

How Songwriting and Performance Support Wellbeing, Community Healing, and Cultural Justice for First Nations Peoples in Remote Communities Facing Ongoing Social Inequity

**Insights From the Creative Change
Project's Case Study of Big hART's
Songs for Freedom in Ieramugadu
(Roebourne), Western Australia**



The information contained in this report may be copied or reproduced for study, research, information, or educational purposes, subject to inclusions of an acknowledgement (suggested citation follows).

ISBN: 978-1-7641573-1-5

Suggested citation

Spence, J. A., & Bartleet, B.-L. (2025). *How songwriting and performance support wellbeing, community, healing and cultural justice for First Nations Peoples in remote communities facing ongoing social inequity: Insights from the Creative Change Project's case study of Big hART's Songs for Freedom in Ieramugadu (Roebourne), Western Australia* [ARC Report]. Creative Arts Research Institute, Griffith University.

Acknowledgements

This research is part of the Creative Change Project and has been funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Future Fellowship (FT200100495) at the Creative Arts Research Institute and Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. The team includes ARC Future Fellow Professor Brydie-Leigh Bartleet; Research Fellows Dr Emma Heard and Dr Mathew Klotz; PhD candidates Pearly Black, Joel Spence, and Flora Wong; and Communications Officer Dr Matt Hsu. This case study was led by PhD candidate Joel Spence with support from Brydie-Leigh Bartleet, and this report was prepared by both Joel Spence and Brydie-Leigh Bartleet with feedback and editing support from Mathew Klotz. This report has been reviewed by the project's external evaluator Professor Geoffrey Woolcock.

We would like to thank all the participants in this study and acknowledge the Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi Elders living in Ieramugadu, community and audience participants, and community partner Big hART for their collaboration and contribution. In particular, thank you to Lucy Harrison from Big hART for their administration role as community partnership liaison and to Dr Scott Rankin and the team for their support and contributions.

We acknowledge the Yugarabul, Yuggera, Jagera, and Turrbal Peoples, who are the traditional custodians of the lands on which we have housed this project at Griffith University. We pay respect to the Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to traditional custodians of the lands where we have worked across the country, including the Bidjara, Bunurong/Boonwurrung, Gunaikurnai, Kunja, Ngarluma, Wadawurrung, Wurundjeri, and Yindjibarndi Peoples. We also pay our respects to our First Nations team members, Advisory Group members, Elders and Cultural Advisors, partners, and project participants.

CULTURAL CARE WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that the following case study may contain images, references, and voices of deceased persons. This warning is also extended to those with cultural or religious beliefs or lived experiences that may be impacted by topics related to trauma or protocols concerning deceased persons.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the ARC nor the project's partners.

Front cover image

The Songs for Freedom concert in Barangaroo, Gadigal Land, New South Wales, 2 September 2023. Image supplied by Big hART.

For additional information on the Creative Change Project

Contact Project Leader Professor Brydie-Leigh Bartleet: b.bartleet@griffith.edu.au or visit our website: creativechange.org.au

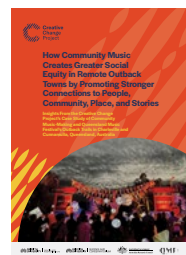
About This Report

This report has been prepared for a general readership of musicians, community members, sector leaders, government departments, funders, and colleagues from diverse industries and disciplines, along with those with a general interest in harnessing the power of music to support social change in their communities.

The Creative Change Project has a wider suite of resources and outputs, all publicly available, including peer-reviewed academic articles, book chapters, conference presentations, videos, creative outputs, and the doctoral thesis accompanying this summary report. These can be found on the Creative Change Project's resources page:



Other case study reports from the Creative Change Project



Report design by Ben Chew in Liveworm Studio
Queensland College of Art and Design, Griffith University.

How Songwriting and Performance Support Wellbeing, Community Healing, and Cultural Justice for First Nations Peoples in Remote Communities Facing Ongoing Social Inequity

Insights From the Creative Change Project's Case Study of Big hART's Songs for Freedom in Ieramugadu (Roebourne), Western Australia

Executive Summary

Community music initiatives can play a vital role in creating the conditions for self-determination, truth-telling, and collective healing in remote First Nations communities experiencing the ongoing impacts of colonisation and injustice. Insights featured in this report come from an in-depth community music study in the remote Pilbara town of Ieramugadu (Roebourne), Ngarluma Country, Western Australia, as one of the Creative Change Project's four major case studies. Together, these case studies provide a comprehensive investigation into the role that community music plays in creating greater social equity in Australian communities, particularly in contexts of entrenched disadvantage. Ieramugadu (Roebourne) was chosen for its long-standing Songs for Freedom initiative, which has been facilitated by arts and social change organisation Big hART. The intergenerational socio-economic disadvantage affecting First Nations Peoples in both the Ieramugadu (Roebourne) township and the Roebourne Regional Prison has been well documented, as has the community's enduring cultural strength, resilience, and determination in the face of ongoing systemic injustices.

The case study used a qualitative participatory approach, conducted in close collaboration with community partner organisation Big hART. Data were generated through engagement with 107 participants and 34 songs, including facilitators, organisational staff, Ieramugadu (Roebourne) Elders, community music participants (township and prison), audience members, and community partners, along with analysis of 28 archival community songs, attendance at national Songs for Freedom concerts (2023–2024), and 6 researcher co-facilitated and collaboratively written songs.

Key insights from this case study are reported across four interconnected areas, using a socio-ecological systems approach.

1. Individual wellbeing

At the individual level, engagement in collaborative music-making allows participants to experience enhanced self-esteem and confidence through the expression of their identities and experiences in a supportive environment. Individuals develop valuable new skills, fostering creative freedom and critical thinking in ways that can increase their individual wellbeing.

2. Community healing

Community songwriting and the Songs for Freedom performances in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds to connect, bond, and experience a sense of collective identity and belonging. This collaborative environment empowers truth-telling through songs, providing platforms for expression and advocacy within the community and nationally through a concert tour. Community music in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) nurtures connections between different age groups, facilitating intergenerational healing through shared experiences.

3. Social consciousness

Songs for Freedom fosters social consciousness by engaging audiences in music and stories from First Nations Peoples. This initiative serves as a platform for public education, intercultural exchange, and creative displays of resistance against oppressive socio-political structures. This process encourages strong social connections within the community as they work together to sustain their own cultural legacy and advocate for broader social change (e.g. in juvenile justice reform).

4. Cultural connections

Community music plays an essential role in maintaining culture in remote communities such as Ieramugadu (Roebourne). It strengthens people's connections to Country, Elders, ancestors, and family. Through collective songwriting and performances of Songs for Freedom, First Nations Peoples are able to expose cultural injustices and social inequity caused by the ongoing impacts of colonisation.

Implications

This report highlights the vital role that community music plays in enhancing the lives of individuals who reside in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) and Roebourne Regional Prison, promoting a strong sense of self-determination and collective healing through the shared creative process. It also demonstrates community music's potential to generate social consciousness through truth-telling in ways that seek to bring about positive social change, including addressing disproportionate rates of First Nations youth incarceration. Insights from this case study demonstrate how music can work across individual, community, social, and cultural levels in ways that both mitigate the consequences of social inequity for individuals and collectives (e.g. creating a shared space for truth-telling and healing through songwriting) and possibly challenge the unequal power dynamics that lie at the heart of social inequity (e.g. through public performances and a tour that advocate for juvenile justice reform).

Visualising Our Creative Change Insights: Our Imagining Instrument

The Creative Change Project has sought to describe the relationship between music and social equity in ways that reflect music's creative, generative, adaptive, and iterative nature. We have created an 'imagining instrument' to help us show the dynamic and relational way music simultaneously works at individual and collective levels to create greater social equity. In each of our case studies, the surfaces of this 'imagining instrument' feature slightly different concepts, reflecting what emerged as significant in these place-based contexts and what was considered salient by our team members and their community collaborators. In all cases, the *relational* nature of this shape echoes the interconnected way that community music operates, whereby individual processes and outcomes are always connected to the collective and vice versa. The *continuous* nature of this shape reflects the temporal way music functions—blurring boundaries between past, present, and future. When making music, we are attuned to the present experience, but we also keep the sonic memories of the past in the loop and can imagine future potentialities at the same time. This shape also reminds us of the knock-on effect when internal or external disruptions have an adverse effect on the community music experience.

Moreover, we find this shape evokes a certain wonder and curiosity that embodies the creative spirit of community music and speaks to its potential to advance social equity efforts in highly distinct ways. As you read the insights of our suite of research reports, we encourage you to keep this 'imagining instrument' in mind and consider how the reported outcomes interact with one another in dynamic ways such that they are not isolated outcomes on a linear trajectory but rather reflective of a dynamic and relational process that is constantly unfolding.

Individual participation in community songwriting and performance in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) empowers leadership and teamwork in ways that build confidence and individual wellbeing. Participation provides inclusive activities, new educational experiences, and opportunities for the community to *be* with one another in ways that promote community healing. Audiences experience emotional reactions such as anger, hope, joy, and sadness, thus creating greater social consciousness and necessary dialogue about First Nations Peoples' experiences. Community music provides a powerful platform for First Nations Peoples to advocate for cultural justice and create greater social equity.

