

# Katherine Youth Justice Reinvestment Compendium Report 1

Social media depictions of youth in Katherine, Northern Territory

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# **Social media depictions of youth in Katherine, Northern Territory**

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I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for any other degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledges in the text and list of references.



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## ABSTRACT

The global use of social media has grown exponentially over the last decade. In particular, Facebook groups are shaping the conversations our communities are having by making them more public, visible and long lasting. Negative community discussions online can reinforce stereotypes and perceptions that are potentially harmful or health damaging. This phenomenon is particularly relevant to youth crime, with some community Facebook groups depicting youth negatively. A number of popular media stories, published in the last three years, have documented the rise of vigilante justice, and the role community Facebook groups play in facilitating this. Beyond immediate physical violence, there is a concern regarding how negative depictions may affect youth's social capital. This is an important factor in relation to conceptualisations of self-esteem and social support, and thus important to their health outcomes. In a regional town in the Northern Territory, Australia, the impact of social media depictions of youth surfaced as an important area of inquiry as part of the initial stages of a youth Justice Reinvestment (JR) project.

Using a collaborative, applied qualitative research approach, data from eighteen participants was collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews; these included community service providers, youth and Indigenous stakeholders. A youth focus group with 6 local youth was also held to triangulate data and compare themes from the preliminary analysis of the first 6 in-depth interviews.

Service providers and Indigenous stakeholders frequently described the depictions of local youth in social media as being negative, and subsequently advocated for more positive depictions of youth as a moral obligation. The youth interviewed were aware of these social media groups and negative depictions, but demonstrated disinterest from, and even a certain level of disdain, for adults engaged in such Facebook activity. They perceived it had minimal impact on their lives and were only involved in the platform to connect with adult family members and to utilise certain functionalities lacking in other social media platforms.

The hypothesised damage to young people's self-esteem and social capital within the community was not reported by youth. Rather, this study highlighted the potential impact of the community Facebook groups on community cohesion. This is considered integral to all community members' health, particularly marginalised groups. Facebook was identified as an opportunity for both community education regarding disadvantage, and promotion of the positive JR work being done in the community.

*Keywords: Youth, justice reinvestment, healthy communities, community Facebook groups, social media*

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## INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

The work outlined in this thesis is a sub-study of a Justice Reinvestment (JR) project located in Katherine, Northern Territory (NT). It forms a research component associated with the requirements of completing a Masters of Public Health through Menzies School of Health Research. This chapter gives necessary background and context, and also discusses the inception and progression of both the overarching project and the sub-study. Chapter 2 introduces the relevant scholarship regarding the links between social media, social capital, and health and justice outlines for youth and the wider community. Chapter 3 covers the methodology, results and discussion of the empirical work done in this study, while the final chapter offers strengths, limitations, recommendations and concluding remarks.

### **Justice Reinvestment Methodology**

Justice Reinvestment (JR) is a data-driven approach to change the way government engage in criminal justice expenditure. It requires reallocation of money traditionally spent on punitive punishments, such as correctional facilities, and the reinvestment of these funds in communities to address underlying causes of criminal activity (Triggs & Quiggin 2016). There are four key stages of JR, A place-based methodology. Stage 1 involves the collection and analysis of relevant data to determine the factors that impact the crime rates in that area, and mapping the community's assets, determining any gaps in services. This is used to inform Stage 2, when the community will create a JR plan with a number of initiatives, that response to gaps identified in Stage 1, which are subsequently implemented in Stage 3. Finally Stage 4 requires an evaluation by the community to determine impact of initiatives and the extent of savings (Allison 2016). The Australian Institute of Criminology have listed 4 JR projects at various stages across Australia; Bourke NSW, Cowra NSW, Port Adelaide SA and Katherine NT (Willis & Kapira 2018). It is noted, however, that this list may not be comprehensive as there is some evidence of other JR projects progressing across the country (Queensland Government 2017).

### **Youth justice in the NT**

The youth justice system in Australia, particularly in the Northern Territory (NT), is shrouded in controversy. On 25 July 2016 ABC's Four Corners released an investigation in the abuse of juvenile detainees, which was the catalyst for the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory established on 28 July 2016 (Australian Government 2018). The final report was subsequently released late 2017 (Hitch 2017). In mid-2018 it was revealed that every child in youth detention in the NT was Indigenous (Allam 2018). This contentious climate has been the backdrop to the emergence of a community driven justice reinvestment (JR) project in Katherine NT.

### **Context**

Katherine is a regional town in the Northern Territory of Australia with an estimated resident population of 10,571 in 2017 (ABS 2017 in Smith et al. 2018). The census in 2016 gives more specific data regarding demographics, showing 19.6% of the general population are aged between 10-24 years. Of the whole population, 22% identify as Indigenous<sup>1</sup>, and this number jumps to 31.6% of the 10-24 year old cohort (ABS 2016 in Smith et al. 2018). Anecdotally the level of youth crime in

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this discussion the terms Indigenous and Aboriginal will be used to refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia. The terms have been chosen for brevity, and the author recognises that this encompasses many diverse and heterogeneous language groups.



Katherine has been increasing, causing concern amongst both service providers and community members. Part of the JR process is to present data to assert the facts associated with this anecdote.

### **Katherine Youth Justice Reinvestment Project**

In early 2015, NT Council of Social Services (NTCOSS) and the Northern Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) were funded by the Law Society Public Purposes Trust (NT) to engage the Katherine community to determine the capacity for a JR project in the town. This report was published by Ms Fiona Allison, of James Cook University, in 2016 and indicated “overwhelming support” (Allison 2016, pg. 4) among stakeholders. Shortly thereafter a decision was made to progress this work, using a Collective Impact (CI) approach, with a focus on young Indigenous people from Katherine (Allison 2016). NTCOSS and NAAJA set up the Katherine Youth Justice Reinvestment Working Groups (KYJRWG) after the receipt of the initial funds, comprised of key stakeholders.

In 2017 a team from Charles Darwin University led by Professor James Smith (JS), now based at Menzies School of Health Research, submitted an expression of interest to provide academic support to Stage 1 of the project. The team consisted of Fiona Allison (FA), Kim Robertson (KR), and Sarah Ireland (SI), with Benjamin Christie (BC) and myself (SC) joining in 2018. At this stage the KYJRWG shifted the focus from Indigenous youth, to all youth in Katherine. For the purpose of this research, youth is defined as individuals aged between 12 and 24 in alignment with definitions used by the United Nations (UNESCO 2017). It should be noted that in some cases local quantitative data is presented as 10-24 years in alignment with the ABS presentation (ABS 2016 in Smith et al. 2018).

The Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee approved the Katherine Youth Justice Reinvestment Project (KYJRP) on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018 (H18044: see Appendix 1), with reciprocal ethics approval gained from the NT Department of Health and Menzies School of Health Research Ethics Committee on 19th July 2018 (HREC 2018-3191: see Appendix 2). The release of administrative quantitative data held by the Northern Territory Government is currently progressing, and will include the extent of incarceration in Katherine, the most problematic offences, drivers of incarceration within the justice system (ie. breached bail), the cost of incarceration and rates of repeat offending (Smith et al. 2018). The qualitative component includes in-depth semi-structured individuals interviews and focus groups with service providers, Indigenous stakeholders and local youth. This component allows for an exploration of relevant topics to identify community assets and gaps in youth services to complement the quantitative data in the KYJRWG planning and service mapping activities.

### **Origins of the social media sub-study**

As part of initial engagement, the research team, including myself, have been regularly attending KYJRWG meetings, where there have been discussions about the topic of social media and youth. Through these meetings it was identified that negative and potentially harmful stereotyping of youth was commonplace on local social media. In particular there was extensive mentions of the Facebook group ‘Town and Territory Matters’<sup>2</sup>. This was minuted as a concern at the KYJRWG meeting on 5 March 2018. In addition the ‘New Territory Forum’, held on the 11 May 2018 and organised by the KYJRWG, brought together key stakeholders to discuss youth justice in Katherine. The list of attendees included local youth service providers, the Minister for Territory Families, national and NT leaders in youth justice and JR. During question times I noted audience quotes regarding similar

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<sup>2</sup> The true name of the group has been redacted in the interest of anonymity and assigned this alias.

concerns about social media such as “Katherine is a vigilante town, with a vigilante mindset – this is really obvious if you look on Facebook”. This was subsequently raised as a priority issue that needed to be addressed as part of the KYJRWG strategic planning session held on 18 May 2018. Based on this, I will be addressing this community concern in my MPH research project, which has received a Letter of Support from the KYJRWG (see Appendix 3).

Despite the specificity out of which this sub-project arose, concerns about depictions of youth through social media are widespread. In recent times, the role of social media has led to more visible trails of public opinions, particular on Facebook community ‘groups’. Within Facebook groups there has been a history of targeting youth for antisocial and criminal behaviour. The role of these groups was brought to light on a national scale recently in relation to the death of an Aboriginal youth who was killed as a result of vigilante justice, encouraged by comments on social media (Purtill 2016). From a strengths-based approach, these community groups have also been known to share local ‘happenings’ and positive stories regarding achievement in the community, including in local youth (Williams 2018). A more comprehensive account of the emergence of social media and its public health impact is provided in Chapter 2.

### **Research questions and aims**

The aim of this project was to qualitatively examine the effect of local community descriptive depictions about youth on social media, in Katherine, Northern Territory. Based on concerns raised by the KYJRWG, this project sought to investigate the role of social media in facilitating and broadcasting community discussions regarding youth in Katherine town; and the subsequent positioning of youth in Katherine. Working collaboratively with both local youth and service providers, to highlight both the impacts on youth and areas for potential positive engagement by the KYJRWG on social media.

The desired outcome is an improved understanding of the way the Katherine community uses social media to discuss youth, and youth related issues. This will provide more detailed information regarding the depictions of youth in Katherine through social media, including the impact on youth of various online commentary, common themes, and the demographics frequently engaging in discussions about youth on social media. This research also aims to provide evidence that can be used to support community-driven strategies to encourage constructive community opinion about youth, and justice reinvestment, on social media. This strengthened based element reinforces positive social media engagement aligned with the overarching goals of the KYJRP.

Strengths-based approaches have a history of being used as part of positive youth development, framing “young people as resources to be nurtured versus problems to be managed” (Benson et al. 2006, pg. 902). Salutogenesis, the concept underpinning the strengths-based approach, refers to the social factors that produce and maintain good health, rather than those which encourage poor health (Antonovsky 1979, 1987, 1996 in Smith 2011). Salutogenic approaches are prominent in health promotion, and particularly appropriate for applied public health research (Lindström & Eriksson 2005; Smith 2011).

The findings from this project will provide information that will enable the inclusion of a specific social media specific component of the overarching KYJRP planning process (Phase 2). Beyond the initial planning, public opinions are fundamental to eliciting political support for the KYJRP, which in turn is key to ensuring its longevity. Having an analysis of current community depictions regarding youth in Katherine offers baseline information from which to monitor community depictions of youth through social media. In this sense, it could be used comparatively, over time, to establish any changes in

public perspectives that related to the youth justice reinvestment strategies currently being implemented locally.

### **Thesis presentation**

The following thesis is presented as a *Thesis inclusive of a research paper: Option 3*, as outlined in the PHM840 unit guide. This consists of two papers; one literature review and one empirical paper (including a detailed description of methodology, result and discussion). Both have been written with the intention for submission to peer-reviewed scholarly journals. Some further adjustments will be required to the findings paper, as components of the introduction and conclusion chapters of this these will need to be incorporated. In addition, some descriptive components of the papers may be repeated across the two papers, this is particularly relevant to definitions. The intent, however, is to provide a cohesive story about community depictions of youth through social media in Katherine.

Chapter 2 (Paper 1) is a narrative overview of the current literature relevant to my research. Entitled *'Those damn(ed) kids: Understanding the public health implications of community Facebook and depictions of youth'*, it explores the current evidence regarding community Facebook groups, the role of these groups in encouraging vigilante justice against youths across Australia, and the relevance of this to health outcomes. This includes the health of both the youth specifically, and the community as a whole. To ensure relevance to an international audience it has been written without a strong focus on the KYJRP and Katherine specifically, details of this have been included above. Instead it uses JR methodology to frame the discussion, focusing on early contributing factors to anti-social and criminal behaviour.

Chapter 3 (Paper 2) summarises the empirical component of this study. Entitled *"You see the very sharp edge of the problems of prejudice in town": Why the health and social justice sector should care about community Facebook groups*, it explores the data collected from 18 participants who were engaged in semi-structured in depth interviews. This cohort was comprised of thirteen service providers, two Indigenous stakeholders and three local youth. Six local youth were also engaged in a youth focus group, to triangulate the initial themes identified in a preliminary analysis of the first six interviews. A more comprehensive thematic analysis of all transcripts identified six key themes, which are discussed from both (a) an academic standpoint, regarding the intersection between health, community cohesion and crime; and (b) from an applied lens, as this research will directly form ongoing KYJRP strategic planning processes. Katherine is deliberately not mentioned in the findings paper, as it will not be named in any peer-reviewed publication. This will increase anonymity of the participants and the community in which they live.

