Community Education Centre have a number of courses throughout the year.
Community infrastructure	Port Augusta has a variety of community service clubs, sporting clubs and associations. There are approximately 120 community groups representing the following categories; sports, service clubs, event management networks, cultural groups, recreation, welfare, religion, galleries and information centres, including the Wadlata Outback centre, the Social Vision Unit, and the Davenport community centre.
Distance from regional centre	The city of Port Augusta sits at the head of the Spencer Gulf and is close to the Flinders Ranges. Port Augusta is located 311kms north of Adelaide at the junction of the Eyre and Stuart Highways.
Local media infrastructure	The local radio station 5AU covers the Spencer Gulf region. Umeewarra Media has designated a radio spot for the City of Port Augusta to inform the community on the projects that are currently being undertaken in the community.

5.4 WEIPA

Size of community	3,900 (including 1,200 people living in Napranum Aboriginal community). (ABS, 2001 Census)
Employment profile	The main industry is bauxite mining operated by Comalco. Other industries include fishing, light engineering, tourism and hospitality.
Local industry	Traineeships and work opportunities offered by Comalco in areas like mine operations (earthmoving, truck driving) and office and administration. There is also contracting work available in building and construction. There are traineeships offered in hospitality.
Proportion of Indigenous people in the community	Including Napranum Aboriginal community, roughly a third of the population of Weipa are Indigenous.
Existence of an Aboriginal Community within the vicinity of the town	Napranum Aboriginal community (Approx. 1,200 people based 5km out of Weipa). Weipa and the surrounding area is the home to a number of Aboriginal communities such as the Awngthim, Anguthimri, Luthigh, Mbeiwum and Yinwum people.
Number of schools	One primary school and one high school – the Western Cape College.
History of Schools' participation in Croc Festival™	Both the primary and high school (Western Cape College) have participated in the Croc Festival™ since 1998.
Other community festival and events	Fishing competitions, 3-on-3 basketball competitions, Show Day.
Higher Education opportunities in the community	TAFE campus at Weipa and external students at University and a limited number of courses are provided through Weipa Multi-purpose Facility and Weipa Community Care.
Community infrastructure	Rugby League, Basketball, Tennis, Netball and Volleyball teams. Golf Course/Lawn and Indoor Bowls, Squash Centre, Swimming Pool, Community centre, Girl Guides and Scouts, Library services, Dance Academy, Western Cape Cultural Centre, Golf club, Adventure Dirt Bike Club, Skate Park, Bowls, Gymnastic Club, Pistol club and sportfishing.
Distance from regional centre	Weipa is located 1000kms north west of Cairns and approximately 3000kms north west of Brisbane in Far North Queensland.
Local media infrastructure	ABC Radio 4WP and Radio 4AM are transmitted from Cairns. The Weipa bulletin is Weipa's only newspaper.

5.5 THURSDAY ISLAND

Size of community	4,000 (ABS, 2001 Census)
Employment profile	Main industries are tourism, Government services, light engineering and fishing.
Local industry	A number of traineeships are offered annually through QLD Health in Pharmacy, Dentistry and Administration. Administration traineeships are also offered annually through TRSA. A number of local businesses offer occasional apprenticeships in plumbing and construction.
Proportion of Indigenous people in the community	51%
Existence of an Aboriginal Community within the vicinity of the town	Thursday Island is the traditional land of the Muralag people.
Number of schools	Thursday Island has pre-schools, a state and a Catholic primary school and a state high school.
History of Schools' participation in Croc Festival™	All of the schools have participated in the Festival since 2000. Students have also travelled to the Festival in Weipa to perform. The Festival itself is held at the high school.
Other community festival and events	The Torres Strait Cultural Festival occurs every second year so as not to coincide with the Croc Festival™, Island of Origin Football Cup and Torres Strait Cup, Music Festival, and Mabo Day Celebration.
Higher Education opportunities in the community	James Cook University is expanding its education program on Thursday Island. There is also a TAFE campus.
Community infrastructure	Various sporting facilities are on the Island such as tennis, pistol shooting, football, aerobics, basketball, netball, boating, fishing, hash house harriers, bowls and canoeing. The town also has a swimming pool, a Cultural Centre, and Green Hill Fort.
Distance from regional centre	Thursday Island is situated approximately 39 kilometres off the top of Cape York. Thursday Island is 800 kilometres north of Cairns and 3040 kilometres north of Brisbane.
Local media infrastructure	ABC radio – Far North Queensland.

6. OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF CROC FESTIVAL™

This section provides feedback on overall perceptions of the Croc Festival™, and explores feedback on organisation and participation, the level of focus on Indigenous culture, benefits offered to students and parents, the possible effects for communities if they were to no longer host the event, feedback on the activities overall, and general feedback with regards to Indigenous Festivals Australia (IFA). The remainder of the report covers the health and education outcomes of the Festival, and the individual and community impact of these events.

Overall, satisfaction with the Croc Festival™ was extremely high across the research, with a strong perception expressed that the Festival offers a unique learning and social experience for students. The volume and variety of activities and experiences mentioned by participants is a testament to the Festival's ability to satisfy a wide range of interests of students.

“It is a wonderful, empowering experience for the kids. Everyone is successful at the Croc Festival™, there is no failure.”

6.1 ORGANISATION AND PARTICIPATION

In all locations a range of organisations had been involved in the organisation of the Festival, although there were some differences by area. In Port Augusta and Moree activity facilitators were more likely to be from local businesses and organisations, whereas in Alice Springs many facilitators were visitors. This can be largely attributed to the number of years that the Croc Festival™ has been held in the communities of Moree and Port Augusta, with Alice Springs holding the event for only the second time and under considerable time constraints in the lead-up to the Festival.

The commitment to the event was very strong in all communities, and those involved talked about the time, energy and resources devoted to the event. For small communities this was seen to create challenges and considerable pressure. However, the research demonstrates that these communities are very committed to the Festival, and are willing to dedicate the energy needed to make Croc Festival™ a success.

The research clearly demonstrates that it is *“the community volunteer involvement that makes it [Croc Festival™] happen”* and a few participants expressed concern that while IFA is paid, the community volunteers are not. In addition to this, a number of participants were sceptical about how funding dollars have been spent. There was also some concern that the appreciation of the volunteers and community involvement is not as great as it should be, and that there should be more recognition of the commitment and effort of volunteers and community members who help to make the Festival a success.

6.1.1 *Port Augusta*

For Port Augusta the community members supporting the Festival tended to be from the community service sector, and also the government sector (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council). There was perceived to be a lower level of involvement of the business sector, as they were seen to be unaware of the event, what it offers and its relevance for the business sector, as well as being limited with regard to time. An Aboriginal health service (Pika Wiya Health Service) plays an important role in the Port Augusta Festival, and co-ordinates the health expo. The local Shire Council was also heavily involved, and some members of the general community questioned the relevance of Council providing so much support to the event. Once the nature of the Festival was explained by Council representatives these concerns were allayed, but there was a request for short and concise information that could be used to describe the events and what they offer the community.

Overall, community members spoke positively about the organisation of and their involvement with the Croc Festival™, and felt proud of what had been achieved. The success of the Festival, and the pride they felt in this success appeared to provide a significant reward for their involvement.

“There is a positive energy in Port Augusta and it is great to see Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together – it’s good for the community.”

6.1.2 *Moree*

In Moree, a broad cross-section of the community are involved in organising the event, including the local service sector, school representatives and the government sector. The Aboriginal Employment Strategy plays a lead role in the management of the Festival, especially with the careers market. Moree Plains Shire Council supports the Festival by providing labour and grounds management and other in-kind support. Local businesses were involved in the Croc future skills workshop. As the Festival has been going for many years, the organisation of the event appeared to run smoothly, with similar organisations involved from year to year.

When asked if the Festival makes the community stronger and more supportive there was a range of different opinions but many people were very positive about the Festival and its ability to strengthen community relationships:

“It shows the young people the unity in putting together an event.”

“Croc Festival™ brings people together for a week – it brings the community closer. I don’t come from here and being here in Moree, I’ve never seen so much racism in my life, but for one week it stops. Colour has no boundary at Croc.”

6.1.3 Weipa

In Weipa there is a small team of dedicated community members who organise the Croc Festival™ committee and all other committee members recognise their dedication and support. Queensland Health have a long-standing involvement with the planning of Croc Festivals™ in Weipa, particularly with the Health expo. Queensland Health also conduct visits to schools in Far North Queensland both prior to and after the Festival as part of their health promotion strategy. They felt that without these people the community would really struggle to host the Croc Festival™. The committee also included parents and people from Council, the business sector, government, and Comalco provided in-kind support to set-up the Croc Village and other facilities. Given the significance of Comalco in Weipa, there was a commitment from this organisation to *“support programs that help create social cohesion and help break down stereotypes”*. The only groups that were felt to be missing were the council representatives of other Western Cape Communities (Napranum, Mapoon and Arakun). Weipa was also happy with the alternating arrangement with Thursday Island, which means that they host the event every second year. They feel it would be difficult to host the Croc Festival™ every year, as it requires considerable resources and dedication. Weipa also hosts a big event on the “off year” (such as a fun day, dancing or fishing competition) that *“still provides something for the children to look forward to.”* They also mentioned that only those students who were performing go to the Thursday Island event, as it is too much of a financial commitment for the schools to be heavily involved every year.

6.1.4 Thursday Island

Although the Croc Festival™ was not held in Thursday Island in 2004, this community was included in the post-Festival research to assess community impact. In these consultations community members expressed a strong interest in taking ownership of the Croc Festival™ and there was some scepticism about how funding is used for the Festival, particularly as local businesses also contribute a considerable amount of funding. While participants expressed a desire to localise the organisation of the Festival, all community members were positive about the benefits that the Croc Festival™ offers students. The Festival was seen to offer many opportunities that students would otherwise have to travel to the mainland for, such as career information, recreational activities as well as the chance to perform on stage. The community did not really talk of the community impact when they were not the host community, except in reference to students travelling to Weipa and the chance to have a break from hosting the event. This was similar in Weipa with the majority of people from both communities feeling that hosting a Festival every two years was appropriate.

6.1.5 Alice Springs

The Alice Springs Festival did not have the same lead-time as other events, and because it was the second time the event was held in the community, the committee had to work extremely hard in the lead-up to the Festival (particularly as the Festivals were not consecutive). The Alice Springs Town Council took a leading role in organising the community, with representatives from a range of areas including Congress, the Heart Foundation, Footprints Forward, and representatives of the traditional owners. The majority of criticisms in

relation to the community involvement were linked to the shorter lead-time, and it was felt if this time was increased these issues would be addressed. Despite this, there was positive feedback from community members about networking opportunities offered by the Festival:

“Working together like this makes you want to continue to work together.”

Overall, across all locations, community members spoke positively of their involvement with the Croc Festival™, and while many dedicated a considerable amount of time and energy to the Festivals, most felt rewarded by the success of the Festivals themselves. There were some criticisms with regard to the lead-time in Alice Springs, the level of ownership by the community, and recognition of the volunteers, but in most cases these concerns were outweighed by the satisfaction they felt in hosting a successful Croc Festival™ in their community. Section 10 explores in more detail the impact on the community of hosting the Croc Festival™.

6.2 OTHER EVENTS

All members of the community could nominate other events that were celebrated in their community (such as NAIDOC week, Show Day, Christmas festivals, etc), but all acknowledged that the Croc Festival™ was the only festival that is drug and alcohol free, has an Indigenous focus, and is specifically targeted at young people. It is clear that this is a unique experience that is not replicated in any other community event, although a few communities identified youth activities that operate regularly in their town.

In particular, it was felt that the Croc Festival™ was unique in providing a safe, drug and alcohol free environment. One participant had this to say when asked if Croc Festival™ was successful in being an alcohol and cigarette free event:

“It was successful as I witnessed community members “growling” at people who wanted to smoke and bring alcohol into the event.”

This positive reinforcement of the cigarette and alcohol free environment by the community is important in order to demonstrate a united stand to students.

One school in Moree holds a “mini-croc” annually and invites representatives from a number of organisations such as Police, emergency services, health and a few local businesses. These organisations hold a number of workshops and information sessions for students and this was viewed to be very successful with students. However, it was acknowledged that the Croc Festival™ inspired the idea for this event.

In most cases community members spoke of the Croc Festival™ as an event that was unlike any other in the community in the way it brought the whole community together in both organising and participating in the

event. For example, a representative from the Moree Plains Local Shire Council felt that the community was able to “draw upon the successes of the Festival” when arranging a food festival for the first time last year called “Moree on a plate”. In this way, the Croc Festival™ supports the notion of social capital as it refers to “the relationships, networks and norms that support collective action” and is “created when people come together out of a shared purpose or goal.” Others also spoke of the networking opportunities within the community that the Festival provides.

All communities included in the research spoke of the ability of the Festival to bring the community together in this way, and the perceived benefits of working together. Section 9 and 10 provide more detailed analysis of this area.

6.3 EFFECT ON COMMUNITY OF NOT HAVING A CROC FESTIVAL™

Teachers and community members were asked in the post-Festival research what the effect would be on the community if the Croc Festival™ was not held in their community any more. Most people identified a negative impact to their community should they cease to host the Croc Festivals™, and these are summarised below:

- People would wonder why, and it would affect the morale of the community: As mentioned previously community pride and identity is at a peak at the time of the Festival and the loss of this event could adversely affect community morale;
- Networking opportunities would be limited: Often the Croc Festival™ offers the only opportunity to interact with organisations and community members that people would ordinarily not come into contact with;
- Children would miss out on the event: As the Croc Festival™ is the biggest and often the only youth-focussed annual event, many people acknowledged that students would be affected by the loss of the Festival;

“Kids would have withdrawal symptoms from not attending the performances”

- Money coming into the town would reduce and business would suffer: It was felt that the loss of the financial benefits brought by visitors to the Croc Festival™ would have a significant effect on the local economy;
- Increased crime rate: A few people in the community felt that crime could increase as a result of not hosting the Festival due to boredom and students having less to do.