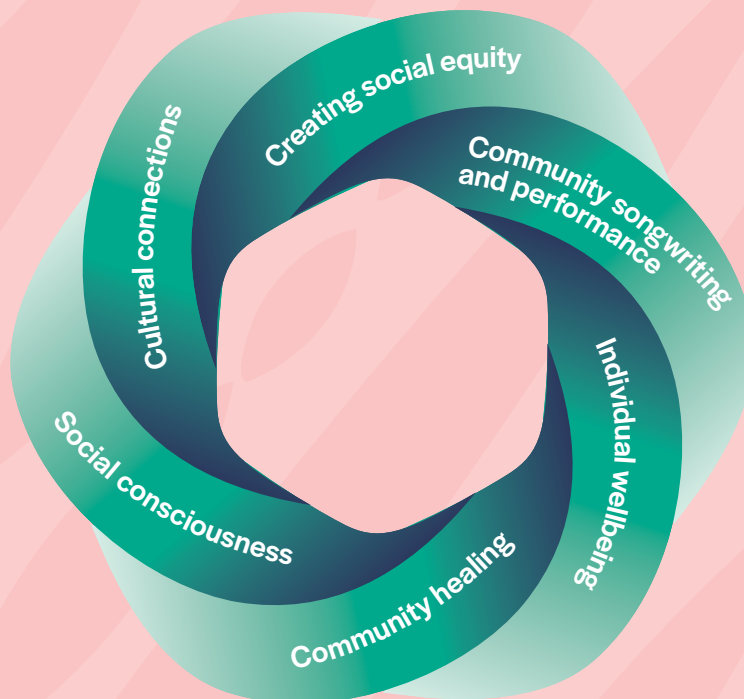


Figure 1: Insights from this case study

Introduction

Creative Change Project

The Creative Change Project is an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship that has explored the role of community music in addressing social inequity across the country (www.creativechange.org.au). Based at the Creative Arts Research Institute and Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, the Creative Change Project has aimed to build on the mounting international evidence base that documents the social, emotional, physiological, cognitive, cultural, and economic benefits that can come from participating in music and how this might be harnessed to support real impact in contexts of entrenched social inequity (Bartleet & Heard, 2024; Bartleet & Higgins, 2018; Heard et al., 2023).

Community music can be broadly defined as participatory music-making by, for, and/or with a community. At its heart, community music involves the creation of inclusive, locally embedded, and community-led opportunities for engagement in music. Rather than being characterised by a particular style, genre, medium, or aesthetic, community music is distinctively reflective of its cultural context and shaped by its participants and local setting. Given its focus on community agency, musical practices within this field customarily work to uphold values of inclusion, access, equity, justice, and self-determination (Bartleet, 2023).

For the Creative Change Project, social equity is about ensuring every person has the opportunities and resources to reach their fullest potential and live a fulfilled life. Inequity can be understood as differences in the resources, opportunities, rewards, and rights a person has based on their position within society, which lead to disparities in health and wellbeing that are unjust and avoidable. Structural systems of power (i.e. the way our society is organised and operates) cause certain groups to thrive at the expense of others. Social inequity has multiple and intersecting causes and symptoms such that to achieve equity, we must work across individual, community, and systemic levels.

This report features insights from one of four Creative Change Project case studies. This case study partnered with Big hART and worked closely with the Ieramugadu (Roebourne) community, Songs for Freedom performers, and music facilitators during Songs for Freedom's 2022–2023 concert and workshop series. This case study was chosen because the songwriting and youth workshops have played a key role in bringing a community together to heal from ongoing systemic injustices in order to narrate a positive future for their community together. The workshops have also taken place in Roebourne Regional Prison and support the wellbeing of inmates. The concerts in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) and on a national tour have

aimed to bring national awareness to localised challenges facing First Nations Peoples in Ieramugadu (Roebourne), including the need for juvenile justice reform. This is significant within the context of the ongoing socio-economic disadvantage First Nations Peoples in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) face, which is exacerbated by land dispossession, conflicts with mining corporations, and disproportionate rates of incarceration in youth and adult settings.

Ieramugadu (Roebourne): A Brief Introduction



Figure 2: Map of Australia demonstrating position of Ieramugadu (Roebourne). Image sourced from Google Maps (<https://www.google.com/maps/place/City+of+Karratha,+WA>)

Ieramugadu (Roebourne)¹ is located on Ngarluma Country, about 1500 km north of Boorloo (Perth) and roughly 40 km inland from Karratha in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. The community has a population of approximately 975 people, 73.5% of whom identify as First Nations (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2021). Before colonial invasion, the region was home to multiple First Nations Peoples living on their Countries, as evidenced by 30,000-year-old petroglyphs (see Mulvaney, 2011). The town of Ieramugadu (Roebourne) was established by settlers in 1866 as a pastoral settlement because of access to fresh water from the Ngurin River (Allbrook, 2022). This marked the beginning of land dispossession, crime, and cultural injustice throughout the Pilbara region (along with many parts of Australia).

¹ The Creative Change Project makes every effort to recognise First Nations place names in their resources.



Figure 3: Mount Welcome, Ieramugadu (Roebourne). Image by Joel Spence

During this time, numerous atrocities took place, such as the Flying Foam Massacre, which involved colonisers and police killing 150 First Nations Peoples (Chapple, n.d.). The development of pastoral stations and farming, forced removal of children, and assimilation practices (culture, language, education, religious ideology) also contributed to the ongoing trauma, violence, and hardship experienced by First Nations Peoples throughout early European settlement of this region (Allbrook, 2022).

From the late 1800s to the 1960s, many remote or isolated First Nations communities, towns, and settlements formed throughout the Pilbara region, primarily because of pearling, mining, and pastoral industries (Allbrook, 2022; Mulvaney, 2011). During this time, First Nations Peoples continued to make up the majority of the population in the Pilbara (Taylor & Biddle, 2005). Senior First Nations Elders, including those collaborating in this case study, spent their childhoods near their traditional Country or ancestral lands. They would engage in seasonal work while relying on their customary economic practices, such as hunting, gathering, artwork, and artisanal crafts to sustain their livelihoods (Holcombe, 2005). Yet colonial policies brought strict controls and curfews on the movements of First Nations Peoples. This made it difficult for them to navigate and thrive on their Countries, and traditional owners found themselves living with limited access to resources and being controlled within town boundaries and spaces (Ellinghaus & Healy, 2018).

In 1982, the Harding Dam (Lake Poongkaliyarra) was constructed 25 km from Ieramugadu (Roebourne) to support mining and population growth. The project



Figure 4: Harding River Dam (Lake Poongkaliyarra). This place holds cultural significance for both Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi Peoples. Image by Joel Spence

sparked significant resistance from the Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi Peoples because of its location on a sacred site, with several important cultural heritage sites, including rock art and burial grounds, being destroyed (City of Karratha, 2014; Thomas, 1984). Furthermore, there are continued concerns that this dam harms the Yindjibarndi Peoples' land, particularly Millstream Chichester National Park, so efforts to protect this area and address the ecological damage and ecocide continue (McLean, 2025).



Figure 5: John Pat Peace Place, Ieramugadu (Roebourne). Image by Joel Spence

Ieramugadu (Roebourne) is also widely known because of the death of 16-year-old Yindjibarndi man John Pat, who died while in custody in 1983 at the Roebourne Police Station. An enquiry found that Pat died because of the misconduct of the attending police officers; however, the police officers in question were fully acquitted by the jury (Cunneen, 2011; Grabosky, 1988; Mason, 2020; Purdy, 1994). The report also found that Ieramugadu has five times more on-duty police officers compared with other Western Australian communities and more than the national average of altercations between police and First Nations People (Johnston, 1991). Pat's death triggered a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1987, yet the recommendations are yet to be realised (Brennan, 2023). The situation in Western Australia has continued to deteriorate, with the number of First Nations deaths in custody standing at 588 since the Royal Commission (Australian Institute of Criminology, n.d.).

People in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) experience disproportionately high incarceration rates, reflecting a national trend whereby First Nations Peoples in Australia are some of the most incarcerated populations in the world. Despite making up only 3.8% of the Australian population, First Nations Peoples comprise 22% of Australia's total prison population (ABS, 2023; Krieg,

2006). Moreover, First Nations youth, who make up 5.7% of Australia's youth population, are 28 times more likely to be detained than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2023; Holland et al., 2022), and in 2023 accounted for 63% of Australia's incarcerated youth (AIHW, 2023). In Western Australia, the rate of incarceration for First Nations youth is 25 times higher than that for non-Indigenous youth (AIHW, 2023).

The development and operation of the nearby Roebourne Regional Prison is a constant reminder of this oppression. The prison has a capacity of 225 people, and approximately 86% of its population identifies as First Nations (Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services, 2022). The adult prison houses male and female inmates, with the women constituting just 6% of the total population (Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services, 2022). Although it is primarily a medium-security prison, it is capable of holding inmates in maximum security for short periods.

This context is important for understanding why Songs for Freedom was originally established. Community Elders first approached arts organisation Big hART in 2010 in an effort to heal the community and write a new

narrative for its future. Over time, Songs for Freedom has emerged as a national campaign to bring awareness to the overrepresentation of First Nations People in incarceration, especially First Nations youth. The 2023 concert series marked the fortieth anniversary of John Pat's death—a significant moment for the Pat family and the community in acknowledging their unresolved loss (Big hART, 2024).

