Seven Sisters Report

2021



ShootingStars

Glass Jar





Executive Officer's Report
Fran Haintz

Since its inception, Shooting Stars has implemented an evidence-based approach to developing programs to empower Aboriginal girls in regional and remote communities. As part of the careful evaluation of our program, Shooting Stars has undertaken regular yarning circles, a uniquely Aboriginal methodology, with our participants and their communities to identify barriers and facilitators to their empowerment.

From this research, Shooting Stars identified some recurring themes as barriers for school attendance across our sites including negative relationships with peers or staff, difficulties with emotional regulation and bullying. These findings highlighted the need for a program that addressed mental health and resilience and guided the development of the Seven Sisters program.

The last 12 months have seen the successful pilot and roll-out of the Seven Sisters program across our sites targeting primary school participants. We continue to conduct yarning circles with participants to ensure the program is achieving a positive impact. The early feedback is positive amongst participants, parents, schools and the wider community.

The next 12 months will see Seven Sisters adapted and rolled out into high schools and as more evidence comes to light, more organisations are eager to jump on board and support the Seven Sisters program and its mission.

To truly empower Aboriginal girls and women, organisations must challenge the status quo. Using evidence, impact and research, Shooting Stars is challenging the systems and institutions that adversely impact Aboriginal girls and women through programs like Seven Sisters.





Program Manager's Report
Jade McGuire

2021 has been a fantastic year for the Seven Sisters program, with 13 sites beginning the Year 5-6 program, and 11 completing the full program. In Narrogin, four girls completed the program for the second time, having been a part of the initial pilot in 2020. These students reported that completing the program a second time really helped them with their emotions and coping strategies.

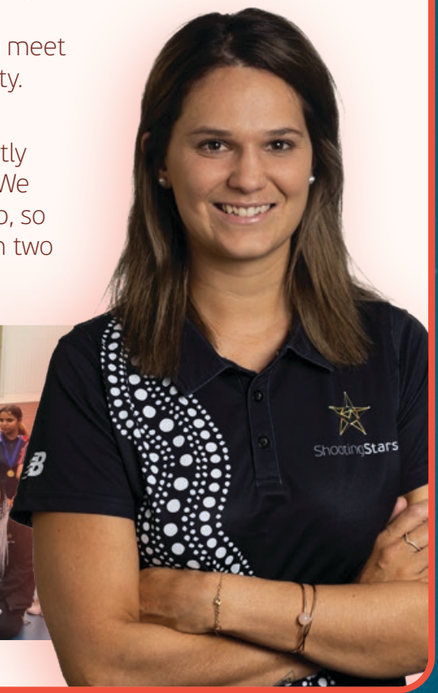
Nine community netball matches took place across 2021, with most sites enjoying good engagement from service providers. Feedback from health services has been positive, and participation is growing. For example, In Narrogin in 2020, five health services engaged in the Community Netball Match. After the success of the pilot and the noticeable difference in girls behaviour in the community, 2021 saw eight local health services and Compass (a Perth-based agency) engage in the Community Netball Match.

We also saw that the girls appeared more confident in approaching service providers the second year, asking questions and learning about what is available to them. We appreciated the great support from the service providers, such as coming over and cheering for the girls playing in the netball games. Some even agreed to get on court and play against the girls! This helps to break down that barrier between service provider and service acquirer – building on relationships within the local community.

We have been evaluating the Seven Sisters program through participant and facilitator surveys, and continue to make adjustments in the program to reflect the feedback gathered. Through these surveys we have been able to gauge what topics were of most importance on site, what activities are most relevant and whether or not there was relevance from the program to meet the needs of the girls, the school and the wider community.

In 2022, all sites will complete the Year 5-6 program and the Year 7-9 program. The Year 10-12 program is currently in development, and will be rolled out in the near future. We are also developing a second program for each age group, so that the warm-up games and activities alternate between two programs each year.





