Evaluation of the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Association (NASCA) Athlete and Role Models Tour (ARMtour): A Case Study of Three Remote Communities

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EVALUATION OF NASCA’S ATHLETE AND ROLE MODELS TOUR (ARMtour)

1 Executive Summary

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the influence of the ARMtour program on three communities (Ntaria, Papunya and Ltyentye Apurte). The fourth community, Yuelamu, was evaluated in October, 2013. Due to the success of the Yuelamu evaluation, we conducted a larger-scale evaluation across the three other ARMtour program communities in August and October, 2014. One small change was made to the methods from 2013. This change was made to encourage students to extend their conversations of how the ARMtour program contributes to their lives and how it could continue to influence and inspire their growth and development. To do this, Art-based classroom activities were used and students were asked to explain their Art piece to the researcher and one of the other ARMtour role models (in each community).

The design focused on the ARMtour program’s influence on children and adolescents’ life skills, self-esteem, participation in sport and physical activity, and educational engagement and aspirations. All community stakeholders were invited to participate in an interview to gauge their understanding and perspectives in terms of the role they believe the ARMtour program currently has and can continue to play in each of the communities. In addition, all role models that participated in the August and October, 2014 tours were invited to partake in an interview. This evaluation concludes with recommendations for the ARMtour program and for each of the communities it is currently embedded.

The evaluation was conducted during the second and third tours of 2014 (August and October tours). Over a total of a 2-week period, each of the researchers were based in a community to: 1) discuss with the community and school members the purpose of the evaluation; 2) to invite participants and to allow community members, students, teachers, other stakeholders and role models opportunities to provide consent; and 3) conduct interviews with community members, teachers, other stakeholders and role models, and Art-based classroom activities and interviews with students. Only qualitative methods were used. The majority of those invited, offered their consent to participate in the evaluation. Reasons for not consenting were not being present in the community during scheduled ARMtour visits and interviews, due to family commitments, Aboriginal sorry business (i.e., mourning the death of an elderly community member), and extra-curricular activities (i.e., choir tour).
2 Background

Founded in 1995 by high profile Aboriginal NRL player, David Liddiard, NASCA uses sport to encourage young Indigenous Australians to be the best they can be. NASCA specialises in programs which encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to stay at school and make positive lifestyle choices. It aims to achieve this through using sport, health promotion, education and mentoring.

The Athlete and Role Models tour (ARMtour) uses athletes and other people with specific skills (e.g., a hairdresser) to deliver sport, recreation and leisure or work-related activities that encourage educational engagement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living in remote Northern Territory communities.

The role models work with the schools and communities to:

- Provide inspiration, encouragement and support for students at school
- Enhance students’ self-esteem and self-confidence as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- Help students develop life skills, for example in communication, leadership and goal-setting
- Encourage participation in sport and recreation activities for healthy and positive lifestyles
- Strengthen school and community partnerships

Since 1997, ARMtour role models have reached over 8000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in communities across the Central Desert, East Arnhem Land and the Tiwi Islands. The ARMtour program is funded by the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

3 Purpose of evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to determine the influence of the ARMtour program across three communities (Ntaria, Papunya and Ltyentye Apurte). In particular, the design focused on the ARMtour program’s influence on children and adolescents’ self-esteem, self-concept, identity, participation in sport and physical activity, and educational engagement and aspirations. All community stakeholders who have been engaged in the ARMtour program were invited to participate to gauge their understanding and perspectives in terms of the role they
believe the ARMtour program currently has and can play in these three communities. All three researchers have been involved with the ARMtour program in the capacity of role models previously and two of the three researchers conducted the case study evaluation of Yuelamu in 2013. In this role, the researchers have gained an understanding of the ARMtour program, and a general appreciation of the cultural context in each of the communities. This encouraged open consultation with the majority of community members for the standard of responsibility (see NHMRC, 2003). Furthermore, the researchers have a collegial relationship with participants, a dynamic that will promote a research partnership for reciprocity (see NHMRC, 2003).

4 Project design and analysis
The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC 2014/603; refer to Appendix 1), the Northern Territory Department of Education (refer to Appendix 2) and the Santa Teresa School (refer to Appendix 3) approved the study protocols. This project is a case study of three remote communities in which the ARMtour program is currently implemented. Interview questions focused on the influence of the ARMtour program on the community, the school community, the benefits and challenges of the current program, the improvements that may be needed in the future, the role models associated with the ARMtour program and whether the ARMtour program contributes to closing the gap on Indigenous inequality (refer to Appendix 4). The data was collected using a digital audio recorder or thorough notes taken during the interview. Data was transcribed and coded in Microsoft Excel to elicit key themes. To ensure the trustworthiness of the analyses, each of the three researchers transcribed and coded the same participants’ interview responses and from this developed key themes. This was then shared between the three to determine similarities and differences with coding and themes. Differences were discussed until mutual agreement was obtained. These codes and themes were then utilised across other responses, with additional codes and themes used when new information arose. This report will present the findings by focusing on each community separately and in the following order: Ntaria, Papunya and Ltyentye Apurte.
5 Ntaria and Ntaria School

Ntaria is the area of land around the former mission of Hermannsburg, 130 km west of Alice Springs, near the geographic centre of Australia. It is on the traditional land of the Western Arrernte people. In the 2011 Census (http://www.abs.gov.au/census), the population of Ntaria was 625, of whom 537 (86%) identified as Aboriginal, and is comprised of 55% females and 45% males. The median/average age of the Ntaria population is 24 years of age, 13 years below the Australian average. Forty three percent (43%) of the population speak Arrernte and 36% Western Arrernte as their first language. Fourteen percent (14%) of people speak English as their first language.

Ntaria School is located in the community of Ntaria, and is part of the Lasseter Group School, which provides education to students residing or staying in Ntaria who are preschool age through to the middle years (i.e., Preschool through to Years 9/10). There are 15 full-time teachers and six full-time Aboriginal assistant teachers employed at Ntaria School. Student enrolment is approximately 170, with the average student attendance per day between 70 and 80. One of the full-time teachers has been allocated the role of planning for the ARMtour program and is therefore responsible for collaborating with NASCA and their own staff/colleagues to determine the implementation of school-based activities during the ARMtour program visit, three times a year. This collaboration is important for NASCA, as they are guided by this teacher, the feedback they receive from others (e.g., Principal and role models), and the ideas these groups of people put forth in terms of role model responsibilities and expectations during the days role models are placed in the school setting.

During the ARMtour program, the role models work individually or pairs in each classroom supporting or leading various kinds of activities (depending on the skills and expertise of the role models). At the start of each ARMtour program, role models are meant to introduce themselves to the various classes, often with pre-designed NASCA role model posters. This enables the students to get to know a little about the role models, and to remember returning role models. Following introductions, the role models may run an activity, usually one with one role model leading the activity with the other supporting, so each role model has a turn leading their own activities. Alternatively, role models work in support of the classroom teacher as a teacher’s aide. After school, role models are involved with informal games, sports and other activities at the basketball court or sports fields. The ARMtour program may also provide a community barbeque one evening during the week. An informal daily debrief occur among the
ARMtour group in the late evenings during the tour, whereby role models are able to share their daily experiences with each other. The team leader and returning role models are available to address any concerns or challenges faced by the role models throughout the tour.

5.1 Methodology

The interviews and Art-based classroom activities conducted are listed below in Table 5.1, with the schedule of interview questions in Appendix 4.

Table 5.1: List of interviews and Art-based classroom activities for each group of participants in the evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (number)</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community members (e.g. parents/carers) (n=1)</td>
<td>1. One-on-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School principal and teachers (n=10)</td>
<td>2. One-on-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal assistant teachers (n=5)</td>
<td>3. One-on-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role models (n=10)</td>
<td>4. One-on-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (n=19)</td>
<td>5. Art-based class activity and interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total participants = 45

5.2 Measures

The qualitative measures were designed to explore the influence that the ARMtour program has on the Ntaria community and the role models who were based in Ntaria for both the August and October tours. Qualitative data collected information about how stakeholders’ perceived the program including what the students’ enjoyed and whether the project had an impact on students’ engagement and attitudes towards school. The participants highlighted the positive aspects of the program, as well as made suggestions for improvements for future practice.

Interviews were conducted by one of the lead authors and were generally collected in one interview period (except for two interviews, which were interrupted for a short period and recommenced soon after). As such, the duration of the interviews ranged from approximately 10 to 52 minutes. This enabled the participants to schedule the interviews at times that were
appropriate for them (e.g., for school personnel in morning tea and lunch periods, and for parents / carers during an ARMtour scheduled activity). Two of the role models opted for a small focus group interview, and three role models chose to answer the questions in a written format (instead of a face-to-face interview). For the community member who’s first, second and third languages were not English, interviews were conducted in a group setting (i.e., two community members being interviewed at the same time) where one of the participants assisted with translation of questions and answers to Arrente and English.

5.3 One-on-one interviews

Participation in the one-on-one interviews was voluntary and all participants were provided opportunities to discuss the evaluation and ask any questions they had prior to participation and providing consent. Written consent was provided by all participants, except for one community member who was interviewed informally at the basketball courts on the last evening of the October tour. Verbal consent was offered instead. One-on-one interviews were conducted with a community member, Aboriginal assistant teachers, school principal and teachers, ARMtour role models and students. The intention was to include a greater number of community members in the evaluation, however due to time constraints, lack of opportunities to establish connection and rapport with community members and various other community factors (such as families out of town for funerals and sorry business) this was not possible. Two ARMtour role models participated in a small focus group interview. Students were also asked to create Art pieces reflecting what is special to them, including ARMtour (refer to Appendices 5 and 6 for an example of the Art-based drawing activity).

5.4 Art-based classroom activities and interviews with students

One-on-one interviews were conducted with school students. Students who wanted to participate in the interviews were read the consent form and if they wanted to partake in the interview, they offered their consent by signing (i.e., writing their name) on the Art piece. The evaluation was explained to participating students and their teachers and they were able to ask questions about the study prior to deciding to participate or offering consent. The instructions for the Art piece differed based on the age of the students. For the Kindergarten/Year 1 students they were asked to draw all of the things that are special to them (refer to Appendix 6). The older students (Years 4 and 5) were asked to draw four different images: 1) what is special about their community and family; 2) what is special about their school; 3) what is special about ARMtour; and 4) what would they like to do with ARMtour in 2015 (refer to
Appendix 5). The interviews followed the completion of the Art pieces and took place with each student yarning with the researcher or one of the role models. This data was collected by the researcher or role models who took notes during the interview. Questions focused on their community, family and school; the influence of the ARMtour program; the improvements that may be needed in the future, and the role models associated with the ARMtour program (refer to Appendix 4).

5.5 Results

The results of the study are presented in four sections: 1) Community members and Aboriginal assistant teachers; 2) Students; 3) School principal and teachers; and 4) Role models. The participants have been de-identified using a code that represents their role, their gender, and the number participant they represent (e.g., RM1 represents Role model, male, #1; TF3 represents a Teacher, female, #3; AATF5 represents an Aboriginal assistant teacher, female, #5). For students, age has also been included (e.g. SF3-13 represents a 13-year-old female student).

5.5.1 Community members and Aboriginal assistant teachers

One community member participated in an informal conversation and her ideas will be presented in this section. This community member has recently returned to the community, after spending some time studying in Adelaide. Despite her absence from the community to enhance her education and qualifications, she still had strong kinship responsibilities with her family and youth in the community. In addition, five Aboriginal assistant teachers were interviewed and their ideas are also presented in this section (refer to Appendix 4 for interview questions). Table 5.2 shows gender of the Aboriginal assistant teachers, where the interview was conducted and whether the interview was conducted individually or in a small group.
Table 5.2: Ntaria community member and Aboriginal assistant teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Where interview was conducted</th>
<th>One-on-one or small group interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Pair interview (with Aboriginal assistant teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Pair interview (with Aboriginal assistant teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Swimming carnival</td>
<td>One-on-one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Swimming carnival</td>
<td>One-on-one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Phone call after October tour</td>
<td>Pair interview (with classroom teacher)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were a few more Aboriginal assistant teachers who were not available or were not contactable, as they were not attending school during both the August and October ARMtour program visits. From observation, there was a level of disgruntlement between school leadership/executive teachers and some of the Aboriginal assistant teachers, although this was not noted in the interviews with consenting Aboriginal assistant teachers. There were five key themes derived from the interviews with the community member and Aboriginal assistant teachers. These are displayed in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Community members and Aboriginal assistant teachers’ interview themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Education, family and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Community knowledge of NASCA and ARMtour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Positive feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Improvement suggestions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Education, family and community

This community member had spent most of her schooling years at boarding school and went onto university to study a Bachelor’s degree. This community member returned to Ntaria to raise her daughter with family networks and kinship responsibilities. She noted that coming home had been lovely and she has continued her kinship roles. At the time of the interview, she was looking after nieces and nephews, as an Aunty, and introducing her daughter to the ARMtour mob. Becoming a mother has not dampened her motivation to continue studying with educational goals now focused on universities that have strong Aboriginal Education programs and support. The community member explained that her family is one of the dominant families in the community and that seeking further education was encouraged.

Community knowledge of NASCA and ARMtour

The Aboriginal assistant teachers made clear that they knew about the ARMtour program, but not NASCA. This was mainly because of the integration of ARMtour in the school setting. Community members who were not closely associated with the school, did not know of NASCA and ARMtour: “Parents who are not linked with the school don’t know about NASCA and very little about what ARMtour aims to do” (AATFs 1 and 2). Another Aboriginal assistant teacher agreed with this by saying that:

Community members who are not involved with the school, don’t know what ARMtour is, and often ask us who you are. We say that you are ARMtour, you come from Sydney and help the kids in school and sport. They are happy with that (AATF4).

When the program was visible in the community, these community members would ask the Aboriginal assistant teachers about the ARMtour program. This was an area that some of the Aboriginal assistant teachers reported as in need of change. They said that would be possible through community events, carnivals and an extension of the ARMtour program to an after-school program (refer to improvement suggestions section).

One of the Aboriginal assistant teachers somewhat refuted these statements by explaining that the excitement experienced by youth in the lead-up to an ARMtour program visit, meant that children would talk about the ARMtour program at home with their family: “The children look forward to the visit and they talk at home before they come. Everyone gets excited” (AATF5). It may be that this Aboriginal assistant teacher, who is a grandparent and great-grandparent for a number of students at school, may be engaged in these conversations with her family, which
may be a different conversation for those children who do not have family closely connected to the school.

Positive feelings

The Aboriginal assistant teachers listed a number of positives and advantages of having the ARMtour program in their community. The first was that the youth really enjoy the ARMtour program and are excited when the program is in the community: “When ARMtour is in the community the kids are really excited” (AATFs 1 and 2). When asked to explain why the youth really enjoy the ARMtour program, it seemed the responses focused on learning new knowledge and skills, playing sport and participating in carnivals, more help and guidance in the classroom, and an array of after-school activities:

*They help with swimming carnival and athletics carnival. They play with the children after school and the children really love it. ARMtour play sport and the children like sport* (AATF5).

*The kids learn different things and are given more help in the classroom* (AATF3).

As a result of the positive feelings that the youth experience, the Aboriginal assistant teachers also acknowledge that they really appreciate having the ARMtour program in the school: “I like the extra help in the classroom, as it is often hard for the teacher and Assistant teacher to run the tasks and activities and to help every student” (AATF4). In relation to comments like this, it is not surprising that Aboriginal assistant teachers also acknowledged that school attendance increased during ARMtour visits: “Kids like coming to school when ARMtour are here” (AATF5). While the positive influence of the ARMtour program was notable among students attending school (particularly the younger students), the ARMtour program may have less of an influence on older children, as it competes with other organisations and programs. One Aboriginal assistant teacher stated: “The younger primary children get really excited when they come. The older children get excited too but they go on many trips and meet lots of people already” (AATF5).

One of the other positive elements of the ARMtour program, from the Aboriginal assistant teachers’ perspective, was the Sydney trip or excursion that students and a few Aboriginal assistant teachers will experience at the end of this year. This was perceived to be an important component of the ARMtour program, as it encouraged 100% school attendance throughout the school year, with all involved wanting the Sydney trip to be the reward: “We want our
community to experience Sydney” (AATF3). The benefits would be plentiful for all involved, including NASCA and the ARMtour program, as “ARMtour people would get to experience culture” (AATF3).

**Role models**

The role models were a central component of the ARMtour program and much of the narrative provided by the Aboriginal assistant teachers focused on the role models, their various skills, their contributions in the community, and areas where role models could have a stronger contribution to the community. Returning role models were welcomed and generally there were only positive responses associated with the role models who have visited Ntaria:

*We would prefer the same role models who keep coming back* (AATF4).

*Role models are volunteers I think they are good role models for our children* (AATF5).

When prompted or asked to select specific role model characteristics, a few of the Aboriginal assistant teachers asked for more role models who were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, so that the students could associate more with these role models and find out how they have been successful in their own lives:

*We would also like more role models who are Aboriginal* (AATF4).

*More Aboriginal role models would be good, so our students can learn from them and see what they have achieved and how. This will be better for our kids* (AATFs 1 and 2).

Interestingly, when asked whether it would be better to have role models from their own community, both of these Aboriginal assistant teachers said “no”. Perhaps it was considered that local role models would already have an influence through their familial and cultural roles in the community and hence would not be appropriate for the ARMtour program.

The role models were predominantly understood to be associated with sports and physical activity: “Kids really enjoy the sport and activities that ARMtour shows and teaches” (AATF3). However, the Aboriginal assistant teachers also suggested that role models needed to possess educational skills for the classroom. It was clear that the Aboriginal assistant teachers believed that the role models had to have knowledge and skills for these dual roles; sport and education: “Role models need to be good at sport and in the classroom” (AATFs 1 and 2).
One of the other Aboriginal assistant teachers extended this and stated that role models not only need to be good at sport and in the classroom, but they also needed to possess knowledge and skills that were different to the community. This was important so that the students would learn new knowledge and skills that the wider community could see and acknowledge: “Role models should bring different skills and knowledge to the community. We would like them to teach our kids how to read and write a book together with ARMtour that could be published and shared with the community” (AATF3). This is an opportunity that would involve role models, teachers and Aboriginal assistant teachers working together with students to design and create an artefact. It also highlights the importance of bringing the ARMtour program to the community in a way that acknowledges the contributions of the ARMtour program that goes beyond sport.

**Improvement suggestions**

The Aboriginal assistant teachers frequently made suggestions related to the ARMtour program and engaging their youth. In order to engage or re-engage older youth, it was suggested that the ARMtour program and sport be used to do this, but these sessions should be conducted after school, rather than in-school time. It was envisaged that this would engage youth in sport, build important interpersonal skills and values, relieve boredom and minimise troublesome behaviours:

*More basketball. When football season is over the older kids get bored and do nothing. We think that evening basketball would be good for all of the kids* (AATFs1 and 2).

*ARMtour should be running activities outside of school. This would be between 3:30-5pm* (AATF4).

It was also suggested that these after-school activities may need to be gender-specific with basketball appropriate for both genders, but if girls are not engaging in these sessions, that netball may be the more appropriate sport: “For the older girls to keep them engaged, netball would be best. I think it would be good for getting them to practice netball and head into town (Alice Springs) to play” (AATFs 1 and 2). The notion of having a goal or reward for engaging in these after-school activities became clear. It was suggested that these activities would be competitive and that it would culminate in a winner or a larger-scale competition (e.g., Alice Springs competition).
Another facet of these after-school activities would be to build capacity for leadership and sustainability. The ARMtour program’s role would be to teach the older youth coaching and umpiring skills, so that they could run the competition beyond the ARMtour program visits and ensure that the younger youth would be learning skills and participating in a safe environment: “When your mob is here you teach the older kids to play basketball and teach them skills that when you mob leave the older kids can teach the younger kids” (AATFs 1 and 2).

When asked whether other sports could be introduced into the after school activities sessions, the Aboriginal assistant teachers agreed and suggested:

*For younger kids continuing with football and softball is fine... The older kids need something new or different, like basketball and netball* (AATFs 1 and 2).

*Playing sports, but different sports could be good. These could include softball, soccer and basketball* (AATF4).

Other suggestions for after school activities included teaching Athletics skills to students, with a carnival scheduled for the end of the ARMtour program visit with a community BBQ. This suggestion links with not only youth learning new skills and competition to keep them motivated, but also with engaging the community more widely, so that they find out more about the ARMtour program, the role models and the aims of the program: “This will get the community to the carnival and get to know more about ARMtour. This could be at the basketball court” (AATF4).

Another area that was highlighted for improvement that was not centred on sport was ARMtour teaching sessions both inside and outside of school focusing on “computers, iPads, and other technologies. Also it would be good for ARMtour to do more classroom activities, more teaching of new skills and things, as the students like learning from them” (AATF3). This continues the idea of role models bringing new knowledge and skills to the community and to youth. This improvement would require stronger links with teachers in the school and pre-planning in terms of embedding within curriculum guidelines and learning programs.

### 5.5.2 Students

Nineteen students participated in the Art-based classroom activities and one-on-one interviews. The two classes that participated in the classroom based activities were a Year 4/5 class (n=11) and a K/Year 1 class (n=8). The role models introduced the activity, with the Year 4/5 class completing a quadrant drawing activity focusing on: 1) what they like about their
community; 2) what they like about their school; 3) what they like about ARMtour; and 4) how they could improve ARMtour (refer to Figure 5.1). The K/Year 1 class drew one picture that focused on what was special to them (refer to Figure 5.2). The variance between the two drawing activities was to cater for the age and stage-developmental differences. As the classes started drawing, two role models conducted the one-on-one interviews (i.e., yarns) with the students. The students then went outside the classroom to make their Art piece using one of their drawings. The students wrote their name on the paper-based drawings to say that they are happy for their drawings to be used for research purposes, and they kept the Art piece to display in the classroom or to take home with them.

Figure 5.1. SF7-11, Years 4/5 class.
There were four key themes derived from the Art-based classroom activities and interviews with the students. These are displayed in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Students Art-based classroom activities and interview themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ARMtour program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family

The students’ responses clearly show that their family and kinship relationships are an important and special part of their life. They love their family as they care for them, keep them safe and they appreciate that their family members prepare and cook food for them: “My family. My mum is special as she keeps me safe and cooks me food” (SF15-6). They also love participating in family activities, usually on the weekend, which include hunting, camping, eating bush tucker food, playing and watching football, watching the horse races, and swimming in the creek. These activities were loved by all students, no matter their age or gender:

- Home is special. I love my family (SF1-10).
- I also like swimming at Palm Valley on the weekend with family (SM4-10).
- Camping and going shooting. I go with my uncle, my cousins, my nephews, nieces, aunty and nanna (SF11-11).
- Football and watching football at our ground, horse races with family and going down the creek for a swim with family (SF7-11).

Community

The students mentioned a number of community activities that they enjoyed and were important to them living in Ntaria. First and foremost, the boys loved football, with only a small number of girls mentioning this as one of their favourite activities. When the boys discussed football in more detail, they generally talked about the major AFL teams in the national competition, their favourite players, and how they like to emulate them when playing football or to be like them after-school:

- Playing football in the community (SM3-10).
- Playing football with friends. Essendon Bombers is my favourite team and Ryder is my favourite player. I want to be like him (SM3-10).

The younger students and the girls were more likely to mention who was important and special to them, more so than the activities, however, the older girls mentioned basketball and softball were the favourite sports to play outside of school hours: “I like playing with family and friends. My favourite sport to play is softball and I like the catching position” (SF5-11). Some of the
students stated that they enjoyed playing together most of the time, but did not like this when there was fighting and swearing: “I like that we are all friends, but I don’t like when we fight” (SF5-11). Other community activities that were highlighted in discussions were “Walking together after-school with (student name)” and “Staying away from the snakes up on Sand Hill” (SM12-12).

School

There were a range of positive aspects associated with school. The older students tended to focus on their favourite parts of the school day and the subjects and activities they enjoy. Break time, such as before school, recess and lunch periods were their favourite parts of the school day, as they had choice regarding the activities they could participate in and who they would participate with. For example, the majority of students liked break time as they were able to play sport and were able to spend time with their family: “I like to play softball with my little sister at school and with my aunty” (SF10-9).

In terms of school subjects and learning, Maths, Music, Art, Reading and Writing were their favourite and computers were also mentioned as a source of enjoyment and learning. Many of the older students believed that Maths was an area of strength, with VampTV (http://web.ntschools.net/w/ntms/SitePages/Vamptv.aspx) highlighted as one of their favourite uses of computers in the classroom. The following quotes show this:

- *I like to learn Maths, counting and drawing. And reading books and playing on the computer* (SF1-10).

- *My favourite lessons are music, and drums are more favourite activity* (SM4-10).

- *I like learning at school like Maths. I like using my brain and ears* (SM6-11).

- *My favourite thing at school is computers and playing games and VampTV* (SM12-12).

Five of the eight younger students drew the school in their images of what was special to them. When asking the students about school, they highlighted that they liked school and their teacher, liked playing with family and friends at school, and liked learning. Two of the five students spoke about the importance of coming to school to learn:

- *I come to school to learn. I like to read books and play sport* (SF15-6).
I like school, it is so much fun. I listen and learn. My favourite activities are Maths. It’s good because you do it and it is important (SF18-6).

These two statements are quite powerful, considering the age of the participants and highlights that students (and their families and community) do place an emphasis on schooling and education. As the students move through the primary school years it seems that the motivation for learning and school is still palpable, with many of the students enjoying Maths (and believing that they are good at Maths) and a range of other learning areas. As school attendance decreases as they enter the early years of high school (for a number of cultural and social reasons), it may be ideal to consider how re-engagement in school or other educational or vocational alternatives may be possible.

ARMtour program

On the whole, the students were unanimous in their desire for the ARMtour program. When they were asked to talk about ARMtour and what they liked, the majority of students mentioned the interactions with role models and the help that the role models give them, particularly in regards with sport and physical activity and to a lesser extent in the classroom. This was true, no matter students’ age or gender; however, it was interesting that some of the students used words like “safe” (SF18-6), “sharing with us” (SF7-10) and descriptions such as “ARMtour is special as they help us and our community” (SF15-6). This alludes to the ARMtour program being much more than a sporting program. For example, students’ described their interactions with the ARMtour role models as an important aspect of the program because they enjoy getting to know the role models, where they are from and their family:

I like talking to ARMtour people. I like to know where they are from, where they live and their family (SM4-10).

ARMtour have good manners and they like sharing with us kids (SF7-10).

This emphasises that students appreciate the interactions with role models and perhaps are seeking more opportunities to listen and learn from the role models, whether that be formalised in the school setting or through other avenues. It also shows the respect and esteem that role models and the ARMtour program are afforded when in the community, particularly when working with and building relationships with the children.
Most of the students mention that the vast array of physical activities that the role models organise for them and participate in is what they like about the ARMtour program. They also suggest that they prefer to engage with ARMtour outside of school hours: “I like to see ARMtour after-school to play with us all” (SM3-10). It is interesting that the sports that they mention are sports they already engage and participate in when the ARMtour program is not in the community. This suggests that the students prefer to increase their skills and expertise in sports that they are comfortable with, rather than learning new sports and skills with the ARMtour program:

- Playing football with ARMtour and kicking goals. I also like playing with them at school (SM4-10).
- I like playing basketball and football with ARMtour (SF5-11).
- Playing with ARMtour mob, sports like football, swimming, skipping and listening to them (SF7-10).

A small number of students noted that they like the extra help that the ARMtour program provides in the classroom. This echoed the Aboriginal assistant teachers’ sentiments and thoughts:

- When ARMtour is in the classroom they help me with my school work (SM4-10).
- I like working with ARMtour inside the classroom. I like when they help me with my work (SF10-9).

As well as highlighting the support and guidance that they receive in the classroom, the students were more likely to indicate that they like learning new knowledge and skills in the classroom when role models are presenting this material or are supporting them. This was particularly true for the younger students who were exposed to preparing and cooking healthy food: “I also really liked cooking with [role model name] and ARMtour” (SF18-6); and the students who liked participating in the new Art activity: “I like this drawing activity with ARMtour” (SF7-10).

The older students were asked to provide suggestions of the type of activities they would like to experience through participating in the ARMtour program. These were varied and reflected the age, gender and different interests of the students. Suggestions included specific sports and
physical activities (e.g., dancing), and more classroom-based activities included music and learning to play musical instruments:

- *I would like to play more soccer with ARMtour, also skip-rope and just running around with ARMtour* (SM3-10).

- *Relay racing, swimming and music. I want to learn how to play the drums properly* (SM4-10).

- *I would like to do more dancing with ARMtour. I call it cowboy dancing. Also, I would like to do more classroom activities with ARMtour* (SF5-11).

This shows that despite students mentioning that they enjoyed playing the same sports with the ARMtour program and the role models that they would be open to learning new skills and sports. One of the students also put forward a cultural suggestion: “*Shooting rabbits. We would like to hunt with ARMtour*” (SM6-11). The suggestions for improvements provided by the students indicate the need for the provision of a diverse range of activities that are age, gender and culturally appropriate, as well as activities that are introducing new knowledge, skills and sports to students.

### 5.5.3 School principal and teachers

The school principal, relieving school principal and eight teachers were interviewed and their ideas will be presented in this section (refer to Appendix 4 for interview questions). The classroom teachers at Ntaria School taught the lower primary, upper primary and the high school classes. The school principal has been the leader at Ntaria School since January, 2011. The 10 teachers (including the Principal and relieving school principal) ranged in terms of exposure to the ARMtour program, with this information displayed in Table 5.5.
Table 5.5: Ntaria teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of ARMtour programs experienced</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There were five key themes derived from the interviews with the teachers (Principal and relieving Principal have both been given a teacher code below). These are displayed in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: School principal and teachers interview themes

- 1. Understanding of NASCA and the ARMtour program
- 2. Benefits
- 3. Challenges
- 4. Recommendations
- 5. Sustainability
Understanding of NASCA and the ARMtour program

All school personnel were aware of NASCA as an organisation, but they ranged in terms of what they knew. The teacher with the most exposure to the ARMtour program had a very good understanding of the organisation, as shown in the following quote: “NASCA is a federally-funded organisation based in Sydney that works with Indigenous Australians to encourage school attendance, engagement and participation in sports and activities, promoting self-confidence in these young people, inspiring positive lifestyle choices” (TF5).

Some of the teachers who were closely connected with the ARMtour program, and often invited role models into their classroom, tended to have a better understanding than teachers who were not as closely connected to the ARMtour program or had limited exposure to the ARMtour program.

So what I know about NASCA is that it’s a non-government organisation that does get Federal funding. It aims to support young Indigenous people in urban and remote areas to stay in school and to seek further education and employment. I think that there are two academies based in western New South Wales and NASCA is based in Sydney. And they run the ARMtour program (TF6).

The teachers who had limited exposure to the ARMtour program and weren’t as engaged, tended to refer to the ARMtour program, rather than describing NASCA as an organisation. This is displayed in the following comments:

Well I know that they are situated in Sydney in Redfern, and that they organise all of the ARMtours and the role models to come to community (TF7).

Well it’s fairly brief and fairly new because I had not heard of NASCA before I came to the school but since I’ve heard about it a bit, I know that it’s based out of Sydney...mainly it’s about introducing positive role models to Aboriginal students around the country and in remote settings (TM1).

All teachers were able to describe the ARMtour program, with most talking about role models, number of visits, locations visited and what they believe to be the aims of the program. As you will read in the comment below, the teachers were more likely to see the ARMtour program as an education engagement strategy, rather than a sporting program with health and wellbeing aims:
ARMtour is a program that’s run three times a year in central Australia for central Australian bush schools. I think they’re Papunya, Ntaria, Yuelamu and Santa Theresa. It sends six role models to each of those schools and was originally I think sports based role models, athletes. That program aimed to enhance students’ experience of schools and promote school attendance, which it does very well at Ntaria. And the aim is also to have the role model demonstrating to students about positive decision making and healthy lifestyles (TF6).