As part of a collaborative effort to address ongoing inequity in the community, music workshops and annual performances have been held in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) and Roebourne Regional Prison. These have included community singing, songwriting, and youth music workshops, and the project is in the early stages of programming a prison choir. Concerts, inspired by songs written collectively in both English and First Nations languages, have taken place annually in September, aligning with the anniversary of Pat's death. Early works from these initiatives can be found on the album *Murru* (Big hART, 2013) and more recently on the album *Songs for Freedom* (The Freedom Collective, 2023).

Case Study Aims

This case study aimed to investigate the role that community music has played in promoting self-determination, collective healing, and truth-telling for First Nations community members in Ieramugadu (Roebourne). Drawing on stories and experiences of both community participants and national audiences, the case study aimed to explore how community songwriting and performance can empower First Nations Peoples to advocate for the systemic changes needed for greater cultural justice and social equity to occur in their community.

The PhD candidate (Joel) leading this case study specialises in the intersection of arts and health, with an emphasis on communities and empowerment strategies to address entrenched social equity issues. As a social worker accredited with the Australian Association of Social Workers, he brings a comprehensive background in secondary music education, research, and community music, informed by his experiences across various sectors, including TAFE, community organisations, and educational settings in Victoria and Queensland. He is an Australian with both First Nations and European ancestry. He has cultivated a deep understanding of cultural perspectives, which shapes his approach to research and practice. Joel's work demonstrates a commitment to promoting social justice and equity by integrating artistic practices and community engagement.

The Project Leader (Brydie) accompanied Joel on field trips to Ieramugadu (Roebourne) at the beginning and end of the case study. As a non-Indigenous, first-generation migrant from South Africa, she has worked hand-in-hand with First Nations collaborators on a wide range of projects in Central Australia, the Kimberley, and regional Queensland for the past 15 years. This builds on Brydie's extensive portfolio of projects exploring how communal music-making can open up pathways for greater social justice, equity, inclusion, and wellbeing, especially in communities where entrenched social disadvantage, displacement, and division exist.

Partner Organisation Profile

Big hART is an Australian not-for-profit organisation dedicated to reducing incarceration rates among First Nations Peoples, among a range of other pressing social issues. It advocates for community safety, welfare, and diversion from punitive justice measures. To date, the organisation has precipitated positive social change for 55 communities and over 12,000 participants across the country. Through innovative, arts-based initiatives, Big hART has successfully implemented numerous projects, such as Songs for Freedom, that highlight community stories and foster empowerment, ultimately aiming to inspire hope and drive social change. Information about Big hART's history and current work can be found on their website: www.bighart.org

Research Design

This case study used a qualitative participatory research approach that included in-depth interviews, community songs, audience interviews, email surveys, and music-making and facilitation (see Table 1). A total of 107 people were involved in data generation (see Table 2 for participant demographics) across three major visits to Ieramugadu (Roebourne) and concerts at Dyoondalup (Point Walter), Perth, Whadjuk Noongar Boodja Country, Western Australia; Barangaroo Reserve, Sydney, Gadigal Country, New South Wales; Australian National University, Canberra, Ngambri/NGunnawal Country, Australian Capital Territory; and Melbourne Recital Centre, Naarm (Melbourne), Wurundjeri Country, Victoria. The Creative Change Project received ethical clearance through Griffith University's Human Ethics Research Committee (GU Ref No: 2020/679).

Table 1
Summary of Methods

| Method | Participant Type | Aim | Number of Participants/ Songs |
|---|--|---|--|
| Semi-structured interviews | Elders, community members, facilitators, and staff from organisations and professional musicians | To understand how community music in First Nations communities can foster a sense of cultural identity, provide empowerment at individual and collective levels, and articulate individual and community experiences of entrenched inequity and instigate or sustain social change. | 21 |
| Analysis of archival community songs | Recordings of songs and lyrics | To understand how songs and their lyrics can provide a means for truth-telling and the articulation of cultural identity and experiences and the means for greater social consciousness and the need for social change. | 28 songs |
| Audience interviews (vox pops) | Audience participants | To understand how audience members responded to the messages of the Songs for Freedom concerts and broader campaign for juvenile justice reform. | 59 |
| Email surveys | Audience participants | To understand how audience members responded to the messages of the Songs for Freedom concerts and broader campaign for juvenile justice reform. | 27 |
| Music-making and researcher co-facilitating in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) and Roebourne Regional Prison | Community participants | To explore through collaborative music-making how community music in First Nations communities can foster a sense of cultural identity, provide empowerment at individual and collective levels, and articulate individual and community experiences of entrenched inequity and instigate or sustain social change. | 6 songs (participants not included in total participants) |
| Total | | | 107 participants 34 songs |

Table 2
Participant Demographics

N = 107

| Gender | % |
|---|------|
| Woman | 63.8 |
| Man | 36.2 |
| Gender-diverse ¹ | 0 |
| Not reported | 0 |
| Cultural Background | % |
| Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ² | 9.4 |
| CALD ³ | 0 |
| Cultural background reported ⁴ | 21.6 |
| Not reported | 69.0 |
| Sexuality | % |
| Heterosexual | 9.5 |
| Queer ⁵ | 0 |
| Not reported | 90.5 |
| Housing | % |
| Owner-occupier | 7.8 |
| Renting | 5.2 |
| Share house | 5.1 |
| Other (self-described) | 2.6 |
| Not reported | 79.3 |

Note: Demographics were not recorded for audience members.

1. We use the term 'gender-diverse' to indicate myriad genders that sit outside the heteronormative colonial gender binary, recognising that the term remains imperfect.
2. Mobs included Yindjibarndi (n = 3), Ngarluma (n = 1), and Yindjibarndi-Ngarluma (n = 1).
3. Culturally and linguistically diverse.
4. Participants were asked to identify their cultural heritage according to how they interpret this term. We do not indicate whether participants were born in Australia. Responses included Italian (n = 1).
5. As with 'gender-diverse', we employ the word 'queer' as an umbrella term describing sexualities that range from gay to pansexual to asexual and beyond. In doing so, we do not wish to elide the important differences between the ongoing histories, experiences, and struggles of each sexuality. Nor do we mean 'queer' to be interchangeable with the more expansive LGBTQIA+ acronym.

| Age | % |
|------------------------|-------|
| Under 18 | 0 |
| 19–29 | 11.2 |
| 30–39 | 12.1 |
| 40–49 | 4.4 |
| 50–59 | 6 |
| 60–69 | 6.1 |
| 70+ | 1.6 |
| Not reported | 58.6 |
| Disability | % |
| Yes | 1.72 |
| No | 29.31 |
| Prefer not to say | 3.45 |
| Not reported | 79.31 |
| Employment | % |
| Full-time | 12.1 |
| Part-time | 5.1 |
| Casual | 2.6 |
| Unemployed | 0 |
| Studying/training | 0.02 |
| Caring | 0.01 |
| Retired | 4.31 |
| Other (self-described) | 0.01 |
| Not reported | 75.86 |

All members of the team—including the Creative Change Project team, the case study's cultural mentor, and key community and partner members—provided insights from their diverse personal and disciplinary backgrounds during data analysis, including during a return trip to Ieramugadu (Roebourne) to share initial findings. The wide range of data was analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis approach to identify 'patterns of shared meaning' using a socio-ecological systems framework.

Key Insights

Insights from this case study demonstrate the important role that community music plays in providing opportunities for individuals to develop their own skills and enhance their wellbeing. This is done in a collective space that allows community members to come together, write songs, and share their experiences in order to collectively heal. These community songs are then given a platform through the annual Songs for Freedom concerts and national tour in ways that not only promote greater social connection among community members but also a wider social consciousness within audience members. This provides a vital platform for the articulation of cultural justice and broader advocacy efforts around the need for social change. Each of these themes highlights the interconnected ways in which community music works to build greater social equity within remote communities that have experienced cultural injustice and ongoing social inequity over generations.

Individual Wellbeing

The wellbeing benefits of participating in community songwriting and Songs for Freedom were observed in both the creative processes and the creative outcomes. For participating community members, these benefits include the development of skills, confidence, and relationships. For audience members, these involve the emotional experience and education offered by the Songs for Freedom production.

Skill Development

Songs for Freedom provides community members with opportunities for developing both musical and social skills, including leadership, teamwork, and communication. In some cases, these skills lead to further individual benefits, including personal development, career pathways, and, for many, overall wellbeing. After a decade working in this community and on Songs for Freedom, music director Lucky Oceans identified a number of individual benefits of songwriting and performance:

It's been singing original songs, women connecting, community, travel, songwriting experiences for those that have left jail. Community music creates such positive aspiration. It's confidence, especially for shy people. Integration from individuals into the show over time. Youth taking on roles in the Songs For Peace and Songs for Freedom shows. Youth that have left town for the city still being involved in music and arts. (SFF007, key informant)

The breadth of benefits generated through community songwriting activities is supported by broader research investigating how participation in music-based activities can provide important opportunities for developing cognitive, social, and personal skills (Hollenbeck, 2008; Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2011). These individual benefits empower individuals within their community because they feel more capable of taking control of their own career paths through touring, performing, and developing their individual musicality through songwriting. For example, Dr Scott Rankin, the founder, CEO, and Creative Director of Big hART, shared the story of Patrick Churnside—a Ngarluma man and emerging Elder who is the narrator of the Songs for Freedom show, a leading advocate for his community, and a member of the board of directors for Big hART:

Patrick comes in to do Welcome to Country and sings a Tjaabi.² We go, 'What's that?' He says, 'It's called a Tjaabi. We don't really do that anymore.' We ask, 'What would you like to do with it?' 'Well,' says Patrick, 'I'd sort of would like to contact all the families across the Pilbara and speak to them about who has the permission in terms of those kinds of family sensitivities because people have broken hearts about this singing. They have heard their grandparents do it, but they're not doing it, and I'd love to pursue that.' Scott suggested, 'Why don't we save and get some resources to support that and see if we can put a producer with it?' ... Patrick responded, 'What if we would think about building young people into that? I'd love that the young men could dance. We could make the artefacts we haven't played for a long, long time.' You know it builds up over a number of years. [Long story short] [i]t's about to go again with Patrick, and that will be a 10-year work. That's co-created and has emerged from a guy who couldn't bear to drive bulldozers and excavators anymore because he didn't want to tear up Country, and it's created this whole world from him to move. (SFF011, key informant)

This individual trajectory demonstrates that the process of community music has many benefits that can include language preservation and revitalisation. Community music has also provided new career opportunities for Patrick to incorporate traditional knowledge and voice through Ngarluma language and performance. The use of Tjaabi was an important part of the Songs for Freedom concert. Skill development through the use of traditional

² Tjaabi is a traditional song form found across various First Nations language groups in the Pilbara and Kimberly regions. It holds significance in Ngarluma culture and is deeply rooted in Ngarluma Peoples' connection to Country and land management. Tjaabi is like a musical haiku, with crisp poetic language, capturing stories, dreams, thoughts and moments, which can be funny, profound, or wistful (Big hART, n.d.).

