2015 Play Your Part Awards

for Inspiring Prevention Initiatives

Northern Territory

NB. PLAY YOUR PART AWARD RECIPIENT ADVICE EMBARGOED UNTIL 6TH SEPTEMBER. Please do not release until then.

To: Willowra Early Childhood Reference Group and the children of the Willowra community in partnership with World Vision Australia

For: Hearing Children's Voices - Willowra Community

In 2014 the children of Willowra (a Warlpiri community in Central Australia) looked into the

future - to their hopes, dreams and aspirations for their community through photos and

paintings.

The children shared their depicted dreams with their families and community through an exhibition about their vision for the future.

Their dreams were for a community where: culture and country was strong, their children and their children’s children were safe and protected, their community sat down to talk about looking after kids and where children were going to school supported by family.

The children were given cameras and instructed to take photographs of what made them feel happy. They were then supported to discuss why they had taken the photograph and what they would like to communicate through the image.

The children were also encouraged to complete a series of paintings that explored their aspirations for keeping children happy, healthy and safe.

The ‘photo voice’ methodology and visual arts encouraged the children to examine and communicate to their parents and the broader community.

The “Hearing Children’s Voices” was a pilot initiative of the World Vision supported Warlpiri Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Project in 2014.

The initiative was a collaboration between World Vision Australia (WVA), BIITE (Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education), Willowra Early Childhood Reference Group, WYDAC (Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation), the families of Willowra and Tex Skuthorpe, an Indigenous artist.

The Willowra community heard their children’s voices and agreed to work on a Community Child Safety Plan. The Willowra Early Childhood Reference Group (ECRG) is a key driving force for this plan, including working on a road safety project and workshops with women of all four of the Warlpiri communities, including a weekend of ‘talking and learning about keeping children safe and looking after them’.

The Hearing Children’s Voices project brought the voices of the children of Willowra directly into the Warlpiri Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) project, to help shape its future and build a strong safe community. The project is a tool to allow the Willowra Community and other service providers to “play their part” in keeping children safe.

These voices have carried loud and strong across the desert, with Hearing Children’s Voices now an activity in all four Warlpiri communities and World Vision Australia partners within Central Australia.

Annette Fuller, program manager, World Vision Australia - Central Australia said that the organisation was proud to walk alongside the children and their community to allow the children’s voices to be heard.

“We are most proud of this initiative because it was community led and directed and has led to concrete improvements in the community that will help keep children safe. We have listened, acknowledged and respected the children’s views, experiences and expertise and have learnt from listening about what’s important to the children and how to walk alongside community to together support all children to be happy, healthy, safe and strong,” she said.

“This has been the start of many more conversations to come with the children of the Willowra community.”

This inspiring initiative is a great model for how everybody can ‘listen to children’ to increase their sense of safety and wellbeing.