The only benefit identified in relation to not hosting the event was that for host communities, a change would provide an opportunity for these students to travel to another community. Students from Thursday Island who

had been to the Weipa Croc Festival™ said that they preferred the Weipa Festival as it was a chance to visit a new place and meet new people. Similarly, students from Weipa said that they preferred the Thursday Island Festival for the same reason.

A few felt that not hosting the Croc Festivals™ for the community would “*not leave much of a dent*”, but it was acknowledged that the children and the community would miss the event. This sentiment was summarised by a committee member in Weipa:

“It [not hosting the Croc Festival™] would take away a thread from the tapestry of the town”.

6.4 INDIGENOUS FOCUS

It was clear that the Indigenous focus of the Croc Festivals™ is a major attraction, and all participants included in the research felt this focus should not be reduced, and there was some concern that this could happen as the Festivals grow. Most felt that the current balance of Indigenous-specific events and mix of Indigenous students to non-Indigenous students was appropriate. A few suggested that the chairperson of the community committee should be Indigenous, and that this would be one way of ensuring the Indigenous focus is maintained. Several people felt that a 50/50 focus was appropriate.

A number of students and teachers made reference to the link between Indigenous culture and the Festival, either through lead-up activities at school, through their performances or through shared activities at the Festival:

“Before we came here we learnt about Indigenous people and how to respect their culture. We learnt about their culture, what they believe in and were told dreamtime stories.”

“I like performing the best because you feel really proud that we are friends with Aboriginals now.”

“We’re proud to be representing our culture. We’re happy and excited – it’s cool meeting new people.”

“It is great seeing different cultures come together in a positive way and experience positive things together like sport, education and health.”

However, there was some criticism that there was not enough Indigenous culture displayed as part of the Festival:

“We were a bit disappointed because we did a lot of fundraising to get here and our big selling point was learning about culture, but we haven’t done anything like that today.”

Many teachers and students mentioned the importance of the involvement of Indigenous members of the community within the school in arts, history and dance as part of the lead-up to the Festival and this was also seen to be one of the benefits of the Festival for the community.

The Indigenous focus of the Festival is particularly important for Indigenous students as an outlet to celebrate their own cultural heritage. Torjmanⁱⁱⁱ writes “culture and recreation provide the means to build social capital. They can take the form of arts, recreational programs or festivals.” In this way the Croc Festivals™ are vitally important as a tool for building social capital, as well as a celebration of Indigenous culture. Again, the notion of social capital and the Croc Festival™ is discussed in more detail in Section 10.

6.5 INDIGENOUS FESTIVALS AUSTRALIA

Community opinion toward IFA varied depending upon a number of factors such as the length of time the Festival had been in the community, level of contact with IFA and the organisation the individual came from. Community members, teachers and facilitators all commented on the sound organisational skills and professionalism displayed by IFA, and in most cases participants spoke positively about IFA's support and commitment.

“The kids are having a great time and it is very well organised.”

One teacher from Port Augusta was particularly impressed by IFA when they took on suggestions made the previous year.

However, there were a number of criticisms toward IFA from community members. As previously mentioned there was some criticism that while IFA were paid the large number of volunteers who were responsible for facilitating and organising the activities were not. Specifically, a number of people were sceptical about the amount of funding provided to IFA and the financial benefits of this for the community. Several people were concerned that IFA received money from Commonwealth and State government agencies, as well as from local businesses, and yet the community did not receive any financial assistance for their contributions. The community in Thursday Island were particularly concerned by this, prompting the desire for the community to run the Festival thus keeping money within the community.

One teacher in Port Augusta felt that IFA had not consulted properly with the Aboriginal communities in regards to the traditional welcome at the Festival. Historically, Port Augusta is the meeting place for a number of different Aboriginal groups and it was felt that acknowledging only one of these groups was to insult other Indigenous communities. This comment has been made in previous research.

IFA was also criticised for a perceived lack of appreciation towards the community and in particular the volunteers. It was felt that the community worked extremely hard in the lead-up to the Festival and that when IFA arrived they were kept out of proceedings. This is also consistent with previous research. A number of people also expressed their disappointment with IFA's assistance with cleaning up after the Festival. One participant said that it was mainly the community volunteers arranging the clean up with one or two IFA staff assisting.

6.6 ACTIVITIES

Overall, the reactions to the activities of the Festival were extremely positive, particularly towards the ‘I want to be’ workshop and the Croc future skills as they combined interactive, practical activities with career information.

However, it was felt that many of the children were too young for some of the activities, as the relevance of the activities was limited given their age. This was especially the case for the careers market, and it was suggested that this should concentrate on those in years 10, 11 and 12. A number of teachers and activity facilitators mentioned this as an issue, and some activity facilitators suggested IFA provide information on the range of ages of each group before the workshop so that they could tailor the workshop to suit that age group. Indeed, a number of activity facilitators mentioned the need to be flexible as the age range, volume and occasionally scheduling of students was fairly unpredictable.

Similarly, English language proficiency was also an issue, particularly in Alice Springs. A number of facilitators felt that they were unprepared for some students’ level of English language proficiency and that much of the information was lost on children that were not proficient in English. Facilitators in Alice Springs often had to rely on school helpers to translate the information and this often slowed the proceedings.

“Some of the activities present a huge barrier because they are presented only in English.”

“Some activity facilitators obviously weren’t used to teaching ESL. They were great speakers but didn’t have the right skills for this. It would be good to get an Aboriginal person to teach ESL to the activity facilitators.”

An activity facilitator from Alice Springs felt that the pace of the activities was too fast, particularly for younger students and those from remote communities:

“In remote schools, kids are used to receiving information quite slowly. This fast-paced way of receiving information only caters to a small number of kids in this region. The kids would absorb more and be more engaged if they only completed two or three activities a day.”

A few activity facilitators themselves requested feedback on how they are going:

“We’d like some feedback to see how we can make ourselves better – like some evaluation or feedback on what the kids say about what we are doing to make sure we are doing the right thing.”

A number of teachers stressed the importance of the activities being able to engage on a personal level with the students and it was felt that students needed to be able to apply the lessons of the activity to themselves in some way:

“The kids need to see some correlation with the bigger picture and themselves, otherwise the activities are just ten minutes of entertainment.”

“I think the ‘Don’t do drugs’ could have been more powerful, it needed to be more hands on. It would have been better if they had a real-life example of someone who had been on drugs giving their own experience. That would have been more relevant to the kids than someone just talking about drugs.”

While these criticisms were made, they should not overshadow the fact that overall teachers, students and community members felt that students engaged strongly with the activities, they were relevant and added to the wider learning experience of the students.

Sections 7 and 8 discuss the results of observation research in relation to the health, careers and ‘I want to be’ activities.

7. HEALTH OUTCOMES

The sponsorship objectives of the Department of Health and Ageing are to reduce the prevalence of smoking, drinking and other drug use in the community and to promote healthy lifestyles by increasing levels of awareness of the benefits of not smoking, not drinking excessively and not using other drugs, and increasing levels of awareness that a healthy lifestyle requires positive choices and personal decisions. There are clearly limitations on the ability of an annual event to significantly influence behaviour with regards to alcohol and other drug use, given that a wide range of social, economic and environmental factors have an impact on alcohol and other drug use. As well, changes in behaviour and identifying cause and effect relationships are difficult to measure. Therefore, this section on health outcomes addresses the objectives of raising awareness and influencing attitudes and intentions with regard to healthy lifestyles and alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use, as well as providing an overview of the health expo based on observational research and feedback from students, activity supervisors, and teachers.

Overall, as in previous research, it was clearly acknowledged that the Croc Festivals™ are one of many health education platforms that students are exposed to. The benefits of the health activities were that children would *“remember things without knowing they are remembering”* through the relevant health messages relating to drugs and alcohol, and healthy living messages through nutrition and fitness (sports activities). These messages were seen to be effective as they are communicated outside of the classroom, by someone other than a teacher and not delivered as a lecture. This helps students to be more receptive to these messages as they are delivered in a positive and different way. The fun and interactive environment of the Croc Festival™ itself was viewed to be positive and to encourage students to engage more readily with these messages.

7.1 OBSERVATION RESEARCH

The health expo at the Festival, in-line with the Department’s objectives, is designed to increase students’ awareness of health-related issues and services available. Each of the health expos had representatives from Drug and Alcohol services that spoke to students about the harmful effects of alcohol, cigarettes and (where appropriate) other drugs. There were also a range of other organisations included in the health expo that focused on healthy living, such as nutrition and hygiene. In addition to this, the Festival itself is an alcohol and cigarette-free event, and many of the other activities (such as sports and dance) also promote healthy lifestyle messages.

Analysis of the Croc Festival™ schedules found that around 650 students in Alice Springs visited the health expo (approximately 34% of students), 700 visited the expo in Moree (approximately 26% of students), and 820 visited the expo in Port Augusta (approximately 29% of students). Care should be taken with these figures as they are based on the schedule, rather than actual attendance at the time, so do not account for

changes during the Festival. However, they do indicate that a significant number of students are not being exposed to the health messages directly through the health expo. These results also show that there was a higher likelihood of students at the Alice Springs Festival visiting the health exhibition due to the presence of fewer students and less activities at the Festival. It could be argued that as the Festivals get bigger, as in the cases of Moree and Port Augusta, fewer students are exposed to the health expo.

All of the activities that were part of the health expo aimed to educate students about health issues and promote healthy lifestyles. This was achieved through practical, hands on activities designed to engage and inform students. The following examples are the result of the in-Festival observation research of the health expo.

Pika Wiya Health Service used a theme for the health expo at the Port Augusta Croc Festival™ of “Get Your Body into Gear” and used various parts of a car or car-related symbols to represent different parts of the body, for example headlights were eyes, tyres were feet etc. This was seen as an excellent way of using an interesting theme and props to engage students and help explain concepts in a simple way. For example, mental health was explained through comparing the messages in your brain to those of traffic lights. The facilitator used the prop of traffic lights and explained that just as a car depends on the correct signals from traffic lights in order to drive safely, your body requires the right messages from your brain in order to function properly. This was an effective way to introduce students to an adult topic in a simplistic and interesting way. The theme of “Get Your Body Into Gear” was also used at the health expo at the Alice Springs Croc Festival.

In Moree, there was no consistent theme throughout the expo, although the activities were linked by a stamp collecting exercise. Students had to collect stamps from at least ten activities, and when they had collected all of these they could select a prize. This appeared to work well, it encouraged students to visit and engage with a range of activities.

A number of teachers commented on the successful way the health expos demonstrated practical examples of healthy living through interactive activities. As part of the dentistry display students were invited to place a liquid on their teeth that showed where plaque was on their teeth. Facilitators then spoke to the students about where plaque gathers most frequently, oral hygiene and brushing their teeth. This activity engaged students by capturing their attention with interactive and practical activities that informed them of how to avoid tooth decay.

In the ear care workshop, students were able to view what the inside of their ear looked like through the use of a microscope. This was often something that students had never seen before and they were engaged while the facilitator explained the parts of the ear (ear drum, ear wax) and the importance of keeping ears healthy for hearing. This message was delivered interactively as students volunteered to see the inside of

their ear under the microscope, and through an exercise where students had to blow their nose, which was linked to keeping ears clear and healthy.

Similarly, students attended an eye care workshop where their eyes were tested. The workshop was sponsored by OPSM and the facilitators were trained optometrists who were able to provide glasses to those students who required them at no cost. Anecdotally, it has been reported that some Indigenous students from remote communities abandon the use of their glasses due to teasing from others. However, IFA recognised this and on the performance night at the Alice Springs Festival Kyle van der Kuyp, who was the guest MC, told the audience that he wears glasses and how important they are to him to enable clear vision.

A number of health support services and organisations were present at the health expo to raise awareness of their organisation. For example the HEP C Council of S.A. had a stall at the health expo in Port Augusta to raise awareness about HEP C. As the students were often too young to be able to understand the disease or how it is transmitted the facilitators gave students fake tattoos with the HEP C Council of S.A. logo on the tattoo. The facilitator of this station said that it would help students to recognise their service if they ever needed the support of their organisation.

The sexual health station in Port Augusta and Moree had a similar form of information delivery as facilitators did not attempt to engage each student that passed through (as often they were too young), but rather they clearly displayed pamphlets and information was on display. Facilitators would speak one-on-one to students who required further information. This form of delivery is necessary when dealing with such sensitive health areas and is also an effective way for organisations to raise their profile with young people in the community should they need to use their services in the future.

Students spoke positively about the health expo and most said it was interesting and that they learnt from it. As well, the health expo provides examples of how the Croc Festival™ can enhance social capital in two ways. Firstly, it is opening up students to *“networks of social relations that serve the purpose of enabling groups and individuals access to a pool of resources and supports^{iv}”* that are conducive to healthy living and positive life choices. The research showed that this has already lead to positive developments such as students feeling less awkward about approaching health care professionals at Pika Wiya health service in Port Augusta and some students doing work experience and placements with this health service. In Moree a facilitator at the sexual health stall commented that numerous teachers approached the station for information about their service and this has already lead to the organisation visiting two schools outside of Moree. Secondly, the research in all locations found that many of the activity supervisors have developed and enhanced their networks as a result of their involvement, and have benefited from these networks.