Benefits

A number of benefits, from having the ARMtour program in the school community, were noted by the teachers. These ranged from educational support, sport expertise and guidance, and school project help through to the selection of appropriate role models to encourage English speaking practice, overcome shyness and feelings of shame, and expose their students to Aboriginal role models outside of their community. To begin with, the teachers placed a lot of emphasis on the role models that were selected to come to Ntaria, stating that the success of the ARMtour program was really dependent on these role models. Generally, the teachers believed that the role models that have been selected over a four year period (their exposure to the ARMtour program at Ntaria School) were appropriate:

As a general rule all the ARMtour role models that have come in groups to visit Ntaria school have been enthusiastic and eager to participate in the program, with a calm and relaxed demeanour, who genuinely enjoy our students (TF5).

When asked to explain the positive characteristics of role models who have come to Ntaria and participated in Ntaria school activities, a few of the teachers mentioned the importance of having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models. They see it as an opportunity to give their students opportunities to see a larger number of successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

I think it’s really about sending, you know, positive Indigenous role models to communities to engage with the community for a week in lots of different ways, in lots of different, you know, the people that have come have lots of different skill sets which is great, because it means you’re probably going to connect with a wider range of students and it’s about building those relationships and having those discussions about what it’s like to live and to be successful (TM1).

To reinforce the importance of having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models for the Ntaria students, one of the teachers highlighted a role model who they believe has had an
impact on students over the years. This is due to the fact he has returned many times and has shared his culture, heritage and achievements: “I have found [role model name] an exemplary role model, eager to share his story and heritage and family with our kids and to channel their exuberance in a professional manner” (TF5).

Other positive characteristics of role models highlighted by the teachers that lead to beneficial gains in their students include returning role models, role models with skills that can be used to teach students new knowledge and skills, role models who are enthusiastic and willing to listen, and role models with a varied skill set. These characteristics are captured in the following teacher quotes:

Well I think long term relationships are really important. I think that to keep coming back is really important for students. That’s, that relationship is key to how they see you and how they engage with you. So that’s important (TF10).

A variety of role models ... And just for them to be motivated and keen to assist in the classroom (TF7).

In light of this, the teachers also believe that the one-on-one interactions between role models and the students are the features that make the ARMtour program so beneficial. For example, the teachers believe that the role models allow for students to practice their English speaking abilities both in the classroom and outside in the playground. They see this as an important aspect of student learning, which may not occur without the visits from the ARMtour program:

Also the children are speaking English in the playground which is a huge bonus to language learning. There is a reason for speaking English, they want to communicate with the role models (TF9).

Benefits to Aboriginal students here at Ntaria are the opportunities to converse in English with role models they look up to, outside of the academic school arena. Students can be exposed to a wider view of Australia as a nation and relate to young people whom they would not normally encounter (TF5).

Another benefit of the interactions with role models, as perceived by one of the teachers, is that students may feel more comfortable communicating with White people and learning about others. This is displayed in her comment: “The role models can help our students to overcome shyness/shame about being amongst ‘whitefella’ by sharing their perspective of the ‘outside world’ – mainstream Australia ‘down south’” (TF5).
It is not surprising that excitement is one of the student outcomes of the ARMtour program, as students enjoy the interactions with the role models. The teachers’ appreciate that this often means more students are attending school when the ARMtour program is visiting and acknowledge the extra help in the classroom to manage the larger numbers of students:

But it’s a massive help because... they’re also usually bringing something of interest that we incorporate into the classroom which kind of excites the kids (TM1).

There’s more kids at school. Yeah, it’s just sort of, there’s a buzz when ARMtour’s here. So I think it’s, for here all I see the benefit is having someone in your classroom, it’s great to have another helping hand in the classroom, that’s a major benefit (TF2).

It certainly increases our attendance every year for that week. And it also allows our students to experience things that they otherwise wouldn’t be able to do because we as teachers just don’t have the capacity to do things like the athletics carnivals, the cross country running, and the swimming (TF6).

There were a number of teachers who would have preferred role models who are motivated and keen to teach a lesson, or those role models who are more than prepared to take an active role in the classroom (e.g., taking reading recovery). Most of the teachers believe that this was the main benefit of having the ARMtour program in the school setting.

So it’s, so things like group work is really good, especially when we have big numbers, and just to assist the teacher with whatever’s going on in the classroom whether it’s reading with a group of kids or splitting up into groups, it just allows the teacher to be able to work in smaller groups with the kids. And that would benefit the students more because they get a little bit more help and assistance, and attention, then they would if it’s a whole class with one... (TF7).

Another added benefit of have role models in the school and has been alluded to previously (by TF6) is the fact that Ntaria school and teachers use the ARMtour program and the role models for sports carnivals and for larger school-based structural projects. This was recognised as the main strategy that increases students’ love of the ARMtour program, as they would not have the opportunity to be engaged in these activities otherwise: “They look forward to the, usually the carnivals and that are on when ARMtour come in” (TM4).

I think what we’ve done here at the school is tying the arrival of ARMtour with whole school events, like the swimming carnival, the athletics carnival, fun run, to me that’s
kind of, how you operate in schools, all those sorts of things. And there’s great support. I hear we had 155 students yesterday (in the lead up to the swimming carnival) (TM8).

They [role models] have built structures. They have painted buildings. They even partly put up a shade structure. So, yeah, they’re just excellent. They take kids through and build projects like tables and chairs for outside areas. They’ve done that in the past (TF3).

Despite all of these benefits, the teachers also named a few challenges of having the ARMtour program in their school. These will be discussed in the following section.

**Challenges**

The biggest challenge for the Ntaria teachers was managing the students’ excited and energetic behaviours as a result of the ARMtour program being in the community. The teachers found that students tended to lose focus and therefore were more likely to concentrate less in class, as a result of the ARMtour program and role models presence in the school setting and classroom:

*Challenges within school during ARMtour visits for teachers include focusing student attention on academic purpose when all the students want to do is play sports all the time and jump all over the role models (TF5).*

*Children play off role models against teachers and the children often get a bit naughty to get the role model attention (TF9).*

For teachers this was their biggest concern, not the interruptions that could occur to teaching programs and the curriculum, perhaps because the teachers often used the role models as teaching assistants and aides. However, as mentioned previously in the benefits section, the teachers preferred if the role models actually used their knowledge and skills to teach a lesson. They are more than happy to re-arrange curriculum and program requirements if they think their students will benefit from the role model lesson:

*ARMtour don’t like to take the class, and we would always have a teacher there, but if they could even take a small group, if they had something planned and they take a group of four well that makes it so much easier for the teacher because then they can sort of focus on a group of ten if they’ve got a class of 14...and then we just keep swapping them around so every student gets to experience it, but the role model only has a small number of kids (TF6).*
In order for the ARMtour program to minimise the hysteria surrounding their visits, the teachers suggested selecting role models who were mature, that show initiative and learn from the teachers themselves. Most of the teachers believed that NASCA did a good job of recruiting appropriate role models (as mentioned in the strengths section), however there were a few role models who the teachers did not appreciate (no names mentioned, but inappropriate characteristics explained). These are outlined in the following comments:

*Role models in the classroom can be on great help or absolutely frustrating because they act like children themselves (TF9).*

*But I will mention that there have been role models in my experience who come into the classroom and they’re quite immature and they don’t read the needs of the class. Almost every teacher in Ntaria school is really strict and we need strong routines, and we want these young people, or the role models, to come in and sort of watch what we’re doing and take a lead from that... And there have been role models who sit down and will muck around with the kids, and we find that a real challenge. It’s hard to have any visitor in the classroom often, but if they’re going to do things like that we may as well not have them in there at all (TF6).*

One of the early years classroom teachers saw the ARMtour program as a disturbance, as they believed the younger students would not gain from the role models and the purpose of the ARMtour program. They would rather see the ARMtour program, role models and the resources allocated to the older students in the school.

*I teach down the lower end it’s hard for my kids I think to see, to use them as role models because they don’t really even know what a role model is. They should spend more time with the older kids (TF2).*

This was supported by one of the teachers in the senior school (Years 7/8), who acknowledged that the ARMtour program spends too much time with the younger students, and she would rather see the ARMtour program and role models with the older classes and students.

*Well because the primary school students are so cute [laughter], and they probably are perceived as easier to be with, there’s often a push or a focus and a, within mentors working with the primary school students. Which, I think it misses out a little bit just on, I think it’s tied in to perceptions, but also history maybe. So I think for it to be seen as across the school and with the senior students, would be good (TF10).*
Other teachers shared similar ideas in terms of challenges of ensuring that the ARMtour program and role models were equal and fair. The teachers have observed that some students receive the most attention from the ARMtour program and role models, and that they have tried to manage this by giving advice and feedback to role models or through overseeing the awards that are given out at the end of each visit:

*The same children get the attention. I have seen this time and time again. The quieter children get very little recognition and attention. It’s always the same children getting prizes unless the role models discuss with the teacher (TF9).*

*The other thing I just remembered is that ARMtour often give out prizes at the end of the week, and we’ve talked to them before about not just selecting any kid, but making sure they communicate with us on the Friday morning before they give out the prize...And I think every single time they’ve come they’ve just given prizes out and a class has missed out or a student has got it who shouldn’t have deserved it, and there’s just a real breakdown in communication there (TF6).*

**Recommendations**

Some of the suggestions mentioned above in the Benefits and Challenges section, will be explored in greater detail in this section, with recommendations put forth for consideration. The teachers believed that better communication was needed between themselves and NASCA to ensure that role models could contribute to the community in a more strategic and generous way. First, the teachers showed that they would be interested in finding out about the role models before they came to community, as well as their skill sets and areas of expertise. This would allow for teachers to schedule in time for the role models to teach this knowledge and skills during the week:

*I would like ARMtour role models to each come with a specific activity that they can do with the children, e.g. an art and craft activity, games, cooking, etc. (TF9).*

*I’d love for the role models, not necessarily all of them, but to bring a skill and then to have some sort of mini-lesson, half an hour, that they can, of course with the support of the teacher, that they can sort of run in the classroom. And I know this has been tried before and I just think it’s something they should commit to trying to do. I think it’d really be great (TF2).*

Some of the teachers also suggested that it may be better to think about the older students, and try to recruit role models who would be able to help with the transition from school to work or further study. This was noted as an area that the ARMtour program could contribute
effectively and build upon what the school was currently providing in this area. This was also suggested by a few of the role models who believed that they could provide a better service to the older students and the transition into employment.

Especially the older ones that are on an employment pathway. And so that you’ve got the different occupations of the role models that come here, if they can use those skill sets to show the older ones these pathways that they can take (TM4).

I think that’s a really important part of Ntaria School, the transition to work and to stay in school, to uni, that sort of thing. To be talking to kids about what they could be doing after school. I don’t think they ever, those conversations aren’t really had with our kids. Because there’s an expectation that they won’t go on after year ten, or after year eight (TF6).

An interesting suggestion offered by one of the teachers was assigning role models to a teacher and a classroom for the week. This would allow for stronger relationships to be developed between teacher and role model and students and role model, perhaps creating more opportunities for mentoring and student learning.

Also the way we do ARMtour here is they get timetabled to a room and then they spend an hour here and then an hour in a different classroom. And I think if the same role model was to spend more consistent time with the same sort of students I think more benefits could be achieved” (TF2).

As these discussions were ensuing, the teachers were asked how the ARMtour program, role models and teachers could better communicate together pre-tour to ensure that the planning suggested (i.e., the teaching and transition lessons) could occur. Previously, communication between NASCA and the schools / teachers has occurred but this has not been sustainable. Teachers were aware that this partially their fault and so had the following advice:

An ARMtour representative or a person can actually come to a staff meeting at the beginning or pre-arrival, and then maybe some feedback at the end, or post-arrival (TM8).

Maybe if the school and the teachers take on, you know, like a lead-up to ARMtour and teach what ARMtour’s about, because we don’t do that. So I guess it also falls on us a little bit too, and what we can do to improve pre- and post-tour (TF2).
So if, I don’t know, I guess that takes initiative on both the teacher’s part and even the person that’s coming to kind of tell the teacher when they’re coming to class, ‘Well this is what I can offer’, or ‘This is what I’d like to do’. But yeah, I guess it works both ways really. The teacher can ask that as well, yeah (TM1).

As you can read from the teachers’ comments, there is not one method of preferred communication. It seems that just before an ARMtour visit may be best for timing, as long as role models are aware that they may be informed just before the visit of the need to teach content or a skill to a group of students. The teachers also suggested working with the students who have left school and are currently unemployed or not studying. They were aware that this may not be within the realms and aims of NASCA and the ARMtour program, but they acknowledged that this would be an area that would be of great benefit for the community:

And also, I don’t know, I mean running programs after school is hard and I appreciate that role models are at school all day, but maybe targeting certain groups of young people, you know, 18 to 20 year olds or some older kids who don’t get exposure at school to ARMtour, and have sessions for them every day after school (TF2).

When asked what these sessions should look like, the teacher suggested that this would need to be discussed with community members. At the present moment, the wider community are not strongly linked to the ARMtour program, and therefore teachers believed that this was an important area of improvement for the program. This would give the ARMtour program greater breadth and width, especially if it was done in consultation with the community, and would allow for school to employment transition programs to be planned appropriately.

ARMtour knowing who is in the community, building relationships with them, we’ve got Indigenous staff at the clinic and aged care. It would be good for ARMtour to be aware of what programs exist in the community and to be talking to kids about that sort of thing (TF6).

For this to happen, the teachers recommended that role models go out on bush and camping trips with the community members, and that way not only are they communicating about the ARMtour program, improving community members knowledge of the program, and finding out from the community members how they see the program operating in their community in the future, but also role models are learning more about Aboriginal culture:
Camps out bush with older students and role models (co-ordinated by Ntaria staff and/or Rangers, with permission and contribution by Indigenous community members) could be an avenue for increased engagement (TF5).

Maybe just if they came for the full week; Monday and left Friday. That would be good. Last time they had to leave and there was a really good community event. It would have been excellent for them to attend. So the only thing I’d say is some more cultural environment and cultural experiences for them to engage in would be good (TF3).

Other suggestions for improvement included capacity building to empower the youth of the community. To do this successfully, one of the teachers mentioned that the ARMtour program needed to teach and encourage community members to become ARMtour role models themselves, rather than bringing in external role models. It is interesting to note that when the Aboriginal assistant teachers were asked about this (i.e., having appropriate community members as role models), they did not agree. Therefore, this may need to be further discussed with Ntaria community members: “No I don’t think the ARMtour program empowers youth in Ntaria. I believe you would have to recruit local young men and woman for this to happen” (TF9).

**Sustainability**

Despite most of the teachers stating that the ARMtour program needs to do more to empower youth and the community to close the educational and health gap, they were very positive when talking about the ARMtour program in light of other external organisations. This was due to the program’s commitment to each of the communities they visit and to ensuring that they keep coming back:

>The children genuinely love the attention and because the orange shirts keep coming back the program are of utmost importance – very few organisations have that commitment (TF9).

>Well I think with ARMtour you’re here for a week whereas a lot of other organisations they’re not... (TF6).

>Because of the continuity for their program and the longevity. They have been coming, and coming and coming and they keep coming. They just haven’t come for five minutes and turned around and gone back (TF3).
One of the teachers extended this support with stating that it was the ARMtour program’s obligation to work closely with the school and teachers that made it stand out from the other organisations who visited the community:

I often feel that other organisations come along and they want to stop what happens in the school, and that’s I think is a problem. Particularly we’ve had organisations who give you a week, two weeks ahead, and they want to take over the school for a week. Sorry. Whereas ARMtour come in and they work with the school, it’s predictable when they’re arriving, it’s predictable now I think about what actually happens when ARMtour’s here, and I think that’s a good thing to actually happen (TM8).

A few of the teachers mentioned other external organisations who they thought were interesting and had potential to impact on the Ntaria community. One of the programs was the Indigenous Marathon Project (http://imp.org.au/) who had just recently visited Ntaria for the first time. Positive characteristics of this program, from the perspective of one of the teachers, were that the program was run well and that the organisation personnel organised and taught lessons without much effort or coordination from the teachers. This supports the teachers’ statements relating to how the ARMtour role models could do more teaching during each visit:

We had the Indigenous Marathon Project come; they were excellent. They were all really enthusiastic, they were all, they ran activities for the kids, they ran a fun day, just their enthusiasm. They were so organised and the school sort of did nothing except turn up, and I guess that was also really, it was just easy I think (TF6).

To ensure the ARMtour program remains the favourite external school-based program in Ntaria, the teachers reinforced the importance of making certain that the benefits experienced from students participating in the week-long activities become more sustainable (outside of ARMtour program visits). Besides the recommendations already presented in previous sections, that teachers suggested embedding the NCIE’s Community of Excellence site into program activities and in role models’ responsibilities to follow up outside of visits. This site was currently being used in the senior class educational programs, with students expecting to post their learning goals and outcomes each term. The teachers acknowledged two role models who were giving advice, feedback and encouragement as the students were uploading this information, and hence thought that this was strategy that could be used to ensure outcomes were sustainable beyond the visit.
Well the year eights and senior girls have got, all got profiles on community of excellence, and that’s been a really good way of the students increasing their literacy, because it’s social media...Because they, it’s, when they get in to 13 and above they’ve got very specific learning goals. So the more people talking about it, encouraging them, giving them feedback, the better (TF10).

Okay, because they do run like a, they have like a closed social network thing and then people from, I guess from NASCA or from ARMtour could potentially get on that and have communication with the kids as they’re doing and create that connection beyond ARMtour visits (TM1).

The other sustainable strategy championed by the teachers was the Ntaria-Sydney trip, which operated for the first time this year (November, 2014). They believed that this would improve the outcomes that students experience during the ARMtour visit, by giving them additional opportunities to be exposed to NASCA, the ARMtour program, role models and other Indigenous community members who would be available to give advice, motivate and encourage students to continue with education.

Well we’re developing our relationship with NASCA by having young people hopefully for the next four years go to Sydney. And that’s seen as a fantastic way of extending the way that our young people see the world, experience the world, and understand their own place in Australia (TM1).

5.5.4 Role models
Overall, ten role models who participated in the ARMtour program to Ntaria in August and October, 2014, consented to partake in an one-on-one or focus group interview. Two of the role models opted for a small focus group interview, three chose to respond to the questions in a written format, with the remaining five role models participated in one-on-one interviews (refer to Appendix 4 for interview questions). The role models brought various skills and experience to the ARMtour program, as shown in Table 5.7.
Table 5.7: Ntaria role models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Model</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Returning ARMtour Role Model (number of tours)</th>
<th>Experience working with Indigenous people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>University staff</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Hospitality (chef)</td>
<td>Yes (2)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Student / Community work</td>
<td>Yes (4)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Student / University staff</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Sport officer</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Yes (14)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Politician</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Business owner (woodworker)</td>
<td>Yes (5)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were five key themes derived from the interviews with the role models. These are displayed in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8: Role model interview themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understanding of NASCA and the ARMtour program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sustainability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding of NASCA and the ARMtour program

The role models who were comfortable talking about NASCA and its role were those who were connected to the organisation in a number of ways. For example, Board members and those who participated in a number of NASCA programs were able to articulate the history of NASCA, its current functioning and it aims/mission:

*Founded in 1995 by David Liddiard and based on the premise that you know we want to help young people lead healthy, active lifestyles as well as looking at education and proper employment suitability (RM7).*

*NASCA is an organisation that supports Indigenous youth or, as much as I’m aware, under 18, across Australia, with the aim of improving employment outcomes (RM2).*

The role models who did not have those other connections to NASCA, and may have been experiencing their first ARMtour visit were less able to express the functions and aims of NASCA. They seemed to loosely describe NASCA, mainly through their contact with the ARMtour program, and were unable to express some of the important components or features of NASCA (e.g., the fact that it is an Aboriginal controlled community organisation for Aboriginal people and youth):

*I don’t know very much about NASCA to tell you the truth but it’s the, what’s it called, the business or the organisation is in Redfern. There’s only one as far as I know in Redfern and through NASCA we are a part of ARMtour so that’s all my connections (RF9).*

As you can see from this response, NASCA’s aims could be clearer. Even though the role models descriptions of the ARMtour program were similar, this was due to their shared experiences, with differences still remaining when role models’ articulated the aims of the ARMtour program. Some believed that the aim of the ARMtour program was health and wellbeing, whilst other believed it was educational engagement and employment transition. This is reflected in the following role model statements:

*It’s there to support schools to increase the students coming to school, and staying at school and then just helping out whilst they’re there for the program, I guess, to promote coming to school (RM2).*

*ARMtour runs programmes with an emphasis on healthy lifestyle and diet delivered by role models. Role models are chosen from the community and reflect what the program*
is trying to achieve. They are mainly people with an active/sporting background and are able to run class activities or help with whatever the teacher may suggest (RM10).

Other role models noted the dual aims of the ARMtour program. For example, RF3 states that:

Each community is different so programs are flexible to adjust to the communities’ needs. The message ARMtour promotes is all about healthy lifestyles and the importance of education. ARMtour uses sport to engage with students to promote the messages.

Using RF3’s comment, the flexibility of the ARMtour program may be the reason for the discussion around the dual roles and the confusion that may be experienced by role models, even after they have experienced one visit. This is captured by RF1’s comment:

After doing it [ARMtour visit] I have a much better awareness. Before I was a kind of a little bit deceived based on the organisation’s acronym, National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy, and then we have the Aboriginal Role Models and Mentors tour. So for me I was a little bit admittedly confused in that is it all about sport? Or is it that element of mentoring, and if so what does that look like?

This has been highlighted, as it may be a consideration for future discussions with the communities, their schools and other important stakeholders to determine how to improve the ARMtour program. It is also important to consider for preparing new and returning role models for the upcoming ARMtour visit, especially if their contributions may be different to what is expected or what was experienced previously. When role models were asked about how they contributed to their ARMtour program visit and whether this was different to what they expected, the following discussions ensued:

I thought maybe we might be running, [other role model] sort of prepped me to say you might be running a class, so I had some ideas in mind as to how I’d do that. So, working with the teachers and teaching, however there wasn’t many opportunities to do this (RF9).

My contribution was to help with the woodwork programs the school runs and also implement my own projects. I was not very successful this visit. I believe my contribution has decreased with each visit. I have been 4 times in 5 years and I feel that the school community has slowly become more distracted (RM10).

I think each time your contribution well for me is similar. Again you obviously have to be flexible and deliver what it is the school and community want. So sometimes it’s more sport orientated and other times the focus is more on classroom work (RF3).
I think just being there and helping out in the classroom, like I think that’s really what a lot of the teachers wanted. I wasn’t really sure I guess what to expect ‘cause I, I kind of thought that the role would be a bit different. For example, when I had the [role model] interview I think it was they asked me what type of activity that I would be good at running ... And then, so I just presumed that we would be leading some type of activities. I think in a way I was a bit like anxious, like is it going to be okay? And like now that I’ve been there anything that I would have done would have been fine (RF4).

I think my background of being Indigenous, growing up in a rural community and having an understanding that these young people learn and perceive things differently. And so I think something that I brought which was kind of beneficial I think for the community is that that acquired sensitivity towards those things ... it’s very unstructured. And understandably community isn’t always run in a structured manner. But I think if there were kind of parameters set around actually knowing the full extent of your role why you’re there. Not turning up to a community and then just being locked into someone’s class who needs your help for the day (RF1).

I didn’t expect to be as involved in the classroom. Certainly in the extracurricular activities, the sporting events, the after school events around the local oval, BMX track and the like, but I must say I didn’t expect to be actually as involved in the classroom work (RM8).

The range of responses displayed a number of emotions experienced by the role models. Most felt uncertainty, confusion and frustration with how their role was utilised, how their skills were not recognised and therefore the limited contributions they were able to make throughout the ARMtour program. A positive aspect to come from these statements is the fact that the role models had planned to and were expecting to make a larger contribution than what they were able to during the ARMtour visit. To move forward with this information, it would be suggested that more time be spent unpacking the role model position for each of the communities, to allocate time for returning role models to explain their previous experiences in the induction day/sessions and engage with the community schools and teachers before each visit to ensure that role model-led sessions have been timetabled. This will be further discussed in the Recommendations section.

**Benefits**

The benefits that the role models experience as a result of participating in the ARMtour program, generally link back to the reasons for applying to be a role model and accepting the
invite in the first place. For the non-Indigenous role models, one of their reasons for becoming a role model was to become more aware of and have a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and people. This is clear in RM10 and RF4’s comments:

*My initial reason to participate was to educate myself on what an Indigenous community is like rather than what one is like reported in the media. So a little bit selfish (RM10).*

*To increase my cultural awareness as well. Again this is so relevant for university and for future teaching (RF4).*

For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models it was about giving back to their people, through either giving back to youth, or giving back to NASCA, an organisation that had helped them through their own schooling and experiences as a child or adolescent:

*For me personally it was a good chance for me to give back to an organisation that provided me with so many wonderful opportunities during school and my time with the [name removed to protect identity] Academy (RF3).*

*A girl I knew from where I’m from was actually working with NASCA, and when I ran into her, I got talking to her about what she does in terms of working with young people. This is an area of interest for me and my work and she suggested applying for ARMtour (RF1).*

As a result of slightly different motivations for being a role model, the benefits gained by role models were also wide-ranging. For the non-Indigenous role models who attended the August tour, they were very clear in stating that they learnt a lot about Aboriginal culture and the disadvantages or challenges that remote Aboriginal communities experience. They were able to connect this learning to their own lives in both a personal and professional manner:

*I have learnt almost everything I know about Indigenous culture and communities and history since my first ARMtour. It reaffirms that you must experience something to be able to comment (RM10).*

*Knowledge and understanding and that’s certainly opened my eyes to the challenges of Indigenous education and it’s because you’re embedded in the classroom through the ARMtour and you work with the teachers that you gain that understanding. So from that perspective the benefits of the ARMtour are infinite and I think you know we should be encouraging more, certainly community leaders and politicians, to be involved in this*
sort of experience because it opens our eyes up and it ensures that we are much more better informed when we’re making decisions about funding and programs (RM8).

For the non-Indigenous role models who attended the August tour, they participated in a cultural awareness session with local Elders before heading out to their communities. This was noted as an important session that contributed greatly to the role models learning.

And also the session when we first got into Alice Springs; that was all interesting. Like even though some of the stuff was things that I’d already learnt from my own schooling or university, it was good to hear it firsthand from an Indigenous person and have it explained in greater detail (RF4).

The non-Indigenous role models who attended the October tour highlighted their learning about Aboriginal culture was not strong, due to the lack of cultural awareness training offered at the start of the October tour. The cultural awareness session was planned for the first evening on arrival to Ntaria (Sunday evening), with NASCA and Ntaria School organising for teaching staff to run this session. The Principal met with the role models before dinner, but the session went for approximately 10-15 minutes. The meeting also focused on updating the role models on the community’s current climate, rather than discussing Aboriginal culture, the strengths of the culture and the students, how this is harnessed in the school, and how the role models could develop and demonstrate cultural competency. This change in the cultural awareness training processes meant that the role models on the October tour missed out on this essential learning component. When asked whether they had read the ‘The Little Red Yellow Black’ book, they did say they read it, but mentioned that they were more reliant on their fellow role model peers who are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent to fill in the gaps or to direct their learning when in the community:

Like learning about bits about their culture. For example like men’s business. I didn’t know very much at all, so just every day I was learning from [role model names] chatting (RF9).

So definitely a steep learning curve in terms cultural knowledge and being culturally sensitive. Another benefit to add would be having [role model name] on our trip. I think it would have been very different and my perspective of Aboriginal culture would have been very different if she hadn’t been on the trip (RF5).

This will be further discussed in the Challenges section, but it is important to highlight the differences in cultural learning and awareness experienced by non-Indigenous role models...
between two ARMtour visits. Other professional benefits mentioned by non-Indigenous role models included learning teaching skills that they did not have before the ARMtour visit:

*I have never had teacher training so I had to prepare myself for lessons and try to take on board the skills the other role models have in this area (RM10).*

*But a positive note about preparation would be the art project. I thought we were able to run that art project really well because we were taught it really well at the induction day and we were than able to teach it successfully to our students (RF5).*

The aforementioned statements from the role models show that being part of a collegial group of role models, who supported one another was a huge benefit. Role models appreciated the guidance and help that they gave each other through their shared experiences: “*So the benefit of being part of a team, I felt really special being part of ARMTour rather than just a teacher*” (RF9). As such, all were appreciative of each other and felt that friendships were formed through this experience.

For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models, the benefits that were experienced were slightly different in terms of the impact of the learning would have on their lives. They were more likely to make connections to their own communities and their own work with Indigenous youth outside of the ARMtour program:

*I guess having greater exposure for me, myself, running Indigenous programs, having greater exposure to communities, understanding their needs, good and bad, helps me out personally*” (RM2).

*I also realised the community I visited have different barriers and issues faced by urban Aboriginal people and we can’t judge or comment of things happening in remote communities until you have experienced it (RM6).*

*Looking at community initiatives that were being implemented and taking that information back to my home community. But also looking at the way schools operate and the similarities and differences between my community and Ntaria (RF3).*

It is interesting, however, that to a certain extent the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models also mentioned cultural learning through community engagement as a benefit experienced by the ARMtour visit and how that will be used back home in a number of ways. Additionally, all of the role models indicated that decisions made on behalf of remote communities, by people and organisations that have not spent time in these communities
would be unfair and irresponsible. This will be further extended upon in the Sustainability section.

It is not surprising that many personal benefits were identified by role models. Most of these centred around increased feelings of self-worth, an improvement of their own interpersonal characteristics (e.g., empathy and understanding) and being aware of their own social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing:

I benefited a whole heap from the experience, spiritually, mentality and emotionally. The trip was a life changing time for me and will never forget it (RM6).

I think it gives you that good feeling deep inside that you are supporting people and helping, especially Indigenous people, in rural communities that wouldn't get that opportunity if people like us didn't come here (RM2).

Benefits seem to be a particular understanding of empathy and really seeing a little bit of a different side of Australia and young people and seeing what young people in remote communities and in the city deal with on a daily basis (RM7).

A number of the role models detailed what they believed to be the benefits of the ARMtour program on the community. Immediately, most of the role models noted the increase in school attendance. This was particularly true, as one of the days during the ARMtour visit, the school attendance record was broken (with 155 students attending school). There could have been a number of reasons for the larger number attendees, but most of the students wanted to go into town for the swimming carnival the next day and therefore were attending school and returning permission notes.

But I think anything that encourages students to turn up to school is definitely worth it. And this program obviously does. I've seen it firsthand and not just in one community but both communities where you do have very high attendance rate even afterwards (RM2).

This led into discussions about whether school attendance was enough to close the gap in education and health between non-Indigenous and Indigenous populations. There was a mixed response from the role models. For those who believed that the ARMtour program and increasing school attendance was successfully working towards closing the gap, they supported this with the premise of being role models for students, supporting educational programs with individual guidance and tuition in classrooms, using sport as a vehicle to entice and re-engage
students in school, and teaching healthy lifestyle sessions in partnership with the school and teachers. The following responses show this:

I think it does, by providing positive role models to attend communities to build friendships and opportunities for the youth. Giving positive messages of healthy eating, staying in school and getting a good education (RM6).

Yes, definitely. Providing important information about healthy lifestyle choices and the importance of education to Indigenous students in a way that they can engage fully with is very powerful. Using sport as a vehicle to deliver these key messages is very effective (RF3).

I feel like it bridges the gap because, as I was saying before I think your life is made richer by a lot of the people you meet and the people, and the people you’re exposed to and the places you’re exposed to, which ARMtour is doing (RF5).

