

THIRD LINK PARTNER PROFILE

Children's Ground



“We believe passionately, and know through our experience, that change is possible. We do not accept the status quo. Ending extreme disadvantage in our country is possible.”
Jane Vadiveloo, CEO

Children's Ground works with communities experiencing the greatest disadvantage in our country. They commit to delivering the scale and quality of resources needed for children to have the very best in learning, wellbeing and development, from birth to young adulthood, to achieve generational change. Their model looks to the future to ensure children and their families have access to the economic, social and cultural opportunities that surround them. They celebrate ability and combine local leading practice and knowledge with international practice and evidence.

HISTORY

While Children's Ground is a new organisation, the wisdom which inspires it is not. Children's Ground's philosophy and place based approach has been informed by the aspirations of Aboriginal leaders and people from communities in Central Australia and the Top End. It builds on over 20 years of program delivery and design experience, and an international evidence base. Following a rigorous incubation process with Government, and two years of Community Engagement and Planning, Children's Ground commenced operations in West Arnhem in October 2013.

They are beginning in Kakadu, West Arnhem, with their key partner, the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, run by the Mirarr people. The Mirarr are committing significant finances to the development of the region and are our lead funders, with support from Government and philanthropy. Children's Ground is guided by the Mirarr People's vision of a whole generation that is strong and proud; economically, socially and culturally.





KEY PROGRAMS

Children's Ground is designed with an integrated range of programs, addressed to each of the four life stages: Early Childhood (0-8); Childhood (6-11); Young people (12-16); and Emerging Adults (17-24).

Their intergenerational approach means that they are delivering services across all ages. They integrate four key program areas:

- Learning – Early Years Learning at the centre and outreach programs;
- Family health – focusing on public health, counselling and including environmental health and maternal health);
- Community Development – social, cultural and physical development to create environments of safety and opportunity
- Economic Development – employment, workforce development training and enterprise.

At the heart of Children's Ground is a multigenerational community centre, which provides a place of safety for meetings and social interaction. It is also where a wide range of activities, including education, events, computer hub and family nights are held. Learning and wellbeing services operate from here too. These programs are underpinned by individual support and mentoring plans for children. The program is extended hours and provides access to specialist cultural and creative opportunities such as art, music, multimedia and sport.

Increasingly skilled Bininj staff are employed across the platform areas of Learning, Wellbeing and Development. Children's Ground has a strong focus on local recruitment, with local people self-identifying with skills in early childhood, health, nutrition, driving, maintenance and other areas. In West Arnhem, Children's Ground already employs more than 40 Bininj staff with many more interested in working as it scales up.

“Our kids have a lot of trouble adjusting to mainstream education. Children's Ground understands Bininj ways and have adjusted their teaching methods. I have noticed a big change in my own son Kayless, with the help of Children's Ground he can now spell out his own name”.

Roxanne Naborlhborlh.



CLIENT BASE

Children's Ground works with all Bininj people and clans across Kakadu, West Arnhem. Our Stage 1 focus is to support all children aged 0-8 years and their families, with the structured learning environment focused on the early years. The health, economic and community development work includes all ages.

EVIDENCE BASE

The gap between the welfare of the majority of Australian children and the 20% of children who are experiencing the greatest disadvantage is growing. The most vulnerable children are those in care, those in detention, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Planned approaches have not had a major impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family outcomes due to a lack of:

- resourcing and planned, comprehensive interventions;
- understanding of the local context and local issues;
- respect for the local language and culture;
- local level integration;
- involvement of families and communities in planning, service and delivery evaluation, and addressing the underlying causes of the key problems.

Children's Ground includes a 25 year longitudinal study to track progress and evidence impact. This will allow them to refine practice and ensure accountability back to the local communities with whom they work and to their partners. It will also provide the evidence for policy and practice reform across communities experiencing entrenched disadvantage.

HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO THRIVE, NOT JUST SURVIVE

Children's Ground was designed to create long term deep change to ensure children have a future rich in opportunity and wellbeing. In Australia it is possible for all children to enter a school that respects their land and language and culture, and that offers them a rich learning environment. It is possible for all children to have access to quality health and wellbeing services. It is possible for all children to enjoy quality

creative arts and recreational opportunities. It is possible for all children to have activities for the holidays and after school programs, homework support and community celebrations. It is possible for all children to 'Start Strong and Stay Strong'. Children's Ground's approach is to deliver high-quality learning development and wellbeing so that children and young people enter adulthood with skills, wellbeing and confidence.

POINT OF DIFFERENCE

Children's Ground is not about delivering a service, it is about changing a system. Their point of difference is in their five key areas of system reform: Governance, Funding, Service Delivery, Evaluation and Workforce which all include a critical point of difference to the existing system. Together they create the conditions that can propel deep systems change that could shift the entrenched disadvantage for children in Australia and create significant savings to the public purse.

ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH

Children's Ground is in a phase of considerable growth. They are working to secure a high corpus of funds to support operations in 3-5 communities across Australia over the next 10 years and to create the evidence base across a number of sites.

Echoing the collective impact approach, Children's Ground has adopted a collective social investment model. Their current funding is led by the local community (Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation) in West Arnhem and backed by Third Link, the Australian Government and philanthropic partners.

Collective investment not only provides sustainable funding at scale, it also provides the conditions Children's Ground need to do things differently. It is a deliberate intention to have majority funding sit outside of Government, particularly in their early years. This allows the innovation and security to deliver against an ambitious but achievable agenda. Through evidence they will then pursue reform for the reinvestment in Government expenditure – to stop the cycle of entrenched disadvantage – and to ensure that what they are doing will close the gap.

Learn more about Children's Ground by visiting www.chidrensground.org.au