7.2 AWARENESS

The Department of Health and Ageing has a range of sponsorship objectives with regards to increasing awareness. These include:

- To promote awareness of the sponsorship theme ‘Respect Yourself, Respect Your Culture’ and the tagline ‘Croc Festivals are a 100% Alcohol and Smoke-free celebration’;
- To increase awareness that a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle requires positive choices and personal decisions;
- To promote awareness of negative health consequences of smoking, excessive drinking and other drug use;
- To promote awareness of the benefits of not smoking, not drinking excessively and not using other drugs; and
- To increase awareness of the connection between choices, consequences and being in control.

These objectives are addressed through the Croc Festival™ by creating an opportunity to deliver drug prevention and education messages and by promoting healthy lifestyles. This section looks at levels of awareness (qualitatively) based on the in-Festival and post-Festival research.

The research showed the Festival clearly promotes awareness and education across a range of health areas such as nutrition, mental health, sexual health, hygiene, fitness and alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs. The Festival also promotes awareness about local organisations and health services available to young people, enhancing their capacity to access support if needed. These health-based activities aim to equip students with the information and tools necessary to make positive life choices.

Students and teachers were asked to give their feedback on the health-related activities in order to gauge whether the main health messages were being heard. In the post-Festival and in-Festival research many students made reference to the health expo activities in relation to drugs (including alcohol and cigarettes), nutrition, healthy living, and general and dental hygiene. These were both prompted and unprompted responses. Students responded positively to healthy living messages when asked why it is important to be healthy:

“Because you can get unfit and then can’t do as much stuff.”

“You don’t need drugs and alcohol to have fun, respect yourself and your culture.”

“To look after yourself and keep your body healthy.”

As previously mentioned, the health-related activities of the Croc Festival™ were seen as effective as they enabled both students and teachers to gather information from the health expo, as they learn in a new, fun and interactive way. The environment of the Festival was seen to encourage engagement with health activities and messages as these workshops are unlike classroom learning and not delivered in an

authoritative way. Teachers in particular believed that students' awareness of a range of health issues and organisations was markedly increased.

“The Festival is definitely a good way to inform students about health messages because if they have problems or issues they might not go to the health centre, whereas here they can approach information as a whole group and take information home.”

“It’s a good way to inform kids because they are enthusiastic at the Festival and are therefore a captive audience.”

In the post-Festival research recall of the health expo was encouraging with responses noting a range of different activities such as receiving healthy food and wearing 'beer goggles' as part of the drug and alcohol exhibition. Students also recalled the dental and general hygiene activities where a liquid was applied to the teeth and hands that enabled plaque and germs to be identified under a special light.

It is also worth noting that there appeared to be very high levels of awareness of the 'Respect Yourself, Respect Your Culture' message among students, and this resonated very strongly with many of the students we spoke to. Students and teachers also spoke positively about the fact that the Festival is alcohol and smoke-free.

The Department of Health and Ageing is interested in promoting awareness of the negative consequences of smoking, drinking alcohol and other drug use, and conversely, promoting awareness of the positive benefits of not engaging in these activities. The research with students suggests that these messages are being delivered effectively to students. The following quotes demonstrate this:

“I know that they’re bad – even a little bit is bad, so you shouldn’t think that you can have some and it won’t hurt you.”

“Don’t do it, it really can damage you....smoking affects feet, ‘cause your cuts won’t heal.”

“I know about liver damage (from alcohol) and damaging lungs when smoke.”

“Given direction on which way to go, instead of making bad choices.”

Significantly, several students also spoke about the importance of making positive choices, and although this was identified less often than more general messages about the negative health consequences of alcohol and other drugs, it does indicate that for some students messages about taking control are being delivered effectively.

“I’m not going to do any of that stuff anyway – it’s good that Croc Festival™ is 100% alcohol and smoke-free.”

“I know what can happen inside of me. I wouldn’t go and get addicted to anything.”

Overall, the results suggest that many students who participate in the Croc Festivals™ receive messages about the positive benefits of a healthy lifestyle, and the negative consequences of using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Research conducted over the last three years suggests the awareness objectives of the Department of Health and Ageing are being met, but it is difficult to assess the extent to which the behavioural objectives are being achieved. It is also important to acknowledge the limitations of an annual event to influence long-term behavioural outcomes.

8. EDUCATION OUTCOMES

There is a wide range of literature on educational outcomes for Indigenous students, and there is considerable debate about how the differences in academic achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students can be addressed. This literature points to a vast range of factors that have an impact on educational outcomes, ranging from health and nutritional issues (eg hearing problems, poor nutrition, poor eyesight) to family, social and economic factors (eg parent's education level, parental discomfort with schools and cultural notions of shame and fear of failure, and socio-economic background).^v

The objectives of the Department of Science, Education and Training's (DEST's) sponsorship are to improve education outcomes for students by increasing awareness of the importance of school, linking education with future career opportunities, generating and reinforcing intentions to stay at school, and through this, improving attendance and retention in school. There are clearly limitations in the ability of an annual event to significantly influence school attendance and retention, given the range of factors that influence this behaviour, and there are also limitations in measuring the impact of the Croc Festivals™ on these behaviours. This section therefore addresses the specific sponsorship objectives with regards to awareness, attitudes and intentions, and explores possible influences on literacy and numeracy. The first component of this section sets the context for this analysis, by providing feedback on the activities that directly focus on education and careers.

8.1 OBSERVATION RESEARCH

8.1.1 *'I want to be' workshop*

For the three Festivals that were attended as part of the research (Port Augusta, Alice Springs and Moree), the 'I want to be' workshop included two components, the introductory talk and video showing personal stories of people's success, and an activity where children could see a range of careers and get an ID photo taken in a specific career. The scheduling program indicates that these two components were not linked, so that school groups went to one, both or neither activity. For example, in Alice Springs the majority of students went to either one or the other, although five schools went to both and ten schools did not go to either (out of about 70 schools). Approximately 80% of the students in Alice Springs went to one of the 'I want to be' workshop. This is important to keep in mind because Alice Springs did not have a careers market, so that a significant minority of students did not attend any activities directly on careers. For Moree and Port Augusta the proportion that attended one of the 'I want to be' workshops was lower, with around half going to one or both of these activities. Caution should be taken with these figures however, as they are based on the scheduling only, so do not reflect any changes that happened during the Croc Festival™.

Feedback from the students who had been to these activities was positive, indicating that most found it interesting and learned *“lots of new stuff”* from their involvement. Teachers did not comment specifically on this activity, although broadly some felt that, especially for the older kids, their involvement in the Festival encouraged them to start thinking about their career.

The ‘I want to be’ workshop was recalled by a large number of students in the post-Festival research with students making particular reference to the activity where they got to choose a career and have their photo taken. High school students responded well to the video in the second ‘I want to be’ workshop:

“The ‘I want to be’ workshop was fun and got you to think about what you want to do.”

“The ‘I want to be’ workshop opened me up to new things.”

“It pushed that we should go to school.”

Observational research conducted of the ‘I want to be’ workshops found that there were high levels of engagement, and that most students took an interest in the goal setting activities and the inspirational stories given by facilitators. Several students also discussed their own personal story when asked questions about what they wanted to be. It appeared that most students engaged well with this activity, and there were not any clear differences based on gender, especially as the career paths demonstrated a wide range of options. The activities delivered messages about co-operation and teamwork, self-esteem, goal-setting, risks associated with behaviours that limit life choices and developing relationships. The activities clearly emphasised the importance of school for the students’ future. There was not much focus on numeracy or literacy, although students were encouraged to read information about different careers.

8.1.2 Careers market

Observational research was conducted of the careers market in Port Augusta and Moree. Based on the scheduling information provided prior to the Festival, for Port Augusta approximately 15% of students attended the careers market and 28% in Moree attended the careers market. Although caution needs to be taken with these figures, as they are based on scheduling only, this does suggest that a significant number of students are not participating in the careers market. In addition, there was no careers market in Alice Springs because the NT Government had conducted a careers forum in Alice Springs prior to the Croc Festival™. There was some criticism of the lack of a careers market in Alice Springs by teachers who expected *“more emphasis on careers for senior kids.”*

In each of the careers markets there were a range of organisations represented, including tertiary education providers (eg Sydney University, University of New England), State and Commonwealth government sector organisations (eg Police, Fire Department, Roads and Traffic Authority, Department of Housing), and local service organisations (eg Kamilaroi Family Violence Prevention Service).

Observational research suggests there was minimal engagement with students attending the careers markets. School groups queued at the door, and then followed a path through the careers market going from stall to stall. Most stalls provided give-aways to students, and there appeared to be little dialogue between activity facilitators and students. Indeed, the focus for students was clearly on gathering the give-aways, and the tendency was for students to look at what items were on offer, and if this was something they were interested in they would stay in line, or if not they would move to the next stall.

There was more engagement between activity facilitators and teachers, although there were several school groups who did not have a teacher with them. In Moree there was one clear interactive activity in the careers market, with other stalls having computer screens and other props that could be used by students if they wished (undirected). The tertiary education providers had information about what students need to study for different careers, and these were provided on an ad hoc basis (written material only). There was no clear emphasis in this expo on the importance of school for careers, and indeed with many stalls it was not clear if the message was about what the organisation provides to the community, or what that organisation offers with regards to career opportunities.

Feedback from the students on the careers markets was very positive. Almost all students that had gone to the careers market spoke very positively about it. However, the responses suggest the interest in this activity for most was on the give-aways rather than the content of the expos.

Several teachers were disappointed with the careers market as it was seen as a “snatch and grab”, and it was felt the careers market should be more interactive. This finding is consistent with previous research. A number of participants suggested that facilitators should have activities so that students have to earn promotional materials, rather than just be given them e.g. answer a question and receive a hat. Many were also unsure about the extent to which students engaged and learnt during the activity. Some said they “*think kids get something out of it*”, but it was acknowledged this is difficult to measure.

Nevertheless, most were very positive about the concept, as they felt it provided exposure of different options for children who often “don't know what's out there”, and improved expectations for the future.

“Shows them they are capable of more than just a grade driver.”

“If you don't show people the stars, they never look at them.”

Businesses and organisations spoke positively of the careers market, as some felt their involvement was an investment, as they are committed to increasing Indigenous employment, and the careers market was seen as a good opportunity for local businesses and organisations to promote their businesses as a career option. However, as with teachers, there was some criticism of the limited engagement with students in the careers expo. As well, several people suggested that the level of involvement of local businesses could be improved.

Teachers also suggested that the careers market was unsuitable for younger children, particularly primary school-aged students, as careers information was viewed to be a little premature.

8.2 AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Several of the sponsorship objectives of DEST centre on enhancing awareness among students in regard to:

- The benefits of staying in school
- Potential career opportunities

These objectives are driven by the goals of the Department of Education, Science and Training, through the Croc Festivals™, to:

- Create an opportunity to demonstrate a diverse range of potential career opportunities through the careers market, and to
- Promote a broad cross-section of organisations promoting both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment opportunities

Several students demonstrated their learning with regard to the importance of school and careers. Clearly these are messages that are delivered within schools already, but the Croc Festival™ reinforces these messages and provides examples of “successful” individuals and organisations that offer career opportunities. For example, there were clear links with these messages and local initiatives in Weipa, where a strategy “got to be earning or learning in 2005” targets 16 year olds. It was felt that the Festival itself reinforced this strategy.

The research found a strong recall of messages about the range of career opportunities available. For example, one student commented *“this makes me really think there are heaps (of careers) out there”*, while another said *“you get a chance to look at more jobs and it gives you more ideas on what to do.”* The responses also varied, in that some responses suggest involvement in the Festival provides suggestions or ideas for career options, while other responses indicated that their involvement had encouraged them to start thinking about their careers – *“makes me realise I need to have a hard think about what I want to do”*.

Teachers also commented on the increase in the level of awareness of the importance of school and career opportunities.

“Students picked up on the need to get good jobs, to attend school and be active in learning. Students became aware of the importance of reading and writing from exposure to Croc skills workshop facilitators and the science workshop ‘Questacon’.”

The research suggests that for many students messages about careers and the importance of school are delivered successfully through Croc Festivals™, although there are limitations in that not all students attend activities in relation to these objectives. As well, the success of these activities is influenced by the interest of the students themselves, and we believe the limited engagement of the careers markets means that students who are not already contemplating their opportunities are unlikely to receive strong messages about different career options and what is required to realise these opportunities.

8.3 ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS TOWARDS SCHOOL AND CAREERS

DEST has a range of sponsorship objectives aimed at influencing attitudes and student intentions, as follows:

- To promote and reinforce positive attitudes towards staying in school to increase opportunities
- To increase confidence to pursue a range of career options
- To generate and reinforce intention to stay at school to increase opportunities
- To generate and reinforce intention to investigate different career options

The research found that most students could articulate messages around the importance of school for their future when asked directly about the importance of school, and linked school with careers. The following quotes reflect the most common responses to this question:

“Better education, better careers.”

“Because everyone here tells you that to get into work you have to do certain things, levels of school.”

“So you can learn, so you can do a job in the future.”

“School is important to get a good education. If you achieve at school you achieve at life. Getting a good education allows you to get good jobs.”

“You need to do it (school) so you can get a good job.”

For many there was an understanding that school influences their future opportunities, and while it is difficult to determine if these attitudes continue beyond the Croc Festival™ and under the influence of other social, economic and environmental factors, participation in the Festivals clearly arms young people with an understanding that may help them to think beyond their immediate future.