Funding Report
Dr Melanie McKee

In 2020 Shooting Stars received financial support from the Department of Health to develop a pilot of the Seven Sisters program to be implemented at our Narrogin sites from 2021 - 2022. Funding initially supported the pilot of a Year 5 and 6 program which was subsequently rolled out across all Shooting Stars sites in 2021. The pilot continued in 2021, with the development and testing of two high school programs in Narrogin, one for Years 7-9 and one for Years 10-12. A grant in 2021 from 100 Women also contributed to the pilot program costs in Narrogin.

Based on the strong outcomes from the pilot of both junior and senior Seven Sisters Programs, and to meet the significant needs of delivery of both programs across the state, we have been fortunate to receive multiple lines of funding for 2022 and beyond.

A significant grant was received from Lotterywest for delivery and development of the Senior program at six Shooting Stars sites in Derby, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Kununurra, Carnarvon, and Collie in 2022-23. The Phillips Foundation will support expansion and build capacity of Seven Sisters across all sites in 2022-2024. Whilst Telethon has provided a grant to build the capacity of our regional team to deliver the program for both junior and senior participants across WA in 2022.

Mineral Resources has committed to support Shooting Stars as Principal Partner of Seven Sisters, safeguarding the expansion and delivery of the program across all Shooting Stars sites in Western Australia from 2022-25.



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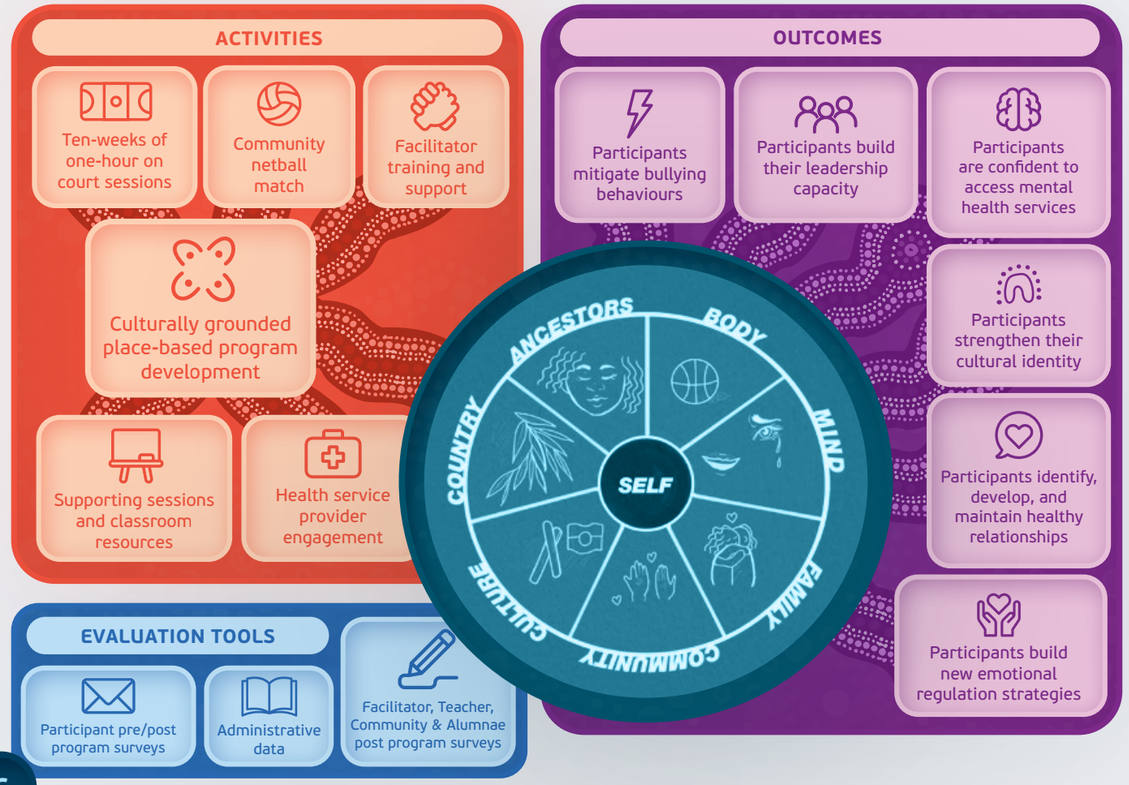
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About the Seven Sisters Program

The Seven Sisters program comprises nine weeks of one-hour sessions that are facilitated on the netball court, where participants engage in culturally grounded warm-up activities, netball skill development, discussion about the session's themes, and a guided stretch and meditation. In week 10 the participants compete in a community netball match, where local mental health service providers are invited to come and engage with the participants to break down barriers in service acquisition.