For those role models who were unsure or who believed that the ARMtour program was not working towards closing the gap, mentioned a number of considerations. First, there was a hesitancy to state that the ARMtour program was closing the gap without any hard evidence of this, but also being aware that this type of evidence might be really hard to gather due to the longitudinal nature of the research design. RM7 covers this well in his response:

Any time we’re getting kids in remote areas to read and they’re starting to comprehend, I think that we’re building on knowledge and building their skills, but if they’re seven or eight years old, we’re not going to see a result. We might not see a result in that for a decade or a generation as to what the results might be. I can’t really say that yes, we’re contributing to closing the gap, because I don’t know that there’s enough empirical evidence to say that.

RM7 extends his explanation to also acknowledge that the ARMtour program only reaches students in school, so when cultural ceremonies occur or students disengage from school there is no way, in the ARMtour program’s current structure to reach these people:

I guess when school stops ARMtour stops to some degree. So if that means that sort of a fourteen year old young man, when school stops then the ARMtour experience stops, so possibly that ability to touch them and to engage with them is lost and so potentially our opportunity to empower them...gets lost (RM7).

One of the role models also supported or reinforced RM7’s thoughts. RF1 noted that school finished at Year 7/8 and therefore felt the role models and the ARMtour program was limited in
terms of bridging the educational gap. To encourage students to go onto and complete schooling, when this is not currently happening or was not possible unless moving away from the community (as the school could not offer this opportunity), felt a little futile for this role model as noted below:

   I don’t think that once this week I really had the opportunity to say, “You know it’s really important to go to Year 12.” Because the school only goes to like Year 7/8 kind of thing. So it was kind of like, how do I say this, what are the options, so yeah I felt the educational aspect’s a bit kind of lagging so to speak (RF1).

Another role model mentioned the lack of school and educational pathways in the community and how this may be limiting the effects or impact of the ARMtour program:

   You know the children finish and then there’s nothing out there for them to continue to learn or work towards to then to work in the local, I don’t know shop or ... Because there’s not much out there and so their knowledge that they’re learning at school basically means that they’ll have to move away which isn’t ideal because they’re family people and that they don’t necessarily want to move away from their community (RF9).

As the ARMtour program is predominantly based in the school, the role models were more likely to discuss the health and education gap with a focus on education. For those role models who interests were in health and nutrition, there were also mixed responses as to the impact of the ARMtour program. Due to the sport focus, one of the role models believed that the ARMtour program was helping to bridge the health gap:

   Obviously we have the physical element which is good, like that’s not the only element. And I think in terms of, so it is happening in the health a little bit and obviously we get the chefs out in certain areas and doing nutritional programming (RF1).

However, one of the other role models was perturbed by the prices of the healthy food options at the local store in the community. She believed that this was limiting the effect of the ARMtour program and any benefits the youth and their families were experiencing as a result:

   In terms of health I don’t, and this is my area and this is where I’m really, really passionate, really passionate and it really upset me going to the supermarket, really upset me at my core...And so I don’t know how this relates to the ARM Tour and to NASCA but that shop, for me represented a lot that was wrong. The prices of the food are not bridging the gap. So the prices of the food were highly inflated, there was barely any fruit or veg there, there was barely any fresh produce (RF5).
The complexity of the situation is captured in the aforementioned discussions. One the role models tried to unpack this and perhaps was coherent in making the internal turmoil that is often experienced by role models:

Why do we need to provide then with different opportunities? And that’s a really challenging issue. And I think it’s about providing the kids with the basic education and getting them to an age where they can make their own decisions. They may want to maintain that connection with their area but they want to go off and do other things and I think the value of ARMtour is that it demonstrates that there are other opportunities that they can take up and that there’s certainly Indigenous role models in Australia who can exemplify that (RM8).

In a more simplistic manner, one of the role models ended the conversation with the following statement:

Saying that, I also understand and have a greater knowledge of how big that gap is. And it [ARMtour program] is a small program. But, if you can change the life of one student or one kid, it’s definitely worth it (RM2).

Challenges

Following from the complexities discussed with closing the gap, this was revisited when role models were asked about the challenges experienced during the ARMtour visit. One of the role models explained the feelings of helplessness and powerlessness in terms of the contribution that role models can make in such a short time, and whether this is enough to make an impact or difference in students’ lives:

I’m not going to a remote community to solve problems or fix things, but sometimes I feel really helpless and I mean if the best that I can do is help a kid colour things in or sound out their vowels and put them in words or you know, sometimes that’s really a real good sense of accomplishment and sometimes I just think to myself I’m a glorified teacher’s aide being in here for a week. So, I have this battle going on inside of am I, do I want to do more? (RM7).

This role model also alluded to the fact that language barriers were also a challenge. Considering that English is often the students second, third or fourth language, communication between role models and students can be difficult. Although it is ideal for role models to be speaking English with the students, to improve their understanding of and use of English, this role model believed it may be appropriate to learn their language to show interest and to build
a stronger relationship with students: “Language is a real big barrier and yeah, like I know that we can’t all take a crash course in Eastern Arrernte” (RM7).

One of the other dominant challenges noted by the majority of role models, whose first time in a remote Aboriginal community was the October tour, was the lack of cultural awareness training before the visit. The role models were sharing their experiences, as well as acknowledging that they were also trying manage ‘culture shock’. Here are a few examples:

For me it was all about cultural awareness. I was very lucky, we were very lucky to be in the car with [role model] on the way from Alice to Ntaria. And we used that time to talk to him about questions we had...I still didn’t feel prepared culturally in that sense for the cultural awareness, understanding Ntaria understanding Aboriginal people, really understanding what we were going into and the sensitivities around that (RF9).

I think a lot of it was inevitably going to be learned as you go, if you weren’t told before. I do think just for awareness, and because it is interesting I would have really liked to have heard from an Elder or someone and have been given a lesson. Whether it was in the induction or when we arrived in Alice Springs, I wouldn’t mind (RF5).

As discussed by these role models, without having a face-to-face cultural awareness session, they felt under-prepared and not aware of important information. This shows that relying on schools and teachers to plan and implement this session may not be an appropriate strategy. Role models reported that as a result of an inadequate cultural awareness session, they found it hard to interact with community members and felt that this may have also thwarted their ability to be a culturally safe role model. One of the role models felt that the text/book was not enough: “I read all the, I read the little book, the little yellow, black book from front cover to back cover on the aeroplane which was great. But I needed more” (RF9).

As mentioned previously, some of the role models relied on other role models or teachers to educate them on Aboriginal culture or to placate them when they were not expecting particular behaviours from students. For the Aboriginal role models, this did not seem fair and they felt like this was the role of NASCA and the school:

And I think another challenge was again, well sometimes, I mean it’s really, really good to have non-Indigenous participants involved as role models. But I just admittedly at times felt a little bit, not challenged, but I suppose I don’t know just being asked a constant barrage of questions without the person enquiring...obviously they’re curious and want to know, but if there’s not a purpose or there’s not another means of finding
that out without actually constantly asking questions, that you can find out if you had
read potentially your little red, black and yellow book, was kind of a little bit of a
challenge (RF1).

Further, it was acknowledged that two cultural awareness sessions may be better than one. It
was suggested that one of the sessions should be run before the ARMtour program during the
induction day and the other at the community. This would create opportunities for discussions,
questions and community-specific knowledge to be exchanged:

One would be Sydney based, dependent on whether the mentors are coming from,
cultural awareness session that is almost like a full day. I mean obviously they have the
briefing which covers elements of that, but to be able to understand you need to be
given practical examples and shown the realities of some circumstances, and I just don’t
think that was provided. And I think also then in community it’s even more so important
to be given the opportunity to have a cultural awareness of that specific community.
Because obviously each and every one is different and that element was missing for me
and as an Indigenous person I felt let down by the organisation in that they didn’t think it
was important enough to organise that for the team (RF1).

Other challenges related to the school environment, specifically student behaviours and
teacher’s teaching styles. Role models were a little concerned about the lack of resources that
were available for teachers to use, the behaviours that were displayed by students, and some
of the teaching styles and behaviours exhibited by teachers. These are captured in the following
comments:

The intensity of the kids can be quite confronting initially. They’re very outgoing, they’re
very excited, they’ve got a lot of energy and you don’t see that energy and the
enthusiasm as much in urban classrooms, certainly not around my area (RM8).

I was really, really, really shocked by the yelling and the touching from the teachers to
the children. So, the grabbing and the pulling and look it shocked me because it was my
first day and it was the first couple of hours of my experience in the school. And then
over the week I realised that it was only from a couple of teachers and it was based on
their teaching style (RF9).

As the suggestions stress the importance of focusing on community-specific cultural awareness
sessions before heading into the school environment, there could also be some time and space
to discuss the school, the teachers, and the environment in more detail. This would further
prepare role models for their role and responsibilities and may alleviate some of the negative feelings or challenges when first entering the community and school environment.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations offered by the role models include the planning of an induction session before the ARMtour visit that builds on the existing induction framework provided by NASCA. This induction session would need to have cultural awareness learning embedded, as well as planning phases so that lessons could be designed based on NASCA’s interactions with the community’s schools. The October tour attended a Sydney-based induction implemented prior to the visit which was viewed as positive and informative; however, due to absences (i.e., unable to travel from interstate or prior commitments) a few alternative delivery modes were offered for consideration:

*I think probably at least two weeks beforehand. So if they came in and say, ‘Well, these are the facilities. This is what the teachers want you to do. You might have an hour’s time slot here, here and here’, and then you can go back to them with the plan and say, ‘This is what I’d like to do’...I think probably something of an evening or whether you can do it online, I’m not 100% sure. But I think asking for people to turn up for a full Saturday is a little bit too much considering you’re already giving a week of your time (RM2).*

*Something where people who haven’t been on an ARMTour can speak to other people who have been on an ARMTour visit before they go. So they just like, there’s so many things that you want to know ... Maybe if there’s a Facebook group, I don’t know, that’s pretty easy in terms of communication and people can ask questions in there ... or if they get given a mentor or something, like just one on one with someone who’s been before that they can ask questions to make sure (RF4).*

*And well from our experience, [role model] and my experience, we were the only ones from our group who could make the induction day on the Saturday. So I wonder if the Saturday for an induction was the best day to do that. I know that someone else that we spoke to in the tour mentioned maybe an evening, I don’t know as a suggestion (RF9).*

If an induction session two weeks prior to the ARMtour visit or any of the other suggestions are not viable, role models mentioned the down-time in Alice Springs as an opportunity to embed a more detailed and localised session. It is important to note that while the October role models did not receive an induction in Alice Springs (prior to community entry), the August role models took part in a small-scale induction session held by local Alice Springs Elders. This was viewed
with mixed feelings, depending on whether they had experienced working with Indigenous people and communities:

*I don’t think so because the briefing with the local elders the day before and the information that they conveyed was quite valuable, particularly on the terms that the young kids would use (RM8).*

*I think the sessions were useful. It’s obviously different for everyone ‘cause some people have been on an ARMTour before and others haven’t. Others had been to Indigenous communities, but it was just, there was a wide variety of people so I guess it’s hard for the community Elder to meet the needs of everyone (RF4).*

Other recommendations focused on engaging the community members with ARMtour and having a well-structured debrief at the end of the ARMtour visit. The first recommendation came from a very experienced role model who is looking to find ways to strengthen the existing program by communicating with and engaging Elders and other leaders within the community about ways to improve the ARMtour program from their perspective:

‘ARMtour are in town’ and they might certainly know the orange shirts or even know our faces, but you know, being able to broker some sort of relationship or at least interest, I know that in the past we had a cooking afternoon where we were able to get a lot of women to the school and we did a bit of a cooking class. At the end of it the electric fry pan that we were using, it was a donation, so, like ‘Thanks for coming up. You can take the electric fry pan home now.’ I think the women were really touched and really pleasantly surprised by that so you know that’s a really strong engagement time. You don’t need to do that every single time but you know that may be the Ntaria community barbecue needs to be reconsidered and reimagining how we can engage a community (RM7).

One of the other role models who was on her first ARMtour experience, strongly believed that for the ARMtour program to survive and thrive, links with community organisations was needed.

*I think there’d be merit with NASCA bridging connections with organisations that have existing presences in those communities, looking at what programming they run, is their scope to provide resources and/or training to the staff in the areas of health and education? Or are there other inequalities that the organisation’s trying to close? Or it
could be a person or people who ARMtour would work with them to tailor a program that potentially might have to run after school to look at doing tutoring, etc. (RF1).

This could alleviate the limitations of the ARMtour program (i.e., three tours of one week duration), allow for community members and organisations to strengthen the program in the community, and empower community people.

Other role models highlighted the importance of having a well-structured debrief session at the end of the ARMtour program before heading home. This would help consolidate some of the learning experienced by the role models, but also give time and space to talk through feelings associated with the experience. Although this was recognised as a strength of the ARMtour program in August, a few of the role models felt a little concerned about the structure of the October debrief.

I think that maybe didn’t quite hit the mark in October and something that needs to be considered for April next year and beyond. Yeah, that was the only thing that I think, yeah I hadn’t really mentioned that I was a little bit apprehensive about in coming back to Sydney. I really wanted to ensure that people had an opportunity to debrief and yeah, I was a bit disappointed … That’s because none of us really have a grip on the answer but we’re all willing to pitch in and help and discuss it. (RM7).

Sustainability

When the role models discussed sustainable commitments after their ARMtour experience, most spoke about how they would take their learning and understanding to back to their own professional and personal lives. This ranged from NASCA and other Indigenous organisations, where the experience could directly impact on other Indigenous youth, through to parliamentary work and primary school teaching where the learning could be used to educate non-Indigenous people and youth:

So, yeah my lifelong I guess, commitment has been to work with organisations like NASCA to bring about good health, education, physical activity outcomes for young people in remote and also in the cities (RM7).

I am now a [position] on the [organisation] board and that allows me to continue to contribute to the organisation. My friendship with long serving staff members who were around when I was a NASCA student really encourages me to continue their work (RF3).
I think it reinforces the work I already do with Indigenous people and how important that really is. I guess the aim of our program is to create Indigenous mentors because there's really not a - there's only a handful of good Indigenous mentors around. And I think that would be good for the communities (RM2).

I’m a decision maker that’s going to have a say in issues associated with closing the gap so I’m all the more wiser and many more people in the [my line of work] should be as well. So I’m going to be encouraging some of my colleagues to be involved in the future (RM8).

I think for me also with the sharing what I am learning back with the children I work with back at home who have, who previously for me it’s difficult to teach, or teach children or, you know about Indigenous or our remote communities in Australia because I haven’t known very much about it (RF9).

There were only a few role models who could see a small commitment as a result of the ARMtour program and their role modelling experiences. There were a few reasons for this, but for some, it was their work, where there were limited opportunities to directly influence other Indigenous youth or educate others. Hence, they believed that they could influence those who are directly around them through the sharing of experiences with them. RM10 explains this:

I have been unable to create any sustainable change back in my life outside of ARMtour. Hopefully my experience will inspire my children and we do discuss it a lot. I do try and voice my opinion to anyone who will listen about what needs to happen but that cannot be gauged.

Overall, the role models believed that they, as a collective, should be the voices for the ARMtour program, with a few role models claiming that social media should be harnessed to a greater extent to ensure many others will be able to engage with the ARMtour program, either as a role model, or as a funder or contributor:

There’s an army of people who have been involved in this tour who are all great ambassadors for it and I think the more that we can engage through social media and get the message out there about the benefits of it the more sustainable the program will be (RM8).

And I just feel the media presence is quite limited, and I kind of feel like they need a specified media person employed to help in that respect in terms of ensuring there’s a constant presence. Obviously, they’re quite prevalent on social media, which is quite
good, but that’s not really spreading the word ... I think there are a lot of existing Indigenous networks around that don’t seem to be currently tapped in with this program and its promotion (RF1).

There were a number of benefits experienced by the role models, and also a number of challenges. Upon reflection and through interview questioning the role models were able to constructively articulate a series of recommendations for consideration. These will be considered and combined with the other stakeholders’ recommendations and presented in the following section.

5.6 Ntaria Recommendations

On the basis of the preceding results, the following draft recommendations have been made for consideration in terms of the ARMtour program and the Ntaria community:

1. ARMtour program structure:
   I. There was limited awareness and knowledge of NASCA as an organisation by community, students and school personnel.
   II. There was debate concerning the aims and outcomes of the ARMtour program. The teachers were more likely to suggest it was an educational engagement strategy to increase school attendance and finishers. Some of the role models also believed that this was the main outcome of the ARMtour program. However, community members, the majority of Aboriginal assistant teachers, students and a number of role models believed the main focus was sport, physical activity, nutrition and better health outcomes. A recommendation would be to ensure that the aims and outcomes of the ARMtour program are clear and that these are communicated to all stakeholders.
   III. Some of the community members (not involved or linked with the school) did not know about the ARMtour program. This was an area the Aboriginal assistant teachers wanted to focus on and believed was an important improvement suggestion for moving the ARMtour program forward in the Ntaria community.
   IV. Role models reinforced the importance of pre- and post-ARMtour program introduction and debrief. The introduction would focus on cultural competencies and previous role models (particularly the lead role models) sharing knowledge of the community and the role of the ARMtour program in that community. The debrief should allow for each role model having space and time to reflect on
their experience and being able to communicate that in a safe and supportive environment. It seems most role models find it hard to do this type of reflection once they get back to their own lives and are often experiencing feelings of hopelessness.

2. Educational component:
   I. Future development of the ARMTour program would include sessions planned and implemented by the role models. These should be aligned with curriculum and associated learning outcomes. The sessions implemented during each tour should be suggested by teachers or based on the strengths and capabilities of the role models (when teachers are informed of these). This requires greater communication between the school and NASCA prior to the delivery of the ARMTour program to allow for curriculum integration, planning and preparation time. The current communication method between NASCA and Ntaria School needs improvement, with teachers providing limited solutions on how to improve this for future ARMTour programs (and indeed took some of the responsibility of ensuring that this improved for future ARMTour programs).
   II. Community members, Aboriginal assistant teachers, and students loved learning new knowledge, skills (including ICT skills) and sports with the ARMTour program. In fact, they wanted role models who could teach them new knowledge and skills and for the most part saw the importance of role models giving one-on-one tuition in the classroom. One suggested activity was writing a book with the ARMTour program and presenting this to the school and the wider community, so that the ARMTour program could reach those in the community who hadn’t come into contact with the program. Students suggested other classroom lessons that role models could teach them were Art and Maths.
   III. A number of teachers mentioned that the ARMTour program focuses too much of their time and energy on the younger students. Although this seemed to work well, as the younger students enjoyed the attention, the teachers believed that the older students would benefit more greatly (including those adolescents not in school), especially if the focus was on community linkages, work/jobs/opportunities and providing a vocational slant (rather than educational support). Further, some of the teachers also proposed that role models stay with the same class/teacher throughout the whole week (and this
would be determined by the role models’ strengths and capabilities and the students in the class).

3. Community links:
   I. The community suggested that reciprocity was important and should be an integral part of the ARMtour program. Specifically, the community (including students) would like to share more of their culture with the role models (e.g., taking the role models hunting), rather than the role models focusing solely on the delivery of the ARMtour program in the school setting. This would encourage stronger community links with the ARMtour program. The community acknowledged that the Sydney Ntaria trip (organised for the end of 2014) was an excellent reward for those students who had high attendance rates, but also would give NASCA and the ARMtour program a stronger presence in the Ntaria community.

   II. The community members also emphasised the importance of the ARMtour program and role models designing and running after-school activities that developed the capabilities (including leadership) of the young people in the community, so that when the ARMtour program was not in the community the young people could still be engaged in sport competitions/physical activity sessions after-school hours. This would also be attached to an end-of-season reward or end of competition game(s) in Alice Springs. Other suggestions were an Athletics carnival and community BBQs.

   III. Students really enjoyed the presence of the ARMtour program and role models in the after-school hours, rather than during school hours. This seemed to be where students were able to build relationships with role models and were able to work more closely with the ARMtour program (i.e., have more choice of the activities that they would participate in each afternoon/evening session).

4. Role models
   I. The role models were not clear of the ARMtour program’s aims and outcomes. They were able to verbalise a range of aims and purposes, but were not sure of the primary focus of the ARMtour program. A suggestion would be to introduce role models to the purpose and outcomes in the initial section of the ARMtour training/preparation program.
II. The Aboriginal assistant teachers and students valued the quality of the role models that have participated in the ARMtour program in Ntaria. They would like this to continue and suggested that they would like a larger number of Aboriginal role models visiting Ntaria. They stipulated that they wanted visitors, rather than their own community members as role models (which was encouraged by the teachers as way to capacity build within the Ntaria community).

III. Teachers were generally happy with the role models that have delivered the ARMtour program in Ntaria, although most of the teachers did acknowledge that there had been role models previously who decreased the quality of the program. For teachers, this was the most important component of the ARMtour program which would make or break the success of the week.
6 Papunya and Papunya School

Papunya is remote Indigenous community 240 km north west of Alice Springs, near the geographic centre of Australia. It is on the traditional lands of people from the Western Desert, predominantly of the Luritja/Pintupi language groups. In the 2011 Census, there were 418 people in Papunya (State Suburbs) of these 45.9% were male and 54.1% were female. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 90.2% of the population. The median age of people in Papunya (State Suburbs) was 24 years, 13 years below the Australian average. Children aged 0 - 14 years made up 29.7% of the population and people aged 65 years and over made up 5.0% of the population. In Papunya, languages spoken at home included Luritja 72.4%, English 7.7%, Warlpiri 4.6%, and Pitjantjatjara 3.4%.

Papunya School is a Northern Territory Government school that is part of the Tanami Group (very remote central Australia). The school provides education to students residing or staying in Papunya, who are preschool age through to the middle years. There are positions for five full-time teachers, five full-time Aboriginal assistant teachers, a relief teacher and principal employed at Papunya School. Student enrolment is approximately 125, with the average student attendance per day between 50 and 70. One full-time teacher is responsible for collaborating with NASCA and their own staff/colleagues to determine the implementation of school-based activities during the ARMtour program visit, three times per year. This collaboration is important for NASCA, as they are guided by the school teachers to determine the most appropriate role model responsibilities and expectations during the days they are volunteering in the school setting.

During the ARMtour program, the role models work individually or pairs in each classroom supporting or leading various kinds of activities (depending on the skills and expertise of the role models). At the start of each ARMtour, role models are meant to introduce themselves to the various classes, often with pre-designed NASCA role model posters. This enables the students to get to know a little about the role models, and to remember returning role models. Following introductions, the role models run an activity, usually one with one role model leading the activity with the other supporting, so each role model has a turn leading their own activities. Alternatively, role models work in support of the classroom teacher as a teacher’s aide. The ARMtour group run activities three sessions throughout the day across the five Papunya classes, so that each class usually has between 1-2 ARMtour sessions per day. After school, ARMtour are involved with informal games, sports and other activities at the
community club house or sports fields. ARMtour also provide a community barbeque one evening during the week. An informal daily debriefs occur among the ARMtour group in the late evenings during the tour, whereby role models are able to share their daily experiences with each other. The team leader and returning role models are available to address any concerns or challenges faced by the role models throughout the tour.

6.1 Methodology

Table 6.1: List of interviews and art-based classroom activities for each group of participants in the evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (number)</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (n=4)</td>
<td>One-on-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal assistant teachers (n=1)</td>
<td>One-on-one and focus group interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role models (n=9)</td>
<td>One-on-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community members (n=11)</td>
<td>One-on-one interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (n=29)</td>
<td>Art-based class activity and interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total participants = 54</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2 Measures

The qualitative measures was designed to explore the influence that the ARMtour program had on the Papunya community and the role models who were based in Papunya for both the August and October tours. Qualitative data also collected information about how stakeholders’ perceived the program including what the students’ enjoyed, appreciated and whether the project had an impact on students’ engagement and attitudes towards school. The participants highlighted the positive aspects of the program, as well as made suggestions for improvements for future practice.

Interviews were conducted with the researcher present and were collected in formal and informal conversations. As such, the duration of the interviews ranged from approximately 10 to 65 minutes. This enabled the participants to schedule the interviews at times that were appropriate for them (e.g., for school personnel in morning tea and lunch periods, and for...
parents/carers during an ARMtour scheduled activity). Another strategy utilised for the Aboriginal assistant teachers whose first, second or third languages were not English was to create artworks that represented their perspectives about ARMtour. This occurred once when one of the Aboriginal assistant teachers agreed to contribute to the study.

6.3 One-on-one interviews

Participation in the one-on-one interviews was voluntary and all participants were provided opportunities to discuss the evaluation and ask any questions they had prior to deciding to participate and providing consent. Written consent was provided by some participants; however other data was collected during informal meetings, after school sport, at the community barbeque, and breaks during work. One-on-one interviews were conducted with a community member, Aboriginal assistant teachers, school principal and teachers, ARMtour role models and students. Students were also asked to create art pieces reflecting what is special to them, including ARMtour.

The intention was to include a greater number of community members in the evaluation; however, due to time constraints, lack of opportunities to establish connection and rapport with community members (such as the club being closed), and various other community factors (such as families out of town for community business), this was not possible.

6.4 Results

The results of the study are presented in four sections: 1) Community members and Aboriginal assistant teachers; 2) Students; 3) School teachers; and 4) Role models. The participants have been de-identified using a code that represents their role, their gender, and the number participant they represent (e.g., RM1 represents Role model, male, #1; TF3 represents a Teacher, female, #3; AATF5 represents an Aboriginal assistant teacher, female, #5). For students, age has also been included (e.g. SF3-13 represents a 13-year-old female student). For the participants who were involved with informal conversations but did not complete consent, we have quoted their ideas in italics but not identified them as specific participants.
6.4.1 Community members and Aboriginal assistant teachers

Two community members participated in formal interviews while notes were taken following informal conversations with nine community members. The community members were Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who held various roles within the community. For instance, six of the community’s Indigenous tradesmen (all male) were consulted as well as a two community Elders who worked as a night patrol employee (female) and truck driver / musician (male). The two formal interviews were completed with a female Aboriginal assistant teacher (AATF1) and the community’s non-Indigenous female school assistant (SAF1). From informal observations, there was a level of disgruntlement between school teachers and some of the Aboriginal assistant teachers. It was not clear what these issues were and this was not noted in the interviews with consenting Aboriginal assistant teachers. There were four key themes derived from the interviews with each displayed in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Community members and Aboriginal assistant teachers’ interview themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview themes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Life in the community (benefits, issues and challenges)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Knowledge about NASCA and ARMtour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recommendations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Life in community (benefits, issues and challenges)

When meeting the people within the community, many discussed various aspects of community life that help provide some insight into the positive and challenging aspects of living in remote contexts. For instance, the Aboriginal assistant teacher (AATF1) pointed out that “life in the community provides opportunity for clear thinking and reduces outside pressures to take drugs that are common in Alice Springs” while one Indigenous male community member suggested that men in the community “like to come to the Maku (community) shed after work and play darts plus buy things from the shop.” Several additional Indigenous community members focused on various opportunities for employment rather than general life in the community. For example, one Indigenous male highlighted that there were there are options
for jobs in “plumbing, maintenance, carpentry, landscaping, vets (wild animal control)” while their non-Indigenous manager claimed that “Splitting jobs has been successful, for example, the janitor role within the school had been split into 3 part time roles to enable more men to work.” From their perspective, men in the community want to complete projects such as fixing the sheds, building fences for houses, and work on horticulture because this gives them great satisfaction and enables them to contribute to improving life in the community.

Community members also raised various issues and challenges about living in Papunya. From the men’s perspective, the community has the facilities were community learning could take place to build up skills in trades; however, there currently are no people in a position to run such vocational programs. These men would like to complete courses and training through community, such as how to use the chain saw or painting (some did this in prison), but most jobs in community need a trade and therefore, pre-established training that is not available within the community. Other issues surrounded access to technology and community programs for social and educational purposes. For instance, AATF1 stated that some people within the community were living “like they are in the stone-age” because they only just received Internet / Wi-Fi. This posed many challenges for parents because they want their children to do well at school and experience what life is like beyond the community. Finally, both groups felt that it was critical for the community shed, among other social / sporting programs, to be running at all times of the year for community members of all ages in order to reduce social issues such as boredom, petrol sniffing, and gambling. AATF1 felt this is critical for the next generation of young people who are the key personnel to make change. She held a positive view about the future generation of students because they are “… different to their parents. They are developmentally different, have different skill sets and opportunities. They know how to use the Internet, are social and not afraid to say hello.” Her final statement was particularly poignant for understanding what community members’ value for their children: “School inspires and empowers the kids to do what they want.”

Knowledge about NASCA and ARMtour

The findings revealed that community members beyond the school know little about NASCA and ARMtour. Some community members know about ARMtour because hear about the program from the children and because the orange shirts are recognisable. For example, the AAT professed that “ARMtour mainly focuses on the kids … and gets them excited about something to do” (AATF1) while the female community Elder likes ARMtour and believes the
kids love it because “...it brings them joy.” These positive feelings were also represented in the drawings completed by the AATF1 during our interview:

![Drawings showing positive feelings about ARMtour.](image)

**Figure 6.1 AAT perspectives about ARMtour**

Community members saw the benefit of ARMtour visiting but felt that the school was the sole beneficiary of these positive aspects. For example, the non-Indigenous community worker stated that kids love the program because it is “fun and exciting”; however, she also felt that ARMtour was not having an impact “because it’s hard to in one week.” Overall, the perspectives of community members suggest that there are some lasting positive effects of ARMtour for the children and school within the community.

**Role models**

The role models were seen to bring specific skills and knowledge to the community. These skills related to sporting specific skills and abilities, and the Aboriginal assistant teacher (AATF1) felt that the role models were able to inspire the community children in various ways. The following drawings from AATF1 depict her positive feelings about the ARMtour program:
Figure 6.2 AAT perspectives about ARMtour Role models

While sport was a strong positive feature of ARMtour, AATF1 expressed that other kinds of role models with different skills were equally valued because the children learn about the various career opportunities such as being a chef, teacher, musician or artist. Overall, community members expressed gratitude toward ARMtour and the role models for coming to the community to offer their children exposure to different people, places and things as well as to be able to share significant cultural aspects of life in their community.

Recommendations

The community members made many suggestions about ways to improve the ARMtour program and extend the intended impact beyond the community’s youth. In order to engage or re-engage older youth, it was suggested that the ARMtour program and sport be used to do this, but these sessions should be conducted after school, rather than in-school time. It was envisaged that this would engage youth in sport, rather than troublesome behaviours due to boredom.

A fundamental suggestion by various different community members was that they would like more interaction with ARMtour in terms of cultural engagement with the community, lengthening the existing program, and additional programs after-school. Increasing ARMtour role model engagement with the community was an important feature to improve for future ARMtours. For example, the male community Elder suggested that he wanted “… ARMtour to have more interaction with community, not just fly in and fly out and work in school with kids. The community wants to talk to about stories from the land / culture.”
AATF1 believed that it would be beneficial to set up a split role model program where half the ARMtour role models work in schools and the other half work with the community. This would build capacity within the community where role models could “Train up adults to run sport or after-school programs for younger kids” [AATF1] and provide “youth diversion programs where youth workers help empower young people in the community” [AATF1] while enabling “community members [to] run programs and be paid” (non-Indigenous female community member). Ultimately, these ideas could translate into capacity building projects and sustained leadership over time. For instance, ARMtour role models could teach the older youth coaching, administration, and umpiring skills to run competitions in between ARMtour visits. This would also assist youth with sport skills and in a safe, local environment.

Another purpose of after school and evening programs are to engage older youth and adults in social activities while reducing issues such as boredom and petrol sniffing. One suggestion here was that some role models could run after-school or night time activities in existing facilities such as school basketball courts and the community shed. For instance, one Indigenous community male stated that “there used to be a hockey program where we played in the school after hours” while another suggestion was to run fun social activities such as bingo and meat raffles. Interestingly, a common problem noted by several community members (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) was that the community shed was often closed or not open regularly enough at night for recreational activities.