There were also a few examples where students' involvement in the Croc Festival™ increased their confidence in pursuing a career. A student from Port Augusta High School, who made items to sell at the Festival and provided some amateur hairdressing for a fee, said that this involvement made her even more determined to be a hairdresser. Several trainees also spoke very positively about their experience and the confidence it has given them, and several felt that this will have an influence on their ability to pursue a

career. While this feedback was not true for the majority of respondents, for some their experience with Croc Festival™ has the potential to increase confidence in pursuing a career.

In the research few students spoke about their intentions with regards to school and careers. Most articulated concepts about the importance of school, but few spoke about any changes in their behaviour that is likely to come of this (and we suggest that this is difficult for students to articulate and also very difficult to measure). Only a couple of responses referred to their intentions:

“Yes, school is important, I won’t stuff around at school, I’ll try and go to year 12.”

“Yes, make me have a hard look at what I want to do.”

“Yes, I’ll start planning for a career. I know what level you need to get a job.”

“The video (‘I want to be’ workshop) made me think about going to Year 12.”

Some teachers also mentioned that the retention rate for Indigenous students has increased in recent times, and it was felt that this may in some way be influenced by the Croc Festival™, although most were hesitant to identify direct cause and effect relationships. A number of teachers mentioned higher attendance in the lead-up to the Festival:

“There’s high attendance that week. Some kids that don’t come to school go to the Croc Festival™.”

Several teachers were positive about the impact of the Croc Festival™, believing that this is an important motivator with regards to school. It was felt that the Croc Festival™ added to the wider learning experience, and the demonstration of their increased motivation was the number of students who did their practice outside of school hours. As well, motivation was seen to be enhanced when students had seen other students now working for the Croc Festival™ as trainees. A few trainees were identified as having gone onto further study, and it was felt their involvement in the Croc Festival™ had an impact on this. A number of teachers and schools also use the Croc Festival™ as a reward for school attendance in the weeks leading up to the Festival. This means that, in the short-term at least, school attendance is improved as a result of the Croc Festival™.

Role models were also identified as an important motivator for students, as seeing Indigenous people as activity facilitators was seen to have a positive effect on the students. Evonne Goolagong-Cawley was mentioned frequently by students, as were relatives and local community members who were noticeably involved in the Festival.

These results suggest that the majority of students received positive messages about the importance of school and a wide range of career opportunities, and that for some of these students this has influenced their attitudes to school and their future. However, it is difficult to determine what impact this has on intentions, as

few spoke about how their participation is likely to influence their behaviour. Feedback from teachers suggests that the Croc Festival™ has a large impact on student attendance in the lead-up to the Festival, but many were reluctant to comment on the impact after participation, because of the complex range of social, environmental and economic factors that influence attendance, and the difficulty for a three-day event to address these.

8.4 BONDING TO SCHOOL

DEST's sponsorship objectives include "to create an opportunity to improve attendance and bonding at school". To assess this, students were asked during the Croc Festival™ whether attending the Festival had changed how they feel about school. While many said that there had been no change, a significant number indicated that they did feel differently about their school. The responses suggest that some students feel a greater sense of pride in their school, especially for those performing, and that others see school in a more positive light because it provided an opportunity to attend the Croc Festival™. Several Port Augusta students also spoke positively about the stall that their school had as part of the Festival, and felt proud of this.

"We are proud to be representing our school."

"School is more fun, I want to learn more."

"Feel good about school because look forward to Croc Festival™ (if did not go to school would not be able to go to Croc Festival™). It helps attendance rates – I want to be there because of Croc Festival™."

As well, several students and many teachers spoke of the change in their relationships during the Croc Festival™. While about half of the students we spoke to said their participation did not influence their relationships with their teachers, several said that it did change things in that it enhanced the levels of trust with their teachers, and this made the students *"feel a bit more important"*. Other students also felt that their teachers *"talk to us more and open up about things – they talk more about life stuff"*.

Teachers also spoke of the changed relationship due to their involvement. Most felt that it benefited their relationship, and provided more social interactions with the students, as well as providing an environment that is more relaxed and trusting. Several also said it gave them a *"chance to get to know them on another level. At school there are a lot of problems with behaviour, but here we get to see kids on a different level."* One teacher demonstrated the difference by recalling what one of her students had said to them *"thanks for bringing us, it's the best day I've ever had at school."*

These results indicate that the Croc Festival™ does have an impact on students' bonding with school, but the extent of this, and the impact this has on attendance, is difficult to measure.

8.5 INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND LITERACY AND NUMERACY

DEST is committed to enhancing the impact of the Croc Festival™ over the longer term, and is therefore interested in the ways in which schools and teachers incorporate the Festival in the curriculum. Most teachers included in the research spoke about activities they did either before or after the Croc Festival™, linking the classroom with the Festival. The main ways that the Festival influences schools are in:

- Providing resources/materials during the Festival to teachers that they can use in the classroom, especially true for careers and health.
- Providing opportunities for teachers to make contact with organisations. One teacher said that prior to the Festival they did not know about an Aboriginal employment organisation that promotes careers and employment paths to Aboriginal students, and now because of the contact made they have arranged for this organisation to visit their school, and it was felt this would not have happened otherwise.
- Providing inspiration for incorporating ideas and themes in the classroom. For example, one teacher said the Festival demonstrated that it is “best to use practical activities and let students’ curiosity take over”, and that her involvement provided ideas to do this in the classroom. Another teacher had used the health expo for ideas on how to study the human body and nutrition in the classroom, and another said that they are going to set up an information bay on health in the classroom based on their participation in the Festival. One teacher had used the Croc Map for numeracy and literacy exercises.

“We used the map from the Croc Festival™ in maths and we used the timetables to get them to understand timetabling. The songs from the Festival were also used – we got the kids to write down the words and work out what the song was about. The secondary kids utilised the workbooks and the video.”

Croc Festival™ also provides a workbook for teachers, and the results suggest that few teachers have accessed this resource. It appears resources picked up during the Festival have a greater impact than the teachers’ workbook.

In terms of numeracy and literacy, it was difficult for people to comment on the direct impact of the Croc Festival™ on numeracy and literacy. There were, however, a few examples provided that suggest there are links between the Croc Festival™ and numeracy and literacy. Several teachers said that in the lead-up to and during the Festival many children who do not normally attend school regularly go more often, and that in this time they would learn more than they would otherwise. For many schools attendance at the Festival is used as a reward for good behaviour or school attendance.

A number of activities involved counting and repetition that teachers and facilitators believed helped students to practice numeracy skills. Some of the activities that involved counting included those such as learning hip-hop dance steps, counting rhythms in the drum workshop and the Questacon activities.

In Port Augusta and Moree a numeracy and literacy program is run either before or after the Festival (and sometimes both) and is linked with themes of the Festival. For example, the students read from their Croc Festival™ workbooks. The “Solid and Deadly” booklet, though not recalled by a large number of respondents, was seen as providing useful activities that were drug and alcohol and health related. However, there was some criticism that the booklet was targeted at students with sound English language proficiency:

“I have seen the booklets provided as part of the Festival to children – they are geared towards very literate students and so we are unable to use it very much.”

One activity facilitator suggested that the booklets be a lot simpler with more pictures and activities, rather than words.

Others mentioned that the Croc Festival™ forms part of the school curriculum. A number of schools in Port Augusta have incorporated an enterprise class as part of the lead up to the Festival and this involves students making craft items to sell at the Festival or costumes for performing on stage. One teacher linked this to numeracy and literacy because enterprise involves numeracy and contextual maths. For example, students use ratios to mix the plaster for plaster moulds and use measurement for costume design. Others said that before and after the Croc Festival™ many of the class writing exercises are based on the Festival experience.

In Port Augusta and Thursday Island teachers mentioned a skills program that they run before the Festival that gives basic office experience to students in making phone calls and using a fax machine. Students call local businesses and organisations to promote the Festival and to source items for the Festival itself. This was also seen to increase communication skills and confidence in communicating. This was seen as particularly important in Thursday Island as it gave students an opportunity to speak with business owners in English.

For students who did not speak English as their first language, the Festival was seen by a number of teachers as an important form of interaction, giving students a chance to speak English with students from other schools.

However, most teachers were pragmatic about the effect a three-day event can have on numeracy and literacy:

“I can’t see how any three-day event can have a long-term impact on literacy and numeracy unless, if they like learning that way, they may want to learn more and come to school more.”

“I don’t know if the Festival has a lasting impact academically but I would like to think they do. I don’t know how you would ever measure something like that.”

“There isn’t really any impact on literacy and numeracy. In the classroom kids spend so much time on literacy and numeracy that there isn’t enough time for hands-on, interactive learning but this type of learning has the biggest impact.”

Another outcome that is not directly linked to literacy and numeracy but that may be relevant is greater involvement of the community in the school and the school curriculum as a result of the Croc Festival™. For example, in Moree one school has a “mini-Croc Festival™” where representatives from organisations like health, emergency services and other community organisations hold workshops for students. The idea for this was derived from the Croc Festival™ itself.

These results suggest there are many examples of teachers incorporating the Croc Festival™ in the classroom, utilising ideas and resources provided at the Festivals. It appears that teachers build on the enthusiasm and energy that the Croc Festival™ generates in their students to enhance involvement in class activities. The extent to which this happens clearly depends on individual teachers, and there are opportunities to enhance the degree to which the Croc Festival™ concepts and resources are incorporated into the classroom.

9. STUDENT RESILIENCY AND HEALTH & EDUCATION OUTCOMES

Much has been documented about the notion of ‘resiliency’, which is made up of protective factors, found both within individuals and their environments, which impact upon the **health and well-being of young people** and consequently on their **educational outcomes**. This section will discuss resilience at an individual level, and section 10 will discuss community resilience in the context of social capital and the ability of the Croc Festival™ to positively affect this.

At an individual level resilience is described as:

The ability of an individual to successfully recover from, or adapt to, adversity and to develop social/emotional and academic competence despite exposure to life’s problems.^{vi}

There are several qualities acknowledged in the literature that contribute to a young person being resilient^{vii}.

These include such qualities as:

- Positive problem solving skills
- Self-efficacy
- High sense of worth
- Awareness of and empathy with others
- Willingness and capacity to plan
- Good communication and social skills
- Good teacher/school bonding
- Having stable relationships with peers
- Considering realistic future plan
- Experiencing success in one or more areas of life
- Possessing a strong attachment to at least one adult
- Having a positive sense of being able to achieve and deal effectively with tasks

9.1 PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR RESILIENCY

While many of the qualities for resilience described above are biologically-based, the literature also points to a number of environmental characteristics, or protective factors, that can enhance resilience at an individual level. These protective factors can exist in a number of environments including the school, the family, peer

groups and the wider community. The following table provides a summary of some of the protective factors that can be seen as influences in developing resiliency in young people.

INTERNAL PROTECTIVE FACTORS (Within the individual)	EXTERNAL PROTECTIVE FACTORS (Environmental)
<p>Genetics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No family history of chemical dependence ▪ First-born <p>Personality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good verbal skills ▪ Internal locus of control ▪ High self-esteem ▪ Healthy attitude toward drug use ▪ Responsible ▪ Sense of well-being ▪ Self-efficacy ▪ Confident optimism/considering realistic future plans ▪ Sense of humour <p>Physical Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good physical health ▪ Diet/exercise ▪ No congenital defects ▪ No acquired handicaps <p>Individual's interaction with environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good social skills ▪ Achievement via independence ▪ Good coping skills ▪ Good communication skills ▪ Good assertiveness skills ▪ Independent thinking ▪ Positive problem solving skills ▪ Strong school bonding 	<p>Immediate family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number children ▪ Positive parent-child relationship, especially attention during first year ▪ Structure, rules, direction and guidance in household ▪ Shared family values ▪ Extended family/presence of additional caretakers ▪ Informal network of kin/supportive and available for counsel ▪ Cultural diversity <p>Extended family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive communication ▪ Cultural diversity <p>Social/peer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drug-free peer group ▪ Strong positive peer bonding ▪ Cultural diversity <p>Community/school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Informal network of neighbours available for emotional support & counsel ▪ Counsel available from teachers ▪ Access to specialist services (mental health, remedial classes) ▪ Trustworthy role models/staff worthy of trust ▪ Cultural diversity

While the Croc Festival™ is not able to impact on all of the protective factors described above, particularly those associated with family (and obviously those termed 'genetics'), there are a number where Croc Festival™ is suggested to have built or enhanced these protective factors. In the following section a number of examples are provided of how Croc Festivals™ have contributed to strengthening the individuals', families', school/community's social framework for fostering resilience, however the extent to which this occurs is difficult to measure.

9.1.1 *Internal protective factors (personality, physical health and individual's interaction with their environment)*

While most people listed many benefits for students from their participation in the Croc Festivals™, they also added a proviso, as there was a perceived need to be realistic about what can be achieved from a three-day event. While they could identify immediate outcomes, in terms of long-term outcomes, the Festival was seen as “a brick among many bricks”.

A range of benefits were identified for students, particularly as the Festival is seen as a fun and exciting event that offers something different for students. Students in both the post-Festival and in-Festival research were able to identify a range of activities that they enjoyed and it was clear that the Festival offers a unique and different experience for each student. Many students commented specifically upon the exciting atmosphere of the Festival itself:

“I feel energetic, happy and proud to be Australian.”

One of the main benefits that has been identified consistently in the research since 2000 is the impact of student involvement in the Festival on **self-esteem**. Students are involved in a number of activities that were seen to increase confidence such as trying new activities, asking questions and interacting with new people - “you see students’ growing confidence”. The strengthening of self-esteem is particularly important when viewed within the context of students’ educational development:

“Student approaches to learning provides evidence that students with strong motivation and a belief in their own abilities are able to take better control of their own learning, and that this helps them to perform much better at school^{viii}.”