The program is called Seven Sisters for the significance that the constellation holds across different Aboriginal nations within Australia, because there are seven players on a netball court, and because the entire program is built upon Gee and colleagues' (2014) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing wheel, which has seven aspects[1]. These seven components are personified as characters within the Seven Sisters activity booklets. Wiradjuri artist Charlotte Allingham brought the characters to visual life for the program materials. The participants might identify most strongly with one or two characters over others, but are encouraged to develop strategies to connect with every aspect of the wheel.



Developing the Seven Sisters Program

The project began with yarning circles that sought to understand the barriers to school attendance in 2016-2018. The Year 5-6 program was piloted in one site in 2020, adapted based on feedback received, and then rolled out across all Shooting Stars sites in 2021. Thirteen sites began the program in 2021 in some form, which included a total of 289 participants. In 2022, the Year 5 and 6 program will continue across all sites. The senior programs were first piloted in 2021 with 50 girls in Narrogin participating in the program, which will be rolled out across Shooting Stars sites in 2022.

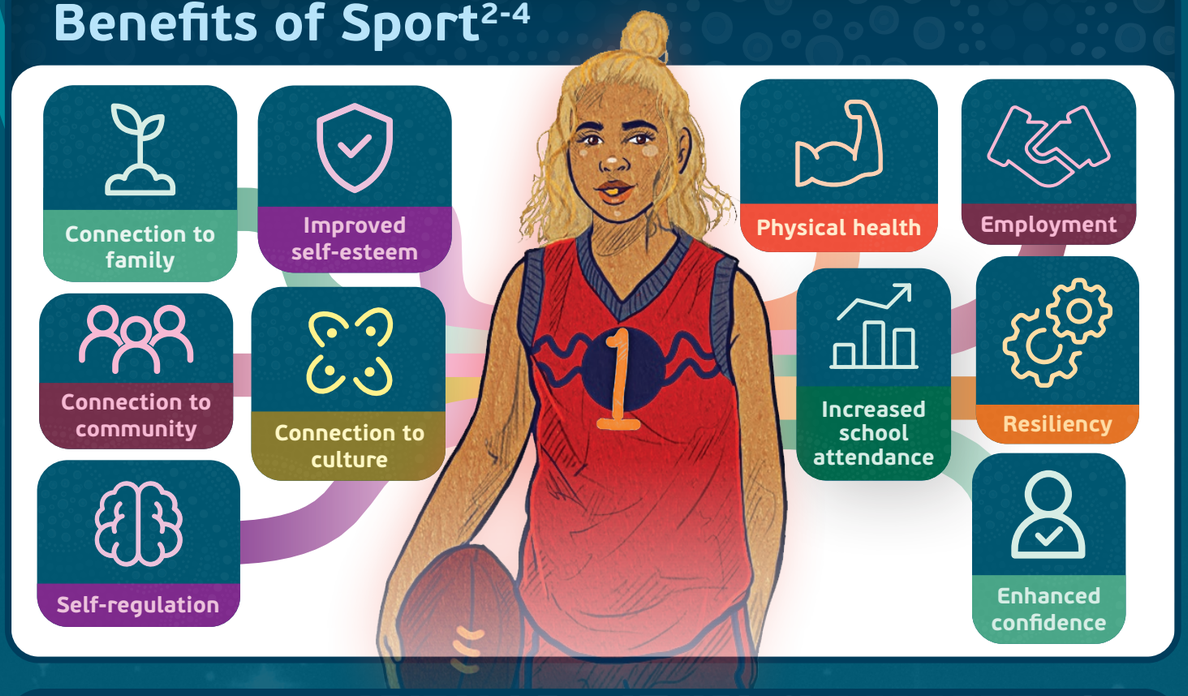
Lowana Corley, a Kungarakan Warramungu woman, was the principal program designer and aligned the program with the Australian Curriculum. Dr Rose Whitau is the project lead for the Seven Sisters program and contributed to the program development. Kobie Combes, Participation Manager Netball WA designed the netball component of the Year 5 and 6 program. Jade McGuire, a Ballardong Noongar woman, adapted the junior program to design the Year 7—9 and Year 10—12 programs in 2021 and is the program coordinator. The Seven Sisters program is facilitated across sites by predominantly Aboriginal staff.