It was also suggested that various school activities may need to be gender-specific to have greater impact. One of the male the non-Indigenous maintenance worker suggested that it would be useful if NASCA and other local community members provided adult role models so as to receive “guidance from existing community members who have work.” This supports the idea AATF1 raised around providing day or night-time activities for women in the community. She suggested that a women only cooking program or healthy eating program be established alongside an exercise program for women, run by women.

While there was a significant focus on after school and evening activities, various Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members raised the idea of extending the length or changing the timing of ARMtour visits. For instance, the non-Indigenous female community member stated that “… a longer period of engagement, say 4-6 weeks, during the school holidays or even on the weekends, would reduce boredom and having nothing to do in the holidays.” She believed that uni students could come out to community and assist during holiday breaks and
that more programs should involve hairdressing, bush trips, basketball, cooking, painting. Similarly, AATF1 suggested that it would be worthwhile to include more programs in music (e.g., choir), drama, art – “things that kids would get in mainstream schools that are currently not available in the community”. She suggested that building programs that have longer term development would give kids something to look forward to.

One key idea mentioned by both community Elders and AATF1 revolved around running more exchanges between the community and interstate areas. While this extends beyond the capacity of the existing ARMtour program, the female community Elder believed this would “show kids how people live in other parts of Australia… and open their minds up to pathways beyond the community”. Similarly, AATF1 suggested that visits interstate would “Inspire kids to get more educated and live life beyond the community because they can always come home.” The idea here is that children in the community build on this inspiration throughout the year because the visits may assist in providing a pathway to a career and enable them to work out ways to achieve that goal.

6.4.2 Students

Twenty-four high school students participated in an art-based classroom activity (three received parental consent to utilise their work). Five one-on-one interviews (four male and one female) were conducted in a conversational manner with students during breaks in school (e.g., recess and lunch) or after school. The two classes that participated in the classroom based activities were Years 7-8 and Years 9-10. Students have been assigned codes to protect their identity based on their ‘role’ (S=student), gender (M=male, F=female), a number (participant number) and letter related to their class, senior or junior). For instance, a male student in a junior class is coded as SM1J while a female student in a senior class FM1S etc.

One role model introduced the activity by drawing a mind-map on the board with ARMtour as a central point. Extending of the centre circle were three prompting statements that students were asked to use to design their own poster. The statements were: 1) I like ARMtour because...; 2) I would like ARMtour to do more...; and 3) When I grow up, I want to be... (refer to Appendix 5). As the classes started drawing, two role models assisted students with their ideas and drawings. The students wrote their name on the paper-based drawings to give consent for the researchers to use their drawings for research purposes. There were three key themes derived from the art-based classroom activities and interviews with the students (see Table 6.3).
Table 6.3: Students Art-based classroom activities and interview themes

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Future ideals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>ARMtour ‘likes’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Recommendations for ARMtour program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Future Ideals**

Students shared varied perspectives when completing the artwork prompt about what they would like to do when they grow up. Students identified roles within the community and potential careers that may take them beyond their immediate context. For instance, one student suggested he would like to become a teacher and play football for Papunya (SM1J). Various male students claimed they would like to become leaders or ARMtour role models within the community while two other male students indicated they aspired to work in marine biology and architecture. Female student perspectives were similar, sharing visions for life in and out of the community, as the following notes from artworks demonstrate:

- *Teacher and a good mother and working and travelling to other community or work at my community and a bright future* (SF1S).
- *Archaeologist, travel the world or even be in the army* (SF2S).
Figure 6.3. SM2S, male student artwork, year 9-10 class.

Dialogue included in the posters highlighted that students enjoyed meeting new people, particularly returning role models. Some of the career paths written down appear to directly correlate with career paths of role models on the tour or from previous tours. It is plausible that as a result of ARMtour visits, students have gained new aspirations for their lives. Indeed, there were several posters where students indicated that when they grow up, they wanted to be ARMtour role models. Clearly, the role models make the students happy and help bring new perspectives to the community and everyday lives of the students.

ARMtour ‘likes’

During interviews, students suggested they liked ARMtour because role models are fit, fun, and play sport with them – particularly football, basketball, and softball. When analysing data from the art-based posters, it became clear that the students’ appreciated the sustained commitment from ARMtour to regularly visit the community: “they come every year to Papunya and do lots of fun activities” (SF1J). The students’ also valued the role model visits because “they’ll show me how to get work” (SM4S) and “They ... set a good example to get a good education” (SM3S).
Perhaps the most poignant quotes about what students like about ARMtour came from two senior female students:

**ARMTour is a great opportunity to get involved in activities, go on trips, and learn about other people; they have fun here; make us learn more about themselves; help out in classes when needed most; play sports with our class (SF2S).**

They help us to be strong, healthy, and encourage us to do good jobs, and they encourage us to do our work and learn our best/hardest (SF3S).

These broad ranging views about what students enjoy when ARMtour is in Papunya demonstrate that role models can provide inspiration and support for students while also building elements of self-confidence. Role models are valued for promoting participation in sport and focusing on education and healthy lifestyles. This shows the positive relationship between what ARMtour aspires to achieve and what the students perceive ARMtour brings to the community during remote community trips to Papunya.
**Recommendations for ARMtour program**

The student perspectives were fairly limited in terms of what more they would like ARMtour to do when in their community. They appeared happy with many aspects of the ARMtour program and mentioned during interviews and in artworks that they would like to play more sport and engage in fun activities like hairdressing. Several interesting points were raised about increasing the number of cultural activities that take place during ARMTour visits, as shown by the following two senior students notes from their artwork:

*Be more involved with the community, go on bush trips, play sports like basketball, softball and others; to learn more about Aboriginal culture; to stay longer, play activities; do more interesting things with ARMtour (SF2S).*

*Stay longer; do more bush trips [to go hunting, look for bush tucker; go to water hole]; play sports, pick up the outstation kids; make us learn more about themselves (SM2S).*

![Figure 6.5. SF2S, female student artwork, year 9-10 class.](image)

Both students also mentioned that longer trips would be ideal as well as finding out more about each individual role model. The students’ suggestions for improvements indicate their
preference for a diverse range of activities that are age, gender and culturally appropriate, and introduce new knowledge and skills to students.

6.4.3 School teachers

Three classroom teachers and one relief from face-to-face teacher were interviewed for the Papunya evaluation. The classroom teachers at Papunya School taught the lower primary, upper primary and the high school classes. The teachers ranged in terms of experience with the ARMtour program, with one teacher experiencing 12 ARMtour visits through to one of the teachers experiencing their second ARMtour. It is important to note that the school and teachers largely determine how the ARMtour program operates in Papunya’s school. Additionally, during the August and October visits, there were various influencing factors that challenged teachers and the delivery of ARMtour activities. For example, a new principal commenced his role during the August tour while one staff member left the school prior to the October visit (and was not replaced). From informal observations, there was a level of disgruntlement between school teachers and some of the Aboriginal assistant teachers, although this was not noted in the interviews with consenting teachers.

All four teachers were female and are referred to as TF1-4. There were four themes derived from the interviews with the teachers as displayed in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4: School teachers interview themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview themes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understanding of NASCA and the ARMtour program</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recommendations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding of NASCA and the ARMtour program

All school personnel were aware of ARMtour as a program but knew very little about NASCA as an organisation. Some of the teachers were closely connected with the ARMtour program having experienced many tours over a number of years. For other teaching staff, the August
and October visits were the first they encountered. In either case, teaching staff had a basic understanding of the purpose of ARMtour:

*I don’t know anything at all about NASCA but ... I have brief information to give about ARMtour; I know they’re a collective group of people who come from all walks of life, all different occupations and they have identified that they are able to come and help with and work in an Aboriginal remote area ... Their skills are varied; they all have their specific strengths and when they come they are able to impart their special skills or deliver their special skills in a means that the teacher would like to employ them in—with (TF3).*

All teachers were able to describe the ARMtour program, with most talking about role models, number of visits, and what they believe to be the aims of the program. The teachers mainly perceived the ARMtour program to be an education engagement strategy with sport, health and wellbeing aims:

*So the ARMtour program is just for the role models and they come in and they try to inspire and encourage the students to be better people—not better people, better—have better goals really, to achieve something ... Giving the kids different opportunities when they come, like different experiences, especially us teachers we have specific genres, like we teach English or we teach maths, but not all of us can teach music, not all of us can teach woodwork or do soccer anything like that ... having ARMtour come up gives us a lot more opportunity to—gives the kids more opportunity to experience different things really (TF4).*

Given the mixed depth of knowledge about NASCA and ARMtour aims, further articulation of the organisations core values and aims could be communicated on an annual (or more regular) basis with school principals and teachers, particularly given the turnover of staff in the Papunya school.

**Benefits**

The teachers at Papunya reported a number of benefits from having the ARMtour program in the school community. These ranged from educational support to sport expertise and general guidance in life. The staff also commented on the variety of role model backgrounds, with several highlighting the importance of having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models to help empower younger generations:
I do believe they empower our younger children here to a certain extent but I think if they are here for a longevity of time that they would empower them even more, they would have more an impact on them and they could see exactly where they could go to, particularly if an ARMtour is an Aboriginal, has Aboriginal descent (TF3).

Teachers also believed that returning role models and new role models with skills that can be used to teach students new knowledge beyond the general skill set of existing classroom teachers, were extremely beneficial aspects of the ARMtour program:

Projects like the Hairy Harry’s that the children thoroughly enjoyed and also the, you know the wooden horses they made, I think it was a really lovely experience using the electrical equipment and actually making, doing, following a process to actually make something in the end ...last time there was [role model name] who did the science and the children enjoyed that you know looking through the microscopes and just looking at all the different things (TF2).

Other personal characteristics, such as role models who were enthusiastic and willing to get involved in any activity, were seen as beneficial for the teachers during ARMtour. Furthermore, the skills / attitudes of role models was important for being a positive role model for young people in the community:

They are very, very willing to jump in and help, they’re never ever saying, ‘Look, no, we can’t help you,’ or they’re very, very open and willing to try anything that the teacher wants them to assist with and they will never, ever say no (TF3).

The teachers were also grateful that the role models were involved the whole school during their weeklong visits. This was noted as a key point of difference between ARMtour and other programs that came to work within the community because other programs did not interact much with daily in-classroom practice. Further to this, teachers highly valued the assistance or extra pair of hands in the classroom when ARMtour visited Papunya. Teachers value the fact that ARMtour brought resources and skills to enhance existing curriculum programs and engage students in and out of the classroom:

And we gain many advantages from having ARMtour because they bring many gifts and skills to our school and they are very willing to enhance our programs, which is a good thing to see and they are very, very willing to bring equipment out that will contribute to our programs (TF3).
Another benefit discussed by teachers included the notable excitement of students in the weeks preceding ARMtour. Additionally, teachers noted that many students continued to talk about ARMtour well after tours had finished. Teachers also reported that students liked repeat visits from role models but also enjoyed meeting new role models when they arrived in the community:

And I think if they get to know you for some of you have come here before so they’ve built that rapport at previous visit so this time it’s not like a new face altogether, it’s somebody familiar. And I think then they make connections easier (TF2).

Repeat ARMtour role models were highly valued yet teachers also saw the benefit of new role models visiting the community, particularly in relation to opening up students’ minds to new and different opportunities in life. In discussing the impact of the role model program, teachers believed that ARMtour presented real and specific opportunities for students to meet excellent role models:

The people who’ve come out have been absolutely excellent role models; they have been professional, approachable, courteous, polite ... they’re good role models for their professional athletic body ... they know how to act in front of the children without being too familiar or without being, you know, too withdrawn, ... all of you show pride. You know you’re neat, you are friendly, you are open minded ... you’re keen, you invite them to join in and I think for these children it’s very important to see modelling. So if they see kindness the likelihood that they will show kindness back is very good and I think when they participate in a group it’s always good to see things like turn taking and you know working as a team and playing as a group and how do we react when things don’t go our way (TF3).

I think a lot of these children go through really tough times and not everybody has role models and I think it’s always good if – especially for the young boys, if they see young males doing some amazing things, excelling at sport you know, actually being able to play an instrument ... because I don’t think in their world they are thinking so far ahead. You know they don’t have future like we see future and I mean sitting in a class they might not have any idea of where this is leading towards but I think if they see other people that they can think of and go oh you know that’s actually quite cool ... Because many of them live with their grandparents who are not always well, some are very much left to their own devices sometimes and I just think it’s really cool if they get into contact with people who can give that little bit of modelling and hope (TF2).
Further to this, teachers reported that ARMtour’s consistent visits over the years have helped build trust and relationships within the community:

You come here as a group of people you know dressing in the same orange t-shirts, the children will know you and they will talk to mum and dad or the family about who’s at school and what we do with them and they will show appreciation. I think that visibility out in the street maybe like at five/six o’clock at night seems to be something that really works (TF2).

One of the teachers also reported that the ARMtour program enabled teachers build relationships with role models and for role models to leave with a sense of fulfilment. A recent improvement several teachers discussed was utilising role models to assist with the delivery curriculum requirements. For instance, teachers mentioned that better organisation with ARMtour prior to the trip, had assisted them in knowing in advance what the role model skills would be, and how they might be able to utilise them in class:

Because we know you guys are coming I plan for that. I guess when I first was here I wouldn’t have known that so back then it would have been a bit different, ... that’s why it’s good to know who’s coming and we can kind of organise where we want people earlier, then we know what we can plan and program for, for that week as well (TF4).

Finally, one of the experienced teachers identified the extended time in community as highly beneficial for staff organisation and student inclusion:

This time around too, I love that you guys were here first thing Monday morning. I think that has made a massive difference to so many things, and also the fact that you aren’t leaving until lunch time on Friday, I think that extended time, like even, like it might not seem much; it’s an extra what, day and a half (TF1).

Challenges

Some of the challenges noted about ARMtour revolved around the types of role models, pre-tour planning, and aligning role models skills with curriculum needs. Most of the teachers believed that NASCA did a good job of recruiting appropriate role models (see Benefits section for role models), however there were some role models who the teachers did not appreciate as outlined in the comments below:

They’ve just sort of come in and they haven’t really engaged with the kids properly; they’ve just sort of sat there and drawn or played in the sand on their own so, and like
really I don’t need another student in the class [laughing] …. We were also having people who just wanted to sit on the floor and cuddle with the kids and that was really a bit of a challenge as well because hang on, these kids are kids who are at risk and we’re trying to teach them about protective behaviours and what people were doing when they were coming in and encouraging that close contact when, you know, when the kids don’t know them that was really challenging… there have been times I think people who have been a part of the group have … I get the impression that they’ve been here more for their resume and a tick-a-box and to get photos of them with the kids. So, and I haven’t sensed that at all these past two visits and that’s been great (TF1).

Teachers believed that while the pre-tour planning and communication between ARMtour and teaching staff had improved significantly in recent times, there were still some issues that could be improved with this aspect prior to the tour commencing:

It was just disorganised between the two parties, like between the school and ARMtour … it was probably, a collaborative failure really ... we didn’t even know who was coming up until [NASCA employee] sent me the thing; before that it’s been usually I’m given at least a week or two notice (TF4).

While teachers identified the benefits of having more role models who could assist with student work that aligned with the school curriculum, at times, teachers felt their needs were not met. For instance, teachers complained that students would achieve limited curriculum outcomes during ARMtour visits because students became distracted or what had been planned did not take place: “Well, previous to this year there’s been no engagement with curriculum and so, having ARMtour here has been more, sometimes, especially last year when that was my first year in my own classroom, it was more of a distraction” (TF1). Similar to the role models interviewed for this evaluation, teaching staff felt that the time constraints for ARMtour posed a significant challenge to empowering young people and building stronger relationships with the community:

I think it is positive but because of the time constraints ARMtour can’t get involved as much in the community or with community ventures... which is a shame in a way because I think it could build up the rapport more and seen as even a more positive fixture (TF3).

Not really. I think that the intention is there but coming out three times a year, once a term for one week, I don’t think that that’s enough to really do that (TF1).
One of the teachers shared an interesting perspective about the challenges within the community. While she did not specifically mention ARMtour’s role in her comment, her ideas may have some implications for the future planning of role model visits to Papunya. From her viewpoint, there appears to be limited opportunities for adults to gain employment and where there are opportunities, few have the skills to carry out the tasks. For instance, she noted that:

*People are paid to come from Alice to carry out work in the community but there are opportunities for plumbing, motor mechanics, agriculture, landscaping. The challenge is that adults need a trade that they don't have. There are buildings in the community where training could take place to upskill locals but nobody to come and train them (TF5).*

This links in with suggestions made in the recommendations section where ideas for developing vocational education training were raised.

**Recommendations**

Some of the suggestions mentioned in the Benefits and Challenges sections relate to the teacher’s recommendations put forth in this section. The teachers believed that better communication was needed between the school and NASCA to ensure that role models could contribute to the community in a more strategic way. First, the teachers showed that they would be interested in finding out about the role models before they came, as well as their skill sets and areas of expertise. This would allow for teachers to better align role models with their curriculum needs during the week:

*I think maybe just sitting down and maybe having more time to plan before the visit actually occurs and I think it would handy to know okay well this is the module we’re working at. Say for instance in maths it’s money, so is there something that would link into that that could be just an extension or something fun or a crafty activity that we can include in that whole unit. I mean there’s quite a lot of fun things happening at the moment but I think if we had that opportunity of sitting and planning beforehand it could be beneficial … I think it would be that simple and I think even if the teacher could make a suggestion oh it would be really if we could do maybe this and this to support this unit or if you’ve got some ideas that would help us extend this or this (TF2).*

While the teaching staff were delighted with the variety of role models who attended the August and October tours, one teacher made the recommendation that more Indigenous role models would be beneficial for the community. They also made recommendations about
including role models with skills in other sports like soccer, hockey, and lacrosse. This suggestion was made to encourage students to look beyond the sports of football and softball that area evidently popular amongst the community. Some of the teachers also suggested that it may be better to think about the older students, and try to recruit role models who would be able to help with the transition from school to work or further study. This was noted as an area that the ARMtour program could contribute effectively to in the future by building upon what the school was currently providing in this area. The teacher’s ideas align with the role model perspectives that outlined how that they could provide a better service to the older students with respect to their transition into employment:

I think ARMtour could be engaged more with older children as well; the older children don’t get so much Vocational Education and Training (VET) work, and I think we could have specialist people come out to do … work with electrical mechanics or maintenance, bike maintenance or car maintenance or things like—anything within that nature that is a practical thing—also teaching the older children more life skills. I know some of the girls already are showing … they’re really good at cooking and they enjoy being in the kitchen. Some of them really show that they love hairdressing and they’re getting to know how to work with clients and they’re making the bookings, so that’s amazing. And I think for the boys if they can do things with their hands or see how can I be sustainable by making a garden (TF3).

In conjunction with these ideas, one teacher mentioned that it would be beneficial if ARMtour could develop and run programs for women in the community during the day, after school and at night. For instance, TF5 mentioned that the female role models could lead programs in bingo, dancing, Zumba, cooking while the men could organise sport competitions at night. TF5 also suggested that “the men need inspiration from other community members who can share knowledge with other community members about what they are doing.” This reflects the suggestion that it would be advantageous to have adults as role models for other adults.

Other areas teachers felt ARMtour could be improved related to the length of time spent in community and frequency of visits. While acknowledging the challenges associated with role models volunteering for extended periods of time and how difficult this might be for NASCA to fund, teachers felt the impact of ARMtour would be greater with longer visits:

How would I improve ARMtour? Well I think they’re doing a very, very good job but I would like to see ARMtour come out more often (TF3).
I would like to see them—both—on a more regular basis and for a longer period of time. I think a week is not enough; I think a two week duration period would be just fine. And it would be nice if some of the ARMtour, if some individuals, if they feel they would want to stay on for a little bit longer, for some unknown reason they would like to stay on to increase their knowledge or their experience that they could be left behind—left behind for a certain amount of time (TF2).

6.4.4 Role models

Overall, nine role models who participated in the ARMtour program to Papunya in August and October, 2014, consented to be interviewed for the purpose of this project (refer to Appendix 4 for interview questions). The role models brought various skills and experience to the ARMtour program, as shown in Table 6.5.
Table 6.5: Papunya role models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Returning ARMtour Role Model</th>
<th>Experience working with Indigenous people</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Student / Athlete</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Community Work</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Community Work / Athlete</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Community Work / Athlete</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role models will be referred to as RM1-4 and RF1-5 for male and female role models respectively. There were five key themes derived from the interviews as displayed in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6: Role model interview themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understanding of NASCA and the ARMtour program</td>
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<td>2. Benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Recommendations</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Sustainability</td>
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*Understanding of NASCA and the ARMtour program*

Many of the role models found out about NASCA and ARMtour through contacts that worked at the organisation or had volunteered time in the ARMtour program previously. Two participants
found out about NASCA through the ethical jobs website while others received emails from athlete liaison personnel at universities. The majority of role models reported basic understanding of NASCA’s main aims as an organisation and presented more detail about the purpose of ARMtour. Employees from NASCA and repeat ARMtour role models were able to best articulate the history of NASCA, its current functioning and aims:

... use sport as a model to engage kids in education and healthy eating and career self-esteem and future aspirations (RF2).

NASCA obviously runs the ARMtour program which is what I’ve been involved in. They have programs out at Dubbo as well as schools in Sydney. I think it’s three schools and those programs are designed to engage Aboriginal youth in school (RM2).

The role models understandings about of ARMtour were more prominent, mainly due to shared experiences as a result of participating in the induction and tour, prior to being interviewed. However, there were still differences in role models’ articulation of the aims of the ARMtour program. Some believed that the aim of the ARMtour program was health and wellbeing, whilst other believed it was educational engagement and employment transition. This is reflected in the following role models statements:

Try and encourage students to stay in school, to attend school and to listen and concentrate, but also to stimulate the kids in ways that they might not get stimulation otherwise. Playing sports with them, playing games, music, acting, dancing, and all that kind of stuff that they might not usually have access too. And to give an example of maybe some of the careers that they can go in to if they really want too (RM3).

When asked to describe what they felt their specific role was while away with ARMtour, role models provided varied responses. Some role models felt they assisted other role models with the transition into the community while other role models believed contribution came in simplistic ways, as the following quote demonstrates: “I think one thing for those sort of kids is it's very easy to get bored, there’s not a lot going on ... So I think in terms of, like, a positive use of time, and that sort of thing, we contributed” (RF2). Finally, role models believe ARMtour presented messages that encourage students from community to think broadly about their future: “It does give them more ideas about things they could do beyond life in the community, even things like, seeing the pictures of travelling on my phone and stuff, they'd be interested in that. Different jobs they could do” (RF2). When role models were asked about how they contributed to the ARMtour program, they presented varied responses. From simply being fun,
to engaging students in class by working in small groups or one on one, role models felt that children enjoyed ARMtour because they were able to build relationships with new and existing role models. Role model encouragement, enthusiasm, and listening were perceived to be positive contributors to the Indigenous students in Papunya. Indeed, Indigenous role models felt that their Indigeneity and rural upbringing helped contribute to his mentoring during ARMtour trips:

I guess that's just a big plus for me at the moment, being able to be so closely relatable, yeah. Like five or six years ago I was just sitting in that same sort of classroom doing the same things, so. And then obviously coming from a small town pretty ... not as remote, but pretty rural and regional. It was ... yeah, there's a lot of things I have in common with those guys growing up. Yeah. I guess hopefully just broaden their horizons a little (RM4).

Perhaps a subtle, yet very significant way in which role models felt they contributed to ARMtour, related to how role models opened up students’ eyes to new opportunities just by visiting their community. The diverse role model backgrounds was thought to be a key contributor here, as role models stated that they offered different options based on their knowledge, skills, and current profession:

I think it's really, really important ... to be able to see different walks of life ... coming from a small town like they don't get to see a lot of different people ... The community is always going to be there, and for those kids to be able to get out and do whatever they want to do, and just sort of broaden their horizons, ... and then go back home it's only going to make [the community] a stronger place (RM4).

In that small town is a different person to have a conversation with and a different point of view, or whether it’s a different sport to play after school instead of going elsewhere, or a different program that they can experience success in that school ... So that was a really big benefit for me I guess to understand that, to have an impact you don’t have to save the world. You just have to give someone a new opportunity (RF4).

The role models also reported that visiting the community multiple times (i.e., ARMtour over a number of years and individual role models returning) helped build relationship with students:

I think it’s just being a part of NASCA and consistently going out there with the same motivation. And, you know really getting on and reconnecting with the students each time you go out there. For this particular thing that’s what I see my contribution (RM2).
The familiar faces that come back out ... the kids and the community just love them. And I think it's really, really important that they keep getting people that go out (RM4).

Some role models suggested their limited community interaction made it challenging to talk with locals. Interestingly, very limited community engagement occurred during the August visit because many community members were out of town for family business. In October, role models interacted more frequently with local community elders during bush trips, the community barbeque, and in an informal music rehearsal. Further details about the benefits of community interaction will be discussed further in the recommendations section.

Pre-tour Induction

Role models who attended the August tour participated in a pre-tour induction program and cultural awareness session with local Elders before departing to their communities. This was thought to contribute to their learning and understanding of Indigenous culture:

It was really good. I think a lot of the things they talked about were important. I did feel that the women running the session weren't, like, that super engaging ... [but] it was women from the communities and ... I guess, important to support them. A few cultural things I learned about in the cultural sessions, like, the Kumanjayi, that stuff I had to really know about, it's interesting (RF2).

For the October ARMtour role models, a pre-tour induction took place in Sydney, one week prior to the week in each remote community. This was also advantageous for introducing role models to each other and outlining how the ARMtour program worked; however various October role models noted several drawbacks. For example, while cultural awareness training was offered at the start of the October tour, some new role models felt limited in their understanding about Indigenous culture:

We didn't have any of the cultural training and which was evident on this trip for some people who didn't make the induction or have never been out before. They seemed to struggle with just issues and how to act in the community (RM1).

The limited cultural awareness training meant some felt under-prepared and not aware of important information. This may have limited their ability to interact with community members and may have thwarted their ability to be a culturally safe role model. For instance, the complexities associated with life in remote communities and the stark contrast in living compared to mainstream Australia was confronting to role models:
The first time I went out I was still a kid, so just sort of go and facing like the harsh realities, that some of these kids are sleeping rough, and don't have the best home life, that sort of hit home pretty hard for me. Something that I sort of struggled with, seeing kids that are wearing the same clothes for a week straight. That's probably the biggest one to seeing someone sort of struggle through life a little bit I guess. And making tea when they come to school hungry and all that sort of thing as well, like that's one of the toughest things for me to see (RM4).

Interestingly, some role models suggested that they wanted to make their own interpretations of life in the community once they arrived to minimise any notions of preconceived prejudice. During the August tour, role models suggested they had extensive ‘down time’ to get to know one another, which was important for building relationships between role models and discovering additional information not raised during the induction. However, some role models felt eager to reach the communities and felt time was wasted in Alice, as the following quotes suggest:

I felt like we almost spent the same number of days in Alice preparing or leaving as we were in the community. I mean that first night was obviously necessary ...but we spent a lot of time just doing nothing (RF3).

Despite these challenges, role models suggested that they were able draw on returning role models and some of their on their pre-existing knowledge (from university studies or work placements) to learn about life in Papunya. Returning role models were supportive and presented opportunities to debrief with new role models on a nightly basis. For other role models, their Indigineity or rural upbringing helped them feel prepared, to some extent, for their time in Papunya:

I’ve been through communities and visited communities like that, and yeah it was all pretty much what I expected, I think there was a different level of, oh socioeconomic situation I guess ... there’s obvious differences between my community and out there and just in-your-face type stuff. When you get out there there’s rubbish and there’s camp dogs, there’s children running around with snotty noses ... I don’t ... see that in my community (RM4).

The aforementioned statements from the role models show that being part of a collegial group of role models, who supported one another, was a huge benefit. Role models appreciated the guidance and help that they gave each other through their shared experiences:
They were very open and supportive, like, whenever anyone experienced anything we could just come home and talk about it and everyone would listen (RF2).

I thought our group was awesome, so I was happy with that. I was happy with the interaction. I guess it’s really about teamwork so everyone helping out with the cooking, the cleaning, the doing, the packing, the putting away. It’s really people that want to be, it’s work. It’s still work. It’s not a holiday (RF3).

As such, all were appreciative of each other and felt that friendships were formed through this experience.

**Benefits**

The benefits that the role models experience as a result of participating in ARMtour, generally linked back to how they understood their role and believed they contributed to the program. This continues the theme of role models bringing new knowledge and skills to the community as previously mentioned in the Understanding of NASCA and ARMtour section. Much like the schoolteachers, role models identified the fact that when ARMtour visits, students get excited: “One of the elders in town made a comment that when ARMtour comes so the children are full of joy, and are coming home talking about their days and all their new experiences. I thought that was really cool” (RF4). The role models also highlighted that their varied areas of expertise were valued by teachers and students and linked back to NASCA being able to choose the ‘right’ role models for each tour:

**Having a dynamic and diverse group was really good as well. A role model with [musical] experience and then the different types of athletes, and then myself as a teacher and others with educational community experience, and working with people, I think it was really nice having that different mix again as a role model in the group, but also for the kids because each person offered something new (RF4).** In addition to selecting positive role models, one returning role model mentioned that the organisation of time when in community had improved over time:

They’re organising [is] a lot more efficient ... where we used to just show up and wing it for the week, and just be like, ‘Well, what do you want to now? What are we going to actually do? So I think that is a benefit (RM1).

Finally, there was also the realisation from role models that community members valued ARMtour’s contribution:
To see [male community elder] on the last trip and [hear about how] they like ARMtour and they want to do more with us, so by him saying that, it means that we’re accepted in the community and they enjoy us being there (RM4).

**Personal Learning**

Role models very clearly stated that they learnt an enormous amount about Indigenous culture, how to work with children, and the challenges associated with living in remote communities. For instance, role models mentioned they learned about gaining “all this cultural new knowledge about what Australia is ... just eye opening to see that there was a completely different world, language, culture, everything, and yeah, so guess I gained awareness” (RF3). New role models learned about the pure enthusiasm of the students and the positive relations that students have with all role models: “I found the kids were just so enthusiastic it was incredible ... they were so enthusiastic and smiling and happy and eager to learn from us, wanting to sit with us in class” (RF2). As a result of their experiences, role models were able to see clear examples of Indigenous success, amongst all the perceived challenges. The two following quotes exemplify this nicely:

*I guess from a Western perspective and a city perspective you would sometimes think they had so little, but then when they would share culture you realise that they had so much more. I mean you would just see the kids hanging out together, you’d be like “That kid’s got no shoes. That kid’s got no shirt. The kid needs their nose blown” and you’d be like “Oh there’s no equipment for them to play with, the equipment’s broken”. It’s easier to see the things that they didn’t have. But then if went closer and sat down with them they’d be having this roaring conversation in language with so much laughter, or they’d be telling stories, they’re not just sitting in the dirt because they’re bored, they’re sitting there with purpose, and they’re sitting there sharing with each other. From the outside you would just see that there was nothingness and “Oh these kids they’re so disadvantaged and they don’t have a big school like we’re used to, or they don’t have a sports club with lots of resources” but then once you go closer and were invited in, you realise that they’ve got so many other things ... I think you could be driving past in your car and be like “Oh these poor kids” and be full of pity, but there was, yeah. It shouldn’t be pity (RF4).*

The learning that takes place during ARMtour appears to have a profound and sustained effect on the role models. From the role models perspectives, it was exciting to learn and be taught by the students and community members during informal conversations and while on the ‘bush trip’ to cultural sites:
It’s not what I go over there and teach them sometimes, it’s what they teach me ... being able to live in both worlds I guess ... for me like growing up with not a great deal of culture, I suppose it’s just pretty refreshing and pretty inspiring to see that a lot of these kids ... going out on the field trips there, like if they just want water or see like any tracks well everything just stops, just an instinct in where they just want to find out what’s happening. Like that sort of stuff is really motivating for me ... it's a massive humbling and grounding experience for myself ... (RM4).