The Festival was seen to promote ‘having a go’ and to ‘try your best’ without fear of embarrassment and without judgement. Students were seen to gain a sense of achievement through trying new things as part of the Festival. Performing on stage was also seen as an important way to increase confidence and self-esteem, as well as a way for children to learn skills about working together.

“It’s relationship building (through dance and socially), confidence building, offers teamwork opportunities. It gives them goals and something to look forward to.”

“The kids get a sense of achievement with their performances – getting rid of the shame factor. It is very rewarding for them.”

Similarly, a number of teachers felt the Festival is a positive experience as it is based upon building and exercising respect:

“As an Aboriginal school the theme ‘Respect Yourself, Respect Your Culture’ is very important to our students.”

Once again, respect is an important building block in both personal and community development. Respect has been deemed an important part of empowering individuals to *“take control over their living and working conditions in order to be able to develop lifestyles conducive to health^{ix}”*.

There were also a number of benefits identified through the research around **social and communication skills**. As mentioned in section 8.5, Port Augusta and Thursday Island teachers mentioned a skills program that they conduct before the Festival that gives basic office experience to students in making phone calls and using a fax machine. Students called a range of local businesses in order to promote the Festival as well as to source materials for use as part of the Festival, such as materials for their performances. This was also seen to increase communication skills and **confidence** in communicating. This was seen as particularly important in Thursday Island as it gave students an opportunity to speak with business owners in English. This exercise gave students exposure to businesses and members of the wider community, while at the same time gave them **responsibility** within the school community.

Teachers mentioned the Croc Festival™ promoting student responsibility in a number of ways, i.e. responsibility to travel, stay away from home, participate in interactive activities and practice for performances, etc.

The Croc traineeship program was seen as an excellent way to combine hands-on work experience with **job responsibility**:

“[It gave us] experience and we learnt to work as a team and take on responsibilities.”

“We learnt to work with and trust other people.”

“Younger kids admire you.”

Students involved as part of the Croc traineeship were very positive about the experience and teachers felt that the program was extremely beneficial in helping students develop leadership qualities, and identifying possible career options for the future.

There were a number of examples of how the Croc Festival™ encouraged students to **consider future plans**, set goals and motivated students to work toward achieving them. Section 8.1 discusses the recall and perceived impact of the ‘I want to be’ workshop in relation to this, as when prompted about future careers many students made the link between education and a career:

“If you want to be something you have to get an education and put your mind to it.”

Section 8.3 demonstrates the ways in which the Croc Festival™ **offers students something to work towards**, which was seen as an important motivator with regards to school. Many believed that the Festival also offered opportunities to **broaden horizons** and encourage **goal setting**.

Limitations were acknowledged by participants, as the motivation to stay at school was felt to be driven by many factors, including the need for this to be developed at home/in the family.

Many teachers and community members commented upon the importance of the drug and alcohol messages that increased awareness, particularly as the Festival is drug and alcohol-free. The Festival was seen to be an important experience for students as an example of having fun without alcohol, cigarettes or drugs. This is particularly important for creating a safe community environment that encourages healthy lifestyle choices.

Section 7.2 discusses the high student recall of general messages about alcohol and **other drug use, physical health, diet** and **exercise**, all of which are linked to enhanced resilience in young people. There was also some articulation of the benefits of making positive choices, although to a lesser extent than general health messages.

Section 8.4 discusses the greater sense of school pride experienced by some students as a result of participating in the Croc Festival™, particularly those involved in performances. A number of teachers also provided examples of improvements in teacher/student relationships. These relationship and pride issues can be linked to **stronger school bonding** among some students, again a protective factor associated with resilience.

9.1.2 *External protective factors: family*

While participants found it relatively easy to discuss interactions between students and teachers, or students and the wider community, or networks between different community organisations, most found it much harder to discuss the link between the Croc Festival™ and improved interactions between family members. This is possibly attributable to the Festival being primarily aimed at students, rather than their families. However, the following observations were made in relation to this.

Many spoke of the opportunity for parents to get involved by attending the performances and the chance to watch their children perform as an important benefit of the Festival. This was seen as especially relevant for Indigenous parents who may have limited involvement with school activities.

“Pride in the eyes of the mums and dads, as it is one of the only things they see their kids doing.”

One student had this to say about parental involvement in the Festival:

“It’s good for them (parents) to know what you are doing at school.”

Research shows that encouraging parents of Indigenous students to be more involved within schools and educational institutions has positive effects upon Indigenous education. One of the causes of low Indigenous school retention is related to factors associated with culture and history such as *“parental discomfort with schools.”* Parents increased involvement in the Festival in some cases was linked to an increased interaction with school activities, which offered opportunities to strengthen ties between parents and the school, and to encourage effective communication in the future:

“It has given me a chance to interact with parents who normally have a negative attitude towards school. Now they see things differently.”

“It bridges the gap between school and the community as often the parents come along.”

“It has enabled teachers to form closer working relationships with parents and other members of the community as we have worked together to make it all come together.”

“There is more positive talk about what young people are doing at Port Lincoln High. Also, as a result more parents have been involved in the school – some have travelled with the school to the Festival – and they are becoming more comfortable interacting with the school now.”

“The fact that 500 parents are out there on the school oval is really significant for us, as we find it just so hard to get them to even walk through the front gate.”

While the Croc Festival™ focuses primarily on students, feedback suggests that some parents directly benefit from their involvement. This ranges from parents attending the performances, through to parents volunteering with the school or in the hosting of the event. Some even felt there was a positive impact just from parents coming onto the school grounds for the performances, as this was seen to help break down barriers. This ties in with some of the recommendations from *Impacts on Social Capital and Educational Attainment*, which suggest that there is a need to help make schools and educational institutions *“parent and elder friendly places”*^x. It can be argued that the Festival is helping to break down historical barriers between parents and schools through parents’ involvement in the Festival.

“Parents take an interest in what students are doing and provide support and advice. Volunteers from the community and school help out at workshops and the Croc Village.”

“Elders and parents help out at Croc in security and as Teachers aids. Elders also come and talk at school about Aboriginal culture, the land and bush tucker.”

A number of parents were heavily involved in the organisation of the Festival, either logistically or by providing support with cultural activities. This was particularly the case in Weipa, where the Chairperson and other members of the Croc Committee consisted mainly of parents.

“Parents were involved in and supported the activities and supervised as volunteers. They also constructed the Croc Village tents, made Johnny cakes and taught culture.”

Finally, there was some evidence from the careers market that some parents accompanied their children when they went through and that a few even came back later for more information. Activity facilitators as part of the health exhibition hoped that health information would be handed onto parents from their children when they took booklets and pamphlets home. This highlights the idea that the information and messages regarding health and careers is not just for students, but can also benefit parents as well.

“The range of workshops and information that promote to students that there are choices in life as well as support, not only from other students but also parents, community, teachers and organisations.”

The Croc Festival™ through its incorporation of parents into the Festival as facilitators, cultural experts, and teachers’ aids and as an audience to the performances is addressing another recommendation from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research. The recommendation states that:

“Commonwealth, State and Territory Education departments should explore new models of educational delivery that integrate communities and schools, enabling true lifelong learning from preschool to adulthood^{xi}.”

While the impact of the Croc Festivals™ on parents is restricted because many parents have limited exposure to the event beyond the performances, the Croc Festivals™ are an example of this new model of educational delivery through their ability to deliver learning in an interactive, fun way and also because they enable student, parent and community involvement.

9.1.3 External protective factors: social/peer

Many students identified **meeting and mixing with students from other schools** as one of the highlights of the Festival, and this was made possible through some of the activities and during free time at the Croc Village. Teachers also felt that this was an important benefit for students as they were given opportunities to interact with students from different areas. For children from remote communities, this was seen as especially beneficial, as the interaction was seen to strengthen their character and self-confidence. This interaction is what students comment on most often, and it was felt this could have a flow-on effect into high school (for example, many of the children from remote area schools may attend one of the host community schools when they go to high school). In particular, for students who spoke English as a second language, this interaction was seen as an effective way to increase their communication skills, as by necessity they had to communicate in English.

A number of teachers and activity facilitators mentioned the student benefits of performing in relation to teamwork and bonding, as well as the sense of collective pride and achievement experienced by students. Many research participants observed a sense of **positive peer bonding** among students in relation to

performing at the Croc Festival™. This was considered a strong positive impact of the Croc Festival™, as it was considered somewhat unusual given the general negative direction of peer pressure in relation to ‘achievement’ experienced in many of the school communities.

A co-ordinator of a youth centre felt the Festival was very important, and the positive outcome of this was to see students’ “willingness to be involved in a public spectacle”, which was perceived as something that youth are often hesitant to volunteer for.

A number of students said that they felt proud to belong to their school as part of their involvement in the Festival, particularly if they were performing. Teachers were also able to identify the benefits for students and schools provided by the opportunity to perform:

“Performing on stage gives the school a higher profile and it gets people talking about us back in Port Lincoln – we have been in the paper three times before coming here. A mural has been produced that depicts our performance.”

Section 6.4 discusses the positive reactions both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students had toward mixing with students from different cultural backgrounds, and that being involved in Indigenous cultural activities at school made them feel proud. The positive promotion of **cultural diversity** within communities is considered one of the protective factors influencing resiliency in young people.

9.1.4 External protective factors: school

Both students and teachers spoke of the Festivals’™ ability to ‘break down barriers’ and allow interaction in a more relaxed, informal and fun social situation, which resulted in enhanced **trust** in some student/teacher relationships. Students talked about getting to know their teachers in a new way outside of the classroom. Teachers spoke of similar occurrences:

“There are a lot of hard times at school and this gives you a chance to get to know them on another level.”

Section 8.3 presents some evidence to suggest that there may be some link between the Croc Festival™ and **school attendance**, although the extent to which this is the case is difficult to measure. Some teachers mentioned that the retention rate for Indigenous students has increased in recent times, and it was felt that this may in some way be influenced by Croc Festival™, although most were hesitant to identify direct cause and effect relationships. A number of teachers mentioned higher attendance in the lead-up to the Festival, particularly as for many schools participating in the Croc Festival is used as a reward for good behaviour or school attendance.

Satisfaction with the Festival was extremely high across organisations and schools within the communities, and it was agreed that the Festival offers a **unique learning and social experience** for students. The volume and variety of activities and experiences mentioned by those included within the research is a testament to the Croc Festival's™ ability to satisfy a wide range of interests of students.

Many teachers referred to the number of students who did their performance practice outside school hours as indicative of the increased student motivation toward school as a result of the Croc Festival™.

The Festival *“brings in a touch of novelty and newness”* as people are exposed to new technologies, new activities such as sports and dancing, and have the opportunity to meet new people and students. This was seen to be particularly relevant for students from rural and remote communities as they are exposed to activities and information that they would not have otherwise seen.

“It’s good to have the Croc Festival™ here because we can’t guarantee being able to get the funds to get kids to the mainland to see those types of things.” (Thursday Island)

“It gives them a wider understanding of their lives and people around them. For example, the activities about voting (the AEC) equips them with skills for life.”

Amongst students who were from the host community, the Croc Festival™ was seen to promote community spirit and pride among the youth. In fact, the Festival was often perceived to increase community pride throughout the whole community:

“I love it (Croc Festival™), it’s brilliant! Kids get involved who don’t usually, or won’t do anything in class and the results are amazing. They’re interacting and helping each other. Isolated kids have made friends. It brings schools, communities, teachers and the public together, there’s not enough of it. The Croc Festival™ is the only thing that we do as part of a community.”

There were a number of **networking** opportunities identified between different sectors of the community. Teachers commented that they were able to interact with activity facilitators, develop contacts and collect information. For example, in Thursday Island local cabinet-makers were able to establish links with the high school and when they were ready to take on an apprentice they contacted teachers in order to assess the interest from students in taking on the apprenticeship. This issue of networking and its associated benefits in relation to social capital is discussed in more detail in section 10.

9.1.5 *External protective factors: community*

Howard and Johnson discussed teachers’ perceptions of the resilience enhancing potential of linking schools with other community-based organisations, particularly health programs that “introduce students to community agencies and their roles and supportive nature of agencies out there and bodies out there to assist that they might be able to tap into at an older age^{xii}.”

The Croc Festival™ has been recognised as an important vehicle that encourages interaction between different sectors of the community, and often building long-term relationships as a result of this. This was demonstrated in many ways.

The Croc Festival™ was seen to **expose students to positive opportunities and information within the community**, particularly about their future direction, education, health and interests.

“They learnt by not knowing they were being taught.”

The Croc Festival™ was seen to **raise awareness of the organisations** involved in the Festival. For example, a youth centre that in the past had organised activities at the Croc Festival™ said that this was very effective as it increased the awareness of their service, especially as they came into contact with people who don't usually use their service in the community, which was very good in increasing exposure to young people and the schools.

This increased awareness was seen to improve the receptiveness of schools to bringing in people from the community and community organisations to run cultural activities, information days and workshops, which **increased the interaction between schools and communities**.

The interaction with various **role models** was identified in all communities as an important benefit for students as part of their involvement in the Festival. Students spoke of meeting people like Evonne Goolagong-Cawley and Kyle van der Kuyp and hearing stories of their experiences. Teachers felt this was beneficial as these role models emphasised the importance of school and achieving your best. Students were also able to interact with local role models and leaders such as health care workers, local TAFE workers, local council workers etc. This mix of local and national role models shows students examples of the range of options open to them and the belief that they can achieve anything if they put their minds to it.