The Seven Sisters program has been developed and facilitated as a module within the broader Shooting Stars program, and as such, has existing approvals from the Department of Education of Western Australia and local community groups (e.g., Kata-Koorliny Employment and Enterprise Development Aboriginal Corporation, or KEEDAC, in Narrogin). Shooting Stars sought and was granted ethics approval from the Western Australian Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee (WAAHEC) (HREC: 974) for the administration of pre- and post-program participant surveys and post-program facilitator surveys.



Benefits of Sport[2-4]



Barriers to Sport Participation for Aboriginal Girls

Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, males reported higher rates of sports participation compared to females (72.3% vs 65.1%)[5]

Barriers for Aboriginal boys & girls include[4]:

- Shyness/embarrassment
- Self-perception of not being good enough
- Lack of motivation and time
- Community feeling disempowered by sports program run without community input
- Lack of continuity in programs (e.g. staff turnover)
- Transport and facilities (in regional/remote areas)

Additional barriers for girls[4]:

- Feeling shy or embarrassed about wearing sports clothing, particularly bathers
- 23.1% of non-Indigenous youth age 15-24 felt unwelcome or excluded from sporting clubs or groups, compared with 32.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people[5]

"It may be that the low levels of physical activity, declining further at adolescence, among female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in this study, reflect the emergence of issues related to a lack of culturally safe opportunities to participate." [6] (p.9)

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Wednesday 6th April 2022

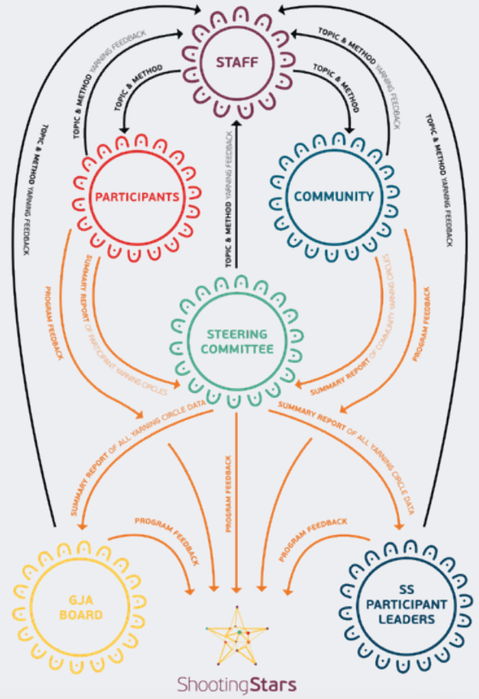
Yarning About Barriers to School Attendance

Between 2016 and 2018, Shooting Stars staff facilitated yarning circles with Shooting Stars program participants and localized steering committees about the barriers that participants face in attending school and staying in class, and their solutions to these barriers.

Yarning circles are an integral part of Shooting Stars' approach, as both a program activity and an evaluation tool[7]. Yarning provides an intentional conversation space that is built around mutual, reciprocal dialogue that welcomes interjections, interpretations, and additions[8,9] Yarning circles provide a culturally safe, democratic method by which our local communities, represented by localized steering committees, and program participants themselves can drive the direction and content of their local program while providing qualitative feedback regarding the program's effectiveness[7].