It helped me develop I guess a greater respect or deeper understanding for life in a remote community. And a greater respect I guess for their ability to maintain such a strong cultural identity. That’s something that I haven’t really witnessed as much in my remote experience, so to go to a town that still had such strong language and such strong cultural practice was really inspiring (RF4).

It is not surprising that role models identified many personal benefits and learning experiences as a result of their ARMtour experience. These personal gains linked with previous comments around increased cultural awareness, decreased ignorance, and inspiration to sustained work in ‘closing the gap’:

... realising my own ignorance about the situation, and realising thus that the ignorance of a vast majority of Australian public was something that I had to swallow and deal with. And I think after swallowing it am now really inspired to help break that gap down, and help create a respect for like the amazing culture that we have here in our country. So yeah, I feel like there’s a few attributes that I’ve taken personally, and that I’ve taken as a role model as part of NASCA (RM3).

A number of the role models detailed what they believed to be the benefits of the ARMtour program on the community. Immediately, most of the role models noted the increase in school attendance. This was particularly true, as during the October ARMtour visit, the school attendance reached its highest level in three months: “The attendance rates when we are at the school. Like last term [October] we had 88 [students], which was the biggest for the year, so I think you can’t ... you can never underestimate the impact that it has” (RM4).

Close the health and education gap

Role model learning led into discussions about whether ARMtour was contributing to closing the gap in education and health between non-Indigenous and Indigenous populations and empowering young students. There was a mixed response from the role models. For those who believed that the ARMtour program and increasing school attendance was successfully working
towards closing the gap, the suggested various positive aspects of the program that would like engage students with ideas for future careers and ways in which to focus on school and healthy lifestyles:

*It provides exposure to ... a really big variety of jobs. [ARMtour] opens children’s minds to different opportunities and I guess that could impact year 12 attainment and employment, which were two of the closing the gap I guess priorities ... I also thought there was a lot of chat between the kids about the trips to Sydney and if you’re a high schooler that could be something that would really ensure that you attained your year 12 studies, because if you had I guess the pretty impressive carrot of an amazing trip to Sydney as a part of staying on at school and being a good leader, and a good role model in your community (RF4).*

Consistency was mentioned as a key factor in helping empower young students and build community relations:

*I think the fact that we go back is really important, that the same kind of role models go back. I think that is really important to show that connection that we’re not just coming there for one time. I think the activities that we do are all based around their interests. So I think in that way, yeah, it’s quite empowering (RF1).*

*The second and third trip I was sort of thinking well, you know well what sort of difference am I making coming out to this area. Just one person going out there for a little over a week, you know what sort of difference can I make. And then you sort of start to think well, you know well, I’ll go back. ARMtour’s been going out consistently for such a long time, three times a year, I think that’s what the students thrive on (RM2).*

Taking part in cultural experiences like the bush trips appeared to be one of the highlights for October role models. Many role models described elation at being lead by students and inspired by the deep knowledge they had about their land and culture. An extension of this was that role models felt students were empowered in these situations, as described by RF4:

*So one of the ones was when we were doing the witchetty grub hunting at the end of the week ... at the morning one particular little girl, I guess kind of guiding me through what to expect in the bush and where to go and where to sit, and was showing me different little things, and I just kind of consciously made an effort to just sit back and listen and roll with it because it’s not my home or my place, it was their place. And I kind of felt like the more I let her lead me the more she started to open up, and the more I showed I wanted to learn by just I guess going with it the more she started to share, so from the start of the session she just kind of be like “Look at this, look at that” to the end of the*
session she pulled me away and sat me down and started writing or drawing stories for me in the sand. And that was pretty special I guess.

For those role models who were unsure or who believed that the ARMtour program was not working towards closing the gap, mentioned a number of considerations. First, there was a hesitancy to state that the ARMtour program was closing the gap without any evidence, but also being aware that this type of evidence might be really hard to gather. One of the role models felt that the program helped empower young people but only with certain educational activities – not any health or wellbeing related outcomes. They also mentioned the importance of long-term commitment to the students for this to be most successful. The complexity of the situation is captured in the following quotes:

_I think ARMtour does a lot of good things towards closing the gap but I think there’s just, I guess that’s the thing that I felt I was a little bit depressed about after coming from ARMtour, is the massive gap. I don’t, any sort of little problem I start thinking about how to fix things, or just like, I just had nothing. I was absolutely, it was completely out of my idea of what could people do to improve the situation and I mean there’s not much more that you can do that’s already being done to raise awareness and to educate people, but at the same time it’s just such a massive gap. So I don’t know (RF3)._

_But with its effect on the people that ARMtour go and visit it’s very hard to quantify I suppose. I’m quite new to ARMtour so I’m not actually aware of any kind of, I guess success stories as far as getting people out to universities and things like that, tertiary education (RM3)._ 

**Challenges**

**Lack of Role Clarity**

Role models suggested that they felt unprepared because they had not received clear information about what their specific role would be while in the community. For example, RM2 commented that:

_I would have liked to have known more what we were doing as role models. So essentially, we were teachers' aides, which is, I'm fine with that, I have no problem with that. I think that's a helpful role. But I didn't really know that until, kind of, the drive out there. It was, even on the day training session we had, it was, kind of, really vague around, will we be running lessons, what we'll be expected to bring, like, those kind of things was very, very vague._
Interestingly, this lack of understanding was attributed to limited information presented at the induction pre-tour and teaching staff not being clear with their expectations for role models upon arriving at school:

*I guess the teachers could say “When you’re in my class [role model name], I’d like you to do, I’d like you to work with a small group, or I might get you to work with my TA and you can help the TAs with their duties” or just even if you just have a little insight of what each teacher wanted, because the different teachers obviously have different styles (RF4).*

Some role models accepted the need for flexibility and found that it was possible to understand what role model expectations were upon arriving in the community:

*I felt a lot clearer once we were out there. I thought that we had, like, a good structure in terms of, like, [role model name] would set up, yeah, these, who you’re with for the day. And now that I’ve been, it is, I understand in some ways it is, kind of, hard because things do happen off the cuff there, so you are a little bit, it’s not as structured as, sort of, an urban school would be (RF1).*

The range of responses displayed a number of emotions experienced by the role models. Most felt uncertainty, confusion and frustration with how their role was utilised, how their skills were not recognised and therefore the limited contributions they were able to make throughout the ARMtour program. As the suggestions stress the importance of focusing on community-specific cultural awareness sessions before heading into the school environment, there could also be some time and space to discuss the school, the teachers and the environment in more detail to further prepare role models for their role and responsibilities. This may alleviate some of the negative feelings or challenges that role models acknowledge they experience when first entering the community and school environment.

**Close the Gap**

Role models highlighted that they could see how NASCA aimed to develop students as leaders in order to empower students to make positive choices about their lives. Despite this, one of the main challenges with life in the community and the impact ARMtour has on the long-term capabilities of the students is that the program is not set up to provide a pathway to education and employment:
I think it’s a big problem that we can show them all these things that we do, I’m a teacher and scientist or whatever, but not actually offer them pathways to achieve those things, which is a very difficult thing for a small organisation (RM4).

My concern is when I go back … there will be a group of kids who were there at school this time who won’t be at school next time … I know that they love the program, but … I don’t know how much change we are having on closing that gap. Because some of the kids, yeah, like, literacy and numeracy skills were really, really below where they would be for kids in an urban school (RF1).

Following from the complexities discussed with closing the gap, this was revisited when role models were asked about the challenges experienced during the ARMtour visit. One of the role models explained the feelings of helplessness and powerlessness in terms of the contribution that role models can make for the people of Papunya:

...in those remote communities I think I just feel like they’ve lost a sense of purpose, because they depend on the government and because they can’t do the things that they could do traditionally, there’s no sense of purpose, and maybe that’s what, I think that’s why I got depressed is because the kids will do great in school but then once they leave school what’s out there for them. I mean some of them, a couple of the kids that will probably leave and go and study something and maybe come back and give back to the community, I don’t know, but then what’s in it for the rest of them? The great majority of them what’s out there for them? To live in Papunya and do what? I can think of roles for the women, but for the men to have a sense of purpose I can’t. I can’t think of anything really (RF3).

Other challenges related to the school environment, specifically student behaviours and teacher’s teaching styles. Role models were a little concerned about the community divide and lack of resources that were available for teachers to use. These thoughts are captured in the following broad and insightful comment:

Generalised statements made in reference to students capacity to learn, or the challenges they may have faced, so instead of I guess being like “This child may have experienced X, Y, Z and they’ve overcome it” it was like “All these children come from violent homes”, “All these children see drug abuse”, “All these children have foetal alcohol syndrome” … the purpose of the conversation I think was to show me that these children are overcoming challenges, but the way the conversation was had just I guess to me showed the stereotyping that can occur. And even in the reverse, if a child was doing really well it was like “Oh wow, this child’s doing so well for an Aboriginal child”. It
wasn’t just “Oh this child’s doing really well” and that’s the end of conversation … They’re an Aboriginal child and last year they couldn’t do this and they couldn’t do that” … Everyday racism, or ingrained racism. So exposure to that was overwhelming at times. And having to, not having to but I guess just witnessing it and then letting it go, because I felt it wasn’t my place to say … But I think that was hard to stomach in a classroom, and then to see just community divide. So when we had the community barbeque a lot of the non-Indigenous workers sat together, whilst the rest of the community sat with themselves and I think there was only two teachers who evidently had quite strong community partnerships and relationships with the kids who mingled with the community at the community barbeque. So just seeing that I guess was, and so like it felt so obvious that there was that divide but I think it was so ingrained in the behaviour of the people doing it wouldn’t have realised, and the same with the comments in the classroom. I don’t think it was necessarily out of malice, it’s just that ingrained racism and stereotyping, and yeah, so that was probably my biggest challenge (RF4).

**Debrief**

While much has been said about the challenges associated with not having enough cultural awareness training preceding ARMtours, considerations for post tour deliberations appear critical for role models given the thought provoking nature of ARMtour visits. Indeed, the manner in which the tour ended was a major point of contention among October role models. While the August role models from all communities experienced an informal debrief session on the Friday night after returning from community, October role models took part in a social ten pin bowling event (Friday night) and formal evaluation (Saturday morning). The perspective of RM3 below represents some of the common challenges October role models raised about the proceedings from the October tour:

*I felt like at the end of the week it all became very unstructured, and I felt really ripped out of the community to be honest … And then coming back to Alice Springs for a night, I didn’t … I mean I know we had to fly out relatively early the next day, but I felt like we could have just stayed that night and then just driven straight to the airport the next day … Going to somewhere like a bowling alley was not conducive with conversation to me, it was very loud, lots of lights, a room full of white people. I just wasn’t prepared for that. After such an exhausting week it was really difficult to have the energy, physically and emotionally, and mentally exhausting week, that was such a difficult place to be … So I felt like we got back to Alice Springs, I felt disconnected for a couple of hours … In the morning we had the de-brief which was like 50 minutes to an hour I think, which I felt, to
be honest, was more for NASCA’s benefit rather than ours. So I felt like at no point was there like ... maybe like a support from NASCA for the role models, especially role models that have not been out there before. And it was good that they were giving us like questions to stimulate conversation, but ... and I could have talked for hours. And I feel like you need too.

I feel like maybe the closing at the end of role model tour was lacking reflection. I think the bowling night everyone just wanted to share their stories and yes, maybe know that the challenges that they experienced or the changes they felt they were experienced as a result of the tour, they weren’t the only ones. And I know for myself leaving the tour ... I was quite emotional, which really surprised me. And I think it would be nice, I guess, for the role models to have an opportunity at the end to not only share ideas, but build upon them, and I think there’d be the potential for a lot more growth for the program if you were then putting all those people in one space to explore those ideas ... I felt like I was walking away with a lot, but didn’t really know where to feed that to, and I’ve kind of just taken it back I guess to my context and gone “Okay, as a result of this experience this is what I can do in my town to support positive change”. But I think it’s almost like a bit of an untapped resource. I think there were a lot of people that potentially had a lot of new perspectives that could really enhance the program maybe. I just, maybe it’s just like a little bit of an untapped resource I guess at the end of the week, that everyone walks away with and then potentially once they get back to a busy life forget (RF4).

These perspectives demonstrate that role models are cognisant of the need for personal reflection and how they may be able to contribute to positive and sustained commitment to supporting Indigenous communities and NASCA as an organisation if adequate time is provided for informal and formal reflection at the end of each tour.

**Recommendations**

Concerns about how new role models, and in particular non-Indigenous role models, will be perceived by other role models and the communities could be a critical introductory point during cultural awareness training. For instance, RM2 highlighted how concerned he was prior to arriving in the community:

I’m thinking like “am I going to be, you know well received”, if you like. And those fears were put to rest when I got out there but leading up to it, it might have been a little bit helpful to, you know to say well it doesn’t matter if you’re not Indigenous, you’re going out there for these reasons and you’re skills.
Additionally, RM3 felt like “… more Papunya centric information would have helped, or just about the community that I was going too.” This could coincide with calls for further training in how to work with students. This appears to be particularly important for first time role models who have no experience or knowledge about working with children or Indigenous populations, as the following role models explained:

*Probably, like, a mixture of an activity to do and also, I think I didn’t really understand the behavioural issues before I got there. So maybe the sort of activities you could run with kids with those sorts of issues would have been good (RF2).*

*… it’s always going to be different in a remote community, and also different with kids where English is not their first language. So tools around that, getting to kids to engage with school (RF1).*

Another area role models felt could be improved was pre-tour communication with teachers. These suggestions align with some of the teacher’s perspectives about how role models could best be used while in the community:

*Before we go out, give them [schools and community] the heads up that we’re coming to start with, work out a timetable, let them know exactly who’s coming and what their skills are. And make sure the teachers know that. Because it’s one thing to tell the principal it’s then filtering down to the teachers saying, well struth I’ve got a woodwork teacher, I’ve got a science teacher coming out, how can we utilise that to the best of our advantage. The main thing is consistency. If the principal’s know that, you know ARMtour is coming out for these three times and ARMtour does everything in their power to send out participants that are, you know that suit their needs, the principal and the teachers can organise their units of work around that. So in terms of getting your best bang for your buck, letting them know who’s coming so that they can organise, you know that we arrive smack bang in the middle of whatever they’re doing that’s appropriate to our skills (RM2).*

*I feel that I could have given the teachers a lot more of my time and a lot more of my, sort of, field that I’ve learned through the last few years dealing with dis-engaged children and things like that in education. I think if given the opportunity to have a chat more in the evenings with the teachers and stuff we could have talked about a lot of different things in that way (RF5).*

It is important to note that much of the planning for ARMtour takes place at the beginning of the year. This is where much of the dialogue between NASCA and the teacher liaison from

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Papunya’s school facilitate what activities and role models they would like to visit throughout the year. Unfortunately, many of the plans made with the school at the start of the year changed as the year progressed (i.e., school staffing changes, unexpected role model unavailability). This meant NASCA had to rearrange some of the activities originally planned for the August and October tours.

Many role models recommended that extending the length of the program might have a greater impact on the community and students. Some suggested extending the stay so as to accommodate time in the community beyond the school while others merely thought three weeks per year was not enough:

*My main thought about the program was that there needs to be a way that it could run for a longer period of time, or for the, still interaction between role models and students after, where they're, I think in a week you can’t really achieve that much (RF2).*

This aligns with comments regarding the holiday program (below) and ideas recommended by community members and students regarding the benefits of hosting weekend activities when students have a lot of down time.

**Community Engagement**

While role models highlighted many benefits associated with the school and student interaction, many also expressed concern about the limited community engagement. For instance, RF2 felt that communication with elders and the community early in the tour would enhance the relationship and understanding of people in the community:

*I was surprised that we didn’t engage more with the community ... with the adults. And I remember when we went out to the arts centre, thinking some of the elders there were talking about their grandkids and it would have been really nice to, kind of, connect who’s, you know, who’s with who, and the stories that could, I’m sure that, it could only be a positive thing if we spent a little bit more time, even just for a half an hour on the first day, talking to the adults.*

While NASCA representatives visited the community between ARMtour visits to plan for future programs, the information shared during those visits was unknown to the role models. Further ideas about how to broaden ARMtour’s impact on Papunya could be achieved by sitting down with the community elders and planning out future programs. Indeed various role models
echoed the comments made by students and community members about ARMtour needing to engage more with the community. For instance, RM4 stated:

Sitting down with the elders, I think that’s actually the biggest one where we sit down with them and sort of [see what their] goals are for ARMtour for the next three to five years, or whatever it may be. And let them know what their role is to play. And obviously you’ve got to go down top with these sorts of things, like you’ve got to be able to get the elders … It doesn’t matter if you’ve got a really red hot program if you don’t have the support of community … And I think that’s probably the biggest step that we need to make to make it a really, really positive program … You’ve got to be around the elders helping carry what we’re trying to do through to the kids, and through to the … even to the young adults, I think it’s something that has to be, yeah, driven, driven from the top. And obviously you’re seen how the communities work out there, like they respect their elders out there.

The role models shared many ideas about why engaging more with adults in the community would be beneficial. For example, several role models suggested that broadening the program beyond the school to after school and holiday programs would generate a more holistic approach to connecting with the community:

I did notice that there are some older kids, older teenagers in the community that we didn’t engage with. And I understand that’s not the role of the program, but I understand the point of early intervention … with a sustainable focus … And so I can see that it might be quite frustrating for these kids … when they were, sort of, 10, 12, and then when, kind of, 15, 16 … they say, ‘Well, we used to, you used to hang out with us when we were at school but now you don’t hang out with us.’ Kind of, that’s a bit of a disconnect. (RF1).

One thing, I think it was [school teacher] was talking about, maybe it was someone else, but talking about the need for holiday programs, which I know, a friend of mine researched that for, it’s a really, sort of, difficult time in the communities ’cause there’s nothing going on and the kids have nothing to do and they can get themselves into trouble and stuff (RF2).

While several role models mentioned sport programs for adults just out of school, other role models envisaged night time music activities with all community members and targeted programs for mothers in the community. Inclusion of the community adults in this way would set a positive example for the children by demonstrating that everyone gets along well when running activities together. As previously mentioned by teaching staff, one role model discovered that a link with day care could be beneficial:
Engage a whole new group of women, being the mothers and that younger age group of children, with the program, and potentially I guess if you’re engaging more women and their families you might have a further reach within the community, with their partners or things like that (RF4).

Clearly many people in the community value ARMtour’s contribution to the school; however, it is apparent that community members, students and role models perceive NASCA’s influence could be broadened in multiple beneficial ways. Here is one final powerful suggestion from RM1:

*I think that would be more powerful if you get someone like that to be a part of ARMtour and show them how you don’t have to stay, you can finish school and go into university and your home is always going to be here. So I think that would be the next step for ARMtour to try and get a role model from the community or from a community like theirs to really role model it, show them what they've done.*

This links with the potential to equip local community members with skills that may assist them in sustaining some of the program aims around education and health:

*I think there's probably a few different avenues that the program could go through and NASCA could go through to make ARMtour even more ... long lasting. Give the community the tools to be able to be self-sustainable and those healthy lifestyle sort of choices (RM4).*

**Pre-tour induction and debrief**

While August and October role models experienced different induction and debrief sessions at the tour’s end (see pre-tour induction and debrief section above), the October role models were more vocal about recommendations for improving future sessions. For the pretour induction, further cultural information could be provided while in the community to reduce time spent in Alice Springs and provide contextually appropriate training in relation to each specific community. Role models suggest that an informal as well as a well-structured debrief session at the end of the ARMtour program before heading home may help consolidate some of the learning experienced by the role models, but also give time and space to talk through feelings associated with the experience.

**Sustained commitment**

All role models suggested that their commitment to working with Indigenous communities was enhanced as a result of the enlightening, engaging, and enjoyable experience on ARMtour. For
some, the opportunity to go on ARMtour raised awareness of various cultural traditions and issues which heighted their interest in returning as role models:

Being a part of NASCA and the tour I’m aware of these issues that Indigenous people face. So being a part of this organisation, I'm more aware of what's going on and more committed to [decreasing racism and increasing awareness about Aboriginality] (RM1).

Some role models planned their future employment around working with Indigenous youth in urban and other remote areas, while others talked about making links in their home community as a result of the experience:

It’s definitely I want to work in ... definitely Indigenous youth and engaging education, so it’s something that that experience is definitely going to last me, the challenges that are faced out there. I’d like to go out there for a job, so. I think I’ve gained a fair bit. I love the experience and ARMtour ... I’d like to make it some sort of a vocation to go out there and work (RF2).

I feel like now I’m aware I can find my own path as to helping people, and I can find other paths to help, and encourage other people to help ... And I think I would love to see my children not have to do something like what I’ve done to know about Indigenous culture. For them to just learn about a lot of it in school would be fantastic... So it’s given me a lot of drive and... I'm excited about going to see more communities and getting more involved.
6.5 Papunya Recommendations

On the basis of the preceding results, the following recommendations have been made for consideration in terms of the ARMtour program and the Papunya community:

1. ARMtour program structure:
   I. Given the limited knowledge around NASCA as an organisation and the varied knowledge about ARMtours organisational aims found among the stakeholders, further articulation of the organisations core values and aims could be communicated on a more regular basis with program stakeholders.
   II. Students, role models and teachers discussed lengthening the existing ARMtour program because they felt a week long program was not having the intended long term impact. A recommendation would be to structure ARMtour programs during university breaks so that students could come assist during longer holiday breaks in order to maximise engagement with all members of the community during this time.
   III. Community members highlighted the benefit of running more exchanges between students in the community and interstate areas such as visiting capital cities in different states so as to open their minds up to pathways beyond the community. This could be linked to NSACA’s existing policy of rewarding students for good attendance and participation in education during and beyond the school setting with trips interstate.
   IV. The following strategies are recommended to maximise understanding of how the ARMtour program works (increase role clarity for role models), deepen cultural understandings, as well as minimise culture shock before and after the tour:
      i. Pre-tour induction (prior to attending school):
         1. General cultural awareness training and key ideas for how to work with young people prior to departure to Alice or upon arrival in Alice. This appears to be particularly important for first time role models who have no experience or knowledge about working with children or Indigenous populations;
         2. Specific cultural awareness training linked to community, delivered in community;
         3. Meeting community members and sharing culture experiences (led by community members).
V. Nightly debrief: It is recommend that this be run informally by each ARMtour team leader as a crucial part of the program for role models to reflect upon and share new experiences, ask questions, receive feedback and direction for daily participation
   i. Post tour debrief (prior to flying out from Alice):
      1. Run an informal debriefing session where all role models get together in a collective, quiet space (e.g., overnight camp) to enable subtle and critical conversations about the ARMtour experience;
      2. A well-structured formal debrief session at the end of the ARMtour program before heading home may help consolidate some of the learning experienced by the role models, but also give time and space to talk through feelings associated with the experience.

2. Educational component:
   I. Results from the student art activity revealed that students aspire to future roles within and beyond the community (e.g., community leaders, represent the armed forces). The community has the facilities were learning could take place to develop skills within certain trades; however, there currently are no people in a position to run such vocational programs. A recommendation for ARMtour would be to continue to tailor the selection of role models who have vocational skills in areas beyond sport (e.g., hairdressing, cooking, trades) to assist students and community members with future career opportunities and transition into employment.
   II. Teachers highlighted the benefits that ARMtour brought to the community in terms of resources and skills to enhance existing curriculum programs. It is recommended that NASCA continue to align role model capabilities with teacher / curriculum needs across various subject areas.

3. Community links:
   I. Community members and students suggested that they would like to share more of their culture with the role models (e.g., taking the role models on trips to important cultural sites), in conjunction with the existing structure for the ARMtour program in schools. This reciprocity was seen as integral to forging stronger understanding of Indigenous culture as well as strengthening the links
between the community and ARMtour role models. A recommendation would be to assign some portion (i.e., half a day to one full day) of each ARMtour to visiting cultural sites at the discretion of the community. This could be determined pre-tour, in consultation with community elders.

II. Several community members recommended that ARMtour sessions be conducted after school and during school time. It was envisaged that this would engage youth in sport, rather than troublesome behaviours due to boredom while build capacity for adults in the community.

III. Another recommendation from community members and school teachers was to set up a split role model program where half the ARMtour role models work in schools and the other half work with the community. With this recommendation, it was perceived that role models could train up senior students and adults within the community run after-school programs for younger students to help empower young people in the community. Ultimately, these ideas could translate into capacity building projects and sustained leadership over time.

4. Role models

I. Community members, students and teachers enjoyed meeting new role models and discussed the benefit of having returning as well as Indigenous role models. The students enjoy a diverse range of role model activities that are age, gender and culturally appropriate, and introduce new knowledge and skills to the students and community. It is recommended that NASCA continue to include role models that promote participation in active lifestyles, education and skills that can be used to teach students new knowledge beyond the general skill set of existing classroom teachers.
7 Ltyentye Apurte and Santa Teresa School

Ltyentye Apurte Community is situated in Santa Teresa, an Aboriginal community, 80km Southeast of Alice Spring in the Northern Territory. The community is an Aboriginal settlement belonging to the Eastern Arrernte people. In the 2011 Census (http://www.abs.gov.au/census), the population of Ltyentye Apurte was 555, of whom 502 (90%) identified as Aboriginal, and is comprised of 49.2% females and 50.8% males. The median/average age of the Ltyentye Apurte population is 22 years of age, 15 years below the Australian average. Thirty five percent (35%) of the population speak Eastern Arrernte, 32% Arrernte, and 2% speak Warlpiri as their first language. English was the language spoken at home for 1% of the Aboriginal people in the community.

Santa Teresa is a Catholic School in the Ltyentye Apurte Community which provides education to students residing or staying in Ltyentye Apurte, who are preschool age through to the middle years. There are 145 students enrolled and the school has 35 staff at the school, 20 of whom are Indigenous. The school has relatively good attendance and several attendance officers working in the community. One of the full-time teachers has been allocated the role of planning for the ARMtour program and is therefore responsible for collaborating with NASCA and their own staff/colleagues to determine the implementation of school-based activities during the ARMtour program visit, three times a year. This collaboration is important for NASCA, as they are guided by this teacher, the feedback they receive from others (e.g., Principal and role models), and the ideas these groups of people put forth in terms of role model responsibilities and expectations during the days role models are placed in the school setting.

During the ARMtour program, the role models in pairs spend time in each classroom running various kinds of activities (depending on the skills and expertise of the role models). Each session commences with the role models introducing themselves to the class, often with some form of presentation which allows the students to get to know a little about the role models, and to remember returning role models. Following introductions, the role models run an activity, usually one with one role model running the activity with the other supporting, so each role model has a turn running their own activities. The ARMtour group run activities during each session throughout the day, so that each class usually has between 1-2 ARMtour sessions per day. Beyond the school day ARMtour are involved in participating in games, sports and other activities at the community club house. ARMtour provide a BBQ for the community one
evening during the week and run the school swimming carnival and athletics carnival once a year. Informal daily debriefs occur among the ARMtour group in the late evenings during the tour, whereby the team leader is available to address any concerns or challenges faced by the role models throughout the tour and role models are able to share their daily experiences with each other.

7.1 Methodology

Table 7.1: List of interviews and Art-based classroom activities for each group of participants in the evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (number)</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School principal and teachers (n=7)</td>
<td>One-on-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal assistant teachers (n=4)</td>
<td>One-on-one and focus group interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role models (n=8)</td>
<td>One-on-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community member (n=1)</td>
<td>One-on-one interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (n=7)</td>
<td>Art-based class activity and interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total participants = 27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2 Measures

The qualitative measures was designed to explore the influence that the ARMtour program had on the Ltyentye Apurte community and the role models who were based in Ltyentye Apurte for both the August and October tours. Qualitative data also collected information about how stakeholders’ perceived the program including what they thought students’ enjoyed, appreciated and whether the project had an impact on students’ engagement and attitudes towards school. The participants highlighted the positive aspects of the program, as well as made suggestions for improvements for future practice.

Interviews were conducted with the researcher present and were collected in one interview period. As such, the duration of the interviews ranged from approximately 10 to 40 minutes. This enabled the participants to schedule the interviews at times that were appropriate for them (e.g., for school personnel in morning tea and lunch periods, and for parents/carers...
during an ARMtour scheduled activity). Two of the role models opted to answer the questions in a written format (rather than orally). Another strategy utilised for the Aboriginal assistant teachers whose first, second or third languages were not English was conducting the interview in a group setting (i.e., two community members being interviewed at the same time). This occurred once when one of the Aboriginal assistant teachers wanted another Aboriginal assistant teacher to be part of the same interview as her English was not strong and her colleague would be able to help her communicate her thoughts.

7.3 One-on-one interviews

Participation in the one-on-one interviews was voluntary and all participants were provided opportunities to discuss the evaluation and ask any questions they had prior to deciding to participate and providing consent. Written consent was provided by all participants. One-on-one interviews were conducted with a community member, Aboriginal assistant teachers, school principal and teachers, ARMtour role models and students. From this community, 7 of the non-Indigenous teaching staff participated in the evaluation (46.7% recruitment) and 4 of the Indigenous teaching staff participated (20% recruitment). Students were also asked to create Art pieces reflecting what is special to them, including ARMtour.

The intention was to include a greater number of community members in the evaluation, however due to time constraints, lack of opportunities to establish connection and rapport with community members (such as the club being closed) and various other community factors (such as families out of town for funerals and sorry business) this was not possible.

7.4 Results

The results of the study are presented in four sections: 1) Community members and Aboriginal assistant teachers; 2) Students; 3) School principal and teachers; and 4) Role models. The respondents have been de-identified using a code that represents their role, their gender, and the number participant they represent (e.g. RM1 represents Role model, male, #1 and TF3 represents a Teacher, female, #3). For students, age has also been included (e.g. SF3-13 represents a 13-year-old female student).
7.4.1 Community members and Aboriginal assistant teachers

One community member was interviewed and his ideas will be presented in this section (CM1). The community member worked at the local pool and has spent his life in the community. In addition, four Aboriginal assistant teachers were interviewed and their ideas are also presented in this section. All of the Aboriginal assistant teachers were from the community, and as such are also community members. Three of the Aboriginal assistant teachers are considered community Elders, and are well respected members of the school and community. There were four key themes derived from the interviews with the community member and Aboriginal assistant teachers. These are displayed in Table 1.

Table 7.2 Community members and Aboriginal assistant teachers’ interview themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview themes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Knowledge of NASCA and ARMtour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Positive feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Relationship building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Knowledge of NASCA and ARMtour**

While the community member had no knowledge of NASCA, he did know about ARMtour and all of the Aboriginal assistant teachers expressed knowing about both NASCA and ARMtour. For the Aboriginal assistant teachers this was mainly owing to their involvement in working in the school, and for having children and grandchildren attending the school. Some of the Aboriginal assistant teachers had been in the school and had a great deal of experience with ARMtour. Two Aboriginal assistant teachers expressed having a good knowledge of ARMtour because they’ve experienced “All of them. I’ve been here the whole time” (AATM4) and that “... I’ve been here since they started coming here. I’ve seen all the ARMtours come through and what they’ve come with them, what they’ve brought with them, the skills, the knowledge for our kids, you know, yeah” (AATF1).
It was recognised that while the community members beyond the school know little about what ARMtour is about, they do hear about it from the kids and they know about ARMtour because the orange shirts are recognisable. For example:

*I think just people in the school hey (know about ARMtour). Just the people in the school are involved in the ARMtour, not people outside in the community ... and the kids are always with you mob ... maybe the community can see you there, that you’re having sports with the kids* (AATF2).

Aboriginal assistant teacher 3 agreed: “They (ARMtour) just come to school. But we know them mob, you know, from them shirts that they wear you know?” (AATF3). Aboriginal Assistant TF2 elaborated on her understanding of ARMtour:

*I’ve just recently found out that ARMtour just come out here. And I know that they do a lot of activities, like communicating with the kids a lot, that’s really good. And they are coming into the classroom, that’s really good and joining in with the activities* (AATF2).