Ngarluma songs can not only enhance confidence and greater self-efficacy in individuals like Patrick but also provide intergenerational knowledge to younger generations and function as a form of cultural exchange with other communities. Patrick described this process of exchange:

As they say, across the nation of Australia, it's still one of many different nations, you know. Tradition, wellness, languages, tribal songs, stories, Tjaabis—if you went across [all] of the nations [you would find differences]. That was, for us, the in-depth part of [the process]. When we went from one community to the next with just the stories and, you know, knowledge, it was also sharing what was captured for us as traditional custodians. (SFF122, key community informant)

Providing opportunities for individuals to practice their culture in appropriate contexts, such as through the use of Tjaabi, is cultural action.³ Cultural action is a dynamic process in which individuals actively shape their cultural realities, working towards a more just and equitable world (Case, 2021; Matarasso, 2007).

Increased Confidence

Community songwriting processes can support individual wellbeing by providing opportunities for participants to develop their self-confidence. Confidence can be developed through peer support, engaging in enjoyable music-making experiences, improvisation, and public performances (McFerran & Hunt, 2022). A Songs for Freedom performer stated,

I guess a lot of people seem to have more confidence about being involved, both in the workshops and in the live performance. So, I think a lot of people have been given more confidence to engage in that some of the shy people in the early years have come out. Certain people who I never thought would have necessarily been on the stage five years ago have gotten on stage with us. (SFF008, Songs for Freedom performer)

Even though increased confidence is present in all age groups, it is particularly pronounced in the youth. As a community member observed,

So many benefits on individual levels, like with the youth especially, that I've noticed. Like, one of the young people [name removed for privacy]—I've seen her, like, really flourish into being a confident young

Ngarluma Cultural Leader Samantha Walker explained the impact these music opportunities can have in changing cyclic patterns of inequity and disadvantage by empowering a community's youth: 'We have heard more in the last 12 years than we ever have. Roebourne is back on the map because of Big hART. I have seen with my own children, my boys, their self-growth. They were shy little boys from the bush. Now, they can stand up in front of a crowd.'

(SFF017, key community informant)

woman, and I don't know how much of that is to do with Big hART, but I know that Big hART has certainly played a role within that—just, like, encouraging and nurturing the talent that she has and, like, directing them [young people] in a really positive way. (SFF014, resident)

Since 2010, many facilitators have influenced, supported, and nurtured young people in the community through the songwriting workshops and Songs for Freedom performances. Community music can foster confidence through the development of inclusive practices, which can enable a participant's sense of purpose and belonging (Boal-Palheiros, 2017). This can also be seen through the act of learning various musical skills, such as singing, songwriting, playing instruments, and music production. One young participant explained how she gained more confidence while on the Songs for Freedom national tour:

While we were in Tasmania, Mum Rose was going to do the Jack Davis speech [a poem written about John Pat used in Songs for Freedom]. Mum Rose decided I should do it. She went to go talk to Scott and was like, 'I reckon [name removed for privacy] should do

³ Within a cultural system, cultural action is defined as an observable and quantifiable behaviour or action that does not simply transmit knowledge but empowers people to critically examine their own reality and become agents of transformation within their own lives and communities (Freire, 1998).

the speech.’ So, you know, at first, I was camera shy, and I just gotten used to it. But yeah, that just brings a lot of confidence, and I got a lot of things hiding, like, confidence-wise. ... So, in Tasmania, when I’d seen that video of Roebourne and when I was on stage doing the speech, I was just like, ‘Oh, that’s nice.’ Scott helped me bring my confidence out. He helped me with my voice and how to speak up more. (SFF117, Songs for Freedom participant)

Researcher Joel Spence witnessed the development of skills and confidence first-hand after being invited to co-facilitate songwriting workshops with youth alongside Big hART facilitator Mark Leahy and Ngarluma Cultural Leader Samantha Walker. Over the course of the five workshops, an original song was created in preparation for the Songs for Freedom concert on 23 September 2023, which was to culminate in a performance in the Ieramugadu (Roebourne) community. The stages of song development included songwriting, rehearsals, and performance. During the writing stage, the youth expressed their thoughts, feelings, and experiences of home. They created lyrics and chose a mixture of rap and hip hop as the genre for their song ‘Living In Roebourne’. Their confidence markedly increased during all stages from workshops to performance (see lyrics below).

This songwriting process empowered the youth to talk about their values of family, Country, and language. As each session developed, the youth continued to gain more confidence in their parts, and their individual wellbeing notably flourished. News of this infiltrated the community, and more youth in the community started to join. During the final rehearsal, the youth performed the song on the Australian national television program *The Point*.⁴

Relationship Building

From a First Nations perspective, relationships are a central part of culture and an important way of learning stories from Elders about *being well* with Country (Tynan, 2021). As such, relationality is the life force or foundation through which life is nourished (Dudgeon & Bray, 2019). This relationality also extends to all the collaborating musicians involved in Songs for Freedom. Pat Wundke, a former long-term Big hART worker who worked closely with the Ieramugadu (Roebourne) community for three years, described relationships in this way:

I think there is a level of the kind of relationships that has been built with artists like Lucky and Naomi Pigram and people like that. There is this level of trust, and there’s almost this level of familiarity now. We know what we’re doing. We’re coming in,

Living In Roebourne Lyrics

Chorus x 2

Red dusty dirt hot
dry winds

Sharing, practicing
culture

Family, country,
language

Living in Roebourne

Living in Roebourne

Verse 1 (Kenton)

Go to Big hART, so
you can get smart

So, we can have that
in our hearts

Where everybody
gonna have a great
future

Chorus x 1

Red dusty dirt hot
dry winds

Sharing, practicing
culture

Family, country,
language

Living in Roebourne

Living in Roebourne

Verse 2 (Isaac)

My home my identity
my bloodline

To many black kids
on the sideline

But you know us
black kids are smart

The only thing we
gotta do is get up

Chorus x 1

Red dusty dirt hot
dry winds

Sharing, practicing
culture

Family, country,
language

Living in Roebourne

Living in Roebourne

Bridge

Lift up so we can
stand up

Lift up so we can
stand up

Lift up so we can
stand up

Chorus x 2

Red dusty dirt hot
dry winds

Sharing, practicing
culture

Family, country,
language

Living in Roebourne

Living in Roebourne

⁴ NITV’s (National Indigenous Television) *The Point* is nationally broadcast First Nations news and current affairs program. Songs for Freedom and the youth appeared on Episode 14, 27 September 2023. The episode is publicly available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQ1By8Bsvos>



Figure 6: Kutch Edwards performing at the Songs for Freedom concert in Barangaroo, Gadigal Land, New South Wales, 2 September 2023. Image supplied by Big hART

we're gonna write a song, and we're ready to have these conversations, and that's what's kind of been cultivated through the relationships and, I guess, through the process. (SFF002, former Big hART worker)

For workshops and Songs for Freedom performances, Big hART regularly invites professional First Nations musicians, such as Kutch Edwards, Kankawa Nagarra (Olive Knight), Naomi Pigram, Shellie Morris, and Jay Jerome. This provides an intercultural musician approach that provides show credibility, media attention, and provides solidarity with the community. These touring artists work alongside long-term musical director and community music facilitator Lucky Oceans and guitarist David Hyams. Many of these musicians have been involved in the community since music programming commenced in 2010. This consistent presence of these familiar collaborators fosters long-term relationships and allows for the important building of trust.

This relationality also extends beyond the music to Big hART's community producers, who play a key role in building, sustaining, and maintaining strong relationships with the community outside Songs for Freedom performances. Aimee Keppa, who was a long-time facilitator residing in Ieramugadu (Roebourne), explained the importance of relationships in this way:

It is actually going and spending time with that young person, finding out they're a really good drawer, or they're really into this, and that's something that we've been able to do and feel proud of. I think that there's some moments of that with young people in particular. (SFF001, Songs for Freedom facilitator)

These positive relationships play a central role in providing consistent, long-term community opportunities for growth and development, particularly in terms of developing connections to community and culture in ways that promote individual wellbeing (Gee et al., 2014). Given the significance of relationality in contexts such as Ieramugadu (Roebourne), individual wellbeing is strongly interconnected with collective wellbeing and a powerful catalyst for broader community healing.