## CHAPTER 2 (PAPER 1): LITERATURE REVIEW

Those damn(ed) kids:

Understanding the public health implications of community Facebook groups and depictions of youth

### INTRODUCTION

#### Social interactions and health

Human beings are inherently social creatures, exhibiting the most complex relationship structures of all organisms (Read & Miller 1995). An individual's place within this structure is both influential and fluid based on the evolution and maintenance of various relationships. The term 'social capital' is used to describe the impact or 'worth' of an individual's networks or relationships, specifically regarding norms and moral obligations, social values (particularly trust) and social networks (Putnam 2001; Putnam 1995 in Siisilainen 2003). Social capital is a major factor in a number of outcomes, particularly health, both directly and indirectly, as it also impacts various social determinants of health (Rose 2000; Szreter & Woolcock 2004; Ziersch et al. 2009). The social determinants of health are factors that influence an individual's health, which are not directly health related, such as education, employment, involvement with justice system, social support and power (AIHW 2016a, Smith et al. 2018).

An individual's social capital is heavily influenced by number of factors, including gossip and community discussions. Gossip plays an important role in the functioning of our society by establishing group rules, punishing those who break them, and creating a system of social influence through reputation (Brondino, Fusar-Poli & Politi 2017). Though not strictly the same thing, community discussions and gossip share a number of commonalities. As Bowles & Gintis (2002) explain, community discussions are a form of social capital, enforcing norms and creating a group mentality, in a defined way. This function of community can foster cooperation and act as a protective factor for those included in the group discussion (Feinberg et al. 2012) and a risk factor for those excluded from, or targeted by the group (Wert & Salovey 2004). Social capital by definition can exist in any social context, which in modern society includes social media.

#### Social media

Today social media is a ubiquitous tool of communication (Boulianne 2015). Facebook is the most widely used social media site, followed by platforms such as Snapchat, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter (Pew Research Centre 2018). Historically, younger people indicated the highest level of engagement across all social media sites but in recent years the number of older users has increased (Anderson & Jiang 2018; Pew Research Centre 2018). In 2018, Facebook was the most popular platform with users aged 50+ years, and this increase in older engagement has ensured the demographics of the Facebook user base is the most representative of the demographics of the general population, compared to other social media sites which have a distinctly younger skew (Pew Research Centre 2018).

#### Facebook community discussions about youth

In recent times, the impact of social media has led to more visible trails of community discussions, particularly on Facebook groups. These groups, a function unique to Facebook, allow individuals to;

“...come together around a common cause, issue or activity to organize, express objectives, discuss issues, post photos and share related content” (Facebook 2018)

The role of these groups was exposed on a national scale recently in relation to the death of an Indigenous<sup>3</sup> youth in Kalgoorlie who was killed as a result of vigilante justice, encouraged by comments on social media (Purtill 2016). This is not an isolated occurrence; within Facebook groups across Australia there has been a history of targeting youth for antisocial and criminal behaviour (Cunneen & Russell 2017). This behaviour has been consistent with eSilva's (2018) definition of vigilantism as;

“an act of retaliation launched by private agents in response to a perceived criminal conduct and targeting alleged perpetrators of a crime” (pg. 21).

Facebook community groups have also been known to share local 'happenings' and positive stories regarding achievement in the community, including those regarding local youth (Williams 2018). For the purpose of this discussion, youth will be defined as individuals aged between 12 and 24 in alignment with definitions used by the United Nations (UNESCO 2017).

Beyond the threat of physical violence towards young people, negative depictions also erode youth social capital and this has a substantial impact on their mental health, work and school engagement, and access to health and social services (Pitkin Derosé & Varda 2009; VicHealth 1999; Whiting & Harper 2003). The popular media has traditionally played a significant role in the process of identity formation through the portrayal of powerful and abiding images (Carey 1985; Hall 1992 in Ewart 2000). Depictions of young people impact the way society and individuals view and treat youth, as well as the way youth view themselves (Department of Health 2004). Negative community depictions often encourage anti-social or criminal behaviour as the discussions about young people's criminality or violence becomes a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Bolzan 2003). In a modern context where social media is replacing and replicating more traditional media genres (Stassen 2010) these portrayals, and the subsequent consequences, are accessible to the general population more quickly and more regularly. One may assume that varied worldviews of individuals on social media would result in varied opinions and portrayals of issues on the platform, however, as in other social contexts, social media tends to connect individuals who share the same worldview and can function to perpetuate only this view (De Choudhury et al. 2010).

The use of social media as a tool for community discussion, particularly youth focused community discussion, is a relatively recent and highly specified phenomenon. This narrative overview will explore the impact of Facebook groups on youth social capital, and the subsequent impact of this on both youth health outcomes, including involvement with the justice system. The presentation of this information as a narrative overview will offer a comprehensive synthesis of the existing scholarship (Green et al. 2006).

## DISCUSSION

### The role of social media within communities

The body of literature regarding Facebook community groups is extremely extensive, ranging from increasing student participation at university (Bosch 2009; Connell 2009; Phillips 2011), to support systems for breastfeeding (Skelton 2018), cancer (Bender et al. 2011) and parents of children diagnosed with chromosomal abnormalities (Edwardsen 2013), as well as information sharing about concussion (Ahmed et al. 2010) and HIV (Young & Jaganath 2013). These Facebook groups were found to have a number of common characteristics, such as gathering information, sharing, information, and connecting with others in a similar situation (Skelton 2018, Gage-Bouchard et al.

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<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this discussion the terms Indigenous and Aboriginal will be used to refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia. The terms have been chosen for brevity, and the author recognises that this encompasses many diverse and heterogeneous language groups.

2017, Edwardsen 2013). Within these groups, exists networks and relationships and thus social capital. The role of this social capital in influencing where people place their trust, and in establishing and sustaining different social norms has been highlighted in some research. Boling et al. (2015) noted that in some cases Facebook groups were acting as a replacement for consulting suitably qualified medical professionals regarding medical queries.

Moving away from academic research, there is evidence in popular media that Facebook groups are being used as a social support tool for regional Australian's to overcome the lack of services in these areas. *The Virtual Pub*, created by a group of men from the Hunter Valley, is a 'secret group' with 51,000 members from across Australia. The administrators discuss the group as creating "a safe space for men to discuss issues affecting them" (Virtue 2017). This article appeared as a positive news story about the role of Facebook groups and social support, but the same group has also appeared in the media regarding issues of revenge porn, and an acceptance of this behaviour because of the 'secret' nature of the group and its targeted demographics (HACK Triple J 2017). This is summarised by a public post made by a young man who reported the revenge porn post and was ignored by Facebook. His post subsequently went viral, that is, it spread across social media in a much faster and wider manner than a post of this nature would be expected to (Al-Rawi 2017).

"I bite my tongue over the daily misogynistic, racist, homophobic & generally uneducated posts in the group because hey, this is a safe space for the working class Aussie males, right? This however crosses the line in a very very big way, and needs to be stopped immediately. Men's groups can be a great help to plenty of people going through tough times, but 'banter' is no excuse for this sort of behaviour" (Brien 2017).

The social norms within this community are clearly different to the social norms expected by a wider audience. The challenge in this section lies in the definition of community as the term is used interchangeably to describe all manner of groups of people. Social media is discussed as facilitating the shift from place-based communities to online-based communities, as the virtual nature of social media ensures it has a reach and participation far beyond a physical location (Baker et al. 2013). Yet, in the case of this discussion, the focus is on social media interactions conducted by those connected by their physical location. While the role of physical community social media groups has not been extensively covered in academic literature, there are a number of examples regarding this phenomenon in times of crisis, disaster and conflict, particularly those influencing the health, safety and environment of the individuals belonging to that community, which are examined below.

Johns (2014) discusses the role of social media in a time of government and community conflict, specifically regarding the Murray-Darling Basin. The engagement of the local authority with the public was enhanced with a "holistic online presence", aimed at encouraging conversations to enhance relationships. There is scant information provided about how this assessment was completed, but it was deemed a success: "data has indicated that human relationships and communication between community members is enabled through the use of social media" (Johns 2014, section 3.2 paragraph 3).

Bird et al. (2012) examines the more complex interaction between community members, emergency services and the traditional media on Facebook during a natural disaster. This piece of research focuses on the role of the community initiated Facebook groups during the 2010/11 Queensland and Victoria floods. These groups gained a following almost instantly, not only from within the relevant community, but also from family and friends of those affected. They published near real time information from the Bureau of Metrology, State Emergency Services, Police and Local Government, and provided a forum for residents to ask and receive help. People witnessing events could also upload information. Many participants noted the specific community information was extremely important as mainstream media service "only cover the larger communities" (Bird et al. 2012 pg.32).

The authors also point out that the usefulness of examining these groups goes beyond an acute crisis because they act as “an important resource to tap into and review informal communication, something that was previously inaccessible” (Bird et al. 2012 pg. 27). Despite this, little is known about the continued role of the group in mobilising more long-term recovery and rehabilitation. It should be noted that the legacy of these groups does live on beyond the disaster, with a number of administrators from the Queensland flood groups joining up to create a new community page regarding Cyclone Yasi (Bird et al. 2012).

Subba (2014) presents another angle on the role of online communities in a time of crisis. In the context of the Haiti earthquake in 2010, they discuss the difference in response from community members, comparing messages of sympathy and support to messages of racial hatred. The case study of two Facebook groups presents five stages of growth for these crisis response groups; emergence, growth, upkeep, decline, and mitosis (transform or reproduce). The ‘reproduce’ stage is of particular interest to this discussion as a number of members from the original group splintered off to ‘reproduce’ similar groups. This was attributed to racism within the original group. Subba (2014) compares the ‘reproduction’ and ‘emergence’ stages, noting they both occur as a result of a triggering event. The research suggests the way negative and hateful messages are handled is very dependent on the leadership of the group. Those who create and moderate a Facebook group are termed ‘administrators’ or ‘admins’, as they have the power to edit anything posted on the group and approve and delete members. A recent media article highlights the role of these leaders further, and discusses the negative impact for these individuals. Williams (2018) notes a high level of abuse directed at ‘admins’, particularly when they deem something to be outside of the community guidelines and decide to remove it. ‘Admins’ who spoke to the author discussed that moderation made some people feel “that they had been censored and their right to free speech denied” (Williams 2018, paragraph 19) and may create their own splintered group (‘reproduction’) to avoid the constraints of these community guidelines. An expert from Queensland University of Technology, Michael Klaehan (in Williams 2018) admits this is just an inherent risk one runs by taking up this administration role and blames the phenomena of ‘trolling’ for the level of abuse;

You've got this whole trolling behaviour and keyboard warrior mentality, where if they're not actually saying it to you personally they can be a lot more harsh or critical or abusive in some cases (Klaehan quoted by Williams 2018, paragraph 45).

Trolling is a form of online antisocial behaviour, whereby an individual or group antagonises other internet users, typically via social media sites, to provoke them and steer communication towards a different, and often hateful, conversation topic (Hopkinson 2013).

The growing community importance of the local Facebook group as an everyday component of modern life is beginning to be identified in other research and publications. For example, Mosconi et al. (2017) conducted an action-orientated ethnography, examining the way communities experience social media in the physical space of their neighbour. They made use of the ‘natural occurring development’ of the community Facebook group in Italy, discovering the “importance of a constant back and forth between online and face-to-face interactions” (Mosconi et al. 2017, pg.1). In the conclusion they argue that ‘online communities’ should be referred to as ‘networked publics’ to encourage the differences between neighbours, rather than emphasising homogeneity. This is an important concept in the context of this article.

Carlson & Frazer (2018) describe the role of community Facebook groups as a “community noticeboard”, used for “knowing what’s happening in the community...events...BBQs...football or netball training” (pg. 8). In an Indigenous specific context ‘closed groups’ were identified as a tool to share cultural knowledge such as language and stories (Carlson & Frazer 2018). Interestingly, there are a number of blog style posts recently published that promote the community Facebook group,

encouraging people to join their own local community online, for useful information, for a little gossip, and for an element of nostalgia (Kelly 2016; Kleeman 2018). Whilst the author recognises this is grey literature, it provides important recent context and information on general population observations, which current research does not.

### Vigilante justice, racism, portrayal of youth and social media

There appears to be general knowledge of community social media groups within community services, such as the police. A tweet published on the Mundaring Police (WA) twitter account on 28 July 2018 referenced a post on the local closed community Facebook group “Perth Hills Chat Forum” asking for information about police sirens;

*For our Facebook friends we don't follow #HillsCops on Twitter at @MundaringPol – All is OK, we just used our #siren to pull over a car ;) #icanhearsirens #PerthHillsChatForum #MundaringShireCommunityPage #FB* (Mundaring Police 2018)

In the same way that information about the community BBQ is shared online, many general community pages double as ‘crime watch’, with some community groups setting up additional specific anticrime groups. Hailed as the modern Neighbourhood Watch, these pages offer a space for community members to share suspicious behaviour with others, but as pointed out by the CEO of Crimestoppers, can also result in misinformation, unsubstantiated claims and a “crisis level when it was never really a crisis” (Shaw 2017). This unwarranted crisis level often manifests in a rise of ‘keyboard warriors’, which has been attributed with the promotion community violence by some media outlets.