ARMtour was recognised as bringing “… role models to the community. Some good role models have come through. They support what the school does” (AATM4). The notion of supporting what the school does was also present in other comments referring to the role model presence and assistance in the classroom. For instance: “It’s good to have ARMtour helping, you know? Helping in the class ... not only in the class ... in the outdoor activities” (AATF3) and “So really going into the classroom and helping them, talking with them” (AATF1).

Sport was clearly recognised as one of the main components of what ARMtour does with the children in the community. Comments surrounding what ARMtour does included: “Some would play basketball, or volleyball, and go out to the hall over there (the rec centre)” (AATF3), “ARMtour comes and plays sports with the kids, like footy” (CM1). The Aboriginal assistant teachers also recognised a positive shift in ARMtour from having predominantly athletes as role models to inclusion of other types of role models, such as a chef (further discussed below under Role Models). For instance

*And you know, in the past, some people used to come and take football, or basketball and all that. And meeting ... was it in the past they used to come and introduce themselves and “I play this and I play this and this is my role of playing”, you know? That was before ...* (AATF2).
Aboriginal Assistant TM1 also expressed how the skills the children learnt from the athletes were still present in the children “Even now every day you see them out there kicking the football” (AATF1).

Positive feelings towards ARMtour

“Even when they come here the kids all light up even before you guys come here they know, ‘ARMtour's coming next week.’ You can see it all in their little faces, you know, light up” (AATF1). AATF1’s comment appropriately highlights the resounding positivity expressed by the Aboriginal assistant teachers towards the ARMtour program. Some comments were quite general, like “Yeah, we just love your presence here” (AATF1) and “we like it, it’s good” (AATF2) while other comments more specifically made reference to the improvement or the difference that ARMtour has made. These included recognition of skills imparted and ‘building up’ the students in terms of self-esteem and support.

Since I’ve been working here, ARMtour started coming here. And they have made a big improvement over the years with our kids, you know, uplifted our kids, boosted them up a bit like when they took them on an excursion ... That was one of the biggest highlights that they ever had away from home (AATF1).

AATF2 recognised where ARMtour was participating in the community, and suggested that this format was addressing the needs of the community:

Everything they [ARMtour] do is really good, you know? Like working here [at the school] and working down there and in the swimming pool. Yeah, that’s good. That’s the main things where the kids are. At the rec hall, the swimming pool and the school. That is the main things that we need, you know (AATF2).

There was also recognition of sustainability, in that while ARMtour is making a difference during the week, some of the skills learnt through ARMtour are sustained beyond the week of the ARMtour program. Some comments encapsulate this well: “Yeah, and they [the lessons] carry on. And you’ve left something with them, something that they will carry and never forget, yeah” (AATF1) and “… Like the chef, he was really good because he taught the kids new skills, the kids can see how to do new things. It helped with them learning about healthy living. Then they can be ‘living it’ after he went” (AATM4). AATF1 also explained how the skills taught to the children by ARMtour have ignited change in the children, “because you see the changes in them and the sports that they play. A lot of them are very keen and play sports now. Some of them
used to just sit in the corner at lunchtime just looking and staring into space. Now they’re chasing each other around. And they’re more into sports” (AATF1).

These comments suggest that the Aboriginal assistant teachers feel that there are lasting positive effects of ARMtour for the children involved in the program, whether they be through useful skills learnt or memorable experiences.

**Role models**

The role models were seen to bring specific skills and knowledge to the community. These skills related to sporting specific skills and abilities, and the Aboriginal assistant teacher’s felt that the role models were able to teach the children and that the community needed the role model contributions. AATF2 explained “We want it [ARMtour] to continue because we need you here. You’ve all got a lot of skills in doing that. Like, they [the children] were learning the proper rules in soccer, how to play soccer, you know? And the rules about it, and the waterpolo”. While sport was a strong feature of ARMtour, the Aboriginal assistant teacher’s expressed that they appreciated “both types” of role models, meaning both athletes and ‘other’ kinds of people with different skills, and they specifically mentioned some of the role models they’d previously had in the community, such as a chef, some writers and a nurse. They expressed that is was important that the role models shared what they are experienced in and can help to “… teach them [the children] something they know about …” (AATF3).

The Aboriginal assistant teachers expressed gratitude toward ARMtour and the role models for coming to the community to offer something, ranging from friendship, classroom assistance, new skills and exposure to different people, places and things. The comments of AATF1 encapsulate this well: “No, I just love you people coming here. And I’m thankful for what [ARMtour’s] done here over the years, really appreciate it … [The ARMtour] mob have really made a difference to the kids. ARMtour mob coming out here- the kids love it” (AATF1).

**Relationship building**

Building, maintaining and developing relationships between the role models and the children and community was recognised by all the Aboriginal assistant teacher’s as something they valued and appreciated about the ARMtour program. These friendships were seen as important and the role model’s presence in the community was discussed as an opportunity for the children to get to know the role models and learn about other places in Australia, like the role
model’s home communities. AATF1 explained her thoughts on the relationship between the role models and the children:

Even when [ARMtour’s] just walking around [they] have all got these kids around [them]. I was looking at it yesterday and I was just thinking to myself, like it makes a big difference when these people come. Kids, they’re just surrounded by kids. Yeah, that’s how the kids get to know [them] and love [them] more (AATF1).

AATF1 further elaborated on what she felt the children ‘get out of ARMtour’, the benefits they receive: “The kids get a lot out of it. When they get the friendship and relationship that they build with [them], you know, they know because of your role models, [they] are teaching them how to be respectful and like each other”.

Similarly, returning role models were valued as the children and community were able to develop trust and build friendships. Some comments encapsulate this well: “Friendship. Like, talking to you mob and playing, yeah friendship you know? We are always trusting you know, that we can see you getting involved with us and with the activities that we do” (AATF2) and “And they talk to you and say “you came back”, you know? They’re happy to see [ARMtour] mob coming back. The same people, yeah” (AATF3). That ARMtour and some role models continue to return was seen as particularly important in this community, considering the high number of visitors the community gets that just come through once and never return. AATF3 explained her feelings towards these transient visitors from other programs and schools: “Yeah, cos we just see them come and go, come and go, come and go … they just come and do what they can do and that’s it. And then do it and they go”.

Other responses about visitors to the community were mixed. AATF1 explained that “… we just welcome people. As long as they come with something to offer us, you know …” while AATF2 was a little more hesitant towards discussing how the community members felt about visitors to the community saying “I’m not really sure about that”. These comments were indicative of the high number of visitors through the community who come through with personal agenda’s rather than for some purpose that is beneficial to the community, and the community members believed this was not the case with ARMtour. Further, there was consensus that “Friendship and the relationship that they build with the kids, you know” (AATF1) was a valuable benefit of the ARMtour program for the children in the community. AATF1 went on to explain how the role model’s presence in the classroom was also an important time for relationship building, rather than just outside playing sport. For example “... being in the classroom working with the
kids and getting to know the kids more in the classroom is what builds the relationship ... often you meet these little kids, you know, yeah. They get to know you more and get to know you better, not just turning up at the sports oval, you know” (AATF1). This comment also indicates the transient nature of many of the visitors through the community, that do not bother to develop relationships nor provide any real benefit to the children or community.

7.4.2 Students

Seven students were interviewed either individually or in small focus groups. The students were aged between 10-13 years and were all currently attending school and volunteered to participate in the evaluation. Three were females and four were males. Each of the students, who participated, spoke fluent English and the local language Arrente, and the interviews and focus groups were conducted in English. This section will discuss the main themes that emerged in the interviews and focus groups. Students in Years 2, 3, 4 and 8/9 also created artworks about their experiences with ARMtour and this section details some researcher observations of student artworks and explanations that the students provided. There were four key themes that emerged in the interviews with students and artworks; knowledge of NASCA and ARMtour, ARMtour teaching and activities, role models and positive relationships, and visitors to the community. These themes are displayed in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Students’ interview themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview themes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Knowledge of NASCA and ARMtour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ARMtour teaching and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Role models and positive relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Visitors to the community</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Knowledge of NASCA and ARMtour

The interviews revealed that the students had little knowledge of NASCA but felt quite confident to explain what ARMtour was. Their responses explained that role models came to the community, the role models ran activities, taught them things, and played sports and games with them. The students also explained that they always knew when ARMtour was coming because their teachers would tell them, and the students would often tell their families about ARMtour. The students explained knowing when ARMtour is coming and looking forward to ARMtour: “The teachers tell us when ARMtour is coming, so we know, and everyone is really excited” (SF1-11),

Their understanding of what ARMtour is consisted of role models and certain activities like sports. For example: “ARMtour is when the role models come to our community. They do activities with us and sometimes they get prizes” (SF5-13), and “ARMtour is the role models coming here. They come to the school and play with us, and they come to the hall after school sometimes” (SM4-12).

SF5-13 expressed that their families knew about ARMtour as some worked at the school and others were told by their children. The students also recognised that families understood who ARMtour was and they recognised the orange uniforms. Comments included “Sometimes they know about it. We tell them and they know. We tell the stories about ARMtour and they can see the shirts” (SF5-13). Another explained that “We all look forward to ARMtour coming” (SF1-11).

ARMtour teaching and activities

The students felt that they learnt from ARMtour and the role models and were excited to explain what they learnt about which included sports such as basketball, and soccer, as well as other skills such as photography, thinking and listening. They explained that “They come to the classroom and they teach. They are teaching us how to play sports” (SM2-10) and “They teach us to be good and be strong” (SM7-11). The students further expressed understanding that ARMtour provided assistance in the classroom and help with their work. SF3-13 explained “I like it when ARMtour comes to our class and help us with our work” and SM2-10 appreciated that ARMtour are “Helping kids, with the swimming carnival and at school and stuff”.

The artworks completed by the students in the school took place in the Years 2, 3, 4 and 8/9 classes. The artworks strongly represented the students doing things with ARMtour, like playing
sports such as basketball, swimming, skateboarding, cooking, or just had images of the student with a role model. A large portion of the images created by Years 2 and 3 students included images of a soapy bucket, which represented a health and hygiene activity that had been done with those classes in the days prior to the artwork.

The students explained that the images including a role model and the student either represented friendship or their favourite role model. The students often explained “[role model name] is my favourite because they do [activity] with me”, with the activities being the sports or activities listed, which have been delivered as part of previous ARMtours.

As expected, the Year 8/9 class created some very detailed images. They created images that represented football posts and big screens, and explained that was from their trip to Sydney with NASCA and ARMtour. One student drew the ADIDAS logo, which represented receiving sporting equipment and being able to play sport, while another drew the NASCA logo and explained “we just like ARMtour visiting”.

Role models and positive relationships

The positive relationships with the role models featured in many of the student comments. The students also discussed the type of role models they liked. Their comments depict a general acceptance of all role models, be they athletes or ‘other’ kinds of role models. SF3-13 explained “I like all the role models that come, it doesn’t really matter who they are. We just like to talk with them and learn about them. And we like them to help us with our work” (SF3-13). Other students explained that “The ARMtours are good people, we like it when they come” (SF1-11) and “We like the role models. Sports ones and other people” (SF1-11). As with the AAT’s, the students recognised value in having role models from a variety of experience backgrounds, as they got to learn about sport and other skills.

The students also discussed the attitudes of the students and community members towards ARMtour, explaining “Everyone likes ARMtour, all the kids and all the people” (SF1-11). The students recognised a working relationship whereby both the role models and students were benefiting, representative of a reciprocal relationship. For example “ARMtour is helping us, and we are helping each other” (SM6-11). They also acknowledged the sharing of information and knowledge that takes place between the students and the role models, for instance “When ARMtour come they do art with us and we can tell them some stories. They tell us about them too. We can learn about where they come from” (SM2-10). This notion of story sharing was
mentioned by several of the students, and the time that was not formal sessions, but just general time talking and telling stories was valued. A comment by SF3-13 encapsulates this well “Sometimes I like listening to the role models, like when they tell us stories. We sit around and talk” (SF3-13).

While the students did not discriminate regarding what kind of role models they preferred, they did emphasise that they liked getting to know the role models and really wanted to see them returning. SF5-13 explained how they could learn more about the role models when they returned, and that returning role models provided an opportunity to build on relationships: “I have seen lots of ARMtours come to the school. I like ARMtour. We have good friendships with the role models, and we get to learn from them. We remember them when they come back” (SF5-13).

**Visitors to the community**

The students also discussed sports and what happens in the community on the weekends. Their explanations about the sport also often led to reference to visitors to the community, because many of the visitors came to the community with sporting programs (e.g., AFL development workshops). On the weekends the students explained that “Sometimes we go town” (SM6-11) or “We just hang around, talking” (SM6-11). Other students agreed with comments such as “On the weekends, we can go to town or stay here. Sometimes the pool is open now and we might go there. Or we like to sleep in” (SF5-13) and “We just hang around with each other. Sometimes we go to town or go out hunting. We are with our family” (SF3-13).

Two of the young fellas explained that “footy happens here on the weekends” (SM2-10) which led to further discussions about the visitors to the community. The students explained the sporting groups that come to the community, from various codes of football and other organisations “We get lots of visitors here. Like the health mob, and sometimes sports people. And the school groups. They come to our classrooms and help us too” (SM4-12). While some students were enthusiastic about the idea of visitors to the community, others highlighted reservations or remained silent. For instance, SF1-11 explained “We like it when visitors come. Like ARMtour, they play with us and teach us things” while SF5-13 explained “Sometimes we like visitors. But sometimes ... we are shy”. The comments from the students indicated a distinction between ARMtour as visitors and other visitors received in the community, whereby being known and having that relationship with ARMtour sets the program apart from the many other visitors that come through.
7.4.3 School principal and teachers

Six school teachers were interviewed along with the school principal, hence the experiences and responses of seven school staff are represented in this section. All seven had been at the school for two years, and as such have each experienced six ARMtours. With the exception of the principal, each of the teachers were classroom teachers, teaching across the school including preparatory, and years 1-9. There were seven key themes derived from the interviews with the teachers. These are displayed in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4 Teachers’ interview themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Knowledge of NASCA and ARMtour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Benefits of ARMtour for the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Benefits of ARMtour for the role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Visitors to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Challenges and improvement suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Attendance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Knowledge about NASCA and ARMtour

The majority of the teachers had heard of NASCA, but admitted their knowledge was limited. Some were able to explain the acronym, and others knew that it was associated with, or funded ARMtour. TMS explained his limited knowledge: “I really don’t know a lot about NASCA other than their ARMtour that comes out here. I couldn’t tell you what it stands for and I’m, no, I’m not really sure about anything, what the goals of it actually are.”

The majority of the teachers also made a connection between NASCA and ARMtour without an extensive understanding of what NASCA is all about. Some comments encapsulate the varied understanding well, such as “I don’t know a lot. I know that they’re the group that ARMtour work through. I can tell you what it stands for, if you like” (TM1) and “Oh, not a lot, other than that they, the funders or the organisation that runs the ARMtour and I don’t really know even what “NASCA” stands for. So no, I don’t really know a lot about it” (TM3).

While these comments are suggestive of the need for clearer communication about NASCA as an organisation, the teachers were more confident in explaining the ARMtour program and what it was about. TM1 explained his understanding: “I know that they’re athletes are role models and that they’re people who give up their time to come to remote communities and they model two things; they model the importance of education and they model a healthy lifestyle. And in recent times they haven’t just been athletes; they’ve expanded to include other people like chefs, we had a story writer here, and so forth”. That ARMtour included athletes but had expanded to include other role models was also recognised by the majority of teachers. Some mentioned other ‘kinds’ of role models, such as writers and chefs that the community had received in recent tours, but there was also a clear understanding that the emphasis of ARMtour was on modelling healthy lifestyles and the promotion of health and physical activity. For instance, the teachers expressed that ARMtour

... was initially set up as athletes being role models, coming out into the Indigenous communities and talking about health, positive stuff and being role models for that in the community ... the whole catch cry of ARMtour is to, you know, promote health and physical engagement, physical activity ... (TM3).

On the whole, the teachers recognised ARMtour to be a classroom presence, whether they were conducting activities or providing classroom assistance. The teachers recognised that
ARMtour “have a particular goal or direction and they pursue it for the week” (TM1), which usually aligns with health or associated themes. TM1 continued to explain that ARMtour

... spend most of their time in the school, and they go into classrooms and assist. They will teach lessons on health, they take kids out for sport, they run an athletics carnival for us, they run a swimming carnival for us. I also know that they run a community barbeque, and that they also interrelate with the kids in the club and just out of school times they’re connecting with the kids and the families.

While all of the teachers were able to articulate what they believed were the general goals of ARMtour, one teacher questioned whether ARMtour was actually meeting those goals and explained that the community would not be aware of what ARMtour was all about. She explained that the community “… know that they wear orange shirts. And the kids might tell them that ARMtour is in the community, but I don’t think that the community would know what ARMtour is all about and what they stand for” (TF7). TM5 also reinforced that people in the community did at least know when ARMtour is in the community, stating that “… the whole community seems to know when ARMtour’s around. I was talking to the people in the shop about it and they say, ‘ARMtour’s here, ‘cause the extra orange shirts around’, they can spot them a mile away”. Collectively, these comments indicate that the teachers perceive they have a fairly sound knowledge of what ARMtour is, and that the uniforms are known and recognised, but that NASCA is a little unclear and that the community would benefit from a greater understanding of the program too.

**Benefits of ARMtour for the students**

The teachers articulated several benefits of the ARMtour program, mainly for the students in the school. The main benefits the teachers described included ARMtour providing and reinforcing positive health messages, bringing positive energy and excitement, providing exposure to the ‘outside world’ and opportunities, empowering youth with skills and experiences, and providing classroom assistance. Each of these will be outlined in this section.

In line with the teacher’s understanding of what ARMtour is all about, the main positive outcome of ARMtour expressed by the teachers was that ARMtour provides and reinforces healthy messages and supports what the school is already trying to achieve. The teachers emphasised the importance of the students hearing salient messages from those other than the teachers, particularly from the role models who the students often respect and look up to. TM3 explained that the students
... get a message that perhaps their teachers are delivering but from somebody else who they might, you know, often if it’s a different presenter presenting the same information ... it supports what the teachers are doing and saying to them and it comes from somebody else so, you know, sometimes that can be more meaningful for the kids.

The positive receipt of messages delivered among the students from the role models is further indicative of the relationships built between the ARMtour program, the role models and the community. This also suggests that some teachers feel supported by the ARMtour program in addressing some of the goals that are promoted within the school.

TM1 explained the importance of those messages being reinforced for the students, not just in the classroom and the activities, but through positive role modelling and interactions in the playground. This reinforcement did not just relate to health messages, but also to behaviours and social interactions. For instance:

*Any reinforcement they can get about themselves is very good, and I mean just seeing the people interrelating to the kids in the playground is really good. I know it probably sounds not much, but that’s pretty significant for them. We have lots of groups visit and, so they’re used to people in the playground, but they’re not used to a lot of extra adults in the playground, and I think that’s good, and if they’re reminding kids about not swearing when things don’t go well or about it’s okay to drop the ball and you don’t tease, and it’s coming from people that they like and they are somehow strangers but also are connected, that has a bigger influence than coming from us because they’re tired of hearing it from us ... so I think there are benefits that I think we don’t necessarily see. And because it’s such a long-term issue, it’s like the whole education thing; any little step forward is worth noting* (TM1).

Continuing with their explanations of the importance of reinforcing healthy messages, the teachers recognised that despite the high number of visitors they have in the community delivering health messages, they still struggle with promoting a healthy lifestyle. The teachers recognised that the issue of promoting healthy lifestyle is complicated and that the issues are “So ingrained and so long-term” (TM1). Sometimes the messages and pressure the students receive may be conflicting. TM1 went on to explain this disconnect between knowledge and behaviour and how reinforcing healthy messages is beneficial:

*... a lot of people come in here with the same message about school attendance and about healthy lifestyle, and we still struggle ... So I can’t see them [ARMtour] not doing some good ... they [students] all articulate the importance of healthy eating and good...*
diet, they can tell you how many teaspoons of sugar are in a can of Coke, but they will then go and buy Coke that afternoon and drink it. So they constantly need that message just redelivered and redelivered.

Other teachers expressed similar opinions, and agreed that the messages reinforced by ARMtour, whether they related to health promotion, ‘good choices’ (a school initiative), positive behaviour or school engagement were beneficial for the students. The teachers also acknowledged that while the difference made by ARMtour reinforcing the healthy messages may not have been very large, it was “a very good thing” and that it’s “very helpful”.

There were several components of the ARMtour program that the teachers explained to be empowering for the students involved with the program. The positive messages about healthy living and eating were seen as empowering to the students, as they reinforced the need for the students to be able to make their own ‘good choices’, but also for the students to understand the opportunities and success that is possible for them to achieve. Several teachers also explained the salience of having Aboriginal role models, and that the presence of strong Aboriginal role models was empowering for the youths. One teacher explains that ARMtour does

... assist to empower them [students], absolutely, for two reasons; one is if they don’t get this message about healthy living and healthy eating, and positive education they’re not going to be very successful. So if they’re getting that message then that’s helping to empower them. And the second thing is if they see young Aboriginal people here over a three or four day period who are holding their own with everybody else, they have got a job as a chef or a sports person or whatever ... The more they’re exposed to the reality of what is possible for them, and the more they see people from their own culture being successful in that area who still had their culture ... people who still are able to connect with them, that’s very empowering (TM1).

When discussing the benefits of the ARMtour program for the children and that notion of providing opportunities, promoting school engagement, and future planning, one teacher explained that while the older students were likely to ‘get more’ out of ARMtour, it is important to

... start that process when they’re little and you know, by the time they get to Grade 5 or Grade 6 when they really maybe hopefully start thinking about some of that stuff, and have the opportunity, sort of start making some choices about whether they want to be going to school or not ... and what they want to do and how much effort they want to put into school ... if they’re used to ARMtour from when they’re little it’s sort of there, it’s
there, ready waiting for them to sort of, for that message to start making sense when they’re a bit older (TF2).

Some teachers provided pragmatic suggestions, that perhaps ARMtour did not empower young people per se, but rather provided opportunities to be empowered, or provided a more well-rounded education, which is empowering in itself. One comment denotes this well:

... I think [ARMtour], perhaps not empower, but give them the opportunity to be empowered or gives them more options. It’s hard to empower someone, they almost need to empower themselves by their options, but I think they’ve certainly helped with that and, yeah, it’s a good idea I think having role models who can come out and talk to the kids and really be honest with them and share their stories. It’s a powerful concept and we could show them videos of this all day and they wouldn’t respond half as well so if there’s actual people standing in front of them who can talk about their lives. Yeah, I think there is certainly some empowerment there (TMS).

Collectively, the teachers comments indicate an understanding that while ARMtour may or may not be directly empowering young people in the community, ARMtour is definitely providing skills and opportunities through education that are working towards empowerment in their lives. The teachers recognised that empowering the students and igniting positive change in the community is difficult due to cultural differences, policies and entrenched disadvantage. Despite this, the notion of this positive contribution or working towards empowerment, as with all the positive outcomes identified by the teachers, aligns with recognising the significance of each small contribution and achievement: “any little step forward is worth noting ... it’s the little steps we should be celebrating because we’re up against it in so many ways” (TM1).

All of the teachers recognised that the children feel positively towards ARMtour and that the children are excited when ARMtour is in the community. TM5 explained this aptly:

*The kids enjoy it and we’re lucky we’ve got good attendance in this community but the kids who are here on the ARMtour days seem to be happy and they are all genuinely excited when we tell them the week before that ARMtour’s coming, so that’s really good. So, yeah, those are the benefits I’d say, you’ve got interested kids and we get a few ideas and extra helpers.*

While this excitement was explained to be a good thing for the students, some teachers expressed frustration that the students could be hard to settle and engage in work when the role models were there. This appeared to be a double-edged sword for some teachers, as the
role models presence spurred excitement in the students, making them hard to settle and engage, but the role models were also reported to be of assistance in engaging the students and telling them when it’s time to listen and work. TF7 further emphasised the excitement experienced by her class:

Yeah, they’re really excited ... because they (ARMtour) come every term and they [students] know that you’re coming ... but the consistency of knowing that ARMtour is coming every term is really good. And it’s really good that the kids know ARMtour is coming. They know (TF7).

The effect that ARMtour had on the children was also linked to their general morale, highlighted by TM3: “... I can see some kids sort of lift when they’re here and they’ve loved it you know ... Yep, that was great and you know, some of the kids came out of their shell a bit as a result of that so, you know, you might say they were empowered a bit through that ... you know, when you get a really good ARMtour person, the kids are lifted by that, you know”. Overall, the general positivity of the role models and enjoyment the students derived from ARMtour was appreciated by the teachers, and they recognised this was an important outcome of the ARMtour program in this community.

While the presence of the role models spurred excitement in the students, the teachers also recognised the role models were a form of classroom support. Some teachers explained how the role models could set a positive example for the students and assist in getting them engaged in tasks. This was done through either supporting the teacher in their lessons or when the role models were running their own activities. Some comments highlight this notion of support and role modelling well:

Like just their influence and their authority and their control that they have over the kids but also the positive example that they set for the kids is really important. So those kind of things I think are the real benefits of ARMtour (TM6).

According to the teachers, ARMtour also represents exposure to different people, things and opportunities:

... Some things they wouldn’t normally get exposure to, I suppose, some ideas, yeah, if you asked the kids here what they want to do after school, you’ll get, teacher or work in the clinic or Ranger. After ARMtour comes they will tell you other careers and they come straight from the visitors from ARMtour. So that’s a pretty powerful thing in itself just
broadening horizons ... these kids can do anything, really, if they have the idea and they know how to do it ... (TM5).

TM5’s comments are representative of the opinion of many of the teachers interviewed and provide a good overview of the impact ARMtour has in broadening the horizons of the students. There was consensus among the teachers that ARMtour provided opportunities for students to learn about people, places, things and opportunities that they may not ordinarily be exposed to in their communities. This was thought to be through the role models sharing their stories about their homes and their lives, but also through the activities they delivered that taught and focused on new and different skills. TF2 expressed that the students are “... getting to know a bit more about different things that go on in the outside world ... talking to them about what they do and stuff like that, that’s always good” (TF2).

In line with the above comment by TM5, others explained how the role models were able to show the children what ‘else’ is out there in terms of what they could do as a career, as many of the students were not aware of the possibilities they may have related to employment. Comments that highlight this:

... anyone who can show these kids a realistic career path or options after school is great to have and that can be a range. I mean these kids really should be able to do anything, but it’s great like when we had the Chef out here and he explained how he went through his process of becoming a Chef and then for a few weeks after he asked the kids what they do now, well they wanted to be a Chef, and they had an idea of that ... anyone with, that can set realistic expectations for the kids and you give them a bit of an idea how to achieve, then I think is really valuable in these communities (TM5).

The continuity ARMtour provided was reported as beneficial to the students and the school. ARMtour was known, recognised, understood and accepted in the school, particularly compared with all of the other one-off visitors, because ARMtour returned three times a year, each year. That there was one consistent team leader for every tour was appreciated by the staff, as the team leaders understanding and relationships in the community meant that the program ran more smoothly and seamlessly in the school. TM1 explained that “... one of the good things is the continuity of someone like [name] who’s been the team leader I think for all six groups. That’s a big help. She knows the school, she knows the people here, she knows the kids.” TM6 concurred explaining “I think the, one of the best things about ARMtour is that the visits are regular and frequent and particularly having [team leader] coming each time as a team leader who knows all the kids and knows the community it’s a lot more meaningful”.

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That returning role models were recognised by the children was discussed by the teachers too. This is a similar recognition of the importance of building relationships that was expressed as appreciated by the Aboriginal assistant teachers. Another teacher provided testament to the value of returning role models for developing relationships and how ARMtour stands out from some of the other visitors in the community:

So yeah but I think ARMtour’s very different to those because of the fact that the role models are adults and the fact that they have those meaningful conversations with the kids and are able to create some meaningful relationships as well rather than just a one off fly in/fly out, never see them again (TM6).

These comments suggest that having role models, and ARMtour returning to the community, allows for relationships to be built and maintained, and also provides an element of consistency and continuity for the children. The teachers emphasised that “consistency is huge, it’s such a big thing up here” (TF7). The teachers also recognised that ARMtour stood out as ‘different’ to other programs and visitors in the school, because of this consistency and the opportunity for the children to get to know the role models and see them again.

Benefits of ARMtour for the role models

While the teachers perceived that ARMtour is intended “for the children” and benefits the children in the school and community as outlined above, some of the teachers also recognised that there are undeniable benefits for the role models too. Some believed that “it’s even more so for the people that come here actually” (TF2). The teachers recognised that ARMtour is a wonderful opportunity for role models to come out to see and experience a remote community, the kids and the culture. TF7 discussed the benefits she believed the role models derived from participation, and felt there wasn’t really any benefit to the children:

Living in a remote community, experiencing Aboriginal culture, going out bush, meeting traditional owners, learning local language. There’s so many benefits, so many benefits. And for the kids it’s, ‘yeah ARMtour’s here to help for 45 minutes, three times a week and maybe get a free t-shirt’. I don’t think the kids see any benefit (TF7).

With the exception of TF7 recognising that perhaps the role models are deriving great benefit from participation, the teachers suggested that this was not necessarily a bad thing as experience and knowledge of a remote Aboriginal community could benefit the community in other ways. This experience was important as explained by TF2:
... the more people that come out the more experience the rest of Australia has with Indigenous culture and life and problems and stuff like that, and I think that’s really important. So you know, it serves a purpose that maybe one day as a whole will actually benefit the community, even if when people come there they’re not contributing much. Hopefully it’s helping more people to have a bit of better understanding of Indigenous Australia and that that may have impacts, greater impacts down the track one day when we pick our next Prime Minister or something (TF2).

Others recognised that ARMtour is “very rewarding” (TF4) for the role models, and that’s why so many role models come back to the community. This in turn was also seen as a positive thing as it helped to develop those relationships between the role models and the children, which is seen as an important thing for the children. Similar to TF2, TF4 believed that there was a lot of learning derived from participation for the role models, and that this learning might lead to commitments to the betterment of remote Aboriginal communities, through returning to communities and staying for longer, such as through teaching positions or similar.

That the role models were learning and going “… away with more really than the kids” (TF4) was generally purported by the teachers. This was seen by most as just part of the program because for the role models, the benefits and experience was quite profound and impacted their lives beyond the week of the program, whereas the children just “kind of carry on with their lives as usual” (TF4) once ARMtour go. Generally, this benefit was perceived as contributing to the “greater good” or the “bigger picture”, and several of the teachers referred to a teacher at the school who had initially come to the community with ARMtour and then decided to return as a teacher. Hence, overall the teachers recognised that ARMtour has benefits for both the students and role models involved, but believed that generally the benefits for the role models were more long term than the benefits experienced by the children.

**Role models**

The teachers generally reported positive feelings towards the role models, and appreciated that they were adults, professionals and positive role models for the children. When discussing the role models the teachers expressed appreciation for the diversity of role models, preferred it when the role models had experience working with children and discussed the Aboriginality of the role models. Some teachers mentioned that the role models were experienced in their respective fields, others made reference to their understanding of cultural sensitivities and
respect. When discussing the role models that he had encountered during the previous six ARMtour, TM5 explained:

*I think generally they’re good ... they are professional people who understand the issues before they come out to these communities, which a lot of visitors don’t, and even if we get family out here, they really struggle to understand, like, what the context is. But I’ve never seen ARMtour doing anything inappropriate, they’re always super cautious and respectful ... I think the choices are good. I’ve seen some really good ARMtour lessons and things.* (TM5)

TM1 also spoke positively about the success of the role models and their humility:

... *they’re all adults and they’ve normally all got their own business or their own job and have made a success of their life, and so they’re not coming with any preconceived agenda. They’re coming to, I suppose, share their success and their ability in a very, a really humble way because unless you ask them, they don’t tell you, they won’t tell you they were an Olympian or anything like that. You have to ask.*

While on the whole the teachers expressed positive feelings towards the role models and reported that there was generally a good variety in the type of skills the role models possessed, some teachers expressed that it is important to have role models who have experience working with children. TF2 explained how the role models impact on her experience of ARMtour through their abilities to engage the children in the classroom, with more positive experiences derived from having role models with experience working with children than with those who don’t have that experience.