Community Healing

Songs for Freedom provides a safe space for Ieramugadu (Roebourne) community to gather, share, and connect amid significant and ongoing systemic injustices and inequity caused by policies and practices from government, mining, and the justice system. The communal spaces created by songwriting and performing together not only amplify the voices of community members but likewise allow people to listen to one another, fostering greater community cohesion and providing opportunities for collective healing.

Community Cohesion

For the First Nations community in Ileramugadu (Roebourne), community songwriting creates a significant space for members of the community to gather and share their stories and collaboratively co-write lyrics around their shared experiences of injustice. Elders describe this important process of building community cohesion in terms of peacebuilding. One community member described the importance of songwriting for community cohesion: 'What I find and what I've found in the last 12 years having Big hART around is it's bringing the peace—the peace that's needed deep within our town of Roebourne. It has been the peacemaker' (SFF017, key community informant).

'When we had the concert here at the Peace Place, I think it was the first Murru concert [the earlier community concerts in remembrance of John Pat were called Murru]. It was the biggest concert that was held here in Roebourne with Big hART. I just stood back, got out of my car, and as I was walking up to the concert, I could hear the music so peacefully. The Elders, the older ladies, were singing, and then, as I walk around the corner, I've never ever seen my community together as one. Well, it was priceless. I had to go back in my car and cry because, like I said, we have faced these big resource companies every day. They brought big division in our community. But with Big hART, they closed that gap slowly but surely. See, I'm still tearing up.'

(SFF017, key community informant)

The shared experience of writing songs and then publicly performing them provides a powerful means for starting the process of repairing damaging disconnections in community relations. This process not only facilitates opportunities for storytelling and artistic expression but also helps to build a sense of trust and mutual respect among community members. As Big hART facilitator Mark Leahy noted,

What I've experienced with lots of young people is that they trust me, and they trust the community because they trust Big hART and that relationship with the community. Because we are good at making sure those performance spaces are safe for people to express themselves. (SFF012, Big hART facilitator).

Similarly, Songs for Freedom producer Debra Myers explained, 'As one older lady said, there's only two places in the community where we don't let any of that other trouble bother us, and that's church and Big hART' (SFF010, key informant). This sentiment highlights the sanctuary-like quality of these spaces in which external troubles are set aside, allowing individuals to engage fully with the creative process together. Creating a space that is inclusive and safe enough for this to occur takes skilful facilitation. Musical director Lucky Oceans described the songwriting space in this way:

The songwriting space is a place where people almost always put their problems away. It's like a neutral space. So, you're not necessarily discussing those target issues or those trigger issues. You're talking about things that are central to people no matter what language they're in. So, the song 'Money,' which I think is a really amazing song, is an indictment of the capitalist system. So, that was a group effort because it was important. You had Yindjibarndi, Ngarluma, and Banjima people all writing it. Then by the time it's finished, all these people have made something together. (SFF007, key informant)

Music can act as a 'third space'—a safe place that is totally different and dynamic and in which community disputes can be left at the door.

Healing From Trauma

Given the impetus for Songs for Freedom come from John Pat's tragic story and the retelling of this narrative has formed a key part of the touring show, trauma has been strongly present in this research. Likewise, the community stories that have emerged in the songs feature a profound interplay between healing and trauma, particularly in the context of social inequity experienced by First Nations Peoples.

The lyrics of these songs highlight how community music serves as a conduit for emotional expression not only to confront personal and collective traumas but also to foster a sense of community healing. Yindjibarndi Elder Anne Jacobs explained,

Remember last night and [name removed as participant has passed away] was doing that song about her daughter? This song tells you about her daughter and reminds me of my daughter. This is healing when we sing songs, sad ones, even rock and roll. I felt it inside when I went back home. I went fast asleep, and I was able to dream about that song and my daughter. (SFF099, key informant)

Anne explains the healing role that listening to and singing along to other community member's songs can play in one's own healing from trauma and loss.

Dr Scott Rankin spoke about the duality of the power of the arts for healing from trauma and the heavy responsibility this places on performers sharing the story. He used the example of a community theatre performance in which a young community member played the role of the late John Pat:

You know, one time when with [name removed for privacy], on Ngapartji Ngapartji, the very first time we did it, we'd been talking about what it will mean when an audience laugh and when they cry. When you'll be with them—we're serving them now—and what it will be like if you go there to the darker places of the story. He got through, but he left the stage after the applause, and I found him in the building's toilet sobbing. We had to go through what that was and unpack it, and that never occurred again. But there was some risk there of not necessarily seeing what it was like to open up this story in any other way than talking. (SFF011, key informant)

Scott notes that while sharing these stories can be cathartic, it also requires careful navigation to avoid re-traumatisation. Given the emotional weight of stories such as John Pat's that are used in Songs for Freedom, there is a critical need for safe spaces to be created, spaces in which participants can engage with their trauma and pain without being overwhelmed by it. These examples illustrate how music can serve as a means of remembrance and healing and provide a space for the community to connect with one another and heal together.



Figure 7: The Songs for Freedom concert in Barangaroo, Gadigal Country, New South Wales, 2 September 2023. Image supplied by Big hART

Social Consciousness

At the heart of Songs for Freedom is a focus on developing individual wellbeing and collective healing for members of Ieramugadu (Roebourne) themselves, along with harnessing the power of the community's songs and performances to build wider social consciousness about the injustices and inequities that First Nations communities continue to face. This focus on social consciousness is intimately tied to liberation, involves the enhancement of awareness and knowledge, and recognises the competencies required of community members, along with wider Australian audiences, to alleviate oppression (Falk-Rafael, 2001).

Educating the Wider Public

Songs for Freedom sought to weave John Pat's story with community member's current experiences to create wider awareness about the disproportionate rates of First Nations youth in incarceration, along with the organisation's continued support to raise the age of criminal responsibility to prevent so many First Nations youth being detained. This had a significant impact on audience members:

I was amazed by the positivity and generosity of spirit of the Pat family and Roebourne community in responding to the tragedy of John Pat's death—and their proactivity in campaigning for raising the incarceration age to keep children out of incarceration for four more years. Songs for Freedom made me sad, and cry, for many reasons: the death of John Pat, the lack of action for the deaths in custody, the incarnation of young people. (SFF029, audience email survey)

Many audience members were surprised to learn how long the community has been fighting for justice, especially when they heard the story of John Pat and the history of youth incarceration in Australia. As one audience member remarked, 'Just hearing the impact of losing loved ones 40 years ago, 10 years ago, and just present day—just the fact

that there are so many children locked up' (SFF048, vox pop). Another audience member stated, 'I had a general idea that the incarceration rates of Indigenous people generally in Australia [are] highly disproportionate to how many people there are, but not to the extent, particularly with children' (SFF065, vox pop). These quotes underscore the importance of accessible information and community discourse in shaping public understanding.

Audience members noted the strong intergenerational support that was displayed by this community on stage. As one participant said,

It's nice in this instance to see such a broad range of age groups conveying that message. It's really strong when you see Elders right through to little kids in support helping them and just the community in general, coming together to give that message. (SFF005, audience email survey)

This important aspect of community involvement, especially the inclusion of Elders alongside children, strengthens the overall messages the community wants to share with the wider public about their resilience and community solidarity and their commitment to First Nations' connections, kinship, and ways of being.

The emotional weight of the songs created in memory of John Pat not only articulates the pain and loss associated with deaths in custody and honours the memory of those lost but also provides a space for audience members to empathise and feel a shared sense of grief, anger, and solidarity with community members. This shared experience can be transformative, as it encourages individuals to confront uncomfortable truths about systemic injustices and their ramifications. For instance, one audience member noted, 'I'm very sad and dismayed at the ongoing high rates of imprisonment amplified by the beautiful videos of happy, vivacious children... remarkably as well. So, I'm inspired and feel compelled to make a difference' (SFF033, audience email survey). This acknowledgement of historical trauma serves to deepen the collective understanding of the ongoing struggles faced by First Nations communities, thus enhancing social consciousness and fostering a sense of urgency for change.

Cultivating Hope

Songs for Freedom concerts carefully balance the need to articulate inexcusable injustices and realities with the hope that can come from a self-determined future in which First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians work collectively for positive social change. This was noted by audience members: 'The music was so inspiring and full of hope' (SFF078, audience email survey). This sentiment underscores the dual role of music as both a reflection of current struggles and a source of inspiration for a more inclusive future.

Moreover, the songs allow audience members to feel optimistic in a practical way: 'It's more than general principles. At the moment, you know, I'm feeling hopeful about it' (SFF066, vox pop). This emphasises the powerful,



Figure 8: Patrick Churnside performing at the Songs for Freedom concerts in Barangaroo, Gadigal Country, New South Wales, 2 September 2023. Image supplied by Big hART

'I'm hopeful for a better future for First Nations and other Australians living together. The ways the beautiful talented people delivered the message also lifted me up and gave me hope for a better future.'

(SFF040, audience email survey)

ephemeral nature of hope that music can conjure, suggesting that it is not just a distant aspiration but a present reality that can be felt through the concert. Another audience member described a complex emotional landscape in which hope coexists with sadness: 'Personally, it makes me feel a little bit sad that we have got to this place, but it's also a happy sadness. It's a hopeful sadness. It's hope tinged with sadness' (SFF005, vox pop). This perspective illustrates that hope does not erase the existence of sorrow; rather, through a shared musical experience, it can create the space for both to coexist.