Lynch (2018) notes the recent rise of this social media vigilantism in Katherine, Northern Territory (NT), with individuals ‘naming and shaming’ by “posting CCTV footage of children on Facebook pages”. In some communities it has progressed from online action to reality. Within the Northern Territory there have been reports of community members organising night crime patrols in Darwin and Palmerston via Facebook (Dunlevie 2016; Smee 2014), a phenomena similarly echoed in Townsville QLD (Atkin 2016). These occurrences have been in direct reaction to a perceived increase in youth crime. The Alice Springs Volunteer Force (ASVF) has drawn considerable media attention in the past few years for its more sinister approach (Hope 2015; Dunlevie 2016; Kurmelovs 2015; McCue 2015). It is modelled on the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), a now ‘officially’ inactive Northern Irish paramilitary group who were prominent during a period of civil unrest known as the Troubles (Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium 2018). The UVF are attributed with at least 485 deaths during the Troubles, most of whom were innocent civilians (Sutton 1993). In more recent times the UVF has accused of drug trafficking (McKittrick 2013). In a copycat behavioural style, the leader of the ASVF has repeatedly discussed physical violence and weapons in media interviews (Dunlevie 2016; Kurmelovs 2015; McCue 2015).

*Someone will go to his front door and warn them, 'don't do this again.' If they continue doing it, then we may arrange for him to be kneecapped*

(Gary Hall, spokesperson for ASVF quoted by Kurmelovs 2015)

The ASVF group recruit via the Alice Springs Community Open Forum, a closed Facebook page, asking for individuals with a military background or “firearms experience” (Kurmelovs 2015).

Cunneen & Russell (2017) have extensively examined the role of ‘anti-crime’ Facebook pages, particularly in their role of ‘legitimizing violence against [young] Indigenous Australians” (pg. 1), by “feeding into moral panics about young offenders” (pg. 16). The nature of social media ensures platforms reflect the users’ worldviews, and as such may both amplify and manufacture racist discourse – known as ‘platformed racism’ (Matamoros-Fernández 2017). These groups are able to use their platform to feed into a narrative about Indigenous Australian’s innate criminality, with no



consideration of the ongoing effects of colonisation and social inequality (Cunneen & Russell 2017). These anti-crime community groups are having significant impacts on public and media discourse, which in turn impacts on the public health of young Indigenous Australians by eroding their reputation and thus their social capital on a national scale (Balvin & Kashima 2012; Stoneham, Goodman & Daube 2014).

This is exemplified in Katherine, NT where there is a plethora of recent media stories regarding community concerns about youth crime (McLennan 2018a; McLennan 2018b; Fitzgerald 2018a; Higgins 2017). Despite these stories there is little publicly available data to back the claims associated with a youth crime spike. While the statistics released on the NT Police website do indicate a general increase in crime in the area, it remains unclear who is perpetrating the crime (Northern Territory Police 2018). The Jesuit Social Services, a justice group in the NT has discussed the recent rhetoric regarding 'crime waves' as unjustified and unproductive (Daly 2017), while Boffice (2018) notes "local media can fuel moral panics and perpetuate stereotypes of the 'likely criminal'". Attributing crimes to youth, and particularly Indigenous youth, with minimal or no evidence to do so, can have damaging and long-term health and social impacts (Larson et al. 2007; Stoneham, Goodman & Daube 2014)

### What's health got to do with it?

The neighbourhood or community in which young people grow up is a fundamental component of child and adolescent development. Community social groups can provide additional or compensatory nurturing support, establish social behaviours and norms, and give youth opportunities to feel valued and loved (Benson et al. 2012). Psychosocial resources drawn from this, such as self-esteem and social support can positively impact an individual's health by mediating stress (DeLongis et al. 1988). This is vital for a person's health as stress is a significant causal factor of many diseases, including, but not limited too: autoimmune disease (Stojanovich & Marisavljevich 2008), Type 2 Diabetes (Harris et al. 2017), heart disease (Bergh et al. 2015), obesity (Morris et al. 2015a) and mental illness (Persson & Rossin-Slater 2018). It is important to highlight that young people who are targeted or known as community 'trouble makers' are often from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds and already have poorer health and social outcomes than their wealthier counterparts (AIHW 2016b). It is probable that they also have less psychosocial resources to mitigate the impacts of this negative attention, as low SES is correlated with fewer psychosocial resources (Taylor & Seeman 1999). Aneshensel et al. (1996) discusses how "neighbourhood(s) are seen as affecting adolescent emotional well-being by regulating exposure to stressors and access to resources" (pg. 294). Emotional stability, stress and access to resources are all factors that also affect a young person's decision to engage in criminal activity. Therefore, if an individual who is being targeted by online community Facebook groups is engaging in crime, or has a number of risk factors for engaging in crime, this sort of attention and negative rhetoric is likely to decrease their self-esteem and propel them to beginning or continued engagement in criminal activities (Kamas et al. 2009; Trzesniewski et al. 2006).

To target individuals, whether by naming and shaming, threatening violence or creating a negative depiction about their character, creates an extra stressor for young people. It also stifles their perceived social support options, further isolating them, and potentially creating negative health impacts. In rural communities community opinions have a huge impact because of the smaller population size. The generation of social capital is dependent upon individuals engaging in norms and behaviours in a way that is acceptable in the eyes of their wider community. Ewart (2000) writes about the role of traditional media in contributing to an 'us and them' mentality regarding regional Australian communities.

[Media sources] produce certain information about their publics and regions, at times clearly indicating the values and meanings those publics should embody, and what it means to be a member of that region's public (Ewart 2000, pg. 2).

Given the continual intertwining of the roles of traditional media and social media in modern times, it is plausible to suggest that region's image of its population is also influenced by the communities use of social media. This labelling and subsequent division has occurred with very little discernment in other communities, with young people in a rural USA town reporting an 'inherited' reputation from their family members (Willging, Quintero & Lilliot 2014). This is likely to be a trend in Australian rural towns as well, where the populations are small and families are well known in the area.

Evidence suggests that humans are social beings and crave acceptance and identity (Waytz 2013). As a young person, whose frontal cortex and sense of identity are still developing, rejection from any element of society can have long lasting impacts (Cheng & Gröhn 2014). Negative labels used can begin to form part of a young persons' identity, causing them to adhere to unhealthy stereotypes (Råheim et al. 2016). The social expectations these labels perpetuate can influence young people, particularly when these expectations are negative. For example, an ethnographic exploration of working class young men articulated the role of substance use and law-breaking activities as a way to demonstrate what they perceived to be their class-based values (Willis 1977). If young people are not expected to finish school or to go on to meaningful (or perhaps any) employment, it is unlikely that they will. This is known as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy', whereby the unconscious behaviours and reactions of an individual informs their reality based on their belief about the probable outcome (Jones 1986 in Madon et al. 2013). Therefore, if a young person is classified as a 'trouble maker' it is likely they will engage in parallel activities that are 'expected' of them by adults, such as drinking, substance use and crime. As described by Richards (2011) more dramatically, "young people labelled as criminals assume the identity of a criminal" (Reducing stigmatisation, para. 4). Young people with negative community labels who do become involved in the justice system often experience harsher penalties than peers who are more accepted socially.

In some cases youth who were known for their sporting prowess avoided major punishment comparative to their peers who engaged in the same activities, often as a result of community pressure "to overlook drug use among socially prominent youth" (Willging, Quintero & Lilliot 2014, Looking Beyond Boredom, para. 6). Strong parallels can be drawn from this piece of research to Indigenous contexts in Australia, where there is an over-representation of Indigenous youth in juvenile detention (Allam 2018), attributed to both the endemic discrimination and the lower socioeconomic status disproportionally experienced by many Indigenous people (Walker & McDonald 1995). Disengagement from education, and subsequently employment opportunities, alongside engagement with the justice system, ensue. These coalesce as major contributing factors to poor health. For those who enter the justice system, particularly detention, their subsequent exposure to education, healthcare and socialisation is massively reduced and as such they generally exit detention with poorer mental and physical health, compounded by a large chance of reoffending (White & Gooda 2017).

Over two decades ago Farkas et al. (1997) described a 'moral meltdown', whereby American adults were more concerned about the increasing 'character deficits' of youth rather than growing youth issues such as homelessness and poverty. Whilst not every young person will be specifically 'known as' or labelled as discussed above, if the community generalises youth in a negative manner it is logical that the general youth population will be affected, as will their health. Across the world media about youth emphasises negative stereotypes, with a thematic analysis of six UK newspapers over the past ten years finding that the words most commonly associated with "teenagers", "youth" and "young people" were "binge-drinking", "yobs" and "crime" (Birdwell & Bani 2014). As discussed

above, the expectations of the community are an influential factor for young people's development and achievement. Designating youth as 'trouble makers' affects their self-esteem and life aspirations, often resulting in "any chances of succeeding just drop[ing] like bricks" (Willging, Quintero & Lillioth 2014, Trapped Troublemakers, para. 1). Education and employment are key indicators of health, and highly linked to SES and risky behaviours (ABS 2011; Curnock et al. 2016). Moreover, "positive future expectations can facilitate optimal development and contribute to healthier outcomes for youth" (Stoddard & Pierce 2015, pg. 332). Exposure to community violence, such as the public formation of vigilante groups, has been proven to inhibit the development of hope (Lorian & Saltzman 1993 in Stoddard & Pierce 2015). A lack of hope for a positive future has a detrimental effect on mental health and educational achievement (Shek & Li 2016), which in turn also affects physical health.

The effect on the health outcomes of youth has been discussed. Yet, the health impact on other community members has not (Blyth & Roehlkepartain 1993). Earlier it was mentioned that labelling young people as criminals often encourages them to engage in criminal activities, while community Facebook groups can often cause hysteria and undue amounts of fear. One can argue that a community in which its residents do not feel safe is an unhealthy community. Perceived neighbourhood cohesion and safety, which is a form of social capital, has been identified as key factors causing variations in health outcomes across postcodes (Baum et al. 2009). The stress and fear can cause physiological inflammation increasing immune dysregulation and impact their mental health (Beck et al. 2016). Fear also reduces the number of health promoting activities people engage in, such as exercising outside, seeing friends and taking part in social activities (Doyle et al. 2006; Stafford, Chandola & Marmot 2007). A lack of community safety, whether legitimate or perceived, can contribute to social determinants that affect a community's health such as economic prosperity and higher education attainment (Ludwig et al. 2014).

Maintaining educated and skilled workforce is a high priority for many rural towns, and in order to do this engagement of young people and fostering a sense of belonging to their community is essential (Davie 2015). The power of labels is highlighted in Willging, Quintero & Lillioth (2014), who quoted young people in a rural town in the USA.

"We're always gonna be marked...If someone wants to get a bad label off them I think they should just leave town" (Willging, Quintero & Lillioth 2014, Trapped Troublemakers, para. 12). Young people who are 'marked' in this way are not the only ones who desire a fresh start. School leavers from rural communities who perform well academically typically seek higher education in an urban setting, known as outmigration (Pollard 2018). Davie (2015) discusses the need to encourage the return of these skilled individuals, which is much harder to do if they have experienced a community that did not value them when they were residents. The recent Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education demonstrated the inequality regarding high education achievement across the country; the proportion of 25-34 year olds who possess a bachelor degree (or higher) is 42.2% within major cities, significantly decreasing to 21.8% in inner regional areas, 19.5% in outer regional and 17.8% in remote areas (Halsey 2017). Across Australia rural communities are not just struggling to maintain an educated population, they are struggling to maintain a sufficient population to justify government services and subsequently business investment. In turn, this reduces the number of jobs and increases the need for outmigration and 'brain drain' (Falk 2001). One sector that is constantly under threat is health, with smaller country hospitals closing or reducing their service capacity (AIHW 2017) and visiting specialist's videoconferencing for appointments to save on travel costs (Bradford et al. 2016). Decreasing the investment in permanent health workers leads to an increase in locum and 'drive-in-drive-out' service providers, who often do not have the contextual knowledge to manage patients in the most appropriate way and this contributes to poor health outcomes (Wakerman et al. 2016).

## CONCLUSION

### Where too from here?

Facebook is a platform for online discussion and can be used to encourage both positive and negative connections and depictions of youth. Multiple studies have shown the tool to be an important element of connectivity in the modern era. Yet, the role of community Facebook groups in propagating a growing vigilante movement, often targeting youth and propelled by thinly veiled undertones of racism, should be considered as a space for further analysis by academics – as a large proportion of the literature is currently media reports and print news articles.

Acknowledging both the far-reaching impact of negative community discussions, and the increased visibility and influence of these discussions as a result of social media, leads to the inevitable question of 'where to from here?' A comprehensive literature review by Halsey & White (2008) recommends a number of strategies to combat misinformed public perceptions of youth crime. These include accurate, understandable and easily accessible police data; a balanced representation of youth in the media; building better community relationships; and validating and addressing community anxiety about youth crime. Morgan & Haglund (2012) discuss linking social capital, that is, the connections between community members and their governing institutions as a crucial element in enhancing youth participation.

The public health community needs to better understand how negative perceptions and vigilante attitudes impact the ongoing health of both young people and the community in general. Not only through the physiological impact of stress, fear and isolation, but through the impact on education, employment and SES, which in turn affect individual and population health outcomes. The ripple effect of community perceptions to community population levels, particularly the health impact, also needs greater attention. An understanding of these factors allows for an appreciation of the role that health promotion can play in creating a more positive youth development space on social media platforms, such as Facebook.

## CHAPTER 3 (PAPER 2): EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

“You see the very sharp edge of the problems of prejudice in town”:

Why the health and social justice sector should care about community Facebook groups

The research presented in this paper is the findings of sub-study of a larger planning and service mapping JR project. This sub-study sought to investigate the role of social media in facilitating and broadcasting community discussions regarding youth in Katherine, and the subsequent positioning of youth in Katherine.