... *I think really that has probably most to do with whether the people have had much experience with kids and/or maybe with teaching ... I mean obviously there are kids out here ... they can be pretty challenging ... it’s not as easy to engage them ... I’ve had groups and people who have been really, really great with them, like just sort of got them re-engaging, knowing that, have lots of stuff organised and what was organised was really appropriate. But then there’ve been groups where that hasn’t necessarily happened in the same way and it’s been a bit, sometimes they’ve been challenging for the teacher ...*

TF2 and TM3 both reflected on previous athletics carnivals that had been run by ARMtour and how these had either gone really well or not so well based on the experience of the role models in working with children and running these sort of activities. TM3 explained the successful
event was likely because of the role models being “the sort of people possibly that they were that they were pretty extroverted and stuff like that”.

The majority of the teachers made reference to the ‘type’ of role models they had encountered on the last six ARMtours and acknowledged the variety of skills and professions of the role models. The teachers expressed appreciation for the diversity of the role models, and these comments were similarly themed to the comments relating to how diversity in the role models led to a greater exposure of the students in the community to different people and opportunities. TM5 explained that role models should be

... anyone who can show these kids a realistic career path or options after school is great to have and that can be a range... anyone with, that can set realistic expectations for the kids and you give them a bit of an idea how to achieve, then I think is really valuable in these communities.

Other teachers expressed liking “… that there’s been a mix of role models the last couple of years” (TM6) and went on to describe some of the previous role models, including authors, chefs, teachers and athletes. One teacher explained preference for role models that bring skills that the teachers in the school don’t already have and preferred the role models not to be teachers because “I guess they get enough teachers, probably is the thing, these kids know teachers” (TM5) and he wanted the role models to be ‘different’.

This notion of the role models being ‘different’ to what the children would already know and see was echoed by other teachers who enjoyed the diversity of sports presented to the children. TM6 agreed that role models beyond just sportspersons were good, but also that the variety of sportspersons was appreciated. For instance he explained:

... the different sports is good as well, like not just footy ... there was a girl that did yoga or karate, Judo ... and those kind of sports the kids have no knowledge of so that’s a really nice thing for the kids to, like to see them learning about something completely new to them. Yeah like I like the variety of the role models. I like the mix of the male and female and sometimes they’re a bit younger and sometimes a bit older but I think in my opinion it’s always been a good mix, a nice mix, I’ve never had any issues or any negative issues. It’s always been positive (TM6).

While TM6 mentioned a mixture of ‘younger and older’ role models was good, TF7 believed that the younger role models were good as they bring an energy to the classroom and
community that is appreciated. Other teacher comments depicted an appreciation for the fact that the role models are all adults, as they possess a confidence and maturity that contrasts with a great deal of the other visitors to the school (discussed below).

**Aboriginality of the role models**

The teachers also communicated an appreciation for the Aboriginality of some of the role models and felt that “one of the really positive things is young Aboriginal people as part of the ARMtour group” (TM1). A comment by TM6 also highlights the perceived importance of having Aboriginal role models as part of ARMtour:

> And especially when Indigenous role models come out that’s a, I think that’s probably one of the most critical things that ARMtour’s able to do is to provide that positive role model for the kids, someone to look up to. A lot of the kids probably wouldn’t have many positive role models, Indigenous role models, particularly male role models in this community (TM6).

While all of the teachers believed that having Aboriginal role models was valuable to an extent, the responses varied from “… the more Aboriginal people the better I think” (TF2) and “… but we wouldn’t want all Aboriginal people either” (TM1) to “I don’t think they necessarily need to be Aboriginal” (TM5). Overall the teachers recognised that a mixture of role models was good, and that having at least some Aboriginal role models is a positive thing. Having both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal role models as part of the ARMtour program was explained as providing opportunities to “see these Aboriginal people equal to or better than some of the white people at those skills. So they’re able to make a comparison and see that it is quite possible for them to fit into the wider society and hold their own” (TM1).

Similar to what TM1 described as an opportunity for the Aboriginal youth in the community to see Aboriginal role models on equal ground with others, another teacher explained that while it doesn’t matter whether the role models are Aboriginal per se, it is beneficial for the youth in the community to see the role models who are proud of their Aboriginality. He explained:

> Sometimes we get a bit of a feeling in this community that there is a bit of shame to be Aboriginal for these kids, I think especially when they go into town, but when you have someone who’s proud and will tell a person, you know, just tell the kids who’s, what tribe they’re from or group they’re from and they’re strong proud people, I think it’s great, but I don’t think they all need to be that. I think a mix at the moment is really good (TM5).
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TM1 went on to explain what having Aboriginal role models meant for the children to see in terms of developing future aspirations:

... they wouldn’t see a lot of Aboriginal people, like goodness, we had a chef here; they wouldn’t necessarily see Aboriginal people in that role. That’s very good for them because their view can be very limited and it can be very much focused on community ... So to see other Aboriginal people working who are not necessarily sports people is a very good thing. We have lots of football players visit who are Aboriginal, and that’s very good, with the same message, but it doesn’t have the same impact, I think.

Collectively, the comments of the teachers suggest that while the inclusion of Aboriginal role models is a strength of the ARMtour program, it is beneficial to continue to have both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal role models, as that sends a message of equality to the Aboriginal youth in the community and demonstrates that Aboriginal people can and do achieve in ways comparable to non-Aboriginal people.

Visitors to the community

In interviews with the teachers, it was strongly apparent that this community receive a large amount of visitors each year. This was a point of mixed emotions for many of the teachers who expressed frustration at the disruption these visitors caused, but also appreciation at the opportunities or services that some of the visitors provided for the community. TM5 explained “this is a unique situation where we’ve got so many visitors in this school, it borders on disruptive sometimes with others, like, we’ve got 18 school groups or something ... there’s too many people that come to the community I think in Santa Teresa. We should start knocking them back, in my mind ...”

The teacher’s accounts of the visitors to the community were all fairly similar and they described school groups on immersion programs, health services, sporting clubs and programs, and ARMtour. Some of the main themes that emerged surrounding visitors included their ‘unpreparedness’ to deliver appropriate teaching or programs, cultural inappropriateness or insensitivity (like taking photos), the proportion of visitors being too high and disruptive to schooling, visitors pushing their own agendas, and ARMtour as visitors.

TM1 poignantly explained how the issue of visitors and their conduct in the community is a complicated matter:
It’s a difficult one. Visitors who come into the community who are respectful of different organisations are fine. Visitors who come with their own agenda and an expectation that we’re like an exhibit in a zoo are quite difficult. Most of the visitors we have are in the first category, but we do have some visitors that can be quite demanding … and it’s more about them than it is about us or the children. And there have been … visitors who go around taking photos of the housing and, or drive around and they wonder why someone threw a stone at their car. They don’t get it, that that’s a breach of people’s privacy and that untidy front yard or the broken down door doesn’t necessarily tell a story of neglect, or doesn’t necessarily tell a story of children not being well cared for. It might, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that. So you don’t just go and take a photo to send back (TM1).

TM1 continued to explain that while some guests just ‘don’t get it’ and that this is “a big issue, and there have been some instances which aren’t positive”, he explained that of these negative instances, “none of them [were] with ARMtour” (TM1). This is further evidence of how ARMtour is perceived as, and received as different to other visitors in the community.

The issue of visitors wanting to take photos was also mentioned by several other teachers as something they did not appreciate from visitors and was seen as culturally insensitive. A comment by TM6 captures this:

Generally as a teacher what makes me cringe the most is when people are here for two minutes and then get their camera out and I just, it’s, I kind of think like you haven’t even finished what you were here to do yet … you know like and they take photos, oh just sit there for me and I just want to take a photo and it causes a lot of issues as well with permission … So there’s a few issues around there (TM6).

The location of the community was considered one of the main reasons for the amount of visitors that come to the community, as it is easy to access from Alice Springs. TM5 explained this convenience and the impact this has on how ARMtour is received by the children:

… sometimes it just feels this place is a bit too convenient for visitors to come, and not necessarily ARMtour but every department that wants to make an announcement on Aboriginal affairs will come to Santa Teresa ‘cause it’s an hour drive and they can go back to town then, yeah, which is good and bad … The kids are almost a bit spoilt for visitors, they expect there to be visitors and people ready to help them and they don’t appreciate them as much as perhaps they should and perhaps makes them a bit slower to warm up to their teachers as well … (TM5).
Considering the children are ‘spoilt for visitors’ as TM5 explained, the way ARMtour is received and experienced by the children has changed over time. Despite ARMtour being reported as different to other visitors in many ways, the children are now less excited as ARMtour are ‘just another group’ coming through: “I think what’s happened is that they’ve, we have a lot of people come out here and just assist in the classroom, so, come and just be with the kids as they do their normal work which is fine but they’re pretty used to that. We have about 18 schools come through each year” (TM3). Some of the teachers who had taught in other remote NT communities further explained that the way visitors are received by the children differs greatly in communities where visitors are less common place. TM5 went on to suggest that “…there’s a lot of kids in remote regions missing out because we’re getting so many visitors” (TM5).

While the positive benefits of ARMtour and visitors were recognised as “nice for the kids to have some different stuff to do” (TF2), the proportion of visitors was also recognised as “an interruption to timetable … in general that’s an issue, having general literacy and numeracy sort of timetable interrupted a bit” (TF2). Another teacher expressed the importance of the timetable and suggested that whatever the visitors aim to do in the community it must contribute something to the learning of the children.

TM3 also expressed his frustration at the disruption to the learning time and how this conflicted with his teaching aims: “…We’re here to educate these kids and if you’re coming in and you’re disrupting that, not through your own fault or whatever but it’s disruptive for the kids, then no, go away. Like, because, you know, I’m here to try and … get as much learning into them as I can” (TM3). While the teachers all expressed clear frustration at the amount of visitors that the school received, they were also careful to articulate that their frustration did not usually apply to ARMtour. A comment by TM6 clearly articulates this:

*Maybe you can imagine the frustration that some of the teachers have felt about constantly having visitors in the school but I always look forward to ARMtour because I know that they’re all adults, they’re all role models, they’re really good interacting with the kids and encouraging the kids and so if I’ve got anyone from ARMtour in the classroom I’m more relaxed rather than worried … you know like it kind of puts me at ease that I know that it’s ARMtour* (TM6).

Further, the staff at the school discussed the noticeable difference between the ARMtour role models and some other visitors that they receive in the school, such as the school groups on immersion programs. These differences were mainly attributed to the fact that the role models
were ‘adults’, mature and established in their lives and themselves. As such they were able to be of assistance rather than just being an ‘extra’ person in the classroom, and a potential hindrance. Several teacher comments explained this well:

Some of the school groups that come, you know, they play, play, play and then - so us teachers, we’re kind of going, "Okay, okay, everyone listening," and they’re sort of playing with some of the kids and you’re like, "Excuse me." Yeah, and ARMtour can go, "Oh, time to listen." Whatever the teacher said ARMtour always kind of back up that comment. "Okay, so it’s learning time." If the kids are still talking to another they’ll go, "No, shh, learning time." So that's obviously good as a teacher to have that. (TF4).

… ARMtour they’re all adults and they’re all role models so they all know the expectations of a classroom and the expectations of school and attendance and they’re able to have those conversations about why school is really important, why attendance is really important, which these visiting school groups they don’t talk about that, you know they’re just kids themselves so they’re not going to ask them (TM6).

Overall, while the comments from the teachers clearly depicted a frustration at the amount of visitors in the community, and how many of these visitors just wanted to assist in the classroom without any real contribution, they also tended to feel that ARMtour was beneficial and a positive presence for the students. The teachers recognised the positive relationship that ARMtour has with the community and how the majority of role models are culturally aware and sensitive. The comments also indicate that perhaps owing to the accessibility of the community and the high number of visitors, the programs that come through are not having as much impact “because these kids are, and the adults are, peopled out in one way” (TM3).

**Challenges and improvement suggestions**

When asked about the challenges they faced when ARMtour is in the community, the responses of the teachers were mixed. The majority provided responses such as “There’s not a lot of challenges, really, they’re pretty well behaved, I don’t think we’ve had any problems with them … it’s pretty good” (TM5) while others found it easier to list the things that challenged them daily during the program. As discussed above, the teachers preferred role models who have experience working with children and they recognised that it could be challenging if they don’t have this necessary experience. TF2 suggested that for her

… probably the biggest one (challenge) is if they’re not particularly onto engaging kids and/or seeing the signs, not that they all have to be, but sometimes people then can see
the signs that, ‘Okay, the kid’s tuning out now,’ and that’s fine, and sort of hand back over to the teacher or whatever. So if that’s not happening then it can sometimes be challenging because the kids go a bit crazy and classroom teachers needing to manage a group of kids who are sort of under the control of someone else at that time, of you know, the ARMtour people, whatever they’re doing. So it’s kind of difficult to manage that at times.

Other teachers echoed this sentiment when discussing the excitement that ARMtour caused and how it could be challenging that “… the kids got a bit too excited” (TM3) and the associated management this requires if the ARMtour role models are not equipped to manage the children in that way.

While not necessarily the fault of ARMtour, as discussed above, the teachers were continually challenged by the amount of visitors they have to the school and the community, and recognised how this disrupted their teaching time, routine, ability to juggle visitors at the same time, and their classroom management. TM3 explained how this related to ARMtour for him and how important it was for ARMtour to differentiate from those visitors: “I suppose the only challenge for me is that I feel like they’re just another group I suppose … Maybe it’s because I’m just, you know, like getting used to, or too used to groups coming but, yeah” (TM3). He explained how initially he felt that ARMtour was offering something different but that recently it had shifted to just become another group coming through, most likely owing to familiarity with ARMtour and the program.

Despite the fact that the teachers had recognised an improvement in recent tours, the organisation of ARMtour was cited as a minor challenge by some teachers. They recognised that communication between NASCA and the school prior to ARMtour coming to the community was important and that not knowing who was coming had been frustrating. This was also suggested by several of the teachers that this was an area that could and should be improved with future tours. Improving the communication between the school and NASCA was suggested as something that would enable the school to utilise the role models and their skills better, in order to get the most benefit from ARMtour for the students. It was suggested that greater communication in the time leading up to ARMtour, would enable the school to request role models with specific skills (e.g. a hairdresser) based on the needs of the current students, and that having more time would make it more possible for NASCA to achieve this. TM1 explained the importance of this communication: “… the other thing that could be an improvement would be if we do know who’s coming as we did this time, at least classes can
then specifically ask for something, like if they’ve got a story writer they can say, “I want three sessions with the writer.” Another comment clearly emphasises the need to know which role models are coming (and with what skills/profession) so the teachers can plan:

So then obviously you guys get here and go, ‘So what's everyone doing?’ I know what this class is doing. ‘Oh, if I’d have known that we could have ...’ whereas teachers kind of say, ‘Well, what's their background?’ If I'd have said, ‘Oh, it's a nurse,’ ‘Oh, that'll be good. That'll fit in really well in Health Week.’ So I guess just that communication beforehand really (TF4).

Extending this, the organisation of ARMtour was suggested as something that could be challenging in terms of which role models go into which classroom, their preparedness to run activities, their punctuality to the lessons, and how they fit in with the timetable. TF7 explained her challenges from past experience with ARMtour not being as organised as they should be by not “… actually having the resources there ready to go. Yeah, and actually arriving to class on time. Like if you say you’re going to be there at 8 o’clock, be there at 8 o’clock. Like don’t come half an hour late- if you come and I’m not ready, I’ll tell you I need half an hour to get the kids ready. So yeah, just being a bit more prepared”. TF4 also discussed the organisation of which role models are going into which classrooms and how this communication has sometimes been poor:

And sometimes I guess teachers kind of go, "Oh yeah, I'll have them then ..." and then something might happen. And it's not - it's no fault of ARMtour's, no fault of the teachers. It's just the communication because we're kind of spread out. It's not easy just to pop in and say, ‘Oh, sorry, I can't make it. I've got to go and do this.’ So there's been a couple of times when other teachers have said, ‘Oh, no-one came.’

TF7 went on to explain that it can be difficult when the role models behave like friends to the students, rather than adults in a position of responsibility:

I think another big challenge is that a few of the role models have come in and just want to be friends with the children and they need to remember they are role models in the community, they don’t go in the back of the classroom and take selfies with the kids or ring up their friends to you know, say happy birthday, you know? These are all examples of things that have happened. You know, so I think they just need to remember that they are role models in the community ... So, that’s also a challenge.
This related to the previously discussed comments by teachers emphasising the importance of the role models having experience in working with children and understanding appropriate classroom behaviours.

Curriculum alignment was something mentioned by teachers as a suggested area for improvement. They wanted activities they could carry on beyond ARMtour and things that were relevant to the curriculum but that they may not already be teaching. This suggestion was tied into the emphasis placed on pre-communication between NASCA and the school and it was suggested that having set programs so they knew exactly what was happening ahead of time would be useful. Teachers explained:

*I feel like what ARMtour should do is get together some really engaging, you know, plan some sessions that you can teach your role models to run in the classroom and, you know, have a look at the health curriculum or whatever and meet some of those expectations in that and if you sent that out, if ARMtour sent that out to us, then we’d go “Okay, well we’ve ticked that off, when we’re doing our planning, ARMtour are going to cover that for us” – healthy eating or whatever they feel like they can organise (TM3).*

Curriculum alignment and the way ARMtour, or visitors in general could pose as a disruption to the timetable and routine in the school extended to suggestions that the timing of ARMtour in the school could be modified to minimise disruption. TF7 suggested that ARMtour is currently “…coming in the middle of term, in the middle of the teaching term. I know they’re only in a couple of sessions in the week, but the kids are extremely excited and looking forward to it and so maybe a suggestion is coming in week 10 towards the end of each term so we know, like all the planning is in, the assessment is done, like everything is done and then the children can have all the different activities ...”.

For the most part, the teachers recognised that some of the challenges they mentioned were inherent in the context and the situation and out of the control of NASCA or the role models. Other challenges were seen as fixable and the teachers offered suggestions for improvement, such as greater communication between NASCA and the school prior to the program coming to the community to facilitate greater preparedness among the role models as well as aiding the teachers in their planning and preparation and meeting curriculum requirements. This extended to choosing appropriate role models with the necessary experience with children and to general preparation and organisation.
**Attendance**

The teachers unanimously agreed that student attendance in this community is pretty good relative to other remote communities, but also that school attendance is a complicated and difficult issue to address. “Sometimes their attendance is determined by a whole range of factors ... the issues that they’re facing are kind of outweigh what we are trying to do” (TM6). The teachers suggested that despite their best efforts, there were factors that impacted on student attendance that were beyond their control, and it was unlikely that they as teachers, or any program within the school such as ARMtour had the scope to have any impact. TM1 explained and rationalised why ARMtour has little impact on attendance:

> Well they [ARMtour] certainly don’t discourage attendance, and it doesn’t drop off when they visit, and it probably marginally might go up because kids love activities and they love visitors. So it’s not a significant thing for us because we’re in a different position to a number of the other communities, where our attendance is in the early 70’s, and basically the people that don’t come, not much is going to bring them to school (TM1).

In a similar way, other teachers expressed that they weren’t sure that ARMtour had much of an impact, if any, on attendance in the community. Comments included “I don’t think so, but I don’t know” (TF2) and “Oh, I don’t know ... off-hand I would say not necessarily, no” (TM3). Other teachers suggested that anecdotally ARMtour may impact attendance for the week, but that this would not be sustained once ARMtour had left. Some teacher comments capture this well: “So I know word gets around and therefore I’m sure that it does improve the attendance for that week but not, it doesn’t stay” (TM1) and “… from a sustainability’s point of view, if ARMtour went out and grabbed them and brought them in for ARMtour week that would be fine but we wouldn’t see them afterwards” (TM3). Another teacher explained that he has two students with very poor attendance usually but that they showed up the week of ARMtour:

> I’m thinking back anecdotally about which kids have appeared. You know I’ve got two boys that have appeared this week who haven’t been coming, [Student X] and [Student Y] weren’t here at all week one and week two. But I don’t know why that is. We’ve got attendance officers who go around and pick them up ... Normally [Student X] only comes to school when the police bring him here ... So it’s kind of interesting that they have turned up this week (TM6).

The teachers explained that while “with the young kids attendance is pretty good anyway” (TF4), it is still “a big community issue” (TM3). TF4 elaborated that the limited impact on attendance is “… not because kids don’t like ARMtour ... It’s just because nothing really would
influence their attendance ... So, yes, the kids that are here in the first place then, yes, they’ll keep coming. Yes, they might not go home at lunchtime”. This idea that nothing really would impact on attendance was echoed by several teachers, particularly when the community has attendance officers, teachers, community members, police and other programs all trying, to no avail, to get more students to come to school. TF4 articulated that it would be hard for ARMtour to have any impact “especially when we have like attendance officers and they don’t really impact on attendance”. Other teacher comments explained how even the teachers had trouble getting the disengaged students to school and that some of those students don’t particularly care:

Yeah, it is and it’s hard for us to try and get the kids here as well. I mean I try and have exciting lessons to get the kids here rather than be chasing them here and sending the yellow shirts [attendance officers] or the Police around, so, yeah, attendance is a big issue, I suppose. But, like I said, here, our community’s pretty good with it, other communities, [ARMtour] might make a difference, I’m not sure, but here probably not so much. I mean, the kids not coming to school, they’re pretty determined they won’t be there that day (TM5).

The teachers spoke of strategies they had employed to encourage the students to come to school, including planning exciting lessons and planning rewards for students like excursions or horse riding, but were disappointed to report that “I said you come to school every day this week, on Friday we’ll do it, so kind of, it never worked though [laughing], I never had any success” (TM6).

While the teachers understanding of the impact of ARMtour on attendance and the context of attendance in the community was similar, the comments of TM6 capture the consensus well:

And it depends, like I said it depends on a whole range of factors in the community as well. Because if the school has got really good attendance and there’s a whole lot of kids that are coming and being exposed to the positive messages that ARMtour spreads then it’s going to have a greater impact. But if the school has poor attendance for whatever reason, cultural reasons, funerals, sports carnivals or family issues or kids being disengaged with school, then the impact that ARMtour has in the school is going to be limited because of that poor attendance. And I think as well that probably links into what I was saying before about the after school activities with the, you know that’s, so that’s where hopefully those kids who weren’t at school on that day if they saw the ARMtour people at the club, like the rec hall, they might be like that was fun, I want to
go to school tomorrow because I saw the ARMtour, you know I know that ARMtour's here now so hopefully.

This comment captures the understanding put forward by the teachers, that while ARMtour may or may not have an impact on attendance in this community, it is likely because they feel that nothing will have an impact on attendance for those students who are choosing not to attend school. Despite this, there is the suggestion that greater involvement with the students outside of the school may encourage attendance. In any case, it is positive that ARMtour is believed not to hinder attendance and in some cases, may encourage students who are attending school to stay longer that they would usual and not go home at lunchtime.

7.4.4 Role Models

Overall, eight role models out of nine who participated in the ARMtour program to Ltyentye Apurte in August and October, 2014, consented to partake in a one-on-one interview (one role model was not interviewed because she was NASCA staff). Two of the role models chose to respond to the questions in a written format, with the remaining six role models participating in one-on-one interviews (refer to Appendix 4 for interview questions).

The role models brought various skills and experience to the ARMtour program, as shown in Table 7.5.
Table 7.5: Ltyentye Apurte role models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Returning ARMtour Role Model</th>
<th>Experience working with Indigenous people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Community work</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Health and therapy</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Student nurse / athlete</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Writer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Student / athlete</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Community Work</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Community youth sport programs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Writer</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Community Work / Athlete</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were five key themes derived from the interviews. These are displayed in Table 7.6.

Table 7.6: Role model interview themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understanding of NASCA and the ARMtour program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sustainability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding of NASCA and the ARMtour program

Each of the role models were confident to explain what the NASCA acronym stands for and a little about the organisation in terms of aims and objectives. It was understood that NASCA are “targeting youth, Indigenous youth specifically to make good lifestyle choices and further their education” (RF3). The role models were also able to describe their understanding of the main ideas surrounding the ARMtour program, and how this was a program offered by NASCA. The role models described what NASCA does:

I know that they’re an organisation that works for Indigenous kids all around NSW and possibly now all around Australia to try to increase confidence, to increase engagement, and you know possible employment options for the future. And that kind of all comes under the banner of sporting role models as well (RM6).

Like the teachers, the role models has a sound understanding of what the ARMtour program was about that was derived from their involvement in running the program:

But basically I think the purpose of it or the aim of it is to kind of show the kids that they’re, different things that they can do in their life beyond just maybe what their parents or other members in the community are doing. I suppose that means, entails teach them to stay in school, the benefits of staying in school, you get diverse people onto the programmes to kind of, to cater to those different interests of the kids (RM2).

It was clear that ARMtour was associated with both sports and academic pursuits, and there was a strong understanding that some of the main components of ARMtour were to encourage continued school attendance, engagement, future aspirations and to bring new skills to the children in the communities. Some of the role models also explained the importance of relationship building as an integral part of the ARMtour program. RM5 discussed his understanding:

Yeah ARMtour is getting athletes as role models into the communities to, it seems like, to really instil a sense of pride and also, yeah to do some community development to engage with, not just the Aboriginal community in those remote communities, but also, yeah just to work with everybody together there so that you can sort of build not only the relationship between ARMtour and the community but maybe the school can get involved in those communities as well. So community building exercises, that’s what my opinion is, of ARMtour (RM5).
RF1 also discussed the importance of the relationship component, and understood how her continued involvement with ARMtour had aided in developing the relationship between ARMtour and the community members:

I know people will acknowledge me more now that I’ve been going out and a lot of people actually sort of stop and talk to me now and they’re starting to talk about their families and their children. So yeah by just going out for the four years and seeing the one person come out with that team, it must make them feel safe too. And you know what, I know I’m welcome every time I go there (RF1).

The strength of the relationship developed between ARMtour and the community was recognised by most of the role models, and they suggested the uniforms were important as ARMtour were identifiable: “Not to mention we’ve got bright orange shirts on and they can see us from a mile away” (RM 1). The shirts were also recognised by RM 2 as important as they representation the relationship and the brand and as such meant that role models were accepted in the community:

straight away, like they know you almost, they know you without knowing you. And the community ..., I mean I haven’t gone in there not wearing an ARMtour shirt, but it feels like, yeah, the community already really like you and yeah, it’s just easy, it’s a lot easier to get to know the kids better (RM 2).

Each of the role models explained what they felt they contributed to the ARMtour program and had positive feelings towards the experience. While each individual story varied, the contributions included an understanding of community life (Aboriginal role models), specific skills like story writing or literacy or beneficial personality traits. There was discussion about cultural awareness training (discussed further in recommendations section) as a component of ARMtour and the final debrief that occurred as part of the August tour. RM5 explained how important he perceived his experience and the importance of the debrief:

... I really like how it was organised, like just the fact that we’re in the communities for as long as we were ... the last day where you get to unwind and just really take on everybody’s stories, I think that was a major part. I think the focus through the week is the kids but on that last day it puts the focus back onto the individual and your stories. And I feel that if that wasn’t there or that was done differently it wouldn’t be the same program and I really think that it’s a positive thing. My whole experience with ARMtour has been a really positive thing and I really feel that I’ve also contributed positively as well (RM5).
That there were both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal role models was recognised as an important part of the ARMtour program. While some of the Aboriginal role models recognised they have experiences and understandings that were useful for them in the program, it was also recognised that all the role models had something to contribute. For example Aboriginal RM 1 explained how her Aboriginality and associated experience contributed to her understanding:

... because I grew up on a mission I suppose I can relate to what a lot of the kids, how they feel when people from – even just when white people come into your community you know. It can be interesting, it can be a little bit scary because you know you don’t know anything about the people that’s coming into your community or coming into the classroom so I think growing up in that environment I can just sort of come in with an open mind and go oh yeah, I know how they’re feeling when strangers are coming in (RF1).

In contrast, a non-Aboriginal role model explained that while his experiences were different to those of the Aboriginal role models, he also felt he could contribute positively: “I don’t have the area or mob. But then I’ve had my own experiences that are different to theirs and so you bring your own element into it” (RM 2).

RF3 explained her understanding of the importance of role models from varied cultural backgrounds:

When ARMtour started it was more of a preference to go [with] Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [role models]. Now they’re just kind of opening it up to everyone, which is good. It shows reconciliation, but after seeing some of the role models and how they are and what they, everyone has their strengths and so everyone really, like that’s all that stands out for the role models, as long as you’ve got that strength, that’s all that matters. If they have that cultural awareness, it would be the cherry on the top (RF3).

**Benefits**

The ARMtour program was recognised to have benefits for both the children in the community and the role models who delivered the program. For instance, the role models frequently cited the skills, ideas, and experiences the children got exposed to through their contributions and the ARMtour program, but also recognised the experiences, knowledge and understanding they derived from participation in the program as important benefits for role models. RM5 explained this poignantly:
I just feel that the contact with people that are from out of these remote communities that can bring the knowledge and skills the kids wouldn’t be shown otherwise, it’s massive. Like you know the fact that there’s professional athletes or people that have got so many skills in so many different areas out into communities just, the kids are like sponges and they just learn so much stuff … But also, it works both sides, it also gives the people who are coming into the communities a different perspective to share with and give back to their lives in the city. So yeah I think it works really positively both ways and that’s what I think closing the gap is, both sides coming together (RM5).

Other role models explained how they perceived ARMtour was benefiting the children in the community:

I think they’re kind of getting an expanded view of the world. And I mean I think that’s really important. That it’s not necessarily ‘I want to grow up and be an Aussie Rules Star’, because, I mean [role model name] is kind of sporty but … also someone who has a professional and academic life as well. I think it’s good that the students meet these sports people, but also see that these people have another life as well. A life as somebody who is working or is going to work in the future, the combining of those two things I think that’s important for kids to see (RM 6).

This notion of an expanded view, or exposure to people and things beyond the community was echoed by a number of role models. This was explained in the context of role models who played different sports that were not so mainstream, or role models will skills or experience different to what the students may usually encounter. This was similar to the sentiments surrounding exposure explained by the teachers.

Others explained the energy and attention the children received were beneficial for the children, and meant that the messages the role models were delivering were received more readily because they were received from role models who the children knew and respected. The role models felt that assisting students to set goals and to think outside their comfort zones was beneficial for the students, both in encouraging their engagement in school, but also in assisting them plan for the future. Some comments highlight this well:

I think ARMtour … do assist young people … to think about even their goals or where they might want to be in a couple of years’ time and again by me going out – like the senior girls, every time I go out they want to know what I’ve been doing, where I’ve been, where I work, how long I’ve been working there for, and I think even though they don’t say they want to leave Santa Teresa or maybe go to University or work outside of
Santa Teresa I think secretly they do think about it and walk away ... So I think yeah, by ARMtour going out it empowers them to think outside their comfort zone (RM 1).

Another role model explained how he felt these positive messages were being received by the students and how the positive role modelling was beneficial: “just showing those kids that, those young fellas that, just a voice in the back of their head saying, ‘Yeah, like go to school, like I want to see you back here next year.’ And I suppose education’s power for them ... I think it kind of boils down to education, like getting them to school or employment training, stuff like that” (RM 2).

Beyond those benefits for the students, all of the role models recognised that they also derived benefits from their participation in the ARMtour program. Some recognised they gained a “Greater awareness of issues present and long term impact of displacement for Aboriginal people” and a “... better understanding of remote Aboriginal communities and culture and hence a more informed view of Aboriginal issues” (RF7). The majority of the role models comments surrounding their own personal gains referred to greater awareness, experiences of Aboriginal culture and community that they wouldn’t ordinarily have and learning relating to different ways of life. They also suggested that this experience was important in breaking down stereotypes and understanding the health and education experienced in remote communities. The role models suggested it was a huge experience for them that “was quite amazing” (RM6), “kind of that pivotal moment in my life, that light bulb moment that kind of changes a lot of things for me” (RF3) and “it blows your mind a bit, you know” (RM4).