Shooting Stars program participants were girls and young women aged Year 3 to Year 12 residing in a remote or regional area, and were predominantly Aboriginal (75 to 100% depending on site demographics). Steering committees comprise Shooting Stars staff, and volunteers including host school administration, representatives from the local Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) provider, representatives of local Aboriginal groups, families, and communities, and other community stakeholders.

The top three themes on which Shooting Stars staff and the Glass Jar Australia Board felt that the program could make an impact were: bullying, where participants do not attend school or leave class because of bullying; negative relationships with teachers and peers, leading to participants avoiding specific classes; and emotional regulation, in which participants describe leave class as a coping strategy when they are feeling overwhelmed.





School Attendance for Aboriginal Girls

Education has been linked to improvements pertaining to health, employment, income, and other social areas for Indigenous Australians[11]



Year 12 Attainment is 25% lower for Indigenous compared with non-Indigenous Australians[10]

A cost-benefit analysis of leaving school early, defined as failing to complete Year 12 or equivalent by age 19, estimated a fiscal cost to the taxpayer of $8,400 per annum per individual[12]

Sport for development programs are widely recognised as an incentive used to encourage attendance for Aboriginal Australians[3, 4]

Barriers to School Attendance

Bullying

Participants yarned at length about how bullying and teasing were one of the major barriers for themselves and others in attending school and staying in class. For example:

"Sometimes people just get bullied and feel sad and upset and they don't come to school."

"I think they don't come to school because well they could've gotten like something could've happened like online or something, bullying."

"And when people tease people they might kill themselves, a lot of people do that if you get bullied a lot."



Barriers to School Attendance

Healthy Relationships

During yarning circles, participants yarned about how positive relationships with teachers and peers were one of the motivating factors to attend school, while negative relationships and the challenges associated with these were reasons to leave class or not to attend school. For example:

"...if you're not with the teacher you want to be or if that teacher isn't doing the right thing for you, you want to be - you just want to go. You don't want to be in that class."

"Like, in between our group maybe there might be some drama; in between - maybe there's just, like, too much angriness, well, not really angriness but too much stress that I can't be bothered dealing with it."

Emotion Regulation

Shooting Stars program participants also yarned about how they would leave class to have some quiet, private time when they felt angry, frustrated, or upset by something that either their peer or teacher had said, for example:

"Maybe if you're maybe stressed out and if anyone teases you, you get frustrated."

Some participants related their emotional response to other issues that they were dealing with:

"Because you, yourself is angry you're thinking about something in the past that got like—never thought of for a long time, but you have to learn and you just got mad about not doing it and people are not listening to you, or not responding and you get wild and you walk out when someone is teasing you, calling you names, you walk out and slam the door."

"Because if a boy is teasing you, or someone acting smartie in class and they talking about you and calling you names, or they're trying to bully you, or if you're having a bad time, like if something had happened at home. Yeah, that's why some people walk out of class."



Feedback on the Seven Sisters Program

In 2020 and 2021, we gathered feedback from participants, facilitators, and other community members. Overall the feedback has been positive. Many people have shared about improvements in confidence, developing friendships, emotion awareness, and emotion regulation skills.



Participant Feedback

On the whole, feedback from 91 post-program surveys indicated that participants found the program engaging. In the post-program survey, participants were asked what they liked about the program. Many participants reported enjoying spending time with friends and coaches and many said they made new, positive friendships. Participants frequently described "hanging out with new friends," "making new friends," and "the coaches" .

When asked directly why she wanted to participate and what she liked about the Seven Sisters program, one participant stated:

> *"I wanted to take part of the program because it was something new, different and that would allow me to get better at netball... I loved our yarns that we had and all of the warmup games – they were fun."*

One Seven Sisters program participant discussed how the Seven Sisters program had helped her to improve her emotion awareness and regulation:

> *"I only knew a few different emotions before the program but not as many as what we learnt... I felt better after playing netball and I realized how quickly your emotions can change in a day with different things going on...If I am at school and feeling sad I now go and hang out with people that are going to make me happy."*



Feedback on the Seven Sisters Program

Facilitator Feedback

Facilitator post-program surveys were largely positive. The warmup activities were consistently rated good or very good, and all respondents agreed that the Seven Sisters program was at the right level for participants.