The aim was to provide more detailed information regarding the depictions of youth in Katherine through social media, and present possible strategies to encourage constructive community opinion about youth, and justice reinvestment, on social media. The research questions were;

- 1) How does the community depict its youth in popular social media platforms?
- 2) How can social media be used to support the work of justice reinvestment in the region?

### Research Approach

This research project has been approached using Collaborative Research (CR) as the guiding methodology, which has been used successfully with both community-based organisations and youth (Harper & Carver 1999; Sanstad et al. 1999). CR is consistent with Participatory Action Research (PAR), the methodology for the overarching JR study. In accordance with Baum et al.'s (2006) definition, this research practise is a reflective enquiry into a situation the individuals frequently experience and participate in. It heavily involves the community, engaging both Indigenous and non-Indigenous research participants, to explore methods for change. These aspects of PAR will be drawn upon within the CR methodology.

Increasingly there is a need for multidisciplinary approaches to produce innovative research (Cummings & Kiesler 2005), and this extends beyond cooperation between academic areas to cooperation between the academic discipline and the frontline individuals. These are individuals who live and work with an issue everyday, who possess an often underutilised but vitally important lived experience (Byrne 2017). CR by definition involves collaboration between the researcher and the researched (Jean-Louise & Lomas 2003). This methodology is synonymous with contemporary discourse about co-design, which is currently lauded as best practise in monitoring and evaluation practises, as well the preferred method of engagement in strategies and policy development (Blomkamp 2018).

During initial engagement with the community JR working group (JRWG) researchers noted the frequent discussions of negative and potential harmful stereotyping of youth on a local community Facebook group, ‘Town and Territory Matters’. This was minuted as a concern at the JRWG meeting on 5 March 2018, raised by an audience member at a stakeholder forum on 11 May 2018, and recorded as a priority issue that needed to be addressed as part of the JRWG strategic planning session held on 18 May 2018. A formal letter of support solidified the JRWG’s support for this project. The data collection process was supported by a number of JRWG members who were key to facilitating access to participants and providing a local lens to research. The findings will be shared with the group to allow the community to interpret and use them as they see fit, an important component of CR (Jean-Louise & Lomas 2003).

The return of these findings to the community is not only vital from a CR approach, but also plays an important role in research impact. Milat, Bauman & Redman (2015) suggest that a more practical

way to assess the productivity of research is through its impact on practise and/or policy through knowledge translation efforts, a practise also encouraged by the NHMRC (2018) and the World Health Organisation (2018).

## Study design

The CR approach requires sustained engagement with local stakeholders to identify and co-design strategies. This engagement has been ongoing and occurring in a formal sense since May 2018. It has involved attendance at working group meetings, a relevant community forum, as well as liaising with local service providers. The researchers involved include; James Smith (JS) (Chief Investigator); Ben Christie (BC) (Project Officer); Sarah Clifford (SC) (MPH student); and co-investigators Fiona Alison (FA), Kim Robertson (KR) and Sarah Ireland (SI). A chronological account of extent engagement is outlined in Appendix 4. In accordance with national research ethical standards each participant was given a Plain Language Statement (PLS) (Appendix 5) and signed a Consent Form (Appendix 6) before engaging in any formal research processes, such as interviews.

### *Semi-structured interviews*

Semi-structured interviews are described by Morris (2015b) as similar to a conversation, because they involve the discussion of a topic of mutual interest in a relaxed and open environment. The role of the interview guide, which is a list of questions and/or sub-topics, is to “direct the conversation towards the research topics during the interview” (Åstedt-Kurki & Heikkinen 1994; Cridland et al. 2015; Krauss et al. 2009; in Kallio et al. 2016). This method allows for an exploration of the research question(s) with the flexibility to investigate particular responses further if warranted (Gill et al. 2008). This encourages depth and richness of responses (Bryman 2008). It also enables reciprocity between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kallio et al. 2016), by recognising that interviewee’s experience of the topic gives them ‘interview knowledge’ (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). It also allows the direction of the interview to be partially controlled by them. This is particularly important in the context of CR, which emphasises the active participation of those being researched to be just as important as that of the researcher (Jean-Louise & Lomas 2003). To prevent the overburden of participants, the questions related to social media were incorporated into the semi-structured interview schedule of the broader study<sup>4</sup> (see Appendix 7).

As part of the overarching study, 21 in-depth semi-structured individual interviews (with one paired interview), with 22 participants, have been conducted over a six-month period. 17 of these interviews included the social media specific questions, giving this sub-study 18 participants. This included 3 Local Youth, 2 Indigenous Stakeholders and 13 Service Providers.

They were conducted at a place of the participants choosing and convenience, ranging from offices to outdoor settings. The majority of the interviews lasted between 1 – 1.5 hours, and all were recorded, with the consent of the interviewee. Researchers also took field notes, for both practicality, should the recorder fail, and for triangulation at the analysis stage (Oliver-Hoyo & Allen 2006).

All interviews were conducted by either myself or co-researchers JS and BC; an outline of the number of interviews conducted by each individual is included in Appendix 8. There are a number of interviews that occurred with all three researchers present, which as Anyan (2013) highlights, has the potential to create a power imbalance and therefore affect the nature of data collected. This occurred as a capacity building exercise for SC, as a student with limited experience of qualitative

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<sup>4</sup> The overarching JR study occurring in Katherine involves a quantitative examination of data relating to the drivers of incarceration and a qualitative exploration of community assets and gaps in services. This study compliments the strategic planning of on-going JR work in Katherine.



interviewing. All of the interviewees involved in the capacity building interviews, were members of the JRWG, and had extensive background knowledge of the role of the interviews and had engaged with all researchers previously. This circumstance is an appropriate one to engage multiple researchers as Anyan (2013) states that to control for any power imbalances the researchers must have a rapport and sense of mutual trust in the interview process.

### *Youth Focus Group*

To complement the individual interviews, one focus group was run. Six young people aged between 16 – 18 years old participated and were compensated for their time with a cinema voucher. Focus groups are a method of data collection whereby multiple participants engage in a conversation guided by the researcher (Kitzinger 1995). They are based on the premise that the group process encourages people to explore their knowledge, experience and, most importantly, reflect on why they hold certain views or opinions (Kitzinger 1995).

Six interview transcripts were used to contribute to a preliminary analysis prior to the youth focus group. The themes identified in these interviews were used to guide discussions in the focus group, which provided an opportunity to clarify, extend and qualify data collected in the in-depth interviews (Gill et al. 2008). This method also allowed for access to a hard-to-reach population who may not have been confident in an individual interview (Hildebrandt 1999) but whose viewpoint was deemed to be important. The participants in the youth focus group were recruited via a key youth stakeholder who had participated in an in-depth interview. This process is known as Snowball Sampling (Marshall 1996) and is described further below. This is consistent with good qualitative research practise, as having an 'in' with participants helps to develop rapport to support more candid discussions (Ross 2017). This stakeholder liaised with the other participants to decide an appropriate time and location. The proposed timeframe was 1 hour. Approximately 20 minutes of questioning occurred by the time all individuals arrived, settled and introduced and general chatter occurred to increase rapport and comfort. However, the conversation was rich and revealed a number of key themes, as participants were very open and candid.

### **Sampling**

Individuals were invited to participate because of their involvement in the previous community consultations (Allison 2016), the current JRWG, or based on recommendations from the JRWG. These are two separate types of sampling. The first was purposeful sampling, which commonly used in qualitative research as it seeks out and selects individuals with a rich knowledge or experience of the phenomenon being studied (Cresswell & Plano Clark 2011).

Asking participants to recommend other potential interviewees is known as snowball sampling (Marshall 1996). Making use of participant's social connections has been particularly useful in engaging with harder to access groups, which was applicable in this study to the youth focus group (Cohen & Arieli 2011). The size of the community naturally limited the number of individuals with an interest or high level of knowledge in the youth (and particularly youth justice) space. Utilising original participants networks to identify other key individuals greatly assisted in moving towards saturation. The number of participants required in qualitative research is based on saturation, that is, when no new information is presented (Miles & Huberman 1994). Despite best efforts to achieve saturation, it is unlikely that this study reached saturation, particularly regarding youth participants. This will be explored further in the limitations section.

## Data analysis

Both the interviews and focus group were recorded and subsequently transcribed by an external professional transcription service, with the social media portions of the interview transcripts and the entire focus group transcript then thematically analysed by SC. Branded as particularly accessible for early career researchers (Braun & Clarke 2006), thematic analysis is used to draw out participant's perspectives and identify similarities and differences, as well as highlight unanticipated insights (Braun & Clarke 2006; King 2004 in Nowell et al. 2017). This study has been particularly useful in exploring the differences between the various stakeholder groups, primarily the service providers and youth. Noteworthy, not all participants are explicitly quoted in the analysis, as quotes were selected for their richness and rigour.

Due to the nature of the CR process, and tight timeframes associated with the completion of the MPH research unit, simultaneous data collection and analysis occurred. This is the norm in many qualitative studies with the ongoing findings refining the ongoing data collection that proceeds (Suter 2011).

## Credibility and rigour

The rigour of a study can also be conceptualised as the quality of the study, and a factor that heavily contributes to rigour is credibility (Birks 2014). Credibility is the truth of the views of the participants and the researcher's representations of these (Cope 2014). In order to establish credibility multiple sources have been used to draw conclusions and assess the validity of these conclusions, this is called triangulation (Casey & Murphy 2009 in Cope 2014). This was done using researcher's field notes; peer debriefs, particularly when multiple researchers have interviewed a participant; alongside interview transcript (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Debriefs usually occurred during travel or mealtimes immediately post interview. Other factors that contribute heavily to credibility of analysis are prolonged engagement, persistent observation and member checking (Lincoln & Guba 1985), which were also built into the project design to satisfy requirements of a CR methodology. As topic of this study was conceived based on community concerns it was important to account for any unconscious bias of the researchers to gravitate towards the negative aspects of community social media use. To avoid this questions were deliberately framed in a neutral way, with subsequent probes regarding both positive and negative aspects to limit bias (Appendix 7).

## Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was granted through the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee (H18044) on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018. Reciprocal ethics approval was gained from the NT Department of Health and Menzies School of Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC 2018-3191) on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018. The approval noted that participants aged between 16 – 17 years would be considered sufficiently mature to provide informed consent, rather than requiring a parent or guardian's signature. This is acceptable practise for research involving youth in this age range (Sprigg 2010). Despite being low-risk the research team were aware of negative and racist comments on social media aimed at Town youth and acknowledged that participation in the research had the potential to cause distress. In anticipation, relevant help-line information was included in the respective Plain Language Statement (PLS) documents (Appendix 5).

## RESULTS

Six major themes emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts. To protect the identities of individuals they have been assigned both numbers and sub-categories. These are Service Provider (SP), Indigenous Stakeholder (IS) or Local Youth (LY). Participants of the Youth Focus Group have only be identified as male or female rather than numbered (ie. Female YFG). Noteworthy is that



participant numbers are consistent with their identification in the overall study so despite there being 18 participants in this sub-study relating to social media, the participant numbering extends up to 22.

### Theme 1: Different understandings and use of social media among youth and adults

Facebook was the most frequently discussed platform, noted in 14 interviews. It was also the most prominent platform that adult participants demonstrated the greatest level of knowledge about. Their level of personal involvement and experience with the platform became apparent throughout interviews, as those who chose to abstain from a Facebook profile discussed the topic negatively.

I see the trouble that it causes my grandkids and other youth that I know, and I hear what other adults are saying. [Participant 5: SP]

Myself, I'm not on Facebook or anything like that. I honestly can't stand it. [Participant 2: SP]

Overall social media was generally regarded with simultaneous acceptance and caution from youth. Young people verbalised certain issues, specifically peer to peer bullying, "youth saying things about other youth is more of a problem on social media than adults saying things about youth" [Female YFG], but were very accepting of social media's pervasive nature in their lives, with no one suggesting abstaining from the tool. Adults often took a firmer stance regarding not having accounts, and discussed the negatives of the platforms at length before considering its benefits. Local youth noted their social media platforms as;

Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook. That's the main three. [Female YFG]

Facebook's for family, Instagram's for friends and Snapchat's more for talking. [Female YFG]

Despite this initial explanation that young people were only Facebook users to remain connected to adult family members by comments such as, "definitely, like, the older generation" [Male YFG], it later emerged that Facebook also possess some functionality lacking from other more favoured platforms. This encouraged usage and was a factor in young people maintaining their profiles. This included features such as sharing, "you can't share stuff on Instagram" [Male YGP], and the group functionality, "you can't post to a group [on Instagram]" [Female YGP] which overall made it "easier to communicate what's happening" [Male YGP].

Adult's engagement on social media appeared to be a source of amusement for young people, who indicated perceived gaps in etiquette and a belief that adults over-prioritised the platform.

It's kind of just like well, I'll keep quiet, let's not make more drama. Whenever the adults are just like, "Here we go." Like, spread the drama. [Male YFG]

I think maybe adults are more affected by it because they are the ones who access it for information and stuff. [Female YFG]

Adults briefly mentioned Snapchat and Instagram, though they demonstrated very little personal experience. The more mature participants tended to draw their conclusions from their children and grandchildren's experience. There was a lot of hearsay referred to, often with hyperbolic language.

