



# Gunbalanya School

## School profile

- Northern Territory
- Very remote
- Government
- Year P to 12
- Partnership arrangement with four external Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)
- Six VET courses in four industry areas in 2015
- 228 students enrolled in 2015

Gunbalanya School is located in the Kunbarllanjja community (or Gunbalanya), approximately 320 km east of Darwin, Northern Territory, on the eastern border of Kakadu National Park. The main language of the 1500 residents is Kunwinjku. The traditional owners of the land where the community is located are the Mandjurlngun clan; there are 25 clan groups in total. Road access via four wheel drive is only possible in the dry season. Gunbalanya is a Year P to 12 school. It is one of the first independent public schools in the Northern Territory. The school operates in the wet season and closes in the dry season. The school has two principals, one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous. The school has a Trades Centre and several partnerships with large employers.

## Program background

Five years ago the school began to investigate how to prepare students for pathways into further education, training or employment. At that time it undertook a skills matrix of the local jobs available and consulted with employers and industry partners to determine what was needed. This laid the foundation for their two pathways programs – a vocational education and training (VET) program as part of the Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE) and a work readiness pathway program.

The VET programs in the school have given the school something to celebrate. The school had its first Year 12 graduates as a result of introducing the VET programs and has had graduates every year since. Likewise the work readiness pathway program has meant that students are finishing school and transitioning into work.

Most students have English as a second or third language and many senior students are re-engaging with school. There is a strong emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills as well as building student confidence. Since most students choose to stay within the community, identifying available work and required skills and helping to create work have become key roles of the school.

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## Program features

### Course selection and structure

*Courses and qualifications chosen by schools and the structure of VET courses should be informed by an understanding of:*

- *the needs of students*
- *how VET supports career and employment pathways*
- *industry workforce needs*
- *school sector or jurisdictional policies*
- *funding priorities targeting VET towards particular industries or occupations.*

There are two major pathways in the secondary school: the work readiness pathway and the NTCE pathway. The pathway chosen is based on the level of the student's literacy and numeracy. In addition to literacy and numeracy components the major part of an NTCE will be made up of VET programs. The aim of the work ready pathway is to give students the skills to gain employment and students that are re-engaging with school usually take this path.



The school begins to map its VET pathways with students in Year 8 when the careers counsellor works with students about whether they want to stay in the community or leave, and to provide them with knowledge about jobs on country, in the community and in local business and industry. In Year 8 and 9, students initially have a taster course in the Trades Centre once or twice a week. After the taster course, a VET industry area is identified for each student and the school tries to integrate that into the student's regular curriculum. If a 14-year-old can be enrolled into VET, with family support, that too is considered.

Industry and course areas identified in Year 8 career counselling sessions help to the school to plan for future years including what will be offered in Year 10 to 12, and the industry area of the embedded trainer contracted to live on site for a year.

Students tend to stay within the community so selection of VET programs needs to be mapped to available work and required skills as well as to student interests.

Where possible the school timetables its VET courses in short, uninterrupted blocks of time, finding that students for whom English is a second language handle the continuous learning better than longer courses that are fragmented and interrupted with other subjects.

Enterprise projects that will help to generate employment have been identified by the interim school board of this independent public school and is a key focus for the school. The school has chosen tourism as an area for development and is working towards the students running a camp for a school from further south. The school offered Certificate I in Tourism in 2016 and has begun building relationships with local rangers.

The most successful programs have been Early Child Education and Care, Business, Conservation and Land Management, and Meat Processing. Manufacturing was introduced in 2016 to meet the needs of industry and business for employees who can use and service small tools safely and perform tasks like welding. It also included jewellery making, which relates to the tourism focus of the school and community.

The school to work transitions officer works with industry and business to marry their skill needs with what students are taught.

School-based Apprenticeships are offered in Year 10 to 12. For example students can commence Certificate I Rural operations then Certificate II and Certificate III Agriculture and gain employment on a local station.

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## Facilities and equipment

*Access to the right facilities and equipment is critical to the success of VET programs and is necessary to comply with VET delivery and assessment standards. The training package or accredited course materials provide information on what is needed. Identifying required equipment informs decisions about partnerships and accessing external expertise and equipment.*

The Trades Centre has a work shed, classroom and visiting officer quarters. Because there is limited housing in Gunbalanya it was necessary to provide housing for visiting industry trainers.