Inspiring Social Action

Strong emotional responses can influence an audience's political engagement and behaviour (Isbell et al., 2006). Anger, enthusiasm, and anxiety are important emotions in shaping political participation, with anger being particularly mobilising (Weber, 2013). The emotionally charged experience of the concerts was heightened because the Songs for Freedom tour unexpectedly coincided with The Voice—a national referendum that aimed to recognise First Nations voices in the constitution through a First Nations 'voice' in Federal Parliament. Over 60% of Australians voted no. Among audiences, there was a heightened awareness of social issues within First Nations communities. One audience member noted, 'There is still so much work to be done in communities; however, we are becoming aware through concerts like this' (SFF073, audience email survey).

This sentiment underscores the role musical events can play not only as entertainment but as platforms for education and mobilisation. Through performances that highlight local struggles, audiences are prompted to reflect on the challenges faced by their own communities and the collective responsibility to address them, especially in a national context such as Australia. This emphasis on building a critical consciousness among audience members illustrates how community music can contribute to more equitable societies by building awareness of social issues, which can be an important precursor to necessary policy changes (Bartleet & Heard, 2024). For instance, Songs for Freedom music director Lucky Oceans noted,

The concert, you know, seeks to engage with politicians to change the law. So, I would call it more, like, activism rather than a protest. ... It's people gathering to be entertained and to hear a message that hopefully they'll do something with (SFF007, key informant).

Audiences spoke of the desire to bridge the gap between community voices and decision-makers. As one audience member in Canberra expressed, 'I'm thinking about how to get the message out, you know, from community-level to, like, decision-makers' (SFF019, vox pop). This highlights a critical aspect of the dialogue and, more specifically, the recognition that achieving equity requires systemic change and the work of decision-makers. It also demonstrates that grassroots messages must reach



Figure 9: The Songs for Freedom concert in Naarm (Melbourne), Wurundjeri Country, Victoria, 8 August 2023. Image supplied by Big hART

those in positions of power to effect meaningful change in policies, programs, and practice.

Many audience members also recognised that change needs to focus on potential alternatives to incarceration, which demonstrates a shift towards seeking community-driven solutions. For example, one audience member noted, 'I was just sort of online reading about what are the alternatives to incarceration, like, to see what the community is suggesting' (SFF019, vox pop). Big hART models such primary prevention types of community music programs in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) for the town's youth. These programs are about inclusion and provide unspoken alternative pathways through the experiences for youth. As Debra Myers from Big hART explained,

Some of the young people that we were working with, age 12 or even younger (10–15 is where youth are on a trajectory of imprisonment). They came to realise that there was a path that they could take and education was a good thing, not a bad thing. (SFF010, key informant)

Community music programs also have the power to transform the lives of individuals who are vulnerable to engagement with the criminal justice system. The City of Melville's (Boorloo/Perth) artistic director explained,

I guess, stepping back a little bit, there's a genuine and very large opportunity for local government in this sphere to support this type of programming. I'm kind of old enough now to have seen that change over two or three decades in arts programming and particularly what local government can now achieve. It's also what community wants. (SFF006, key informant).

Through both the work on the ground in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) and the Songs for Freedom tour, the case for support from all levels of government has been made, including the important role that local government can play in expanding the reach and effectiveness of these programs, particularly in remote Australia (Ware, 2014).



Figure 10: The Songs for Freedom concert in Naarm (Melbourne), Wurundjeri Country, Victoria, 8 August 2023. Image supplied by Big hART

Cultural Connection

Community music plays a significant role in supporting people's cultural connections to Country, Elders and ancestors, and family and their sense of identity and belonging. In the community-written songs, themes of ancestry speak to the importance of cultural wisdom, connections, and traditions across generations.

Connection to Country

Connection to Country is described as a fundamental aspect of First Nations wellbeing and spirituality, encompassing relationships with ancestors, family, nature, and cultural landscapes (P. Smith et al., 2023; Yashadhana et al., 2023). This connection is crucial for social and emotional wellbeing, resilience, and healing among communities that have continued to experience entrenched disadvantages as a result of colonisation (Smallwood et al., 2023).

However, for many First Nations community members who have family legacies of forced displacement, these connections are complex. Lucky Oceans illustrated this point through a story about First Nations musician Uncle Archie Roach visiting Ieramugadu (Roebourne) and Roebourne Regional Prison. Uncle Archie is renowned for his songs about the Stolen Generations.⁵

Archie Roach came to the community, and the day before [he came to the prison], I'd said to the guys, 'Archie's coming in. You want to sing your songs

⁵ The Stolen Generations refers to a period in Australia's history when Aboriginal children were removed from their families through government policies.

Community music is a powerful enabler of people's connection to Country and place.

for him?' They [the participants] said, 'Yeah.' I kind of thought that they'd get scared [given his high profile]. But we sat out in the [prison] quadrangle there, the other side from where the concert was. People cooked scones and tea, and we had that. Archie sang a few songs, and everyone sang their songs for him—you know, that's powerful—including a young woman who had written a song about missing home, and she said to Archie, 'I never wrote a song before. But when I sing, I feel better. I feel closer to home.' At the end of it, they all thanked Archie, but Archie said, 'No, thank you. Thank you for sharing this with me.' Because he was really moved that people did share their songs about place. I think he was really about people's connection to place that you have in the Pilbara that you wouldn't get if you're a Stolen Generation. (SFF007, key informant)

One of the songs performed in Songs for Freedom, 'Ngarndu Ngurra', features community members' deep-rooted connections to Country and the cultural narratives embedded within that relationship. The repetition of the phrase 'My Land' signifies ownership and belonging, reinforcing the notion that Country is integral to identity.



Figure 11: The Songs for Freedom concert in Naarm (Melbourne), Wurundjeri Country, Victoria, 8 August 2023. Image supplied by Big hART

The emotional and spiritual connections articulated in the lyrics and narratives of the community-written songs resonate with literature on the healing power of music in addressing trauma and promoting resilience among First Nations communities (Scarfe et al., 2024). For example, in the song 'Money', there is the lyric 'I once walked in abundance before I knew your name' (SFF090, community song). This lyric reflects a critique of colonial disruption and a yearning for pre-colonial times, thereby confirming existing knowledge regarding the impacts of colonisation, especially on First Nations Peoples (Watson, 2014).

Connection to Elders and Ancestors

Maintaining cultural connection to Elders and ancestors is crucial for the wellbeing of First Nations Peoples in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) and beyond. This spiritual connection is strongly connected to people's cultural identity and encompasses kinship and relationships with Country. Here, 'traditional' cultural beliefs are often interwoven with religious spirituality, such as Christianity, which is the case for many Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi Peoples in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) and across the Pilbara region (P. Smith et al., 2023). This blend of cultural practices and religion features in many community-written songs that honour Elders and ancestors.

Individuals in the community take on roles as emerging Elders and leaders, and music provides opportunities for people to develop themselves in these roles. Cultural stewardship as an emerging Elder is central to this process (Busija et al., 2020). As Ngarluma song man, emerging Elder, and Songs for Freedom narrator Patrick Churnside explained,

I guess part of my role in doing this was to be the ambassador: a cultural stewardship in navigating the Western process. Maybe in the field it was a cultural process. So, like in the space here at the moment, especially back on home Country. And that makes more of our family and mobs connected. (SFF003, key community informant)



Figure 12: The Songs for Freedom concert in Naarm (Melbourne), Wurundjeri Country, Victoria, 8 August 2023. Image supplied by Big hART

The importance of cultural leaders in preserving and transmitting traditional knowledge within the community is underscored by this notion. It reinforces scholarship that highlights the dynamic function of these roles in promoting cultural resilience among First Nations communities (P. Smith et al., 2023). The concept of 'keeping spirit strong' is central to culture, spirituality, and overall health for many First Nations People (K. Smith & Gilchrist, 2017). The lyrics of the community song 'Letter To My Mum and Dad' illustrate this:

**I'll use my strength of heart and country
To see you one sweet day
Even though you're in your final rest
I feel you there (SFF136, community song)**

This song embodies the emotional bonds and spiritual significance cultivated through collaborative songwriting, demonstrating the multifaceted role of music in cultural preservation, personal bereavement, and expressions of loss.

Family

In First Nations communities, family structures can be complex and dynamic, extending beyond Western concepts of nuclear families to encompass kinship networks and community connections (Lohoar et al., 2014). There is a strong emphasis on the influence of familial ties in many of the community-written song lyrics. One community participant reflected on the song 'Tribute To My Family':

'Tribute to Family'—it's about our family and the struggles that me and my mum been through for the last 10 years. It's really important for my mum, my grandmothers, and the rest of my family, mainly. It's important that I'm here today to make them proud for doing this, and I feel happy for myself. I feel happy for making my mum proud. (SFF117, key community informant)

In this way, music not only honours familial connections but also acknowledges the intergenerational struggles that shape these relationships. Another participant expressed gratitude for family support provided by fellow community music participants and the facilitators during Song For Freedom:

My experience is that it is just something that's helping a lot of people—like, a family that helps you and looks after you to make sure you're right, and then that supports you. I just love being around them because they make me feel safe. I feel like I'm in good company. (SFF118, Songs for Freedom participant)

Such sentiments highlight how familial bonds foster resilience, which suggests that strong family relationships and support networks are essential for individual, collective, and cultural connections. This was noticed by audience members, who commented on the 'incredible generosity of community and Elders and performers who keep reaching out, in spite of setbacks to their families and young people, to spread their message' (SFF032, audience email survey). Indeed, when family members feel supported to connect with their cultural practices, they are more likely to engage as active participants within their communities (Moreton-Robinson, 2015).