Local role models are of particular relevance to Indigenous students as research into Indigenous school retention shows that students are more likely to stay at school longer when sustained contact with people of higher education levels is maintained^{xiii}.

Section 6.2 discusses the fact that for many communities, the Croc Festival™ is the only event that is well attended by all sectors of the community, that is youth and adults, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members. Many people commented on the success of the Festival in being drug and alcohol free and it was seen to be an important community-supported message to provide to young people, which helped to strengthen the community's social framework for fostering resilience.

It was seen to demonstrate to young people a sense of **community unity** in putting together the event, something that no other community events in any of the communities was perceived to have achieved.

Many people commented that the Croc Festival™ made the community stronger and more unified, even if it was only for the three days when the Festival was on. Strengthening the community in this way was attributed to the **networking** opportunities offered by the Festival and the way families, schools, businesses and community organisations were united by the Festival. Making a community stronger through *“networks of social relations... that serve the purpose of potentially enabling groups and individuals access to a pool of resources and supports^{xiv}”* is the foundation for social capital, which is discussed in the following section.

10. COMMUNITY IMPACT

This section aims to articulate and examine the unique qualities and the impact the Croc Festival™ has on local Indigenous communities. It outlines the dimensions of social capital and community resilience and how these come together to contribute to an understanding of the relationships and links with the goals of Croc Festival™. The constructs of social capital and community resilience are not, yet, fully supported by research. This evaluation contributes to the development of reliable measures of social capital and community resilience, and to improving knowledge of ways to enhance the educational and health outcomes of young people, in particular.

10.1 SOCIAL CAPITAL

The concept of social capital has been developed by different disciplines to explain social interaction and organisation, and to link these to desirable social goals – economic development, social cohesion, and more recently, to the health of populations. Although it has been defined differently by different disciplines and used differently to explain different outcomes there is growing evidence of its value in describing some of the complex pathways between social phenomena, and the education and health outcomes achieved by individuals and communities or populations. It is important to note that the evidence is of an **association** between these phenomena and educational or health outcomes – with some evidence that communities that have higher levels of social capital having higher rates of educational attainment and better health status than communities that have lower levels of social capital. However it is not, yet, clear which comes first – more research is needed. Despite this lack of ‘proof’ of the relationship between social capital and educational and health outcomes, there is evidence that children and young people who live in families and communities that are cohesive, connected (within and to wider society), and that share norms of respect, support, and tolerance are more likely to ‘stay at school’ and to be healthier throughout their lives.

In this project, given the specific focus of the Croc Festival™ on Indigenous young people and communities, the description and definition of social capital developed by Mignone et al with First Nations communities in Canada were used. There has been no equivalent research conducted to define Indigenous social capital in Australia.

“Social capital is a concept that tries to capture the essence of community life.^{xvii}” It is a collective construct that combines several elements – identified by Mignone and First Nations communities (and others) as:

- Social relationships (e.g. how do people get along?)
- Social networks (e.g. do people find it easy to connect with others?)
- Social norms and values (e.g. do people show respect towards others?)
- Trust (e.g. do people, in general, trust others?)
- Resources (e.g. do people tend to share resources?)

Each of these elements was incorporated into the design and evaluation of the Croc Festival™ conducted in 2004. The evaluation identified participants' perspectives on the ways in which the Croc Festival™ contributed to increases in the social capital available to the participating communities (and to individual participants) and these have been reported below.

10.1.1 Community Resilience

Although there has been no definitive study of the relationship between social capital and community resilience, again there is a defensible logic linking the two. It is likely that communities with access to high levels of social capital are more likely to be resilient.^{xvi}

Community resilience looks at the ability of a community to respond effectively to shocks and stresses, including the collective and personal capacity of its citizens and institutions to respond to and influence economic and social change.^{xvii}

A resilient community has been found to have the following characteristics:

Leadership

1. leadership, both formal elected and informal organisational, is diversified and representative of age, gender, and cultural composition of the community;
2. elected community leadership is visionary, shares power and builds consensus.

Participation/Collaboration

3. community members are involved in significant community decisions;
4. there is a spirit of mutual assistance and cooperation in the community;
5. organisations in the community have developed partnerships and collaborative relationships;
6. citizens are involved in the creation and implementation of the community vision and goals.

Unity/Pride

7. the community feels a sense of pride;
8. people feel a sense of attachment to their community;
9. the community adopts a development approach that encompasses all segments of the population.

Self-reliance

10. the community is self reliant and looks to itself and its own resources to address major issues;
11. the community has a strategy for increasing independent local ownership;
12. the community looks outside itself to seek and secure resources (skills, expertise, finance) that will address areas of identified weakness.

Economy

13. there is a variety of community economic development organisations in the community such that the key community economic development functions are well served;
14. the community is aware of its competitive position in the broader economy;
15. the community has an economic plan that guides its development;
16. there is on-going action towards achieving community economic development goals.

Employment

17. employment in the community is diversified beyond a single large employer;
18. major employers in the community are locally owned;
19. there is an openness to alternative ways of earning a living and economic activity.

Confident optimism/vision

20. people feel optimistic about the future of the community;
21. there is a strong belief in and support for education at all levels;
22. there is regular evaluation of progress towards the community's strategic goals;
23. organisations use the community economic development plan to guide their actions.

A project such as the Croc Festivals™ cannot hope to contribute to each of these dimensions of a resilient community. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify some characteristics to which the Croc Festivals™ might reasonably be expected to contribute and some of these were included in the evaluation.

10.2 LOCAL IDENTITY

Strong communities provide people with personal support for each other through bonds of friendship or family. They are also communities in which individuals and groups participate actively in community decision-making – through membership of committees, local government, sporting and social clubs, and all mechanisms through which people connect with one another and with society .

Participants saw the Croc Festival™ as strengthening the communities in which they were held. Participants said that they found the Festivals had increased the supportiveness of the community and contributed to the community's positive self-image. Several people in Moree and Port Augusta felt that their community had a negative image and that the self-esteem within the community was generally low.

Many felt that the Croc Festival™ had contributed to improved community pride by bringing other people into the town, offering opportunities to showcase their community and to improve the perceptions of the community among others.

“It brings the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community together. It brings kids together. Moree has a bad name and the Festival breaks the negativity of the town, as people go away and talk positively about Moree. It’s the best thing for Moree.”

There were several examples of how Croc Festival™ was linked to improved community identity in the host community:

- It was seen to “put our community on the map.” As well, it was felt the Croc Festival™ provided an opportunity to bring people together, as “no event pulls the community together like Croc”. It was seen to lift people’s spirits, both for young people and the wider community;
- Some people felt very proud that they had hosted the Croc Festival™, a sense that “we did all that work”;
- The Festival creates a good atmosphere and a regional feel that brings communities closer together. For example, in Weipa community members do not see the Festival as a Weipa Festival but rather a Western Cape Festival;
- On Thursday Island they ran a competition for students to design the logo for the Croc Festival™. This was made into posters and calendars and these were displayed throughout the community in hotels, offices and shops.
- The majority of respondents felt that Croc Festival™ is well supported by the community and well attended.

“Croc’s fun and we felt special as hosts. It’s exciting to meet other students from other areas”.

10.3 TRUST

The role of trust as an integrative force that bonds people, that enables people to cooperate, and that reduces the complexity of social interactions (between individuals, and between individuals and society’s institutions) is well documented.^{xviii} Strong communities are those in which people trust that other people, organisations and government institutions will act in accordance with social rules and norms and will take into account the interests and needs of others. High levels of trust in communities have been shown to enhance cooperation, interaction and engagement in community activities, and is associated with attitudes of altruism and reciprocity.

There were several examples of how the Festival promoted and strengthened trusting relationships between members of the community. Many spoke of the lines of communication having been opened between organisations, as well as business related interactions made easier.

For example, in Port Augusta, the Pika Wiya Health Service said that the Croc Festival™ has made many students feel more comfortable approaching the health centre. A number of students have completed work experience or placements with Pika Wiya as a consequence of their presence at the Croc Festival™.

10.4 SOCIAL NETWORKS

10.4.1 *Interaction between different sectors*

Educational outcomes and health outcomes are determined not only by personal decisions made by individuals, but by the physical, social and economic environments within which people live, work, and play. When environments are supportive it is easier for children and young people to make positive choices about education, career and health. When environments are not supportive it is harder for children and young people to make such positive choices. For this reason it is vital that all sectors (government, non-government and the private sector) and within government (housing, transport, education, health, family services, employment, etc.) work together to improve children and young people's life chances.

The organisation of the Croc Festivals™ provides opportunities for all relevant organisations and sectors to join in and work together, even if only for a defined period. Building good working relationships among different groups and organisations is a necessary first step in developing effective longer-term partnerships – and the Croc Festivals™ appear to have been a useful platform for such relationships.

Some people felt that in their general work environment they have links with other organisations that do similar work to their own, or work with similar target groups, but that they often do not make links with organisations outside this speciality. It was felt that Croc Festival™ broadened the relationships that organisations develop, which can be beneficial personally and professionally. A range of examples of this interaction were identified:

- People involved in activities often go around and introduce themselves to other activity supervisors and gather information about their organisation.
- Once the Festival is over, organisations and individuals have strengthened relationships creating more opportunity for interaction and future collaborations. In Port Augusta and Alice Springs activity supervisors discussed getting to know people from other organisations and this has opened up lines of communication both socially as well as for business opportunities. This was more limited in Thursday Island because the community is already very tightly knit, with organisations already working together quite regularly.
- Relationships that developed as part of the Croc Festival™ have lead to long-term collaborations in Queensland between Queensland health and other local health services who collaborate throughout the year.

- Others have said it provides contacts of “who to talk to” and has “oiled the wheels a bit” when it comes to conducting other business.
- Running sports activities for the Croc Festival™ has led to follow-up visits from QLD Hockey, QLD Athletics and QLD Softball in Weipa.
- As mentioned in section 6.1.5, in Alice Springs, where the event was held for the second time, members of the Croc Committee felt that the Festival enabled the most extensive networking opportunities of all local community events. In particular, the Alice Springs Local Council felt the Festival was significant as it enabled them to engage with a number of important areas such as venue organisation, sporting activities and associations and the environmental health activity.
- It appears the interaction and networking opportunities offered by Croc Festival™ are quite different to other opportunities during the year. Generally other opportunities are limited to groups with similar focus (eg youth services), rather than offering broader exposure to a range of organisations and individuals across a range of sectors. It was recognised by a number of people that if the Festival was not held in their community, networking opportunities would be reduced.

10.4.2 Use of local facilities: sharing resources

There were numerous examples of how local facilities were used in the staging of the Croc Festival™.

- CDEP workers in Alice Springs helped with some of the catering. In Port Augusta and Alice Springs CDEP workers also helped in the erection of the tents in the Croc Village.
- In Alice Springs the prison truck was used to transport supplies and equipment, and prison workers helped to set up tents in the Croc Village.
- In Thursday Island local buses were used to transport students between activities. Local facilities such as the public pool, oval, sports centre, bowling club were all used to house activities.
- Other local services used TAFE, plumbers, community catering and local businesses. Comalco, in Weipa said this of the Croc Festival and their contribution of in-kind support (cranes, trucks, etc):

“We (Camalco) support programs that create social cohesion – albeit for a couple of nights. Croc helps to break down stereotypes ... it is also a good chance to talk to people. I now stop and have a yarn with the AQIS person in Weipa, with QLD Health. It improves relationships between ourselves and Police as now we know who to talk to. It has oiled the wheels a bit.”

Ownership issues

Within any partnership there are likely to be tensions arising when organisations have different goals, or when people have differing expectations of the roles to be played by each of the partners and of the intended benefits. These tensions are common in inter-sectoral partnerships when the initial relationships are negotiated without specific attention being given to defining the needs, goals, and expected benefits for each

partner. Such tensions can be worked out – the Croc Festivals™ experienced such tensions as discussed by respondents below.

There was some criticism related to a perceived limited level of interaction between organisations in Moree because it was felt that the Croc Festival™ (by this they were referring to IFA and the AES) “divorced itself from other organisations” and “split the community”, and that this limited the interaction that was possible. It should be kept in mind that a few participants who were not involved in organising the Croc Festival expressed this perception™, but this was not unanimously shared by others who were not involved in the organising of the Croc Festival™.

Thursday Island and to a lesser extent Weipa, also felt critical of the level of ownership they have of the event, and expected more community control and recognition of the time, energy and resources devoted by the community. In particular, a number of community members from both Weipa and Thursday Island felt that they did not see enough of the funded money being put to use at the Festival as most workers are volunteers and the community provides many in-kind resources. This feeling was fuelled by the fact that local businesses also contributed in-kind to the event. There was some sense of “where does all the money go?” In all locations a number of people felt that while they did all the preparation work, “IFA completely took over during the Festival” and a few felt resentment at the perceived lack of recognition that was shown to the community for their efforts. One member of the Croc Committee in Weipa expressed disappointment that very few IFA workers helped with the clean up after the Festival and that the majority of the clean up was performed by community members themselves, again on a voluntary basis.

Despite this, there was a sense across the research that the community was prepared to put these gripes aside “for the sake of the kids”.

Others appeared to be very happy with the current level of ownership and a number recognised the difficulty of organising the event without the assistance of IFA.

10.4.3 Building relationships among people and organisations

The quality of social networks can have an impact on health. Social isolation or exclusion can have an impact on individuals’ self-esteem and hence, on the likelihood of their completing school education. Such exclusion (of whole communities as well as individuals) can also mean that some groups are denied access to the resources they need to participate fully in education and to become and stay healthy. For individuals, social networks can help people to obtain the social and material resources they need (love and care, food, books, clothing, transport) while for communities, social networks are necessary to ensure that they have high quality schools and health care facilities, representation on the bodies responsible for social decision-making, and avenues through which to advocate for changes where problems have arisen.

