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## rrala milaythina-ti—Strong in Country project

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The rrala milaythina-ti (strong in Country) program was developed to showcase, what Aboriginal people have always known:

When Aboriginal people are 'On Country' we are mentally, physically and spiritually stronger.

Aboriginal people's health and mental wellbeing is improved when opportunities are provided for Aboriginal people to be together on country sharing culture, sharing knowledge, experiences and creating strong connections to each other.

However these opportunities are not easily afforded simply due to the modern contemporary pressures commonly suffered by Aboriginal people. Poor health, financial restraints, lack of access to camping equipment, access to transport all contain many Aboriginal people to the convenience of the suburban environment.

The problem with the convenience of the suburban environment is it promotes isolation, masking it with the label of independence. People have access to public transport and this will take you to the local health service or shopping centre but it will not take you to the edge of the river, to the mountains or to culturally significant places.

Aboriginal people are able to access health services to see doctors to obtain medicines to aid in the healing of physical ailments but when it comes to aiding the healing of the spirit and building strong connections to country this simply cannot be achieved through modern medication.

Through providing the opportunity for Aboriginal people to be together on country we are building individual capacity and community strength. Strengthening cultural confidence in families to break out of the suburban environment and get back on country as family groups and as community groups.

When we started the program we aimed to provide some guidance, camp equipment and transport in the hope to achieve getting people on country and if that was all, then it was worth the effort. However the program has provided much more and proven that time on country together has a far greater benefit than just helping Aboriginal people be on country.

The result of supporting Aboriginal people to be together on country has built strong intergenerational relationships, where younger generations have sat around the camp fire and

learnt about family connections through elders, increasing family knowledge, and strong community connections for younger people and provided a sense of purpose for elders.

The struggle of daily life has been shared and a sense of acceptance replaces a sense of hopelessness, and encourages community solution-driven discussions. The learning of cultural knowledge has strengthened people's cultural identities, leading to individuals having the confidence to participate in other Aboriginal community events.

The experience of being on country as created ongoing relationships between Aboriginal community members and improved health and wellbeing within the community. Proving that when we are together on country, we are better.