



Improving nutrition and providing jobs in remote Indigenous communities

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It is well understood that adoption of a Western style diet (high in fat and carbohydrates) in Indigenous communities has been associated with high rates of diabetes, hypertension and other non-communicable disease. Less well known is the prevalence of food insecurity among the elderly in these communities. As the mortality gap slowly closes, better medical care is resulting in higher numbers of over-45 year olds and there is need for increased attention to personal care and diet in this group.

For half of its ten years of operation, the Jimmy Little Foundation has been providing multi sector nutrition education to remote Indigenous communities through the Thumbs Up! program. It's message of Good Tucker = Long life is delivered across the whole of community through song writing and music workshops with school children, local store branding, cook ups of healthy food and with performances at music concerts and cultural festivals.

In partnership with the University of Newcastle, the Foundation is now exploring the possibilities and merits of delivering certificate level courses in healthy nutrition/care of the elderly to Indigenous youth. The outcomes would serve the dual purpose of providing employment for young people and addressing nutrition needs for the elderly. The project will embed the healthy eating and lifestyle message into the whole of the community in a sustainable and culturally respectful way.

This proposal is in line with current government policy around finding employment for Indigenous people in remote communities. It will also provide high school students with a pathway to a qualification that will guarantee employment in the local or wider community. The model might be considered by other organisations working in these communities.