Section 9 discusses in detail how the Croc Festivals™ support the expansion of social networks between parents and children, between parents and teachers, and between schools and the wider community, for example:

- Families and community support the school through their involvement in the organising and execution of the Croc Festival™. In Port Augusta the parents involved in the community catering during the Croc Festival™ raised enough money to buy five fridges for a local high school.
- The Pika Wiya Health Service in Port Augusta through their involvement at the Croc Festival™ now have stronger relationships with the schools, and students visit the centre and learn about careers in health. High school students also do placements and work experience at the health service.

“From Pika Wiya’s perspective it has strengthened relations with other organisations and has had positive spin-offs. This means that we have a greater capacity to do more with each Festival and outside the Festival as well.”

- University students studying allied health got involved in the health expo organised by Pika Wiya in Port Augusta.
- The Festival shows young people there is unity in putting together an event (unity with Aboriginal organisations, government, schools and wider community ... “all working together to make the event happen”).
- The Croc Festival™ increases the organisations’ and community’s awareness of community service and youth organisations, particularly through the health and careers markets.
- A number of Croc trainees in Moree have subsequently taken on work with local community organisations as a result of their involvement with the Festival.

10.5 CULTURAL CONTEXT, SOCIAL NORMS AND VALUES

Communities in which prevailing social norms and values support dialogue among people from different cultures and in which difference is not only tolerated but valued are more cohesive, and provide all their members with the confidence and support they need to grow and flourish – physically, psychologically and socially.

Creating opportunities for dialogue, for creating partnerships and working together, and for modifying the social norms and values of people and organisations were also outcomes of the Croc Festivals™. Participants reported that that the Festival promotes reconciliation as it brings Indigenous and non-Indigenous people closer together:

“There is no other time in the year when you see that audience together”.

You see “black and white students performing and see black and white parents sitting together”;

10.6 EMPLOYMENT

In Weipa the Napranum Community (an Aboriginal community just outside of Weipa) ran the security for the Croc Festival. Since that time Camalco have employed their security services with a contract of \$20,000.

In other communities:

“CDEP workers were given some responsibility with labour and catering so the Festival has provided some employment opportunities.”

As with the health exhibitions, the careers market was seen as one of many education platforms targeting students. In Weipa members of the local Shire Council identified the link between the Croc Festival messages around employment and education and their strategy “got to be earning or learning in 2005” which targets 16 year olds, as mentioned in section 8.2. This representative said “the journey of 1000 miles starts with a single step” and felt the Croc Festival™ was a useful complement to other strategies.

“If you can get a few kids saying ‘I can do that’, this is useful for planting seeds”.

Also mentioned in section 8 was that businesses were positive toward the careers market as some felt their involvement was an investment, as they are committed to increasing Indigenous employment, and the careers market was seen as a good opportunity for local businesses to sell themselves as a career option. However, some businesses and organisations felt the careers market had less relevance as it was perceived to be a ‘snatch and grab’ and therefore students were not engaged with the information. Several people also suggested that the representation of local businesses could be improved.

11. OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS

The previous sections have explored the benefits offered by the Croc Festivals™ for students and the broader community. This section provides a summary of the suggestions made by participants for opportunities to build on the success of the Festivals.

11.1 ORGANISATION, PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Most people included in the research spoke positively about the organisation of the Festivals, and the level of community involvement. Others also highlighted the limitations of what can be expected from a three-day event.

“If you are trying to plant a seed in the kids mind, then you won’t do too badly, but if you are trying to change a community you are doomed to failure”

There were some suggestions, however for enhancing community ownership and participation, and improving the level of recognition volunteers receive. While many of these suggestions may need to be orchestrated by the communities themselves, advice and assistance could be provided by IFA.

- There is a potential to improve community involvement, especially from small community groups, as it would be helpful to raise their profile in the community, and to develop their skills by running activities. Youth organisations were specifically mentioned, as there are clearly advantages in linking the Festival with community organisations that run youth programs, as this may encourage students to be involved in other youth events. Other suggestions for improving community involvement included offering employment options, promoting arts and crafts, having market stalls and entertainment for adults.
- This suggestion for increasing community involvement was also raised due to concerns that the success of the committee was dependent on one or two people, and that if they left *“the whole thing might fail”*. This was particularly the case in Weipa where a very small group of people were responsible for things running smoothly in the lead-up to the Festival.
- A number of community members were interested in gaining greater community ownership and responsibility over the Festival. A few suggested the funding should go to the communities and this can then be channelled back into local organisations and businesses and employment.

“Are we (Thursday Island) receiving adequate financial benefits from the Croc Festival? It seems that IFA gets all the profits.”

- At Thursday Island it was suggested that local people become involved in the scripting of the performance nights to make it more relevant to the community. For example, there were numerous references to Commonwealth government departments but very few (if any), to local businesses and

local people who helped make the Festival possible. It was felt that more community involvement within the scripting would give the performances more of a community feel.

- A few suggested the development of a “how-to” manual for the host communities. This could include a list of the contacts, timelines, information on how to arrange a press release, logistical issues with setting up the activities (eg a map of the careers market venue with power points indicated). Pika Wiya Health Service in Port Augusta has started to develop a “how-to” manual for their organisation, which could be used to develop a broader community manual.
- It was also felt that there should be greater promotion in the communities of the Croc Festival™ including banners and posters in the main street. In addition to this all advertisements should make it clear that the performances as part of the Festival are for the whole community, as there was some confusion that the Festival was just for the Indigenous community or just for schools. As well, some participants thought that advertising material for the Croc Festival™ should mention the health and education workshops and not just the performances. A number of participants requested information on the history of the Croc Festival™ and it was suggested that summary materials on the Croc Festival™ be developed that can be used to increase awareness in the community (there was a perception that the current material is too wordy). There was a request for information that briefly says:

“Why it is here, what it’s about and what benefits it brings to the community.”

- A few suggested it would be good to have a “main act” at the end of the performances to encourage people from the community to attend. This was most relevant in Alice Springs as it was only the second time the Festival had been held there.

There was also a range of suggestions related to improving the engagement of families with the student’s involvement in the Croc Festival™:

- One teacher suggested creating a video that showed children from their community interacting with some of the activities of the Festival, and not just the students’ performances, which is currently the case. It is hoped that this would help to relate to parents the importance of the Festival and give an understanding of the type of activities students are participating in. This may lead to further encouragement of parents for their children’s involvement in the Festival, as well as those interests developed as part of the Festival.
- Another teacher suggested that students compile follow up diaries including photos or big posters that they can put up around the community to show what they participated in at the Festival.
- It was also seen as important that children see “fathers, uncles and family members” as role models, and a few felt that this was not encouraged enough by Croc Festival™ as many activities relied on “out-of-townners”. Enhancing the local involvement in the activities provides an opportunity to reinforce local role models.

11.2 ACTIVITIES / WORKSHOPS

A few of the activities were criticised for not being engaging and interactive enough. The suggestion was made to skill up activity facilitators so that they develop activities that are interactive and don't solely rely on written material. This was felt to be particularly relevant with regard to students in Alice Springs who spoke English as a second (or sometimes third or fourth) language.

The careers market in particular was criticised for not engaging enough with students and once again it was suggested that facilitators were skilled up to overcome this barrier. It was also suggested that the careers market have more information and stalls relating specifically to Indigenous employment opportunities.

“There needs to be a greater focus on organisations getting together – they need to network and provide services in concentrated partnerships. There shouldn't be giveaways for students at careers markets – it just leads to a lot of rubbish. Instead facilitators should engage with kids, letting them know employment opportunities. If you don't engage with kids specifically about careers it is pointless. They need to facilitate interactive engaging activities and be able to talk about careers in an interesting way.”

The Croc Festival™ was seen as an important avenue for encouraging the interaction between students and role models, including both famous and local role models. Many commented on the impact made by famous role models such as Evonne Goolagong-Cawley and other sports stars upon students. Many participants felt that the interaction with local role models and community leaders was equally important, if not more important, as students' interaction with famous role models.

Many felt that Croc Festival™ did offer an opportunity for students to see local role models, although there were a few who felt this could be improved. Participants spoke of the importance for children to see parents, uncles, aunts and family members as role models, and a few felt that this was not encouraged by Croc Festival™ as many activities relied on “out-of-towners”. Enhancing the local involvement in the activities provides an opportunity to reinforce local role models.

“Role models are very important for these kids. To see their own people in leadership capacities is good and needs to be continually built on. There is a lot of negativity out there and to change that is a positive thing but it is a long term thing.”

As well, some suggested that Indigenous staff and organisations should be utilised more often. As most organisations have Indigenous staff, these should be more involved in the activities, as it is important to see Indigenous faces in mainstream positions to promote the message that *“Indigenous kids can do anything.”*

A few said that they would like to see more cultural activities as part of the Festival such as weaving, carving and traditional dancing. Primary school students in Moree suggested the following:

“There should be more Indigenous famous people as role models, more sport activities and more Aboriginal culture”

This was also seen as an important avenue for involving families in the Croc Festivals™.

A few students suggested an activity that involved making their own healthy food and one community member suggested displaying examples of nutritional supermarket food to make nutrition more relevant to students.

11.3 INDIGENOUS FESTIVALS AUSTRALIA

There was a request made by many community members for IFA to increase the level of recognition given to community volunteers, as everyone felt the success of the Croc Festival™ depended on these volunteers, but that they did not receive enough recognition and praise:

“It is dependent on volunteers, and if they’re not looked after they won’t come back.”

In Port Augusta one community member discussed how volunteers involved in one of the workshops were paid, and that this was important as it *“gave recognition of their expertise”*. While it is not expected that this could be achieved for all the volunteers it highlights the importance of recognising the efforts of the Festival volunteers.

In Thursday Island community members reflected on the Croc Festival held on Thursday Island in 2003. In relation to this event, they felt that students were “rushed off stage” in order for the organisers to keep to time restrictions. One community member said that one of the performances was stopped before the end, as organisers were concerned with finishing on time. Students and community members were disappointed about this as the students had put a lot of preparation time into their performances and no-one would have really minded if the performances ran over time.

Several criticisms were made about the facilities at the Croc Festival™, all of which were consistent with previous research. Criticisms of the facilities were as follows:

- The quality and quantity of food was mentioned as an issue, particularly in Alice Springs where no additional food sources were made available at the Festival grounds.
- The toilets and showers were criticised for their poor quality.
- A number of students felt there was not enough shade at the Festival and this was particularly relevant in Alice Springs.

- There was criticism that the 'I want to be' workshop did not cater for disabled students, as there was no wheelchair ramp.
- There was some criticism of the sleeping arrangements in the Croc Village, mainly that the mattresses were too thin and uncomfortable.

11.4 ENCOURAGING SCHOOLS TO INCORPORATE MESSAGES BEFORE AND AFTER THE EVENTS

A number of suggestions were made to help schools extend the life of Croc Festival™ by integrating some of the activities and messages of the Festival into the curriculum. A number of teachers and community members stressed the need to link the Croc Festival™ into school subjects to ensure the development of the messages and information derived from the Festival. While it is acknowledged that much of this responsibility lies with the schools themselves, there is an opportunity for IFA to establish networks or provide information or examples on how this could be achieved. For example, the literacy programs in Moree, Thursday Island and Port Augusta are an example to all schools of how the Festival can be linked to classroom learning. These programs involve after-school classes that are held both before and after the Festivals that concentrate on activities aimed to increase literacy and numeracy skills such as basic maths, reading and writing. In many cases teachers used the activities in the Croc Festivals™ booklet 'Solid and Deadly' as part of the program. Students also wrote and read out stories of their experiences at the Festival.

A number of teachers mentioned the importance of lead-up information or activities as part of the students' involvement with the Festival:

"It is important to come here with some preparation under the belt. Then the students can come with some expectation."

As mentioned in Section 6.1.3, Queensland Health, who are responsible for the Health Expo at the Weipa and Thursday Island Festivals, have successfully extended the life of the Croc Festival™ through visits to schools in Far North Queensland as part of their health promotion strategy targeting students. Similarly, in the post-Festival research in Moree a facilitator at the sexual health stall commented that numerous teachers approached the station for information about their service and this has already lead to the organisation visiting two schools outside of Moree since the Festival.

Information provided before the Festival would be useful to prepare students for some of the activities and concepts that they will be exposed to at the Festival. This is particularly relevant for students from remote communities or students that speak a language other than English at home, as the Festival introduces a range of topics to students, some of which they would not have encountered previously.

A few participants stressed the importance of the need to follow-up messages, especially with regard to drug and alcohol, education and career messages. It was felt that exposure to these messages needed to be sustained over a longer period of time than the Festival can offer in order to be effective. Once again, it was acknowledged that this might need to be addressed by schools and community organisations.

The suggestion was made to attempt to involve families in the lead-up to the event, as families would really like to know what their kids are doing as part of the Festival. However, it was recognised that it may be the committee and the schools who have to be pro-active in this regard.

11.5 OTHER PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The research asked participants to consider other funding opportunities that would achieve the same objectives as those of the Croc Festival™. The vast majority felt that the Croc Festival™ offered the best opportunity given the objectives, and only a few other suggestions were offered:

- Funding other community events such as the National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC), and putting the drug and education message in all community events.
- Funding other committees such as Parents and Citizens Association and the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) programs with the resources to be able to promote health, education and goal-setting messages.
- As mentioned in section 5.2 Moree East Primary School has a “mini-Croc” where they invite representatives from CDEP, Police SES and other organisations to do workshops with the students on A Day (Aboriginal Day).