Creating Social Equity

Through the collective songwriting process and the Songs for Freedom performances, this research has documented significant outcomes in relation to individual wellbeing, community healing, social consciousness, and cultural connections. These interconnected outcomes are all necessary for mitigating the negative consequences of social injustices and ongoing social inequity and also for addressing the root causes of such issues in remote communities like Ieramugadu (Roebourne).

The historical and contemporary experiences of First Nations Peoples in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) reflect a complex interplay of unjust causes and consequences of colonial policies and practices that have resulted in intergenerational disadvantage. The historical process of colonialism is complex, entailing the dominance of one nation over another, which is often achieved through settlement and exploitation (Mooney, 2020; Nwanosike & Onyije, 2011). The impact of colonialism on First Nations communities across Australia persists (Watson, 2014), profoundly affecting societal structures, values, and ways of life.

Community music provides a significant space and platform for challenging systemic injustices and creating public dialogue between First Nations Peoples and non-Indigenous Australians about social changes that are needed to move forward as a nation. It functions not only as a means of individual expression but also as a strong collective tool for advocating for social equity. Many participants have expressed the strong sense of empowerment they have felt through their engagement with music.

Emerging Elder Michelle Adams explains, 'On an individual- and community-level, I now have a stronger platform to highlight issues in a non-confrontational way. With the Pat family and the work Songs for Freedom encompasses, this has meant three generations of the one family are still asking for justice. So, asking for justice through Songs for Freedom is that vehicle, and the whole community has been able to participate in it.'

(SFF079, key community informant)

The insights from this case study demonstrate how powerful music can be as a mechanism for sharing stories that can capture the imagination and mobilise action around social injustices. As Dr Scott Rankin explained, 'The community would always return to the Pat story, and I think that the Pat story was symbolically strong enough to capture all the other injustices that were and are being rolled out in that community' (SFF011, key informant). The framing of the John Pat story serves as a representative microcosm of broader injustices, calling for a re-evaluation of how individual narratives can enhance our understanding of societal challenges.

The insights from this case study also tell an important story about the role of music in self-determination and this community being able to exert its right to culture. This theme is powerfully expressed in the song 'Ngarndu Ngurra'. This song not only asserts ownership but also serves as a reminder of the historical injustices faced by First Nations People from the Pilbara region:

**This is, My Land Ngarndu Ngurra
From the rusty ranges to the big blue sea
This is, my land Ngarndu Ngurra
from Karijini, Nanganyunga, Murujuga
My Land, my land, Ngarndu Ngurra.
This is, my land Ngarndu Ngurra
From the rusty ranges to the big blue sea
This is, my land Ngarndu Ngurra
from Karijini, Nanganyunga, Murujuga
My Land, my land, Ngarndu Ngurra (SFF091, community song)**



Figure 13: A Songs for Freedom rehearsal at the Ngurin Cultural Centre in Ieramugadu (Roebourne), 2022. Image supplied by Brydie-Leigh Bartleet

The lyrics emphasise that land is not an economic resource but a core element of First Nations cosmology and identity (Beck et al., 2020). This viewpoint challenges Western notions of land valuation that prioritise profit over cultural significance. Connection to Country is fundamental to traditions, spirituality, and collective memory, illustrating a holistic understanding of existence that weaves together nature and community (Watson, 2014). The struggle for land rights symbolises a fight for self-determination and recognition of historical injustices. By expressing these themes, the lyrics invite broader audiences to rethink their relationships with the land and the effects of its commodification, urging respect for First Nations Peoples and voices. This highlights the relational way in which First Nations and non-Indigenous peoples are implicated in the process of creating greater social equity in remote communities such as Ieramugadu (Roebourne).

Artistic expression is a form of freedom, and songs can provide the public with an embodiment of what freedom looks like.

Implications

Insights from the Songs for Freedom case study support and extend Australian and international literature exploring the ways community music contributes to equitable societies (Bartleet, 2023; Bartleet & Heard, 2024; Heard et al., 2023). This report highlights how community music can support self-determination, collective healing, truth-telling, and social equity for First Nations communities affected by systemic injustice and ongoing inequity. In terms of individual wellbeing, participants developed enhanced self-esteem, confidence, and valuable skills (leadership, creativity, critical thinking). Youth notably gained confidence through active participation, performances, and songwriting processes.

Community songwriting created a shared safe space for storytelling and fostering peace, trust, and unity within the community, such that community healing could occur. Collective musical activities provided platforms for expressing emotions, confronting traumas, and enabling intergenerational bonding and healing. As such, Songs for Freedom raised public awareness about systemic inequities, notably First Nations youth incarceration, and advocated for juvenile justice reform. The touring concert also generated social consciousness in audiences by educating them about issues facing First Nations communities, fostering emotional connections, and inspiring social activism and policy engagement. In doing so, community members also maintained vital connections to Country, Elders, ancestors, and family, reinforcing cultural identity and traditional practices. Lyrics and performances articulated experiences of historical and ongoing cultural injustices, emphasising the importance of cultural resilience and self-determination.

Community music in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) does more than create opportunities for improving individual wellbeing. This case study demonstrates that community music plays an important role in bringing a community together to connect and heal after the destructive impact of ongoing government policies and divisive practices from local industries. The community-written songs and Songs for Freedom performances provide a platform for community members to share stories and experiences of local injustice and to speak about how these are reflective of much wider systemic issues found throughout Australia. Through a process of truth-telling, community members have made a clear case for the need for juvenile justice reform throughout the nation. In doing so, they have also powerfully drawn on their cultural connections and exerted their cultural rights to self-determination, which are central to addressing so many of the ongoing social inequities through appropriate First Nations community leadership. Overall, this case study underscores the transformative potential of community music as a powerful driving force to provide empowerment and cultural justice and produce greater social equity in remote communities.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Practice

- **Community ownership and sustainability:** Ensure community-led approaches in music and arts initiatives emphasise sustainable practices and long-term involvement.
- **Inclusive and culturally relevant programming:** Implement programs that reflect the diverse narratives of the community, involving cultural leaders, Elders, and youth actively in planning and execution.
- **Safe and supportive environments:** Provide trauma-informed facilitation to ensure safe emotional environments, enabling participants to engage with personal and collective trauma constructively.
- **Skill development:** Encourage personal growth through creative skills training, fostering leadership, teamwork, and individual confidence.
- **Intergenerational engagement:** Promote inclusive and intergenerational activities to strengthen community bonds, cultural exchange, and healing processes.



Figure 14: Brydie-Leigh Bartleet, Anne Jacobs, and Joel Spence (left to right), Ieramugadu (Roebourne), 15 September 2022

Recommendations for Policy

- **Advocacy for Juvenile Justice:** Leverage music to support First Nations youth in addressing juvenile justice reforms.
- **Cultural Recognition:** Ensure First Nations voices are integral to the juvenile justice system and decision-making processes.
- **Community Engagement:** Provide funding for community-led initiatives that use music and arts to engage youth.
- **Mental Health Services:** Prioritise mental health support for First Nations that recognise the therapeutic benefits of community music and arts.
- **Public Education:** Implement programs to raise awareness about the challenges faced by First Nations communities, reducing stigma.
- **Restorative Justice:** Promote community engagement and healing as alternatives to punitive measures for youth.
- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Foster partnerships among arts organisations, juvenile justice, education, and health services for comprehensive youth support.
- **Sustained Funding:** Secure financial support for community music initiatives to maintain positive engagement programs for youth and communities.
- **Ongoing Commitment:** Ensure sustained involvement from policymakers and communities to create lasting impact from these initiatives.