RM6 discussed how the both the experience in the community and the cultural training prior to going into the community contributed to his learning:

For me, because I hadn’t been outback at all, so kind of going out there, not as a tourist, going out there with a purpose, going out there to do something useful with the community was a good way to experience that for the first time ... The session that we did before we left, about the totems and all of that type of stuff, I thought that was really useful and gave me a lot of good grounding and made me reasonably confident about ... interacting with the students and the community in a way that wouldn’t be upsetting for them (RM6).

Other role models described similar experiences, and noted that the experience coupled with the cultural awareness session at the start (of the August trip) enabled them to take the information and experience away and utilise it in their own lives.
This greater awareness also related to understanding the depth of culture that exists in the remote communities, in contrast with what the role models may encounter in their home communities. This related to language, totems, dreaming stories, hunting and other cultural aspects thriving in the community. One role model explained:

I didn’t know there was that depth of culture that there is still in these remote communities. And I did really think that that was amazing. Like the fact that you don’t really hear about you know, whole communities that still have their languages other than English in Australia, I did think that that was a real eye opener, that the culture is so strong still (RM5).

One Aboriginal role model suggested it gave her a chance to reflect on her own experiences of culture as an Aboriginal woman and how her culture differed to what she experienced in the community:

... I would have to say it makes me think more about traditional culture because back home we don’t live that traditional Aboriginal culture anymore, a lot of it’s Westernised now and language, I mean how important language is. I know I go home and again when I first came out I said to my mum, I said mum, why didn’t we hang onto our language? Why didn’t nan and pop ... [and my] great-great grandfather ... fight for it? Because I said language is so important yeah. And just to see how instilled they are in their traditional ways (RF1).

Similar to some of the teacher perceptions, some role models suggested that they derived greater benefit than the children from their participation:

Oh, way too much, way too much. I think probably more than what the kids ... at first it was fun ... second of all you learn a lot about them, like they’re such, they’re really smart, clued on kids and they see life differently and their little quips or whatever, you learn a lot from that; and then community-wise you learn a lot from the elders, speaking to their parents so you know how the community dynamics work, so understanding that (RM 2).

There were several comments from non-Aboriginal role models that suggested they learnt a lot from their interactions with both the people in the community, but they also learnt a great deal from their interactions and conversations with the Indigenous role models in the group. For example: “Being a non-Aboriginal person within a group of ARMtour role models that were predominantly Aboriginal enabled me to be involved in discussion surrounding past and current issues surrounding people who are Aboriginal that it is unlikely I would be exposed to otherwise”
Others suggested this allowed them to understand “different perspectives”. These comments came from role models on the October tour, where there was no pre-tour cultural awareness training session, as it was intended that this would take place in the community at the start of the tour. While this learning and interactions between the role models was beneficial for the non-Indigenous role models, one of the Aboriginal role models suggested that the lack of cultural awareness training on the October tour placed undue pressure on the Aboriginal role models. This will be discussed further under Challenges.

Challenges

The experiences of the ARMtour role models on the August and October tours varied, not only because of different things happening in the community at the time, but because of the different format to the program between August and October. Namely, the August tour had cultural awareness training in Alice Springs prior to going to the community and the October tour did not. One August role model explained that he was not challenged during the week of ARMtour because of the preparation he received such as the cultural awareness training and from discussions with other returning role models:

*I thought about ... what things will look like and what they’ll be like before I get there ... But also, I really think that that cultural awareness session was really good and kind of chatting, in that day before we actually left, chatting with the other people who had been away on ARMtours previously, that kind of really informal sharing of knowledge and information was really good* (RM6).

For the October tour, in community training was planned to take place with the role models and community members. Due to unforeseen circumstances, this did not take place in Ltyentye Apurte. Role models who participated in the October tour mentioned the lack of cultural awareness training relevant to the actual community at the start of this tour meant they felt challenged or unprepared for ARMtour. One role model mentioned only being able to “…read part of the ‘little red, yellow, black’ book provided at the induction one week prior to the Program” and that “face to face cultural training” would have helped her to feel more prepared (RF7). Other role models who were on the October tour but who had been on ARMtour before mentioned that they noticed not having the usual pre-tour training in Alice Springs as this was a good ‘refresher’ for them, particularly since some had not made it to the induction day that took place in the week prior to ARMtour in Sydney or were going to different communities to what they usually go to. RF3 articulated:
There’s a tall learning curve culturally in this training. Although being an Aboriginal, like we do have some understanding, to an extent. But because it was a different community I didn’t know how much of what I’d, how we learn at Papunya translated to this community. It would be beneficial if we could get a rough understanding of the area, because I came in to this only going off what previous mentors had said, role models. So just having that knowledge and then, yeah, that would be good to know a bit more about (RF3).

The comment by RF3 suggests that specific in community training would have been beneficial had it have come to fruition. RF8 also explained her thoughts on the lack of training during the October tour and the responsibility this placed on the Indigenous role models:

There was no appropriate cultural awareness training for first time or non-Indigenous role models. This leaves the responsibility to provide information and support to Indigenous role models in each team. Not all Indigenous role models are capable or want to be act as the font of all Indigenous knowledge, and nor should they be expected to. The organisation needs to equip their volunteers adequately. By the same token, there was no training on working with children, how to react in certain situations occur in the classroom, that we are not to provide medical attention to students … In previous tours the Sunday in Alice Springs provided for some basic protocols to be shared and hypotheticals carried out so that ALL role models had the same understanding of how to behave in the classroom and community (RF8).

Beyond the cultural training, that was mentioned by the majority of the role models as beneficial if it happened, or challenging if it didn’t, the challenges encountered by the role models varied significantly. These included challenges with some teachers not being overly receptive or supportive of ARMtour, challenges with engaging the children and running activities without being from a teaching background, and issues surrounding health and education and how different it is in the communities from the role models own communities. For example, RM1 indicates how the reluctance of some teachers can be a challenge she faces:

You do have your challenges with some teachers. You know not all teachers are very receptive for ARMtour … and it’s never the class because the kids absolutely love when we come there – but if a teacher’s a little bit reluctant I try and keep the activity as brief as possible and I just sort of make it as hands on and as exciting as we can and just move on. Because I have had some challenging teachers who just sort of go okay you know, another interruption … But not all teachers are like that. A lot of the teachers love it and I reckon that would be one of the challenges that I have to face every time I go out (RF1).
Others reflected on their personal skills and experience in working with children, and recognised that not coming from a teaching background, nor having experience with the children in the remote community from their very specific cultural background could be a challenge at times:

I suppose, like always engaging with the kids, trying to find different ways to engage with them; I’m not a teacher in the classroom ... that was probably challenging ... And just getting them to, yeah, write their goals and think about where they wanted to go, and a challenge there was getting them to talk ... they’re really shy like that; they don’t like standing up and talking (RM2).

The role models also indicated feeling challenged by the contrast between the health and education in the community, and how the children in the community are disadvantaged in many ways from that. One role model explained:

A lot to do with the health and schooling. That’s really, like, that really shakes me up a bit, you know, just how, how it is? It’s just like how behind a lot of things are. I see, you know, Year 12s in Sydney and they’re, like, they’re achieving so much and then come up here and like, basically there’s no seniors or, so you know, after Year 10 they just basically, you know, they go and get a job or they’re doing something in the community or but yes, it’s a real culture shock, I guess (RM4).

These comments highlight how while much of what the role models experience is similar, what they are challenged by can be quite different based on their individual characteristics and past experiences, the specific ARMtour they are on, the teachers they encounter and many other variable factors.

Recommendations (improvement/suggestions)

As with the challenges, the recommendations made for improvement by the role models has great diversity. Suggestions surrounded greater involvement of ARMtour in the community, more goal setting and future planning sessions, less art, more mentoring, targeting the older students, and devising or utilising set programs prior to ARMtour that could be used for / during the program. The recommendations often reflected the background experiences of the role models, for example a role model who had little experience teaching or working with children suggested having planned programmes or activities would be helpful for role models who didn’t have much past experience working with children in classroom settings. Another role model who has a great deal of experience in Aboriginal community settings, felt that it would be beneficial for ARMtour to be more involved in the community beyond the school:
I’d love for ARMtour to be a little bit more involved in the community. As much as you know it’s nice in the school, it’s nice to be in the class but I think it’s so important, like if we want to change the mindset or if we want the kids and the young people to start thinking about higher education and roles and jobs and careers we have to change the mindset of the parents too. So I’d love to get more involved out in the community and just spend some time at the local crèche or you know the health centre where a lot of women go and hang out. Yeah so I’d like to see that happen a little bit more (RF1).

Others made suggestions that tied in with having the maximum impact in line with ARMtours goals, like school engagement and future aspirations and as such suggested it was important to target the secondary students. For example: “I reckon … targeting those older age groups especially, like from … the Year 7s and Year 8, because after that a lot of them drop out” (RM2).

Another role model suggested that partnerships with other organisations would be beneficial for the community. The example provided was the Indigenous Literacy Foundation and the role model explained:

*Being an Indigenous Literacy Day Ambassador, one of the greatest joys of the tour was working with students and their reading. Assisting teachers by listening to students read and testing their spelling is a practical way to be part of the learning process in the classroom and assist the teachers in getting through their own obligations for the day. This is one potential area for measuring Closing the Gap also, and perhaps NASCA should partner with the Indigenous Literacy Foundation in terms of working in that area (RF8).*

RF8 also suggested that what ARMtour offers in the community, should be different to what is already in the community. These comments were specifically in reference to art activities that took place on ARMtour:

*NASCA should be thinking about and creating activities that bring something NEW to the community – eg. Consider some cultural activities from the eastern states that students may not even know exist such as painting emu eggs or doing shell work, even threading yellow, black and red beaded bracelets would be something different and leave something for them to keep (RF8).*

**Sustainability**

As in other communities, the Ltyentye Apurte role models reported that their experiences on ARMTour enabled and motivated them to go and give back to their own communities. For some this was just through talking to others and breaking down stereotypes, for others it was
through cultural awareness, and another suggested this would be through her work. Some comments highlight these commitments:

Through my experience through ARMtour, I’ve been able to give a lot back to my own university, my peers ... I got a greater sense of what I wanted to do, how I wanted to do it. I felt more inspired, because each opportunity that I’m given, the more opportunities I can give back to my community. And other communities that have significance to myself ... I definitely think, after ARMtour ... I felt that I’ve given back to these communities, but it’s benefitted me massively and then I, it has had an effect on my community, inspiring others (RF3).

Thanks to my first ARMtour I cemented my lifelong commitment in terms of serving the community, and my role with ARMtour and supporting NASCA’s visions generally is part of that commitment (RF8).

While the above comments indicate a commitment to giving back to communities, other role models indicated that their learning also informs their work and professional life:

Will use the knowledge and experience I’ve gained to inform my work and life, to ensure that health treatment is accessed and delivered in the best way possible. I’ll continue to advocate for equality and cultural awareness and sensitivity for all however with greater firsthand understanding. This experience provides me as a non-Aboriginal person the chance to speak up with more credibility having been a volunteer in a remote community to help educate friends, colleagues and acquaintances about Aboriginal history, issues and debunk or address misinformed labels placed on Aboriginal communities (RF7).

Another role model reflected on her past experiences and suggested that she had a continued commitment to ARMtour, to NASCA and other associated organisations like the NCIE. She spoke of the impact and sustainability of ARMtour:

Yeah, it’s massive. So I think little things like these programs and I remember [ex-ARMtour coordinator], my first tour, said we’re not going to be a storm that just hits and goes away. We’re going to keep that continuity. And I really love that and that’s why I’ve stayed within ARMtour, because I love that analogy and it’s like okay, well this is actually a program that’s going to benefit all the communities (RF3).

RM2 echoed these sentiments and suggested he had a commitment to keep returning as a role model, as he felt the consistency in the community for the children was important. He also emphasised the importance of the mentor role continuing between visits and he suggested the online tools such as the Community of Excellence should be utilised to maintain this contact.
RM5 made comments that nicely articulate how ARMtour is beneficial for the children, but also for the role models in the way they can carry their experience through life and how this can contribute to ‘the bigger picture’:

*I think the kids benefit from it a lot. But I think that the ARMtour people who go along, the people like me, also come away with a different mindset, and I think it’s often stuff that we can do when we get back to our normal lives in Sydney, or Melbourne, or wherever, that it’s a kind of flow on effect from the ARMtours, and it’s what we can do to try and close that gap after the ARMtours that I think may also be important too. So I think it’s a bit of both ways, it’s what happens and stays within the community and with the kids, and you know what they kind of want to do with their futures, and then it’s also what the ARMtour people take back to their world as well (RM5).*

All of these comments by the role models clearly depict that for them, ARMtour has an impact that continues to have an effect beyond the week of the program, and promotes sustained commitment to the betterment of health, education, and cultural understanding for Indigenous Australians around the country.
7.5 Ltyente Apurte Visitor Case Study

As discussed above (7.4), Ltyente Apurte Community receives a great deal of visitors to the community delivering various programs to the school and community throughout the year. Based on interviews with school staff and students, these visitors are both appreciated for the services and opportunities they provide and a source of frustration in the school due to the interruption they represent. The proximity of Ltyente Apurte community to Alice Springs is thought to be a factor in the ‘high traffic’ of visitors to the school and community, as it is easy to get to in one day. One teacher explained:

... I think what happens is Santa Teresa is 80ks from Alice Springs so anybody that wants to do their little bit for Indigenous people goes, “Oh what’s the easy ... How do we get ...?” ... “Oh, it’s only 80ks. Oh we’ll rip out there in a day and back. No worries”, you know?

One of the Aboriginal staff at the school also explained how she felt about the high frequency of visitor they receive in the school: “Yeah, cos we just see them come and go, come and go, come and go ... they just come and do what they can do and that’s it. And then do it and they go”.

In the interviews the school staff mentioned many different visitor groups but also explained “there’s probably some other groups but I can’t think of them at the moment”. The majority of the visitors mentioned included school immersion groups, sporting groups, and government health service providers. Table 7.7 provides an outline of the visitor groups discussed in the interviews with school staff.
Table 7.7 Visitors to the Santa Teresa School based on information provided by school staff in interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Duration of stay</th>
<th>Frequency of visits</th>
<th>Service provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Education Immersion Marist School Groups (usually year 9 or 11 students)</td>
<td>1 week per visit</td>
<td>18 school groups (2014) (each time a different group of students) = approximately one group every 2-3 weeks.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The health mob’ includes various government health groups- none were specifically named in interviews.</td>
<td>Ranging 1 day – 1 week.</td>
<td>Various visits throughout the year.</td>
<td>Dental checks/services - Health checks/services - Education sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFL players / clubs</td>
<td>Half day or full day in different classes.</td>
<td>One off visits.</td>
<td>AFL skills workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT Thunder (AFL)</td>
<td>1 day (lessons delivered in various classes)</td>
<td>Weekly for duration of program.</td>
<td>AFL skills workshops and gala sports days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics and dance</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Weekly for duration of program.</td>
<td>Gymnastics workbooks and skills lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide Soccer Team</td>
<td>1 day (lessons delivered in various classes)</td>
<td>Weekly for duration of program.</td>
<td>Soccer activities and after school workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Kings (Basketball)</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>One off visit.</td>
<td>Basketball workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Surf Life Saving</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>Once a year.</td>
<td>Swimming lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket Group.</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>One off visits.</td>
<td>Cricket workshops.</td>
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7.6 Ltyentye Apurte Recommendations

On the basis of the preceding results, the following draft recommendations have been made for consideration in terms of the ARMtour program and the Ltyentye Apurte community. The majority of the recommendations for this community are derived from acknowledging and understanding the high number of visitors that come through the school and community each year.

1. Community program links:
   Communicating and linking with other programs, services and school initiatives was a strong recommendation made by the teachers:
   
   I. Aligning with other programs in the community would reduce the potential ‘overload’ of services in the school and allow for the maximisation of outcomes. For example, awareness of health week in the school has in the past allowed for ARMtour to promote the same health messages being delivered and to combine to provide richer sessions with the nutritionist visiting the community.
   
   II. The teachers suggested that the students ‘listen’ to the role models and that the messages promoted by the role models are well received by the students and have a greater impact than the same messages delivered by the teachers. Collaborating with other programs, services and school initiatives allows the role models to reinforce and provide positive messages to the students, strengthens the messages being delivered and can align with the strategic goals of ARMtour.
   
   III. Connecting with other services and programs in the community could also allow for an opportunity for ARMtour to have a greater relationship with community members beyond the school students, as was suggested as important by role models and teachers. This could also allow for an opportunity to engage the older youth in the community who may not be attending school.
   
   IV. Understanding what else is happening in the community would also allow for greater structure around the ARMtour program in terms of planning sessions that align with curriculum and avoiding overload in a certain area (such as football if a football clinic is in the community around the same time), and assisting teachers with meeting the demanding curriculum requirements.
2. ARMtour program structure:
The relationship between the team leader and the community was highly valued by the teachers, the role models and the Aboriginal assistant teachers.

I. The consistency that ARMtour represented, through returning three times a year, every year, was valued in light of the amount of “fly-in, fly-out”, one-off visitors that come to the community. This aligned with valuing the relationship between ARMtour and the community, and the opportunity for students to get to know the role models.

II. While teachers and Aboriginal assistant teachers appreciated the diversity in role model skills, experiences and background, returning role models represented a consistency that is relevant to the Ltyentye Apurte context. Hence, it is recommended that as much as possible role models return to the community to continue this relationship development and continue to represent consistency and continuity within the ARMtour program.

Cultural training:

I. The professionalism and cultural understanding of the role models is valued by the teachers, and recognised by the role models as derived from the cultural training that usually takes place prior to spending time in the community. This relates to things like understanding not to take photos and ways of behaving respectfully while in the community.

II. The cultural training is recognised by the role models as an important facet of their preparation for their time in the community, and a component of the holistic learning the role models derive from the ARMtour experience.

III. The intention of the October tour was to have community situated specific cultural training. While this did not eventuate for various unforeseen circumstances, role model responses indicate that this would be a beneficial facet of the program, and they recognised that each community is different and there are different cultural mores they need to be aware of to ensure cultural safety is adhered to.

Outcomes of the ARMtour program:

I. The students and the Aboriginal assistant teachers reported overall positive feelings derived from the ARMtour program operating within the school context. The Aboriginal assistant teachers appreciated relationship between ARMtour and the school community, and felt this was an important component of the tour for the students learning new skills.

II. Greater outcomes for the youth not attending school were desired, and greater involvement in the community beyond the school was suggested.
III. Wherever possible, ARMtour should align with the relevant curriculum content as well as provide different and engaging activities, to provide new skills and experiences to the students, but also to support the teachers in meeting their curriculum requirements.

IV. Providing material and activities that could be continued by the teachers between ARMtour visits was also something suggested to promote the continuity of learning initiated by ARMtour.

3. Educational component:
   I. Due to the high amount of disruption that visitors to the school represent within the classroom and curriculum, the teachers suggested that knowing what ARMtour would be doing in advance would help them to plan the rest of their units and lesson so they were meeting all of the criteria. The teachers wanted to know that they could “tick that off”, in terms of covering specific content with ARMtour so they would not have to.

   II. The Aboriginal assistant teachers and Teachers recognised ARMtour to be a support in the classroom, and adding educational benefit for the students. It was suggested that ARMtour was most beneficial for the students when it was exposing the students to new skills or experiences that they would not ordinarily be exposed to.

   III. While returning role models were valued because of the relationship development they represented, new role models were also valued because they brought something different to the program and the students.

   IV. Greater communication between NASCA and the school prior to the tour was suggested as something the teachers would like as it would allow better planning and preparation from both the teachers and the role models.
References

National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC]. (2003). *Values and ethics: Guidelines for ethical conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.*

Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council.
8 Appendices

APPENDIX

ONE
Research Integrity
Human Research Ethics Committee

Thursday, 4 September 2014

Dr Louisa Peralta
Education and Social Work - Research, Faculty of Education & Social Work
Email: louisa.peralta@sydney.edu.au

Dear Louisa,

I am pleased to inform you that the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved your project entitled "An evaluation of an Indigenous community organisation’s remote outreach program (ARMtour): An ethnographic study."

Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.: 2014/603
Approval Date: 26 August 2014
First Annual Report Due: 26 August 2015
Authorised Personnel: Peralta Louisa; Cinelli Renata; Bennie Andrew; Cinelli Renata;

Documents Approved:

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<th>Date Uploaded</th>
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<td>15/07/2014</td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>Interview questions (all participants)</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/08/2014</td>
<td>Participant Consent Form</td>
<td>PCF Community Adults</td>
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<td>Participant Consent Form</td>
<td>PCF Student</td>
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<td>Participant Consent Form</td>
<td>PCF NASCA staff volunteers</td>
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<td>15/07/2014</td>
<td>Participant Consent Form</td>
<td>PCF School Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/08/2014</td>
<td>Participant Info Statement</td>
<td>PIS (community adults)</td>
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<td>PIS School Staff</td>
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<td>08/08/2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>15/07/2014</td>
<td>Participant Info Statement</td>
<td>PIS NASCA Staff Volunteers</td>
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HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

Condition/s of Approval

- Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.

- Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.

- All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

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CRICOS 00020A

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All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

Any changes to the project including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.

Note that for student research projects, a copy of this letter must be included in the candidate’s thesis.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor’s responsibilities:

1. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms (if applicable) and provide these to the HREC on request.

2. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr Stephen Assinder
Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.
APPENDIX

TWO
Dr Louisa Peralta
Rm 448, A35
Faculty of Education and Social Work
The University of Sydney, NSW 2006
Via email: louisa.peralta@sydney.edu.au

8 August 2014

Dear Dr Louisa Peralta


I am pleased to advise that your application to conduct the above research has been approved by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC).

Please note that the decision to participate in this project will be at the discretion of the school principals at Ntaria School and Papunya School, parents/carers and relevant individuals. Please provide a copy of this letter to the school principal of each school.

I advise that it is mandatory for people who have contact or potential contact with children in certain areas of employment to hold a Working with Children Clearance Notice. Please ensure you satisfy this requirement as per http://www.workingwithchildren.nt.gov.au/.

The Department is interested in the findings from your research and as such I look forward to receiving a copy of the final report. If you require any further assistance, you may contact the Research and Evaluation Team on (08) 8999 5829.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Gillan PhD
Chairman Research Advisory Committee
APPENDIX

THREE
June 13th 2014

Dear NASCA and Researchers,

I support the research project titled ‘An evaluation of an Indigenous Community Organisation’s Remote Outreach Program (ARMtour): An ethnographic study of three communities’ being conducted with our school community.

We look forward to working with NASCA and the researchers, and contributing to the project, once ethics approval is awarded.

Yours faithfully

Br Daniel Hollamby
Principal
9 Interview Schedules

**School students**

Each interview will begin with an introduction which allows students to tell their stories about their life in the community and who they are. Children will be encouraged to share any stories they would like to.

1. Perhaps we could start with a little background information to build rapport:
   a. What’s your name? How long has your family been in this community? How many people are in your family here in the community? What do you like to do in your spare time? What is your favourite sport? What is your favourite music and who is your favourite artist at the moment? What was the last song you listened to on the radio/computer/iPod? Do you have any other hobbies (link to art/music/cooking etc)? What do you like at school?

2. Can you tell us a little bit about living in your community and your life?

3. Tell me what you know about NASCA.

4. Tell me what you know about ARMTour.

5. Can you tell me what happens when ARMTour is in the community?

6. What do you like about ARMTour? What would you like to do more of?
   a. (Timing of ARMTour, structure, what do students want? Smaller groups of role models, more frequent tours, longer tours?)

7. How would you suggest improving ARMTour?

8. When ARMTour is in the community, how does it affect you and school (e.g., school attendance)?
   a. If it has no impact on students, finding out what would have an impact. (E.g. specifically skilled role models? Finding out differences in ARMTour activity ideas according to age/gender of students)

9. What is it about the role models that you like/don’t like? Would you prefer to have different role models?
   a. Who are your life role models? (Ask about people they look up to, who they would like to be or grow up to be like)

10. What other sports programs or visitors like ARMTour come to your community?
    a) Would you say they are the same as ARMTour? If not, how are they different? How often do they visit?)

11. What are your thoughts/feelings (or what do you think) about outside visitors coming to your community?

12. Can you tell me about any local community sports programs or teams/activities that are happening in your community?
   a. If yes, can you tell me about the program/team/activities? Who runs it? Do you participate? How long has it operated? Is it for boys or girls/both?

13. How many sports teams/people have visited your community this year?
a. If yes, where did they come from? How long did they visit/stay? Are they coming back? Would you like them to come back?

14. What are your hopes and dreams for the future? (Education or employment? Finish school, get a trade, work in the community, have a family, study at university).

*Prompt or re-structure questions as needed. Develop this in a conversational or storytelling context.*
Additional interview questions – School students
Each interview will begin with an introduction which allows students to tell their stories about their life in the community and who they are. Children will be encouraged to share any stories they would like to.

1. Can you tell us a little bit about living in your community?
2. What do you really like doing in your community or with your community?
3. How do you spend your time after school/weekdays or on the weekend days?
4. How often have you spent time outside of your community? Did you enjoy these activities? What did you like most about those activities?
5. Do you have goals you would like to achieve at school or personally? What are these? How important is it to you to achieve these goals? Why?
6. If you stay in your community, what would you like to do after you finish school or complete studies? Is this achievable? How are you going to achieve this? What are your hopes and dreams for the future?

Prompt or re-structure questions as needed. Develop this in a conversational or storytelling context.
Indigenous families living in the community and Youth Worker(s)

1. Can you tell us a little bit about living in your community and your life?
   a. How many people are there in your family?
   b. How long has your family lived here?
   c. What do you enjoy most about living in this community?

2. Tell me what you know about NASCA.

3. Tell me what you know about ARMtour.

4. Can you tell me what happens when ARMtour is in the community?
   a. (getting community members perceptions about ARMtour)

5. What do you think are the benefits of having ARMtour visit the community? Are there long term benefits between/after visits? Does it increase or decrease school attendance?

6. How would you suggest improving ARMtour?
   a. Would you like to see ARMtour engaging more with the older children?
   b. How would you like this to happen? (e.g., ARMtour running after school to engage more of the community?)
   c. If any changes are recommended, then ask what needs to happen for these changes to occur? (Timing of ARMtour, structure, what do community members want? Smaller groups of role models, more frequent tours, longer tours?)

7. What do you think about the role models coming into the community? Are there any specific types of people you would like to see coming into the community as role models for the children (e.g. athletes, Aboriginal role models, etc.).

8. Do you believe ARMtour assists to empower Aboriginal young people in the/your community? Can you tell us how or why/why not?

9. What other sports programs or visitors like ARMtour come to your community?
   a. Would you say they are the same as ARMtour? If not, how are they different? How often do they visit?)

10. What are your thoughts/feelings (or what do you think) about outside visitors coming to your community?

11. Can you tell me about any local community sports programs or teams/activities that are happening in your community?
    a. If yes, can you tell me about the program/team/activities? Who runs it? Do you participate? How long has it operated? Is it for boys or girls/both?

12. How many sports teams/people have visited your community this year?
    a. If yes, where did they come from? How long did they visit/stay? Are they coming back? Would you like them to come back?

Prompt or re-structure questions as needed. Develop this in a conversational or storytelling context.
Additional interview questions – Community members (female)

1. Can you tell us a little bit about living in your community?
2. What are some of the reasons for you spending time outside of your community?
3. What do you really like doing in your community or with your community?
4. How do you spend your time during the week and on weekend days?
5. Do you have goals you would like to achieve? What are these? Why is it important to you to achieve these goals?
6. Did you have goals when you were at school that you wanted to achieve? What were these? How important was it to you to achieve these goals? What were some things that helped you achieve these goals?
7. Do you believe ARMtour assists to empower Aboriginal young people in the/your community?
Interview questions – Role models

1. Tell me what you know about NASCA.
2. Tell me what you know about ARMtour.
3. How did you get involved in the ARMtour program?
4. How do you think you contributed to ARMtour and the remote community?
5. If this is not your first ARMtour program, did your contribution this time differ from previous contributions? Please explain.
6. Tell me about your experiences on ARMtour. What benefits did you gain from your participation in ARMtour? What realisations or challenges did you need to overcome during your time in the remote community(ies)?
7. Are there any knowledge and skills that you think you needed, but you did not have before visiting the remote community(ies)?
8. What knowledge and skills did you gain from your participation in ARMtour?
9. Are there any lifelong/sustainable commitments that have arisen from your participation in ARMtour?
10. Does ARMtour contribute to Closing the Gap on Indigenous inequality? Do you believe ARMtour assists to empower Aboriginal young people in the community?

Prompt as needed. Develop this in a conversational context.
Interview questions – Principal

1. Tell me what you know about NASCA.
2. Tell me what you know about ARMtour.
3. How many ARMtour visits have you experienced during your time as Principal?
4. Tell me about what happens when ARMtour is in the community?
5. What benefits do you think your school and your students gain from participating in ARMtour? Do you think attendance increases or decreases whilst ARMtour is in the community?
6. Are these benefits sustained after or between ARMtour visits?
7. What are some of the challenges you need to overcome to embed ARMtour in your school?
8. How would you improve ARMtour if you were given the opportunity? Would you like to see ARMtour engaging more with the older children? How would you like this to happen?
9. What do you think about the role models?
   a. Are there any specific types of people you would like to see as role models for your students (e.g. athletes, Aboriginal role models, etc.)?
10. Do you believe ARMtour assists to empower Aboriginal young people in the/your community?
11. What other sports programs or visitors like ARMtour come to your community?
   a. Would you say they are the same as ARMtour? If not, how are they different? How often do they visit?)
12. What are your thoughts/feelings (or what do you think) about outside visitors coming to the community?
13. Can you tell me about any local community sports programs or teams/activities that are happening in your community?
   a. If yes, can you tell me about the program/team/activities? Who runs it? Who participates? How long has it operated? Is it for boys or girls/both?
14. How many sports teams/people have visited the community this year?
   a. If yes, where did they come from? How long did they visit/stay? Are they coming back? Would you like them to come back?

Prompt as needed. Develop this in a conversational context
**Interview questions – School staff**

1. Tell me what you know about NASCA.
2. Tell me what you know about ARMtour.
3. How many ARMtour visits have you experienced during your time as a teacher at this school?
4. Tell me what happens when ARMtour is in the community?
5. What benefits do you think your school and your students gain from participating in ARMtour? Do you think ARMtour increases or decreases students school attendance?
6. Are these benefits sustained after or between ARMtour visits?
7. What are some of the challenges that arise when ARMtour is in your school?
8. How would you improve ARMtour if you were given the opportunity? Would you like to see ARMtour engaging more with the older children? How would you like this to happen?
9. What do you think about the role models?
   a. Are there any specific types of people you would like to see as role models for your students (e.g. athletes, Aboriginal role models, etc.)?
10. Do you believe ARMtour assists to empower Aboriginal young people in the/your community?
11. What other sports programs or visitors like ARMTour come to the/your community?
   a. Would you say they are the same as ARMTour? If not, how are they different? How often do they visit?
12. What are your thoughts/feelings (or what do you think) about outside visitors coming to the/your community?
13. Can you tell me about any local community sports programs or teams/activities that are happening in the/your community?
   a. If yes, can you tell me about the program/team/activities? Who runs it? Who participate? How long has it operated? Is it for boys or girls/both?
14. How many sports teams/people have visited the/your community this year?
   a. If yes, where did they come from? How long did they visit/stay? Are they coming back? Would you like them to come back?

*Prompt as needed. Develop this in a conversational context*