Instagram...through sharing the social media experience with my kids, there you see kids demonstrating themselves and their own rule [breaking] behaviour. It's pretty full on. [Participant 3: SP]

This disconnect is highlighted by a comment from a SP who questioned a local youth group's use of Facebook for promotion. As noted earlier the functionality of the platform comparable to Instagram or Snapchat was the reason for the use, which this adult appeared to be unaware of:

I think one of the downfalls in that...is that [person] is using a Facebook group to engage young people in it. And when young people aren't particularly engaged in this Facebook group it's probably not the right platform or media. Probably better using Instagram or something, I don't know. [Participant 3: SP]

Even the young people interviewed acknowledged that they may not be as aware of younger individual's activity. This evidence, that different age cohorts use social media differently, has significant implications for appropriately tailored health promotion responses.

I use it a lot, but then when I look at kids in year eight or nine, I think actually no, I don't. Because, like three or four years' difference has an insane impact. [Participant 14: LY]

This disconnect between different age groups, may also exist between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. Service providers who work with Indigenous youth referenced 'diva chat', but in the focus group no young person had heard of it. However, none of the participants in this focus group identified as Indigenous.

Divas Chat is - oh, my god. It's like this chat room thing, I guess. All the kids have been talking about it for years and years [Participant 2: SP]

[About Diva Chat] It seems to be the cool thing. I think it's because it might be free with Telstra phones... I think there's a lot of online bullying that happens, and probably sexual harassment/abusive sexually explicit pornographic material. [Participant 6: SP]

[The police] consistently say that the NT is the only place that has an issue with Air-G Diva Chat. And that is - and we know - it's consistently a problem, creating family tension and family feuds and issues amongst Indigenous communities. [Participant 22: SP]

[Youth Focus Group]

M: Is that like MSN?

F: Diva Chat?

F: Diva Chat. I have no idea what that is.

## Theme 2: Using social media to stay informed in a regional context

The mention of social media frequently brought up the Facebook group 'Town and Territory Matters', explicitly named almost immediately by 9 individual interview participants. Though a 'closed group' and only viewable by members, "it's very public, because there's not many people that aren't on it" [Participant 9: LY]. This was not the only community Facebook group discussed, but certainly is of notable importance. Twelve participants either stated or implied they were members of this group. Those who were part of this group did so predominantly to stay connected to the community; whether that be about receiving community news updates, or more nuanced observations of community behaviour and portrayed worldviews.

I don't read the newspaper and [Local Newspaper] doesn't get put up on TV or anything like that. Facebook is pretty much my only way of finding out what's going on. [Participant 7: LY]

I choose to be part of the 'Town and Territory Matters' page...just to sort of hear - at [workplace] and in our Town social bubbles, we're associating with very like-minded people, and so I like to have a reminder, sometimes, that not everybody thinks that way. [Participant 8: SP]

I think being in a slightly more left-wing circle of friends and colleagues in Town, I'm often a bit shocked. So I think it's a part of town that I don't really understand. [Participant 16: SP]

Individuals who were Facebook users but chose not to join the 'Town and Territory Matters', tended to point to the "drama" [Female YFG] and stress of community politics as reasons to avoid the group; "I'm not even on it because it was so toxic" [Participant 22: SP]. Many interviewees, including those who were members of the group, were quite blunt about their distaste for the group, though as the conversation continued some did conclude there were some positive aspects.

I'm on all of them because I'm a tabloid junkie, I can't stay away from them. I should unsubscribe from them all. [Participant 20: SP]

I don't think there is anything positive on 'Town and Territory Matters'...there might be the odd comment or invite to something which is quite constructive. [Participant: SP]

A major issue taken with the group was the way in which community crime was dealt with on this forum.

### Theme 3: The online neighbourhood watch

A large problem that was identified with 'Town and Territory Matters' was the common practise of uploading photos of individuals committing crimes, in an effort to 'name and shame'.

I've seen victims posting video footage or photos of youth who have committed the crime...it's essentially creating a witch hunt or man hunt. [Participant 4: IS]

Identifying young people, some under 18, as criminals, with images, CCTV footage, some by name, some just with images. [Participant 6: SP]

The youth demographic received the greatest negative attention, with most crimes attributed to them.

Any time young people are mentioned, it's really been really negative and people who have the same view as the [person posting] hopping on and furthering this hatred. [Participant 8: SP]

However, the ones that were actually doing a lot of the offending weren't actually youth, they were young adults that were over the age of 18 or adults...I think it's easy for us to assume that it's kids. [Participant 9: SP]

[There's] not a lot of thought going into comments that are made and comments are made out of frustration. Comments are made stupidly from emotional point of view... [Participant 20: SP]

Whilst many participants were horrified by the practise, other expressed sympathy for the dissatisfied community members who were posting these photos.

I fully understand where they're coming from because there's nothing worse than living in fear of repeated break-ins and not feeling safe in your own home and many people feel like that in Katherine... when they see a lack of action they vent and use social media to do that. [Participant 11: SP]

There's no one that's out to kill kids...I think people are frustrated. I think people are sick of their houses being broken into. [Participant 20: SP]

This perceived lack of action was attributed to the tenuous reputation of diversion and other justice measures in the town; "diversion is nothing in Katherine" [Participant 11: SP]. It appears that posts regarding crime often descend into an aggressive and abusive commentary by community members. One participant detailed an incident where online violence moved from cyber threats to physical violence.

It ended up with something like 200 and something comments within the first 12 hours, everybody, of course, had an opinion. It ended up with the parents being assaulted. [Participant 9: SP]

No other participants gave examples of physical violence but many were certainly concerned about the extremity of the threats and the subsequent impact on a population who are vulnerable and still maturing as people. It was noted that the majority of youth who were identified in this Facebook group may already be lacking more social supports than some of their peers.

When someone says 'my house was broken into' and this and that, the response to that is 'break their legs, take a whip to their back, just flog the piss out of them' and that's a horrible response for anyone, but for that to go towards a young person who may not have had the upbringing we had. [Participant 4: IS]

It cannot be helpful for youth to grow up in a community where that sort of stuff is spoken like that. [Participant 15: SP]

The accuracy of this information was discussed with a number of participants noting that the reliability of posts, names and photos were rarely called into question. Stereotyping, assumptions and fear mongering was common.

...news travels very, very quickly...whether something is true or not is irrelevant. [Participant 14: LY]

...because there was obviously a lot of break-ins at about that time and, of course, that one kid now got blamed for the whole communities offending. [Participant 9: SP]

Some participants discussed the stereotyping as being largely based on the young person's ethnicity, specifically whether or not they were Aboriginal.

Adults just stereotyping everybody. And unfortunately it's jump people of colour, so young Indigenous people. The majority of that I've seen either are racist or they're borderline...most of it is targeting young Indigenous people. [Participant 4: IS]

Another division being deepened by the activity on community Facebook groups was the division between the "left-wing" and "right-wing" members of the adults in town.

#### Theme 4: Hairy Armpit Brigade versus Lock Them Up Brigade - spotlighting small town politics

As discussed in Theme 2, a number of participants highlighted the role of community Facebook groups as reminding them of the range of worldviews held by those outside of their own social circles,

their 'left-wing bubbles'. A clear division within the community, based on worldviews, was evident. The people who were posting photos in an effort to 'name and shame' or venting their frustrations regarding crime in the town were summarised by some participants as "the 'lock them up' brigade" [Participant 21: SP], while those who took issue with this online activity were similarly grouped; "my mum calls them the Hairy Armpit Brigade" [Participant 20: SP].

You've got two groups of people, you've got a group of people who don't give a shit about solving a problem and all they care about is that houses are being broken into, these kids have broken the law. Then you've got these people that it's not their fault, poor kids, we've got to sort all the problems out. When they meet together, there is no amicable ground. [Participant 20: SP]

Facebook groups appeared to be spotlighting this difference, in a way that had been impossible prior to social media, making differing opinions constantly very visible to all community members.

What I think it does is further kind of unifies the right-wing voice, the harsh voice, the condemnation, in what I think is probably a minority of people in town. You see the very sharp edge of the problems of prejudice in town [Participant 16: SP]

The participants spoke about the demographic who were engaging in this negative behaviour as being "very well-known adults in town" [Participant 16; SP].

Unfortunately in Katherine, the people over here saying lock them all up are all the people who control our political parties...who own the businesses in town...the people with money...the people who people listen [to] [Participant 20: SP]

The adult participants in this study were overwhelmingly more 'left-leaning' in their commentary on the issue, unsurprising given the majority held roles in youth or community services, where principles such as equity and social justice are commonplace (Bennett, Zubrzycki & Bacon 2011).

The exclusionary attitude by non-Aboriginal members of the community, "definitely comments about, us and them" [Participant 6: SP], was highlighted in a number of interviews, and appeared to be of greater concern than any overtly racist comments on the page. Statements such as 'We, the people of Katherine [Participant 6: SP] portray a group of non-Indigenous, 'law-abiding' citizens as the true residents of the town, isolating and excluding the Indigenous youth who are being named and shamed online.

All you do is make people feel like they belong to a different group of people. History is littered with examples of how that can be very positive or be very negative. So it's hard to say which direction it will go on, but it definitely unites people, whether or not you unite them in feeling well fine, we'll continue to be these terrible people, or you unite them in feeling yes, we are difficult and welcome to Katherine Black Panthers 2.0, I don't know. But it creates a clear division. [Participant 15: SP]

### Theme 5: Impact on youth

Many adult interviewees were oblivious to the number of young people who were members of 'Town and Territory Matters', and therefore bearing witness to the antisocial behaviour of a number of adults on that group.

From what I see young people that would be most impacted...aren't a member of that site and aren't active. [If a young person were to see this content] it would be shocking. There are some really vile stuff that is said in that space...swearing or being racist or being derogatory. [Participant 3: SP]

During the youth focus group and interviews with local youth, however, it became clear that the majority were members of the group and all too aware of this behaviour.

I know personally that a lot of the Facebook pages, especially the closed groups that I'm in are very free with talking about how bad young people are and how bad they can be. [Participant 7: LY]

There is never anything positive said about youth on Facebook ever. [Q: Ever?] I can't say I've ever seen anything in my opinion. [Male YFG]

A minority of adults were unbothered by the concern that it may be negatively impacting youth; "I don't think it does very much damage to the youth" [Participant 16: SP], with some service providers stating that, not only were the youth aware, but that some thrived on the attention.

Some of them...will boast and gloat and say, "Hey they got my photo on"...because they got off with it so it's, "Hey, I'm one up...I'm king of the gang." They get a bit of respect from their peers. [Participant 11: SP]

I think for some, it's a game, because what it does is it creates a challenge to the young people. And I've talked to a few of them that think it's awesome. [Participant 22: SP]

The majority of service providers were very concerned about both the short and long term impact of this negative attention for these young people. Short term concerns included impacts of the threat of violence, the possibility of actual violence and isolation of vulnerable youth. Common long-term concerns related to long-lasting negative labels attached to 'badly behaved' individuals; and the perpetuation of an unhealthy culture of, and tolerance for, stereotyping and damaging assumptions.

If we're forever treating them like, 'you're that kid', they don't get past that. [Participant 9: SP]

But the circles that these young people usually move in, they're not affected. It's only if they were looking for work. [Participant 11: SP]

The youth demonstrated a dissent in discussions about the stereotyping young people as criminals, with some feeling that all young people were viewed as negative and others stating they had never felt targeted.

By default, we're all kind of painted with the same brush. [Participant 14; LY]

I don't really have an opinion on it. It doesn't really affect me because I don't really want to break into anyone's home. [Female YFG]

I guess it might be different for different types of people who come from different backgrounds or anything like that. But I've never been told I was a bad person because of stuff people said on Facebook. [Female YFG]

Discussing the adults concerned about this impact on youth, with the youth themselves, once again saw the adult's opinions were regarded with a level of disdain. It appeared that youth saw adults as overly hyped about the platform and its relevance.

I don't really know a lot of youth who spend hours and hours scrolling through 'Town and Territory Matters' as much as adults just sitting there, scrolling through. [Male, YFG]

Maybe [adults] assume that it's going to affect us and take on a sort of social justice warrior kind of stance [but] it doesn't really impact [us] [Female, YFG]

A nuanced observation from a local youth noted that this issue is not new; rather that social media has intensified it.

All you will hear about...young people is how horrible they are...it's been the same for decades...but now it's a more prominent platform. [Participant 14: LY]

#### Theme 6: Community services potential role and place on social media

The role of services and community members to intervene appears to either be moral obligation to contribute positively or complete refusal to engage and legitimise. It is both very polarised and personal.

I actively search for positive stories...I just [post them] on the page and I just put it up with the title 'celebrating our future leaders'. And so that's my give back. [Participant 3: SP]

I disabled all access that I had to any sort of social media, so deleted any accounts that I had on anything. I just didn't have to be seeing [the negative posts]. [Participant 15: SP]

Service providers who worked in government agencies were even more concerned about posting, noting the repercussions they would face from an organisational perspective.

You can't do that. In a professional capacity, you can't do it. So it's really fruitless. [Participant 9: SP]

We're not even in a position to post or have an account...I wouldn't do it on my personal account. [Participant 2: SP]

The focus of many of these conversations revolved around the highly negative skew of Facebook posts. Many interviewees suggested a need to contribute to change in the conversation about youth, to provide a positive element to balance the overtly negative portrayal.