References

- Allbrook, M. (2022). A disguised and unquestionable form of slavery: Aboriginal labour on the nineteenth-century pearling fleet in north-west Australia. *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, 6, 79–101.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Roebourne: 2021 census all persons quickstats. <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/SAL51305>
- ABS. (2023). *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/estimates-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/latest-release>
- Australian Institute of Criminology. (n.d.). *Deaths in custody in Australia*. <https://www.aic.gov.au/statistics/deaths-custody-australia>
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2023). The health of people in Australia's prisons 2022 [Catalogue no. PHE 334]. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/e2245d01-07d1-4b8d-81b3-60d14fbf007f/aihw-phe-33-health-of-people-in-australias-prisons-2022.pdf?v=20231108163318&inline=true>
- Bartleet, B.-L. (2023). A conceptual framework for understanding and articulating the social impact of community music. *International Journal of Community Music*, 16(1), 31–49. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1386/ijcm_00074_1
- Bartleet, B.-L., & Heard, E. (2024). Can community music contribute to more equitable societies? A critical interpretive synthesis. *Social Justice Research*, 37, 180–204. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-024-00431-3>
- Bartleet, B.-L., & Higgins, L. (Eds.). (2018). *The Oxford handbook of community music*. Oxford University Press.
- Beck, L., Behn-Smith, D., Gislason, M., Hoogeveen, D., Johnson, H., Stelkia, K., Adams, E., Kendall, P., & Henry, B. (2020). Everything is connected: Integrating First Nations perspectives and connection to land into population health reporting. In C. Stephen (Ed.), *Animals, health, and society* (pp. 225–232). CRC Press.
- Big hART. (n.d.). *Tjaabi—flood country*. <https://www.bighart.org/projects/tjaabi/>
- Big hART. (2013). *Murru* [Album]. Big hART.
- Big hART. (2024). *Big hART annual report: 2023–2024*. https://www.bighart.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Big-hART-Annual-Report-23_24.pdf
- Boal-Palheiros, G. (2017). Singing against loneliness: Songs of a homeless choir in Porto. *Music & Arts in Action*, 6(1), 63–79. <https://www.musicandartsinaction.net/index.php/maia/article/view/142>
- Brennan, D. (2023, 28 September). *40 years on, John Pat's death still hasn't led to major reforms*. National Indigenous Times. <https://nit.com.au/28-09-2023/7857/40-years-on-john-pats-death-still-hasnt-led-to-major-reforms>
- Busija, L., Cinelli, R., Toombs, M. R., Easton, C., Hampton, R., Holdsworth, K., Macleod, A., Nicholson, G. C., Nasir, B. F., & Sanders, K. M. (2020). The role of Elders in the wellbeing of a contemporary Australian Indigenous community. *The Gerontologist*, 60(3), 513–524. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gny140>
- Case, A. (2021). Exploring music, imagery, and racial-ethnic-cultural identity with youth in a community music program: A community engagement project [Masters thesis, Lesley University]. DigitalCommons@Lesley. https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/expressive_theses/462/
- Chapple, R. (n.d.). *The Flying Foam massacre* [Summary paper]. Parliament of Western Australia. [https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/tables/papers.nsf/displaypaper/4014314cf920c2f875dc796a482585ec008206a9/\\$file/tp-4314.pdf](https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/tables/papers.nsf/displaypaper/4014314cf920c2f875dc796a482585ec008206a9/$file/tp-4314.pdf)
- City of Karratha. (2014). *Harding Dam/ Lake Poongkaliyarra*. inHerit. <https://inherit.dplh.wa.gov.au/public/inventory/printsinglerecord/c42a105e-8f87-4dd0-b18e-c5f037641409>
- Cunneen, C. (2011). Indigenous incarceration: The violence of colonial law and justice. In P. Scraton & J. McCulloch (Eds.), *The violence of incarceration* (pp. 209–224). Routledge.
- Dudgeon, P., & Bray, A. (2019). Indigenous relationality: Women, kinship and the law. *Genealogy*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy3020023>
- Ellinghaus, K., & Healy, S. (2018). Micromobility, space, and Indigenous housing schemes in Australia after World War II. *Transfers*, 8(2), 44–66. <https://doi.org/10.3167/trans.2018.080204>
- Falk-Rafael, A. R. (2001). Empowerment as a process of evolving consciousness: A model of empowered caring. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 24(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00012272-200109000-00004>
- The Freedom Collective. (2023). *Songs for Freedom* [Album]. Big hART.
- Freire, P. (1998). Cultural action and conscientization. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68(4), 499–521. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.40.3.h76250x720j43175>
- Gee, G., Dudgeon, P., Schultz, C., Hart, A., & Kelly, K. (2014). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing. In P. Dudgeon, H. Milroy, & R. Walker (Eds.), *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice* (2nd ed., 55–68). Commonwealth of Australia.
- Grabosky, P. N. (1988). Aboriginal deaths in custody: The case of John Pat. *Race & Class*, 29(3), 87–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030639688802900306>
- Heard, E., Bartleet, B.-L., & Woolcock, G. (2023). Exploring the role of place-based arts initiatives in addressing social inequity in Australia: A systematic review. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 58(3), 550–572. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.257>
- Holcombe, S. (2005). Indigenous organisations and mining in the Pilbara, Western Australia: Lessons from a historical perspective. *Aboriginal History*, 29, 107–135. <https://doi.org/10.22459/ah.29.2011.07>
- Holland, L., Smirnov, A., Hickman, A., Toombs, M., & Reid, N. (2022). Examining incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 6(9), 599–600. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642\(22\)00160-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642(22)00160-2)

- Hollenbeck, L. (2008). *Cognitive, affective, and meta-cognitive skill development through instrumental music: A positive impact on academic achievement* (Publication No. ED502742) [Thesis, State University of New York]. ERIC.
- Isbell, L. M., Ottati, V. C., & Burns, K. C. (2006). Affect and politics: Effects on judgment, processing, and information seeking. In D. P. Redlawsk (Eds.), *Feeling politics: Emotion in political information processing* (pp. 57–86). Springer.
- Johnston, E. (1991). *Royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody: Report of the inquiry into the death of John Peter Pat*. Australian Government Publishing Service. http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/individual/brm_jpp/
- Kokotsaki, D., & Hallam, S. (2011). The perceived benefits of participative music making for non-music university students: A comparison with music students. *Music Education Research*, 13(2), 149–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2011.577768>
- Krieg, A. S. (2006). Aboriginal incarceration: Health and social impacts. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 184(10), 534–536. <https://doi.org/10.5694/j.1326-5377.2006.tb00357.x>
- Lohoar, S., Butera, N., & Kennedy, E. (2014). *Strengths of Australian Aboriginal cultural practices in family life and child rearing* (CFCA paper no. 25). Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Mason, B. (2020). Reporting Black lives matters: Deaths in custody journalism in Australia. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 26(2), 202–220. <https://doi.org/10.24135/pjr.v26i2.1129>
- Matarasso, F. (2007). Common ground: Cultural action as a route to community development. *Community Development Journal*, 42(4), 449–458. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsm046>
- McFerran, K., & Hunt, M. (2022). Music, adversity and flourishing: Exploring experiences of a community music therapy group for Australian youth. *British Journal of Music Therapy*, 36, 37–47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13594575221078591>
- McLean, C. (2025, 22 March). *Pilbara traditional owners push back on Rio Tinto, state government water extraction from sacred sites*. ABC News. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-03-22/water-extraction-in-northern-wa-damaging-aboriginal-sites/104626770>
- Mooney, B. T. (2020). Introduction: Some thoughts on colonialism. *The European Legacy*, 25(5), 499–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2020.1761626>
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (2015). *The white possessive: Property, power, and Indigenous sovereignty*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Mulvaney, K. (2011). About time: Toward a sequencing of the Dampier Archipelago petroglyphs of the Pilbara region. *Records of the Western Australian Museum, Supplement* 79, 30–49. <https://doi.org/10.18195/issn.0313-122x.79.2011.030-049>
- Nwanosike, O., & Onyije, L. (2011). Colonialism and education. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(4), 41–47. <https://www.richtmann.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/view/10879>
- Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services. (2022). *2022 Inspection of Roebourne Regional Prison*. Government of Western Australia. <https://www.oics.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Roebourne-Report-145.pdf>
- Purdy, J. (1994). Royal commissions and commissions: What was left out of the report on the death of John Pat. *Australian Journal of Law and Society*, 10, 37–66.
- Scarfe, B., Apps, K., Sunderland, N., Graham, P., Bartleet, B. L., Barry, G., Garvey, D., Cooper, R., & Bracknell, C. (2024). Music as a determinant of health among First Nations People in Australia: A scoping narrative review. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 35(4), 924–935. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.865>
- Smallwood, R., Usher Am, K., Marriott, R., Sampson, N., & Jackson, D. (2023). Understanding the importance of connection: An Indigenous exploration of the social and emotional well-being and resilience of a rural cohort of Aboriginal young people. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 27(10), 1407–1425. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2023.2213638>
- Smith, K., & Gilchrist, L. (2017). Well-being of older Aboriginal Australians: The importance of ‘keeping spirit strong’. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 36(2), 112–113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajag.12421>
- Smith, P., Rice, K., Schutte, N., & Usher, K. (2023). Healing through meaning as an aspect of spirituality for Indigenous Australians: A qualitative study. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 19(3), 626–634. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11771801231193169>
- Taylor, J., & Biddle, N. (2005). An evidence based analysis of indigenous population and diversity. *The Journal of Indigenous Policy*, 5, 16–24. <https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/JIndigP/2006/5.pdf>
- Thomas, A. (1984, 14 August). Harding Dam raises hackles in WA. *The Canberra Times*. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/127219675>
- Tynan, L. (2021). What is relationality? Indigenous knowledges, practices and responsibilities with kin. *cultural geographies*, 28(4), 597–610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14744740211029287>
- Ware, V.-A. (2014). *Supporting healthy communities through arts programs* [Health report]. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; Australian Institute of Family Studies. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/142afee1-f0b5-40c9-99b5-5198feb255a4/ctgc-rs28.pdf?v=20230605181153&inline=true>
- Watson, I. (2014). Re-centring First Nations knowledge and places in a terra nullius space. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 10(5), 508–520. <https://doi.org/10.1177/117718011401000506>
- Weber, C. (2013). Emotions, campaigns, and political participation. *Political Research Quarterly*, 66(2), 414–428. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912912449697>
- Yashadhana, A., Fields, T., Liu, E., Serova, N., O’Leary, M., Kenning, G., Kuchelmeister, V., Lockhart, J., & de Leeuw, E. (2023). Therapeutic aspects of Connection to Country and cultural landscapes among Aboriginal peoples from the Stolen Generations living in urban NSW, Australia. *Public Health Research & Practice*, 33(4), Article e3342332. <https://doi.org/10.17061/phrp3342332>