In most cases, participants were unable to identify strategies that could meet the range of objectives and offer the variety of benefits that Croc Festival™ offers, and this demonstrates the relevance and importance of the Festivals to the students and communities who participate.

11.6 STRENGTHENING PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

The majority of participants were overwhelmingly positive about the Croc Festival™, however a number of limitations were identified as part of the research.

While most participants could identify at least some link between the Croc Festival™ and social capital building within communities, many were hesitant to identify an enduring community impact - “[after the

Festival] things go back to normal". Others commented that the Croc Festival™ is *"efficient rather than effective"*.

Not having secure funding limited the ability of towns to enhance their capacity to host the event. For example, Port Augusta would like to build a stage that could then be used for other events, but not knowing from year to year whether they will get the funding to host the Croc Festival™ makes this planning difficult.

In order to create stability it is important to have consistent community representatives who are involved in community committees and other community programs:

"The co-ordinator position is very important as the central person who brings everyone together and helps to make decisions more easily"

In relation to this it is important to keep in mind that hosting the Croc Festival™ puts a lot of pressure on the community, and can *"take it's toll on the organisers"*, particularly when this is a yearly event such as in Moree and Port Augusta. This makes recognition of the efforts of volunteers particularly important in order to avoid 'Festival fatigue'.

There was criticism that the Festivals are failing to reach young people in the community who have less of an opportunity and arguably more of a need to access the health and careers information. Croc Festivals™ target students, and clearly those who have dropped out of school (aged 15-16) are an important audience that is missing out on the messages of the Festival.

Also limitations were acknowledged by participants in regards to the Croc Festival's™ ability to increase motivation to stay at school as it was felt that this is determined by many factors, including the need for this to be developed at home/in the family.

12. GUIDELINES ON KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

One of the objectives of the research was to identify the key factors for success of the Croc Festival™, and aspects of the events that are transferable to other strategies. The research suggests the following factors are critical in making the Festivals a success.

- Community involvement: It is critical to have wide community involvement and consultations, especially with regards to including a wide range of service providers, to encourage ownership. A supportive community is critical to the success of the Croc Festivals™.
- The Performances: While the activities during the day are extremely valuable to the students, the performances at night are crucial to the success of the Croc Festivals™ for the community. The performances bring the community together and provide an example of students' achievements. The performances are an excellent source of pride for students, schools, parents and the wider community and help to build students' confidence and self-esteem. A professional approach to the performances is also important, as it emphasises their significance.
- Offering a wide variety of interactive activities: Throughout the research teachers and students emphasised the benefits of the engaging, interactive, hands-on learning opportunities offered by the Festival. For messages to be delivered effectively, it is crucial that the strategy offers students a different and fun learning environment.
- Youth and community oriented event: A large part of the success of the Croc Festivals™ can be attributed to the Festival's focus on youth. However, the Festival extends to the rest of the community through such events as the performances and this ultimately extends the breadth of enhancement of social capital.
- Linking the event with school curriculum: Schools in Thursday Island, Moree and Port Augusta have successfully linked literacy and numeracy programs with the Croc Festival™ by holding these programs before and after the Festival, as well as incorporating themes of the Festival (such as those in the "Solid and Deadly" booklet). Other schools had also incorporated enterprise and dance classes into the curriculum as part of the lead-up to the Festival. Schools should be encouraged to set students follow-up projects based on the Croc Festival™ and its messages.
- Providing local and national role models: The presence of both national and local role models was seen as an integral part of the Festival as this is an important motivator for students. Role models also provide real examples of individual achievement on a community level, as well as on a national level.
- Professionalism: The vast majority of participants commented on the professionalism of IFA and their exceptional organisational skills. However, as the Festival grows and becomes 'more slick' it is important not to alienate the community or take their input for granted.

- Having a good venue: It is of vital importance to hold the Festival at a suitable venue that can provide shade, ample toilets, showers, water supply and adequate food arrangements. Several people were critical of a number of these arrangements across the research and this is consistent with previous research.
- Alcohol and smoke-free: It is important that an event focusing on drug and alcohol messages does this through an alcohol and smoke-free forum. This distinguished the Croc Festivals™ from other community based events, and provided a real experience for students of having fun without alcohol or other drugs.

13. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, perceptions of the Croc Festivals™ were positive, with students, teachers and community members identifying clear benefits from their involvement, and few suggestions for alternative funding strategies that could meet the range of objectives and offer the variety of benefits that Croc Festival™ offers. The research provided evidence of strong levels of community support, of students receiving messages about the importance of school and a healthy lifestyle, of teachers gathering ideas and resources for the classroom, and of community members developing trusting relationships. As the research was qualitative, it is not possible to assess the extent to which these outcomes were realised, but it does provide guidance on how these positive benefits can be further developed.

13.1 ORGANISATION, PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Most people included in the research spoke positively about the organisation of the Festivals, and the level of community involvement. There were some suggestions, however, for enhancing community ownership and participation, and improving the level of recognition volunteers receive. In this regard, thought needs to be given to improving the level of recognition given to community volunteers (eg. through the performance nights), and to ensuring initial consultations reach a wide cross-section of the community.

The research suggests that for many communities hosting the event, success depends on a few key individuals. It is therefore important to consider the risks this poses to future events, and ideally develop strategies to minimise these risks.

There is a need to expand the level of community involvement, so that there is a broader base directly involved in the organisation of the Festivals. Widespread promotion of the events is necessary to increase awareness and encourage participation. As well, it may be possible to ask those who are currently heavily involved in the organisation to nominate other individuals who may be interested in being involved, and directly invite them to participate. The community representatives are clearly in a good position to nominate individuals and organisations that would benefit from their involvement, and that could bring their expertise and knowledge to the events (such as youth groups and other community organisations). This would also increase the presence of local role models, which is an important component for the success of the Festivals.

Another option is to develop resources for each community that can be used in the organisation of the events. A “how-to” manual for the host communities could include a list of the contacts, timelines, information on how to arrange a press release, and logistical issues with setting up the activities (eg a map of the careers market venue with power points indicated). Pika Wiya Health Service in Port Augusta has started to

develop a “how-to” manual for their organisation, and this could be used to develop a broader community manual.

The research also suggested that there are opportunities for improving the level of awareness of the Festivals for families, especially with regards to travelling schools. Thought should be given to developing resources, or encouraging the development of resources by the schools, that demonstrates the students’ involvement. Suggestions were given for videos showing students involvement in the activities, and it was thought this could help parents understand the type of activities students are participating in, and the importance of these activities and messages. Other options include developing student diaries with photos and posters that could be displayed in the community. It may be possible to provide resources to encourage the development of these materials after the Festivals.

There are also several opportunities for improvement with regards to the facilities at the Croc Festival™, all of which are consistent with previous research. These include:

- The quality and quantity of food was mentioned as an issue, particularly in Alice Springs where no additional food sources were made available at the Festival grounds.
- The toilets and showers were criticised for their poor quality.
- A number of students felt there was not enough shade at the Festival and this was particularly relevant in Alice Springs.
- There was criticism that the ‘I want to be’ workshop did not cater for disabled students, as there was no wheelchair ramp.
- There was some criticism of the sleeping arrangements in the Croc Village, mainly that the mattresses were too thin and uncomfortable.

13.2 ACTIVITIES / WORKSHOPS

Overall, feedback on the activities was very positive. However, a few of the activities were criticised for not being engaging and interactive enough, and there are clearly opportunities to enhance this component of the Festivals. This could be done by improving the skills of activity facilitators prior to the Festivals, encouraging the development of activities that are interactive and not solely reliant on written material. This should focus on the range of students in terms of age and English language skills. The need for greater engagement was mentioned more often with regards to the careers market, and we suggest that this is the higher priority at this stage. It may be possible to introduce a stamp collection system or other options that link the activities and encourage students to engage with the facilitators (although care needs to be taken so that these options are not dependent on good literacy in English).

The research also suggests that there are opportunities to enhance the involvement of local role models in the activities, and that this should be further encouraged. Consideration also needs to be given to ensuring there is a strong presence of local Indigenous role models.

Finally, we also suggest that there is a need to ensure that the program provides an adequate amount of Indigenous cultural activities, as this is a clear attraction for many attending the Festivals. While most felt that the current Indigenous focus was adequate, as students only go to a selection of the activities because of programming, it is necessary to offer a variety of these activities so that the majority of schools attend an activity relating to Indigenous culture. This also offers opportunities for greater community involvement, and addresses concerns that as the Festivals grow the emphasis on Indigenous culture may be diminished.

13.3 HEALTH OUTCOMES

The research found that many students participating in the Festivals receive messages about the positive benefits of a healthy lifestyle, and the negative consequences of using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. It appears that these messages are delivered clearly across the Festivals, and that students are 'listening.' The sponsorship objectives of the Department of Health and Ageing also include attitudinal and behavioural objectives with regards to students making positive life choices in relation to healthy living and the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, and the research could not determine whether these objectives are being met through the Festivals. Participants were hesitant to make any links between behaviour and participation in an annual event. We therefore suggest that the Festivals build on and reinforce messages that are already being delivered through schools and communities, and that the Festivals' enhance the acceptance of these messages due to the interactive way they are being delivered. As well, the broader impact of the Festivals on resilience and social capital offer opportunities for positively influencing health outcomes.

13.4 EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

The research suggested that for many students messages about careers and the importance of school are delivered successfully through Croc Festivals™, although there are limitations in that not all students attend activities in relation to these objectives. As well, the success of these activities is influenced by the interest of the students themselves, and we believe the limited engagement of the careers market means that students who are not already contemplating their opportunities are unlikely to receive strong messages about different career options and what is required to realise these opportunities.

Research respondents were reluctant to comment on the impact of student participation in the Festivals on school attendance and performance, although there were many examples of school attendance increasing prior to the Festivals. The conclusion therefore is that messages about the importance of school are being heard by many of the students, but that it is not possible to link this with long-term educational outcomes with regard to school attendance and retention. However, there are opportunities to enhance the potential impact

on these long-term behavioural outcomes by extending the reach of the Festivals beyond the three-day event, and encouraging schools to incorporate messages before and after the Festivals.

13.4.1 Encouraging schools to incorporate messages before and after the events

The research provides several suggestions of ways to help schools extend the life of Croc Festival™ by integrating some of the activities and messages of the Festival into the curriculum. While it is acknowledged that much of this responsibility lies with the schools themselves, there is an opportunity for IFA to establish networks or provide information or examples on how this could be achieved. For example, the literacy programs in Moree, Thursday Island and Port Augusta are an example to all schools of how the Festival can be linked to classroom learning.

There is a clear need for students to be exposed to messages and concepts prior to the Festival, and this is especially useful for students from remote communities or students that speak a language other than English at home. IFA could provide resources and examples of activities that can be conducted in the classroom to prepare students for the Festival.

Of more significance to DEST's objectives though is incorporating the Festival in the school curriculum after the Festival. Exposure to messages around the importance of school for your future (and also health messages) needs to be sustained over a longer period of time than the Festival can offer in order to be effective. While there were many examples of this happening already, this appeared to be very dependent on the individual teachers and schools. Consideration needs to be given to how this approach can be further encouraged. There appeared to be limited use of the teacher resource provided by IFA, so there is a need to develop these options further. One opportunity is to include a briefing for teachers during the Festival that provides suggestions and resources for teachers for extending the life and learning of the Festival.

13.5 ENHANCING RESILIENCE IN STUDENTS

The results of the research suggest there are a number of protective factors for resiliency for which the Croc Festival™ has influence. With regards to internal protective factors, the Festivals were seen to have an impact on self-esteem, respect, motivation, social and communication skills, and pride and school bonding. With regards to external protective factors, there was also evidence of the Festivals influencing a number of these including the family, peer, school and community environments, although the influence on family was limited, as families are less involved in the Festivals.

While there were several examples of the Festivals influencing each of these internal and external protective factors, it is difficult to assess the extent to which this occurred, and the impact this has on health and educational outcomes. The research however does suggest that this is an important outcome of students' involvement, and that consideration should be given to how this can be enhanced further.

13.6 COMMUNITY IMPACT

The research explored the impact of the Croc Festivals™ on social capital. Literature on this suggests that there is an association between social capital and educational and health outcomes, in that children and young people who are surrounded by families and communities that are cohesive, connected and that share norms of respect, support and tolerance are more likely to stay at school and to be healthier throughout their lives. The research demonstrates a number of ways in which the Festivals strengthen community relations and resources through greater interaction between different sectors, helping to create a more supportive community environment. In particular, the examples identified in this research suggest that the Festivals:

- Enhance local identity, community self-image and a sense of unity
- Build trusting relationships by opening up lines of communication between organisations and different sectors
- Develop good working relationships and improve social networks by linking a range of organisations and sectors together in the hosting of the Festivals
- Support dialogue among people from Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds

While examples of enhancing social capital are present, the research does not provide information on the extent to which this is happening within communities, and whether these benefits are evident in the long-term. We believe there is an opportunity to improve the impact that the Festivals have on social capital by increasing awareness among community members of the benefits that this interaction and networking offers individuals, organisations and the community overall, and by providing guidance on how these benefits can be realised. Examples identified in this research can be used in the implementation of this strategy. While we acknowledge that the outcomes in this regard depend heavily on the community themselves, IFA, through their engagement with community representatives, has an opportunity to enhance the capacity of communities to develop social capital and therefore extend the long-term impact of the Festivals on communities.

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- ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid.*
- ^{iv} White, Spence and Maxim: *Impacts on Social Capital and Educational Attainment*.
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