I feel like Katherine makes a habit of focusing on the negative and forgetting the positive. [Female YGP]

If the proportion of media, social media traffic, was positive, it would be really positive. It would be great. That's how you get your message around. [Participant 2: SP]

This was applicable to adults and young people alike, regarding showcasing both positive community development and positive community role models.



I think using social media to clearly demonstrate to the wider community that there's good things' happening is very important [Participant 16: SP]

Somebody needs to drive that [positive role models] in a coordinated way. We've got an amazing female AFL Indigenous team down there. [Participant 22: SP]

The function of creating events, sharing posts, and creating groups was very important to the participants. Young people saw it as an appropriate way to be accessed by service providers and kept up to date about relevant activities.

For a lot of young people I think it's very much a chain of communication between organisations and young people and pretty much every organisation in Katherine at this point has a Facebook page that they use to update what's going on and different events and stuff like that. [Participate 7: LY]

The role of community education was also suggested a number of times. Service providers were very self-aware of their unique understanding of the factors contributing to a young person's decision to engage in criminal activity. Not surprisingly, the major suggestion to combat this issue was education.

We need to do more community education. Put your hand up instead of banging them and bashing them. It's about having more and more people talking in a positive slant. If we can be strategic and collaborative about using social media to do that we can influence public perception. [Participant 11: SP]

People just don't understand that kids are out on the street because it's a safer place for them to be than their homes. [Participant 22: SP]

Timing of these episodes of vigilantism was identified as important factor in selecting ideal opportunities to engage with community members in a positive manner. Comments were made about 'mango madness'<sup>5</sup> being a time of particularly high crime, and subsequently negative social media activity. The anecdotal increase in crime in Katherine during this period was attributed to the number of people coming in from remote communities to avoid being cut off in the ensuring flooding of waterways and wetlands. The swell in population causes overcrowding and exacerbates a number of existing social issues. This time period concedes with the two month summer holidays from school.

...when there is a flux of crime the community is really angry and quick to respond...when crime rate is lower and the community is calmer they're more likely to listen. [Participant 41 IS]

At the start of the year crime will be really bad, young people's perception in media will be really bad, there'll be lots of fights, stuff like that...As the year goes to the middle of the year everything calms down...The Facebook groups calm down and it's not as youth focussed

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<sup>5</sup> Mango Madness, also called tropical seasonal affective disorder, refers to the monsoonal build up experienced in the northern tropics of Australia, when the mangos are ripe. This heightened humidity and heat is associated with fatigue, aggression, poorer mental health and an increase in homicide and sexual assault rates in the NT (Oppermann et al. 2017; Purtill 2014)



anymore and it's more about celebrating young people rather than villainising them. And then as the year builds back into the wet season the chaos begins again. [Participant 7: LY]

Local youth pointed out that the negative environment of Katherine community groups might impact the way the JR project is received, but reiterated that Facebook was an appropriate and easy way to access young people's opinion for a project that strongly concerns them.

[Facebook will] be important in the way of getting the opinion from young people, but to use or view the platform and how other people perceive young people, it will be incredibly damaging to the reinvestment. [Participant 14: LY]

If you're smart with it. Because I think it's very easy to just think that we're going to throw this on social media and people are going to see it and care about it. [Participant 19: LY]

Obviously you've got to spend a bit of money on it but they do use them correctly. [Participant 19: LY]

A participant whose workplace did engage with social media discussed the vitality of this engagement for both promotion and justification purposes, aspects which are both really important to the JR project.

For businesses and for organisations like ours, there is a need for us to have a social media presence, a) for the consumer and the kids to see this is what [organisation] does, b) for the government and us to justify what you're investing in. [Participant 20: SP]

It was also felt the strong community ownership of the project should be promoted, given the frequency with which outsiders come and go from Katherine, leaving legacy of ambitious and unsustainable projects.<sup>6</sup>

They're looking to come to the Northern Territory, get their skin name for their resume and go back down south, once they've had their 'I've had indigenous experience' written on their resume [Participant 20: SP]

[JR should be promoted to the community] not [with] American accents overdoing it and things like that, with actual Katherine local people who are involved and are seeing the overarching benefit [Participant 15: SP]

## DISCUSSION

### Facebook is for "like, the older generation"

The adult participants in this study interacted mostly via Facebook, if they chose to engage with social media at all. There were very few balanced reactions to the topic; participants either saw its potential, but caveated this with a follow up discussion about its practical perils, or solely abhorred it. Buckingham (2007) has noted this as a common dichotomous pattern regarding adults and technology; "popular discussions of the internet, for example, veer between celebration and paranoia" (pg. 31). The prevailing reluctance to accept emerging technologies is seen in many

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<sup>6</sup> The NT, and in particularly regional and remote NT, has the highest population turnover in Australia (Taylor & Wilson 2016), which has a sizable impact on workforce, particularly in health, education and law. Many young professionals have been accused of using regional work to "get a jump on their careers before moving to the next place" (Lynch 2017, paragraph 7).

adults, as well as the overemphasis they place on its importance comparative to young people, who have grown up with the medium and regard it as the norm.

Despite apathy commonly being associated with poor mental health (Lavik et al. 2018), it appears the lack of value young person attributed to adult's activity on this platform, reduces its power and therefore its impact. In this case, these paternalistic concerns may be misplaced, as it appears the impact on young people's social capital is less than originally hypothesised, thus less damage is being caused to their social support networks and therefore their health (De Silva et al. 2005).

Where this stereotyping may become problematic is outside of this peer group, particularly if it affects, as hypothesised by some participants, young people's ability to enter the workforce or develop beyond their adolescent labels. When young people are attached to negative labels, particularly ones regarding criminality or violence, it can become a 'self-fulfilling prophecy', resulting in further anti-social behaviour (Bolzan 2003). The self-image developed in adolescence, which is impacted by communication from adults, is intrinsically linked to long-term self-esteem, achievement of realistic goals and maturity (Sandu et al. 2015).

### Small town news on a big time platform

Given the high prevalence of Facebook use amongst adults in Katherine comparable to any other social media platform, it is predictable that a major form of community communication occurred via this medium. The relevance and role of community Facebook groups in Katherine was consistent with what has been established in other regional areas. Having easily accessible specific community information is extremely important as mainstream media services "only cover the larger communities" (Bird et al. 2012 pg.32). Interestingly some participants also discussed the group as a reminder of other worldviews and opinions, when they existed in social and employment circles that exhibited highly levels of homogeneity. The idea that people with similar worldviews congregate in certain professions and social groups is not new, as a moral worldview has a strong relationship with community (Vaisey 2008). However, the level of self-awareness portrayed by these participants is interesting. Bird et al. (2012) discusses these groups as "an important resource to tap into and review informal communication, something that was previously inaccessible" (pg. 27), which is likely to have been realised by more socially aware individuals. These Facebook groups, therefore, are likely to be worthwhile sources of public perception, akin to thematic analyses of popular media. Miranda et al. (2016) discusses social media as a place "wherein ordinary people in ordinary social networks (as opposed to professional journalists) can create user-generated news" (pg. 304). When considering smaller communities that do not have extensive media coverage the Facebook groups should be considered as a data rich source to be utilised. This may be applicable later in the JR project, regarding evaluation.

### Dealing with 'crime' through Facebook

Within the current climate of the NT youth justice system, there is huge scrutiny to ensure the physical and emotional mistreatment of youth detainees, which was highlighted by the ABC investigation, is not repeated (Hitch 2017). The preference is to keep youth from punitive punishments, and instead focus on early intervention and diversion (Allison 2016). In the NT, diversion programs are contracted out to a number of non-government organisations (Northern Territory Government 2018) and as highlighted in the interviews, can either work very well or very poorly. Participants discussed the frustration felt by Katherine residents, who were venting their anger on Facebook.

The depiction of youth that was described, though potentially harmful and certainly heavily negatively skewed, is less aggressive in tone than other depictions recently portrayed in popular media. For example, in direct reaction to a perceived increase in youth crime, community members were reportedly organising night crime patrols in NT urban areas via Facebook groups (Dunlevie 2016; Smee 2014). In another NT regional town, paramilitary groups have been advertising themselves on the community Facebook group, looking for individuals “with firearm experience” (Kurmelovs 2015). It should be noted that these examples are portrayed in popular media and therefore there are likely to be engaging in “alarmist headlines” to capitalise on shock as a method of generating engagement and discussion (Livingstone & Brake 2010). No academic research has been conducted on these specific groups to establish the frequency and outcomes of these posts. Despite this caveat, the level of violence relayed as appearing on Katherine community Facebook groups is still concerning, particularly given racial undertones of the stereotyping, which was commonplace. While adults discussed the levels of online racism they had witnessed and provided examples, the most telling piece of data was collected during the youth focus group.

Many of the youth did appear to be frustrated by the level of negative attention directed at other young people in general, but they did not necessarily connect this to themselves, and did not appear to personally experience any negative fall out from this. They spoke about the youth who were being ‘named and shamed’ on the Facebook group as not being like them. Some felt it was wrong to post photos, while some felt that these depictions did not affect them at all, and were blasé about any suggestion of an attempt to combat the issue. The discussions regarding the ‘right’ way to have conversations about crime was particularly interesting. It appeared that indicative approval was granted to informative posts regarding safety, yet a high level of critique was evident towards posts interpreted as excessive complaining. As Katherine residents themselves, it was clear that crime and the fear of break-ins is a facet of their everyday life, and the role of the community Facebook groups as a modern ‘Neighbourhood watch’ (Shaw 2017) was important. Though only specifically stated in a few interviews, and never by the youth themselves, the separation between these engaged ‘good’ kids and the disengaged ‘bad’ ones being discussed online seemed to be reflected in whether or not they were perceived as Aboriginal.

### Racial profiling and the alienation of difference

The white privilege displayed by the youth focus group was displayed by their disconnect to the youth who were being depicted negatively online. Adult and youth participants often referred to these individuals as having different backgrounds or upbringings to themselves, and often outright stated that Facebook posts were targeting Indigenous youth specifically. These online discussions feed into a damaging narrative perpetrated since colonisation, regarding the innate criminality of Indigenous Australian’s (Cunneen & Russell 2017). This occurrence on social media is known as ‘platformed racism’ (Matamoros-Fernández 2017), which is extremely concerning given the triangulated link between racism, poor health outcomes, and involvement in the justice system (García & Sharif 2015). Racism and discrimination, whilst endemic across Australia, is particularly visible in the NT given the lasting imprint of the NT Intervention<sup>7</sup>, which saw the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 suspended (Allison, Schwartz & Cunneen 2012; Australian Human Rights Commission 2007).

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<sup>7</sup> The Northern Territory Emergency Response (2007), colloquially referred to as the ‘Intervention’, saw the Australian Federal Government announce a national emergency in response to a report into the sexual abuse of Indigenous children in remote communities. It has been largely commended both nationally and internationally as an abuse of human rights (Australian Human Rights Commission 2007; Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association and Centre for Health Equity Training 2010).

The impact of these very visible online discussions on media and public discourse cannot be underestimated. From a macro point of view, these may have serious health impacts on young Aboriginal Australian's, as negative stereotyping further perpetuates racist beliefs and actions, subsequently impacting health and justice outcomes (Cunneen 2005; Larson et al. 2007; Paradies, Harris & Anderson 2008; Phelan & Link 2015). Whilst the visibility of this prejudice was hypothesised by adults to cause distress to youth, this distress appears to have greater applicability to the adults in Katherine; with a number refusing to engage with it at all because they found it so stressful.

The content of one's Facebook feed has been intrinsically linked to mood; in 2014 Facebook conducted a controversial study regarding their ability to manipulate users moods based on the algorithm which dictates the posts each user see's (Kramer, Guillory & Hancock 2014). The ideological division discussed between 'left' and 'right' wing factions within Katherine, appeared to be what was causing a level of concern among service providers. It is unlikely that this is a new phenomenon, instead it is likely that social media is just making these views more visible to individuals who previously would not have been exposed to this. As discussed by a participant, this exposure appeared to be encouraging division in the town to a point where there was "no amicable ground" [Participant 20]. An important space where JR could be beneficial is community cohesion, which is a contributing factor to a number of poor health and justice outcomes in all demographics (Cantle 2018; Burnett 2004).

### Using social media through JR: An opportunity for Katherine

As a community movement, the Katherine JR working group has the ability to engage in social media unconstrained by the bureaucratic red tape of organisational policy. This, in itself, is a huge freedom. It has been established that the majority of Katherine community are members of, or are at least aware of, the major community Facebook group, and therefore it is an ideal access point for engagement.

The most commonly suggested antidote to the frustration and stereotyping portrayed on this group was education. Education about what the service providers already know from their professional lives; that these young people are often facing a raft of physical, social and emotional pressures that lead to their engagement in criminal activity (Burke 2016); have faces significant traumatic experience in their lived; and that stereotyping Aboriginal youth as criminals contributes to a problematic narrative that has been in existence since colonisation (Cunneen & Russell 2017).

The disconnect highlighted between adults use and knowledge of social media and that of young people, indicates that in order to successfully engage in this space considerable consultation will be required. This will require engagement with youth in general, and in particular, the demographic who are stereotyped as the 'troublemakers'. Facebook was highlighted as an appropriate avenue to access youth and their opinions, though again, this may not be the case for those who are being targeted on Facebook.

There were a number of concerns raised about the possible damage that could be done if the project received backlash on social media. This was particularly noted regarding the delicate subject of funding. This fear may be alleviated if the approach takes into account other factors, such as the evolving community context.

