‘Aboriginal people having sexual and reproductive health outcomes that are equal to the best’ is the goal of Yarning On. Funded for three-and-a-half years through the National Indigenous Partnerships to develop and deliver ‘sexual health education programs targeting Aboriginal young people’ in 17 rural and remote Aboriginal communities in South Australia, the Yarning On model builds the capacity of schools and communities to deliver respectful relationship and sexual health education both within and outside of the school system.

There are two programs within Yarning On—the Aboriginal Focus Schools program and the Investing in Aboriginal Youth program. Both utilise workforce development training programs combined with local knowledge and solutions within the context of school-based curriculum and community education activities to address the issues of teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and low birth weight babies for teenage Aboriginal young people, which are significantly higher than for non-Aboriginal young people.

Central to the development of this unique program has been relationship building with Anangu and Aboriginal key community members, communities and agencies. This resulted in extensive consultation, collaboration and partnerships to ensure culturally and age-appropriate curriculum, resources and training programs. A literature review and program logic model underpins the programs development, implementation and evaluation. The complex issue of increasing the sexual health literacy of young Aboriginal people, especially in rural and remote communities, is a challenge and sits within the context of the community and access to services and resources many take for granted.

This paper explains the Yarning On model, learnings and the early evaluation findings.

This project is currently being evaluated by the South Australian Community Health Research Unit at Flinders University and through the SA Health evaluation of Close the Gap programs.