Feedback from facilitator surveys, community stakeholders, and participants' parents described an improvement in participants' confidence following the Seven Sisters program. For example:

> *"[The girls are...] more confident in how they present themselves, more confidence in playing sport"*
>
> *"I've witnessed improvement with teamwork, communication, self-regulation and confidence"*
>
> *One facilitator described an improvement in emotion awareness:*
>
> *"I haven't seen a huge change in behavior just more so knowing all their emotions and being in tune with them."*



Facilitators spoke about relationship improvements that they witnessed throughout the program. They described participants "developing positive relationships," while their "friend groups have changed and become more mingled," and in an instance where multiple primary schools were involved "girls have built relationships with students from other schools and the girls [are] really looking forward to high school."

Community Feedback

Feedback from participant parents and carers described an improvement in participants' confidence following the Seven Sisters program, such as this mum who shared:

> *"I've been amazed by the transformation in my daughter [name], she has gone from a very quiet, shy follower into a confident proud leader. She has learnt how to deal with her emotions and how to help others with their own. I have no doubt that the team from Shooting Stars and the Seven Sisters program have played an enormous part in bringing my daughter full circle to the amazing girl she is today."*

Similarly, Shooting Stars staff received feedback indicating that the program assisted participants to improve their understanding and regulation of emotions. One Year 5 teacher commented:

> *"The girls are definitely better at regulating themselves and I am sure this is from the program that you ran in Term 2 [Seven Sisters]. Of course the girls have off days, but overall I have had many less issues with my girls who are high attenders with their emotional regulation."*



Engagement From Service Providers

Many services came to the Community Netball Matches in 2021, and we appreciate the unique contribution of each service in encouraging and connecting with our participants. We received positive feedback from participating service providers who appreciated the opportunity to engage with the Shooting Stars participants.

COMPASS GROUP

Compass Group

Thanks for having (staff names) at the Narrogin event last month.

It was really great to be a part of the day and engage with yourself and the girls and see so many people from the community attending in support as well.

Shooting Stars and the Seven Sisters Program really is an inspiring program to be a part of and I can see so much confidence and courage in the girls at such a young age.

I appreciate the engagement from yourself and look forward to future engagement and what 2022 holds for Compass Group, Seven Sisters and Shooting Stars.

headspace



ORD VALLEY ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICE ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

OVAHS Kununurra Health Service

OVAHS's Social and emotional wellbeing, TIS, sexual health and FASD programs each had stalls with the KDHS girls in attendance. All the girls were extremely engaging. The girls asked thoughtful questions and we all felt that each of our take home messages were well received. We feel that the Seven Sisters Program held in Kununurra was timely and rather impactful. We are grateful that OVAHS programs had the opportunity to work together with them and build rapport with the students present. The interaction and participation by the girls at our stalls were extremely positive and we hope that connection made with Seven Sisters will continue in the future.

2021 Participating Services

The map displays the health services that were engaged in the program throughout 2021 at each site. We look forward to welcoming more services to the Community Netball Matches in 2022, including linking in with larger organisations to help service the smaller regional towns.



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Acknowledgements

First, we would like to thank our participants, staff, steering committees, schools, and communities for their participation in this research project.

Lowana Corley, a Kungarakan Warramungu woman, was the principal program designer and aligned the program with the Australian Curriculum. Dr Rose Whitau is the project lead for the Seven Sisters program and contributed to the program development. Kobie Combes, Participation Manager Netball WA designed the netball component of the Year 5 and 6 program. Jade McGuire, a Ballardong Noongar woman, adapted the junior program to design the Year 7—9 and Year 10—12 programs in 2021 and is the program coordinator.

Wiradjuri artist Charlotte Allingham brought the characters to visual life for the program materials. The graphic design for the program materials was done by Ferdinando Handojo and Drew Brockway. Drew Brockway was the designer for this Annual Report. Sayuri Peries contributed to the research analysis of the participant surveys. Dr Sarah Stanford contributed to the research analysis and wrote the Annual Report.



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