As discussed by participants there are additional challenges recognised by service providers come October in Katherine, which increase social pressures and result in increases in crime rates. A

number of participants noted the volatility of the community at this time, and advised against attempting to engage in an overt positive manner at the time.

The themes highlighted through this study have illuminated potential future directions within the JR social media space; both for the community working group to consider in their strategic planning and regarding gaps to be addressed in further research. These will be elaborated on in the following chapter.

## CONCLUDING CHAPTER

This research has highlighted a number of interesting themes, which include strategies for the KYJRP to consider in the social media space, and potential avenues for further research. This chapter will discuss the outcomes, strengths and limitations, the link of this sub-study to overarching KYJRP, and the ongoing work to be completed.

### Outcomes

The research achieved the initial aims, and beyond this, also identified possible avenues for both action by the KYJRP and further research. The aims of the research were to investigate the role of social media in facilitating and broadcasting community discussions regarding youth in Katherine town; and the subsequent positioning of youth in Katherine. As highlighted in the findings paper the role of social media in Katherine in general was identified as a crucial one, particularly in a regional context. These groups did play a role in facilitating and broadcasting negative youth depictions, with participants describing youth related posts as frequent. The impact of this positioning of youth is dependent on which age demographic you consider. Engaged, non-Indigenous youth, whilst they did not appreciate the negative depictions, did not feel like their personal positioning in the community was at all altered by the depictions. Researchers were also told by service providers that the disengaged youth who were being explicitly targeted online were unconcerned by the attention, treating the experience as a game. This warrants further investigation. Interestingly, no information was mentioned regarding the impact on engaged Indigenous youth. The positioning of youth in the eyes of adults was highly negative, and many participants demonstrated the rather visceral reaction of avoidance, and/or hyperbolic discussions with other adults about how awful this must be for youth. It is unsurprising that young people have very little personal investment in adult 'keyboard warriors' on a community Facebook group. Adolescents are notoriously egocentric; a by-product of their developing cognition (Galanaki 2012). The general negative attitude to youth in Katherine is experienced universally. As noted by a local youth, it has only been raised as an issue now because of the high visibility afforded by the platform of Facebook.

Katherine Council and local services have been directly accused of being discriminatory towards Indigenous people a number of times in the media (Rawlinson 2013; Smith, Ralph & Pollard 2017; Squires 2006). The role Katherine plays, as a hub for a number of neighbouring dry remote communities, such as Barunga, Ngukarr and Lajamanu, should not be underestimated. The impact of wet season on remote communities in the NT, and the subsequent displacement was discussed in a number of interviews. There are also a number of historic and current alcohol and crime reduction policies in the NT that have been accused of being racially motivated (Gray et al 2015; Hose 2017). Given this context it is not surprising that the commentary online is racially charged.

### What this means for justice reinvestment and health in Katherine

Katherine, as portrayed on Facebook, is a divided town; both racially and ideologically. Alienation and assumptions are issues of the human condition, not created by Facebook. They are just broadcast by the platform. Social media is sometimes thought to encourage 'bad manners' or more extreme views because of the nature of disconnection between those posting and those viewing these posts (Wood 2016). A potential explanation for the lack of impact discussed by youth is that the adults were not exposed to the stereotyping and negative depictions of youth that the youth themselves are exposed to everyday, potentially in a much broader array of social platforms, including those that are peer to peer.

The repercussions of this divide are an apparent lack of community cohesion and alienation of certain groups within the community. This impacts on both the justice and health sector. Alienation,



and the assumptions and stereotypes that come with this, have a massive impact on both propensity to engage in criminal behaviour and poor health outcomes, as outlined extensively in Chapter 2. Katherine Hospital has been taking significant steps to improve elements of alienation felt by Indigenous patients to reduce discharges against medical advice and non-compliance (Cohen 2017). Similarly, a consortium of local health and social services are currently working together in the Katherine Individual Support Program (KISP) to deliver case management and outreach services (Fitzgerald 2018b). The momentum KYJRP is creating in the justice space suggests similar positive changes can, and already are, being achieved in this space.

### Strengths

The collaborative approach to this research was a huge strength, allowing for a research area to be identified by community members, who were involved throughout the process, and who will ultimately be presented with the results. By definition collaborative research requires the ongoing commitment from the researchers to engage with, be guided by, and privilege the worldviews, of the researched (Jean-Louise & Lomas 2003). Whilst this thesis will be submitted without any final input from the working group, given the tight timeframe common of postgraduate coursework requirements, a trip has been scheduled to Katherine in November 2018 during which time I will present the findings to the working group. The thesis will also be provided to members at this time, alongside a one page summary of findings, for their information. Feedback will be requested and addressed prior to submission of the empirical paper to any academic journals. In recognition of the role a number of Katherine-based individuals played in accessing key participants, and providing a local lens to interrogate the analysed data, it is probable they will be named as co-authors on this submission, subject to their agreement.

As an applied research project this work has immediate relevance and impact for the community. A fundamental part of assessing how valuable research is to a discipline is how it impacts on policy and practice contexts (Grimshaw et al. 2012). Research knowledge translation is often discussed as being challenging (Graham et al. 2006) but as an applied and collaborative piece of research means that this study will automatically influence the practice of the KYJR endeavour, thus likely to make an impact and prove its 'worth'.

My age was another strength, in regards to the youth participants. As a 22 year old I was not that much older than the cohort who participated in the Youth Focus Group, and therefore able to connect with them in a different way to an older researcher. As Generation Z, we have all grown up with social media as an integral part of our lives, and I could absolutely relate to their comments about the different platforms for different 'group' within their lives (ie. family comparative to friends). Having a much smaller age gap also removes an element of the power dynamic (Råheim et al. 2016), allowing for the candid and open conversation that occurred.

All researchers involved in the data collection, including myself, all live and work in the NT, which gave us a lived experience of the unique political and social context of the project. This enhanced our ability to both engage and analyse throughout the project.

### Limitations

The sampling of the youth in this study was heavily skewed towards non-Indigenous, highly engaged young people. This limits the generalisability of the findings. The youth focus group was conducted in tandem within a local youth group session, and by default those engaging with the youth group were also the young people who were engaged in school and other activities. They also had the support at home to invest their free time to organise events and plan fundraising. They were not

regarded as the disengaged Aboriginal young people who were being berated online. Despite hearsay comments from service providers that the Indigenous youth who were being berated online often saw it as a game, and were proud of their 'troublemaker' label, this alone is not enough to confirm this reaction as the norm. Further study regarding the nuanced differences in social media use among youth of different ages and ethnicity is required. Within this, investigation of the platforms used by these different demographics is also key, as research shows Indigenous youth and non-Indigenous youth engage with slightly different platforms (Rice et al. 2016). For example, non-Indigenous youth in this study had never heard of DivaChat, though it was mentioned several times by service providers as a platform of concern.

The time pressure of postgraduate coursework requirements was an unavoidable limitation. Whilst CR is best conducted over a longer period of time, the existing relationships one co-researcher already had with the community (FA) facilitated productive initial engagement and hastened relationship building. Despite this it still acknowledged as an important limitation.

I was not involved in all interviews, which limited my familiarity with interview context. However, I did code all social media content of the interviews. For the interviews where I was present, I have a deeper contextual understanding. Discussion with co-researchers was used as a strategy to deepen my understanding of those where I was not directly involved, but it remains a limitation to the analysis.

Though my age was noted earlier as a strength it was also a limitation; as a novice researcher with minimal prior experience engaging with service providers, and no previous experience conducting qualitative research. This is not uncommon for a student completing a research project as part of an MPH and the impact of this inexperience was minimised by substantial mentoring and capacity building by my supervisor, JS.

Despite previous statements about the strength of the researchers being based in the NT we are based in Darwin and it should be acknowledged that we do not have as strong an understanding of the specific local context as a Katherine resident would.

## Recommendations

The research highlights some important areas of both information for the working group and potential further research.

For the working group, should they wish to pursue social media as a facet of the JR project, there are a number of key points to consider. Overall positive promotion of a Katherine driven project was thought to be important in changing conversations about youth justice, and the perceived lack of action regarding youth. This enthusiasm was caveated by notes regarding the potential for backlash and the lasting damage it may do to the project if it was not received well. To that end, consideration should be taken regarding the effect of wet season and 'mango madness', as well as the framing and presentation of the project (particularly in regards to funding). Obtaining community support was acknowledged as a key element for the longevity and of the project. Given the disconnect in views between various age groups, it is important that consultation with the youth, particularly disengaged youth, be prioritised. KYJRP also offers the opportunity to provide community education around the reasons why young people might commit crimes to reduce reductive online vitriol.

An area which require further research is the purported disconnect between different age groups in social media use and consumption, and the sizable hole in the data regarding youth from different



social backgrounds, notably those who experience significant disadvantage and/or who identify as Indigenous. It is envisaged this will be addressed in the on-going work of the KYJRP.

### Further work

On 18 July 2018 the Menzies School of Health Research team was awarded a 'Menzies Small Grant' for the sum of \$38,500 to further explore youth voices to continue the KYJRP work. The research team, including myself, will continue five more youth focus groups with a more diverse range of young people. We hope this work will provide deeper insights into the areas of deficit related to this research and continue to make a meaningful contribution to equity and social security for youth in Katherine. This work will also inform future attempts to pursue Australian Research Council funding to monitor and evaluate the impact of YJR in Katherine over the long-term (Smith et al. 2018).

### Looking towards the future

This sub-study has highlighted that Katherine and the NT still has significant progress to make regarding race relations, particularly with local Indigenous communities. The observation of a community divided over both race and ideologies is not unique, and this thread running through Chapter 3 should be considered as it may have broader applicability across the nation. After all, the over representation of Aboriginal Australian's in the justice system, and the poor health outcomes comparative to their non-Aboriginal counterparts, are national issues. Whilst NT does exhibit the worst statistics in these areas, the unique demographics and spread of the population in this jurisdiction contributes towards the crisis point that NT is often described at. It is worth suggesting that NT is outwardly displaying realities that quietly bubble under the surface in every other jurisdiction. Whilst this may be seen as negatively, it is actually an opportunity for change and for NT to be positioned as leaders in YJR. The KYJRP is well positioned to lead improvements in social, justice and health outcomes in Katherine in this way. I trust this research will contribute to this cause.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Ethics Approval

Office of Research and Innovation, Ethics  
T: 08 8946 6063 E: [ethics@cdu.edu.au](mailto:ethics@cdu.edu.au)



8 June 2018

Dr. Sarah Ireland

*Via email*

[sarah.ireland@cdu.edu.au](mailto:sarah.ireland@cdu.edu.au)

Dear Sarah,

RE: **H18044** – Katherine Youth Justice Reinvestment Project

#### Human Research Ethics Committee – Proposal Approval

Thank you for submitting the above proposal for ethical review. The proposal has been considered under the auspices of the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee (CDU-HREC) and is **approved from the date of this letter to the expiry date listed below.**

**EXPIRY DATE: 30/12/2018**

An annual progress report must be provided to the Ethics Office before each anniversary of the commencement date. This approval is contingent on submission of a satisfactory annual progress report.

**APPROVAL IS SUBJECT TO** the following:

1. The safe and ethical conduct of this project is entirely the responsibility of the investigators and their institution(s).
2. The Principal Investigator must **report immediately any event or circumstance that might affect the ethical acceptability** of the project, including:
  - Adverse effects of the project on participants and the steps taken to deal with these;
  - All other unforeseen events that influence the protocol or participants; and
  - New information that may invalidate the ethical integrity of the study.
3. The Principal Investigator must obtain approval for any **variation to the protocol** (including the addition of new investigators) prior to implementation the proposed variations. Requests for approval of variations must be submitted in accordance with the procedures of the Ethics Office.
4. The Principal Investigator must advise the University immediately of **unapproved protocol deviations or protocol violations.**
5. The Principal Investigator may request an **extension of the project past the expiry date listed above.** An extension may be requested at any time, however, the preferred time and method of requesting an extension of ethical approval is in the **annual progress report.**

6. The Principal Investigator must notify the Ethics Office of his or her **inability to continue as Principal Investigator**, including the name of and contact information for their replacement. The research may not proceed without an approved Principal Investigator.
7. Confidentiality of personal information of research participants should be maintained at all times as required by law.
8. You must forward a copy of this letter to all investigators and to any associated organisations.

This letter constitutes ethical approval from the CDU Human Research Ethics Committee only.

Should you wish to discuss the above research project further, please contact the Ethics Team via email: [ethics@cd�.edu.au](mailto:ethics@cd�.edu.au) or telephone: (08) 8946 6063.

Best wishes for the success of your project.

Yours sincerely



Professor Lawrence Cram  
Acting Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee  
Charles Darwin University, NHMRC Registration No. EC00154  
<http://www.cdu.edu.au/research/ori/human-ethics>

*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).*

## Appendix 2: Reciprocal Ethics Approval



19 July 2018

Ethics Administration Office  
File Reference Number: HREC-2018-3191  
Phone: (08) 8946 8687 or (08) 8946 8692  
Email: ethics@menzies.edu.au

Professor James Smith  
Wellbeing and Preventable Chronic Diseases Division  
Menzies School of Health Research  
PO Box 41096  
Casuarina NT 0810

Dear Professor Smith,

**HREC Reference Number: 2018-3191**

**Project Title: Katherine Youth Justice Reinvestment Project**

Thank you for submitting the above research project for ethical review. This project was considered by the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Northern Territory Department of Health and Menzies School of Health Research (HREC) in accordance with the NHMRC *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007* and guidelines for minimising duplication of ethical review.