Industry partners visit the Trades Centre and ensure that everything from the way things are taught through to the signage in the centre replicates what students will find in industry.

A two-week induction program focuses on safety before students begin any work in the Trades Centre.

The school also performs motor registration checks for local vehicles in the workshops as part of the automotive program.

## Staffing

*Access to the right staffing is critical to the success of VET programs and is necessary to comply with VET delivery and assessment standards. The training package or accredited course materials provide information on what is needed.*

The school is supported by the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training for an embedded trainer in an industry area based on the priorities identified through counselling of students, knowledge of jobs and skills needed in the local area, and long-term school and community planning and vision.

In 2016 the focus was on manufacturing – building, welding, small tools and jewellery-making. In 2017 conservation and land management is likely to be the focus.

The staff member lives in the visiting officer quarters of the Trades Centre and is contracted for a one-year term. Staying in the community means relationships are built with students, families, other staff and industry. The school has found this a more satisfactory arrangement than a fly in and fly out arrangement. The trainer is adopted into a family and becomes part of the community. This means that what they teach and the way they teach is more relevant to the students' needs.

When a new trainer arrives they are introduced around the community. If needed, someone may assist with their early classes ensuring that the trainer is able to sensitively cater to the needs of students who come from a background where English is a second or third language and from a very remote Indigenous community.

## Working with employers

*Collaboration is a key component of the Preparing Secondary Students for Work framework. Involvement from employers and industry is critical when planning for the implementation, delivery and assessment of VET delivered to secondary students. Working with employers or work placement providers to provide access to quality and relevant workplace learning opportunities enables students to develop skills that are better aligned with workplace needs.*

The school has partnerships with local industry and businesses such as the Ranger mine at Jabiru, the Land Council, the meat works and the station where students work with cattle, horses and fencing. Work placements at the meat work and the station lead to School-based Apprenticeships for some students. The school has a partnership arrangement for childcare, with students completing up to Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care leading to pathways to employment in childcare, health, community services and aged care.

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## Registered Training Organisation status

All VET is required to be certified by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Schools have a variety of ways of accessing RTO services:

- becoming an RTO
- the school sector acting as the RTO
- partnering with an RTO (auspice)
- using an external RTO to deliver and assess all of the training onsite or offsite.

Each of these options will suit schools in different situations. Whatever the arrangement adopted, schools and employers need to be confident that the RTO has suitably qualified trainers and assessors and access to the industry-standard equipment required.

The school has four RTO arrangements in place. The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training supplies the embedded trainer, with the department acting as the RTO. Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education from Darwin delivers Community Services. Charles Darwin University delivers Certificate I in Tourism. Group Training Northern Territory delivers a business certificate.

## Student support

Vocational learning activities and pre-vocational programs support students to select the right VET course and pursue their chosen pathway to a career, employment or further education and training. Career education and the opportunity to gain work readiness skills helps students make informed choices and prepare them for learning in a workplace environment.

The school places significant emphasis on providing the literacy, numeracy, financial literacy and life skills that students need to be work ready.

In a unit that supports students to gain a driver's licence, students are taught the skills they need to seek and complete forms in order to first apply for a birth certificate and then apply for the licence. They are also taught how to seek and provide supporting information where that is required. By applying for a birth certificate students have access to tax file numbers, bank accounts, and other forms of identity.

Students are supported as they communicate with government departments to negotiate the passage of their documents. More immediately they learn road rules, road safety, about contracts with the community and about legal responsibilities. Having a licence gives students access to jobs such as at the meat works where being able to drive a car to the station and a tractor to the bone yard is necessary. 'Getting the kids all ticketed up and ready to go gives them a really good start and adds value to them being able to operate in those environments'. (Assistant Principal)

Because many of the students are re-engaging with school and may have been out of school for long periods of time, support is given to them if they need assistance out of school hours, or if they are unable to attend for the full school hours.

The school has two programs that are important in supporting the wellbeing of students. These are the Gunbalanya Clontarf Academy and the West Arnhem Girls' Academy. These agencies build leadership, esteem and positive aspirations for the future. They support increased attendance, cultural activities, participation in sports and work experience and they help students facing difficulties or illness.

