

## The story of the Sanderson Alliance

The Sanderson Alliance is a long-term community-led effort to promote the well being of young people by taking local action and influencing systemic change.

The Sanderson Alliance is made up of and supported by people from families, community services, schools, universities, business, philanthropists and government. It's all of us - everyone working together for our children.

We want to help create a community where all 4000 young people from birth to 18 years in Karama, Malak, Anula and Wulagi grow into happy and healthy adults. Our systems-change approach, means some actions have an impact across Darwin, Palmerston and remote areas of the Top End.

### It's about working together to achieve what families and young people want

The usual ways of working often mean that businesses, government and community organisations all work independently trying to address problems. There is competition for funds, contracts are often restrictive and inflexible leaving gaps where people miss out on services.



In the Sanderson Alliance we believe we can achieve more together, so work with a spirit of generosity and we cooperate with the attitude that **"All our children, are all our children"**

### Respectful and Collaborative Groups for Action and Learning

We work to involve families and organisations actively in the design, implementation and leadership of local initiatives.

The Sanderson Alliance has earned trust over years as a forum for hearing and acting on community priorities and as a collaborative partner that builds capacity in our community for collaboration, especially in early childhood and trauma informed care.

A number of learning and action forums have emerged, most of them initiated and led by Indigenous, migrant and refugee communities.



### Leadership by families and young people

The Sanderson Alliance was established in 2015 with an 'interim' structure that planned for the equal participation of community members. Currently, the Sanderson Alliance is stepping into a new level of community leadership. The membership, structure and process of the Sanderson Alliance are being reimagined so that the actions of the Alliance are identified, designed, implemented and evaluated by young people and families. We are currently holding a community action process with families, young people and organisations. The process starts in April and includes community conversations, an action planning workshop and a 60-day action challenge.

### How we started

In 2015 six government schools and six non-government organisations agreed to work together using the Collective Impact model. This partnership was based on earlier efforts to work together. The Alliance has one staff member - a Backbone Facilitator. This role has been funded at different times by the Wulagi Primary School Independent Public School initiative, the Northern Territory Government and our philanthropic partners Ten20 Foundation and Opportunity Child. Since 2015, the local organisations who have been the most active leaders are:

Wulagi Primary	Karama Primary	Catholic Care	Melaleuca Refugee Support Centre	NAPCAN
Sanderson Middle	Anula Primary	Save the Children	City of Darwin Alderman	Good Start
Malak Primary	The Smith Family	Charles Darwin University	Karama and Sanderson MLAs	
Manunda Primary	Red Cross	Malak Reengagement Centre	Department of Social Services	

The number of organisations who have participated in a Sanderson Alliance activity is now over 100. Most actively collaborated with Larrakia Nation; FASNT; Multicultural Council of the NT; Darwin Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter; Healing Foundation; Danila Dilba, YWCA; Anglicare; NT Council of Social Services; Casuarina Shopping Square; Karama Shopping Square; Public Health Network; Darwin Community Arts; Alabut Families; Yarning; Indigenous Wellness Centre; NT Domestic Violence Directorate; Corrugated Iron; Dawn House; NT Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation; Territory Families, Top End Health Service, NT Department of Education and i.e. community.

## What have we achieved together?

In May 2017 we held community conversations about making the Sanderson area a really great place for all children and young people.



We started with one simple question: *"What kind of community do you want to live in?"* Over a month we had at least 600 face-to-face conversations with children, young people and adults. We gathered 422 responses to our questionnaire. The aspirations that people shared have directly led our actions.

**A safe and caring community** where people look out for children and each other.

**A positive and understanding community** where people are supported rather than judged.

- In 2018 a series of conversations started by Aboriginal people resulted in a multicultural Community of Practice for Trauma Informed Care and Intergenerational Healing. The community involves a wide diversity of people all sharing their learning and questions. Within months the mailing list has grown to 114.
- In 2017 all staff in all government schools in the Sanderson suburbs were trained on child brain development and behaviour strategies informed by neuroscience, positive psychology and attachment theory.
- In 2016-8 the Kind and Brave Art Show promoted positive relationships. The art was part of social and emotional learning for students. The show promoted that child abuse and family violence is preventable and that we all have a role in supporting the wellbeing of all children as friends, neighbours and bystanders.

**A harmonious and respectful community** that celebrates our diverse identities and cultures.

- This year Melaleuca Refugee Centre is leading a new project to grow the number of people from all backgrounds, who are confident and supported to share their culture in schools and the community.
- In 2018 Red Cross led an effort to place volunteers from migrant backgrounds into classrooms to work with students.
- In 2018 Wulagi Primary signed an agreement with the Wulagi people from Gamardi Homelands near Maningrida. This is unique partnership for sharing Indigenous language and culture across our community.
- In 2017 we recognised that positive cultural identities were essential to children's wellbeing and learning. We identified that securing additional funding for these activities and to grow the network of people available to share their culture is essential to guarantee children's access to these experiences. Sanderson Alliance has been working with Larrakia Nation to grow the access for children to cultural activities in Darwin.

**A fun community** where there are many activities and events for children, young people and families.

- In 2018 Sanderson Alliance supported organisations to develop new collaborative partnerships to provide more after-school and holiday activities. The voice and leadership from young people is essential to develop the opportunities that young people need. DAIWS and Red Cross are collaborating to support young people to lead a calendar of activities.
- Students for Change Day will be held in August to give children and young people an opportunity to identify and influence the kind of change they want to see in our community.

**A community of opportunity** where everyone has the materials basics, good health and skills to help themselves and their community.

- In 2018 we created a Children and Families Referral and Information Network that has been strengthening collaboration among services who are supporting pregnant women and families with children under 4 years. These relationships have played a significant role in supporting the integration of midwifery services at Royal Darwin Hospital.
- In 2018 Brave began to provide mentoring support for teenage parents. It is part of a national trial and is not only supporting our young parents but is the impetus for identifying local systemic challenges for families. The Multicultural Council NT is leading an effort to fund an additional mentor who can support parents of any age with young families.
- Sharing Stories for Solutions is a new project to create a safe forum for services to reflect on and effectively learn from real-life experiences of families trying to access support in our community. This proposal has grown out of conversations within the Children and Families Referral and Information Network and the Community of Practice for Trauma Informed Care and Intergenerational Healing.

## What next?

**A Community-led Action Day - Wednesday 1 May** will clarify priorities, needs and opportunities for local families that will inform the implementation of various NT Government services and reforms. We will also identify some immediate and achievable actions that we can do together for 60 days. This event was called for and designed through contributions from many people. Together we have been asking ourselves, *"How do we work together to achieve what families want?"* We know this cannot be a theoretical question. It's something we can only answer through practice.

## You can be part of the Sanderson Alliance

There are many ways that you can be involved. You can join a decision-making group, action team, volunteer or share your views. Contact Karen Cieri, the Backbone Facilitator on 0428 718 981 or [karen.cieri@ntschoools.net.au](mailto:karen.cieri@ntschoools.net.au)

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