I am pleased to advise that the **Chair of the HREC** has granted **reciprocal ethical approval** of this research project to be undertaken in the Top End of the Northern Territory.

**Approval Date: 19/07/2018**

**Approved Timeline: 19/07/ 2018 – 30/12/2018**

**Please submit a final report to this HREC: 30/12/2018**

**Please note:**

- The HREC endorses the approval granted by the **Charles Darwin University** Ethics Committee as the lead HREC (Ref number: H18044) and reciprocal approval is granted subject to the researchers' continued compliance with conditions set by the **Charles Darwin University**, without further review by the NT Dept Health & Menzies HREC.

**APPROVAL IS SUBJECT TO** the following conditions being met:

1. The Coordinating Principal Investigator will **immediately report anything that might warrant review** of ethical approval of the project.
2. The Coordinating Principal Investigator will notify the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Northern Territory Department of Health and Menzies School of Health Research (HREC) of any event that requires a **modification or amendment to the protocol or other project documents** and submit any required amendments in accordance with the instructions provided by the HREC. These instructions can be found on the Menzies' website.
3. The Coordinating Principal Investigator will submit any necessary reports related to the **safety of research participants (e.g. protocol deviations, protocol violations)** in accordance with the HREC's policy and procedures. These guidelines can be found on the Menzies' website.
4. The Coordinating Principal Investigator will **report** to the HREC **annually** and notify the HREC when the project is completed at all sites using the specified forms. Forms and instructions may be found on the Menzies' website.



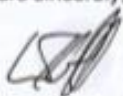
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5. The Coordinating Principal Investigator will notify the HREC if the project is **discontinued at a participating site before the expected completion date**, and provide the reason/s for discontinuance.
6. The Coordinating Principal Investigator will notify the HREC of any plan to **extend the duration of the project past the approval period listed above** and will submit any associated required documentation. The preferred time and method of requesting an extension of ethical approval is during the **annual progress report**. However, an extension may be requested at any time.
7. The Coordinating Principal Investigator will notify the HREC of his or her **inability to continue as Coordinating Principal Investigator**, including the name of and contact information for a replacement.
8. The safe and ethical conduct of this project is entirely the responsibility of the investigators and their institution(s).
9. Researchers should immediately report anything which might affect continuing ethical acceptance of the project, including:
  - Adverse effects of the project on participants and the steps taken to deal with these;
  - Other unforeseen events;
  - New information that may invalidate the ethical integrity of the study; and
  - Proposed changes in the project.
10. Approval for a further twelve months, within the original proposed timeframe, will be granted upon receipt of an annual progress report if the HREC is satisfied that the conduct of the project has been consistent with the original protocol.
11. Confidentiality of research participants should be maintained at all times as required by law.
12. The Patient Information Sheet and the Consent Form shall be printed on the relevant site letterhead with full contact details.
13. The Patient Information Sheet must provide a brief outline of the research activity including: risks and benefits, withdrawal options, contact details of the researchers and must also state that the Human Research Ethics Administrators can be contacted (telephone and email) for information concerning policies, rights of participants, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical conduct of the study.
14. You must forward a copy of this letter to all investigators and to your institution (if applicable).

**This letter constitutes ethical approval only.** This project cannot proceed at any site until separate research governance authorisation has been obtained from the CEO or Delegate of the institution under whose auspices the research will be conducted at that site. Should you wish to discuss the above research project further, please contact the Ethics Administrators via email: [ethics@menzies.edu.au](mailto:ethics@menzies.edu.au) or telephone: (08) 8946 8687 or (08) 8946 8692. The Human Research Ethics Committee of the Northern Territory Department of Health and Menzies School of Health Research wishes you every continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Lewis Campbell  
Chair  
Human Research Ethics Committee  
of the Northern Territory Department of Health  
and Menzies School of Health Research  
<http://www.menzies.edu.au/ethics>

**This HREC is registered with the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and operates in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). NHMRC Reg no. EC00153**



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### Appendix 3: Letter of Support

Ms Sarah Clifford  
c/o sarah.clifford@students.cdu.edu.au

13 June 2018

Dear Ms Clifford,  
**Letter of support**

I refer to your email of 29 May 2018 in which you request a letter of support from the Katherine Youth Justice Reinvestment Group (KYJRG) for your research: *"The community depictions of youth in Katherine as portrayed through social media"*

KYJRG anticipates that your research will provide useful insight into community perceptions of youth and crime in our region. We are therefore most happy to provide you with this letter of support.

Thanks and regards,



Thomasin Opie  
Chair  
Katherine Youth Justice Reinvestment Group

#### Appendix 4: Outline of Engagement

<b>Dates of visit</b>	<b>Researchers</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
5 March 2018	JS, KR	Meeting with KYJRWG and local stakeholders to consider research components of the KYJR project
12 – 13 April 2018	BC, SC	Meeting with KYJRWG and local stakeholders to update project progression and next months New Territory Forum
10 – 12 May 2018	BC, FA, JS, SC	Attending the Katherine 'New Territory Forum' and consultations with KYJRWG as well as local stakeholders to consider research components of the KYJR project
18 – 19 May 2018	BC, JS	Co-facilitating and provide support for the Katherine Youth Justice Reinvestment project Strategic Planning Session
7 – 10 June 2018	BC	Meeting with KYJRWG and local stakeholders to update project progression, including Ethics Research Update and key stakeholder consultations
10 – 11 July 2018	BC, JS, SC	Meeting with Sub-Working Group and interviewing local community service representatives
9 – 10 August 2018	BC, SC	Meeting with Sub-Working Group and interviewing local community service representatives and youth
28 – 30 August 2018	BC, JS	Interviewing and Focus Groups with local community service representatives
5 – 6 September 2018	SC	Conducting youth Focus Group
10 – 12 September 2018	BC, FA, JS, KR	Consultations with KYJRWG, Interviewing local community service representatives

## Katherine Youth Justice Reinvestment Project

### INFORMATION SHEET – LOCAL YOUTH

**This is yours to keep.**

#### **What is the project about?**

The aim of this project is to help find ways to keep youth in Katherine engaged in fun and exciting activities that keep them out of trouble, so they don't end up in jail.

Research shows that listening to young people is important for making services relevant to their needs. We think your story is important. It will help to provide better services for youth in Katherine.

This project builds on a previous project from 2016, which showed the Katherine community supported this idea.

#### **Who is completing the research?**

Australian Red Cross has engaged a team of researchers from Charles Darwin University (CDU), Menzies School of Health Research (MSHR) and James Cook University (JCU) to undertake this project with the Katherine community.

Investigators include Professor James Smith (Menzies), Ms Kim Robertson (CDU), Mr Stanley Law (Red Cross) and Ms Fiona Allison (JCU). It is supported by Mr Ben Christie (Project Officer) and Ms Sarah Clifford (Masters of Public Health student). They have lots of experience in Indigenous health, education and justice research.

#### **What will the project do?**

This project will seek the views of *local youth*, local Indigenous community members and local service providers about opportunities to keep the youth of Katherine out of trouble. We are interested in the reasons for, and impacts of, youth crime in Katherine. We want to know what can be done to make this change.

Your story is important to us. This could help to inform change in youth and other services in Katherine. We would like to talk to you about what you think would work and why. The information you provide will be used to guide a plan of action for youth in Katherine over the next 3-5 years.

#### **How will the project be done?**

The project will be undertaken in the Katherine, NT. It will involve a combination of data collection methods like:

- group discussions,
- individual interviews,
- yarning circles, and
- surveys.

These will typically last for 30-90 minutes. You will be invited to participate in one or more of these research

activities throughout the project. Your participation is voluntary. You will be offered an iTunes or movie voucher to show our appreciation for your valuable contribution.

We will also do interviews with local Indigenous community members and service providers. We may also take photos or videos to support change for youth in Katherine. You will have the opportunity to say not to photos or videos if you like.



**When will this project happen?**

The research will occur between March to September 2018.

**Benefits and Risks**

If you choose to participate, you will be helping people who are involved in youth justice, health, education and corrections work (both government and non-government services) to incorporate changes into their work. This will ensure services better meet youth and community needs.

There are no specific risks to you or the community if you choose to give information through this research. However, if you feel unsettled or distressed as a result of your participation in this research, we encourage you to contact eheadspace on 1800 650 890 or kids helpline on 1800 551 800. You may also wish to contact a local health service such as Wurli-Wurlinjang on (08) 89729100 or the Katherine Mental Health Service on 08 8973 8724.

**Use of your information**

If you choose to be part of this project you should know that focus groups, interviews and yarning sessions will be recorded and transcribed for research purposes. Fake names will be used to protect your identity if you want the information you provide to be non-identifiable.

During this

project, staff may also take photos or video clips. Please let them know if you don't want to be recorded or if you don't want your image used in a certain way. Mandatory reporting requirements means that legally the researchers may be obliged to disclose the information you provide, particularly in areas relating to crime, sex and violence. Information that you provide may also be used in publications or other products such as research papers, reports or presentations. We will present results back to the community at the completion of the research process.

**Safety of your information**

We will store recorded information in a safe and secure location at CDU, Menzies and JCU.

**Who to contact**

If you have questions about this form, the project, or about the information that you provide, please contact Mr Ben Christie, Project Officer on (08) 8946 8534 or Professor James Smith, Principal Investigator on (08) 8946 8685. If you have any questions or concerns that you would prefer not to direct to project staff, please contact the Ethics team at CDU Human Research Ethics Committee on (08) 8946 6923, on the toll free number, 1800 466 215 or by email, [ethics@cdu.edu.au](mailto:ethics@cdu.edu.au)

## Appendix 6: Consent Form

### Katherine Youth Justice Reinvestment Project

#### CONSENT FORM

This means you can say no

I have talked to \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ about this project. I would like to be part of this project.

Please circle YES or No to the following statements

YES / NO I understand what this project is about.

YES / NO I understand what is written on the Information Sheet.

YES / NO I am happy to participate in the following research activities (please tick):

- ☐ Interviews
- ☐ Focus Groups
- ☐ Surveys
- ☐ Yarning Sessions

YES / NO I am happy for the information that I provide in interviews, focus groups, surveys, yarning session, meetings or forums as part of this project to be recorded.

YES / NO I am happy for people to take photos of me.

YES / NO I am happy for my words, photos, videos or writing to be used in the project.

YES / NO I am happy for my information to be used in books, strategies, research proposals, reports, talks at workshops, seminars and conferences, journals, or on websites.

YES / NO I understand my information will not be used in reports, conferences, journals or on websites in such a way that I could be identified, unless specifically requested.

YES / NO I understand that researchers are obliged by law to follow mandatory reporting requirements, if required to do so.

YES / NO I understand that I can choose not to answer questions, or choose for information not to be recorded.

YES / NO I understand that I can pull out or withdraw information at any time (except for focus groups where others may hear the information I have shared).

YES / NO I understand that the information I provide made be used in future research projects relating to youth justice reinvestment

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For children under the age of 18 Parent/Guardian/Community Consent is required:

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Full name \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions or concerns that you do not want to direct to the researcher, you are invited to contact the Ethics team of the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee on (08) 8946 6923, on the toll free number, 1800 466 215 or by email, [ethics@cdu.edu.au](mailto:ethics@cdu.edu.au). The Ethics team can pass on any concerns to appropriate officers within the University.

## Appendix 7: Interview schedule

### KYJRWG Research Questions

- What do you think are the key issues affecting local youth in the Katherine region?
- Why do you think some local youth end up in the justice system/corrections/prison? How could this be changed?
- What helps local youth to stay out of trouble in Katherine and why?
- If you could do one thing to help youth in Katherine to stay out of trouble what would that be?
- What things would you do locally to support youth engagement? How could this be achieved?
- Are existing programs and services for youth in Katherine meeting their needs? How could they be improved?
- What do you think the life aspirations of youth in Katherine might be?
- How could local services better support the needs of local youth?
- Which existing services do you think work best for youth and why?
- Is there anyone else in Katherine you think we should talk to about youth justice reinvestment?
- Do you have a pseudonym (fake name) that you would like us to use in our research when attributing any comments you have made?

### Social Media focused Questions for Katherine

- There have been discussions at stakeholder and community meetings recently regarding the role of social media in community discussions about, and portrayal of youth – can you tell me about any experience you've had of this?

[Subsequent probes for interviewer] specific examples | the form of social media | positive and negative

- Can you tell me about the impact of these conversations on youth and youth issues in 'real life'?

[Subsequent probes for interviewer] are youth aware | any impact on Government (ie. community push for change in policy/funding) | the image of Katherine youth

- How do you think these social media depictions might impact the Youth Justice Reinvestment process?

[Subsequent probes for interviewer] positive and negative

## Appendix 8: Interviewers

Interviewer	Participant
JS, BC, SC	2
JS, BC, SC	3
JS, BC, SC	4
BC, JS	5
JS, BC, SC	6
BC, SC	7
BC, SC	8
BC, SC	9
BC, SC	10
BC, SC	11
BC	12
BC	14
JS	15
JS	16
BC	19
JS	20
JS	21 + 22
SC	Focus group (n=6)