

DJIDBJIDBI RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE

Djibidjibi Residential College (DjRC) is an innovative educational facility that works with the school, Bininj children and their families to increase school attendance and dramatically improve educational engagement and outcomes.

The Mirarr clan have lived on and cared for their spectacular and culturally rich traditional lands in what is now known as Kakadu National Park since time immemorial. It is only the most recent generations

**MIRARR RECOGNISED
THAT RADICAL
EDUCATIONAL
CHANGE WAS NEEDED**

of Mirarr who have experienced the influx of Balanda (non-Aboriginal) people to the region and who are living with the associated rapid change. In 2009 very low school

attendance amongst Bininj (Aboriginal) students was entrenched and Mirarr recognised that they were faced with little choice: for their children to experience success at school, for their education to be meaningful and enduring, radical change was needed. The Mirarr knew that they must be the ones to create that change and despite many hurdles and difficulties along the way, the vehicle for change was constructed at a cost of \$7 million over a period of 18 months in 2011-12.

Djibidjibbi Residential College (DjRC) is an innovative educational facility that works with the school, Bininj children and their families to increase school attendance and dramatically improve educational engagement and outcomes. The College provides a safe and supportive environment for school attendance, after-hours study, part time employment and wellbeing. Students reside at DjRC from Sunday evening to Friday each week and return to their families for weekends. The College is staffed by a mix of Bininj and Balanda (non-Aboriginal) staff and includes a state-of-the-art homework centre, recreation rooms, bedrooms and a commercial kitchen and dining room. The College can currently accommodate up to 21 students. Most students at DjRC are in Grade 5 to Year 12 (11-18 years old).

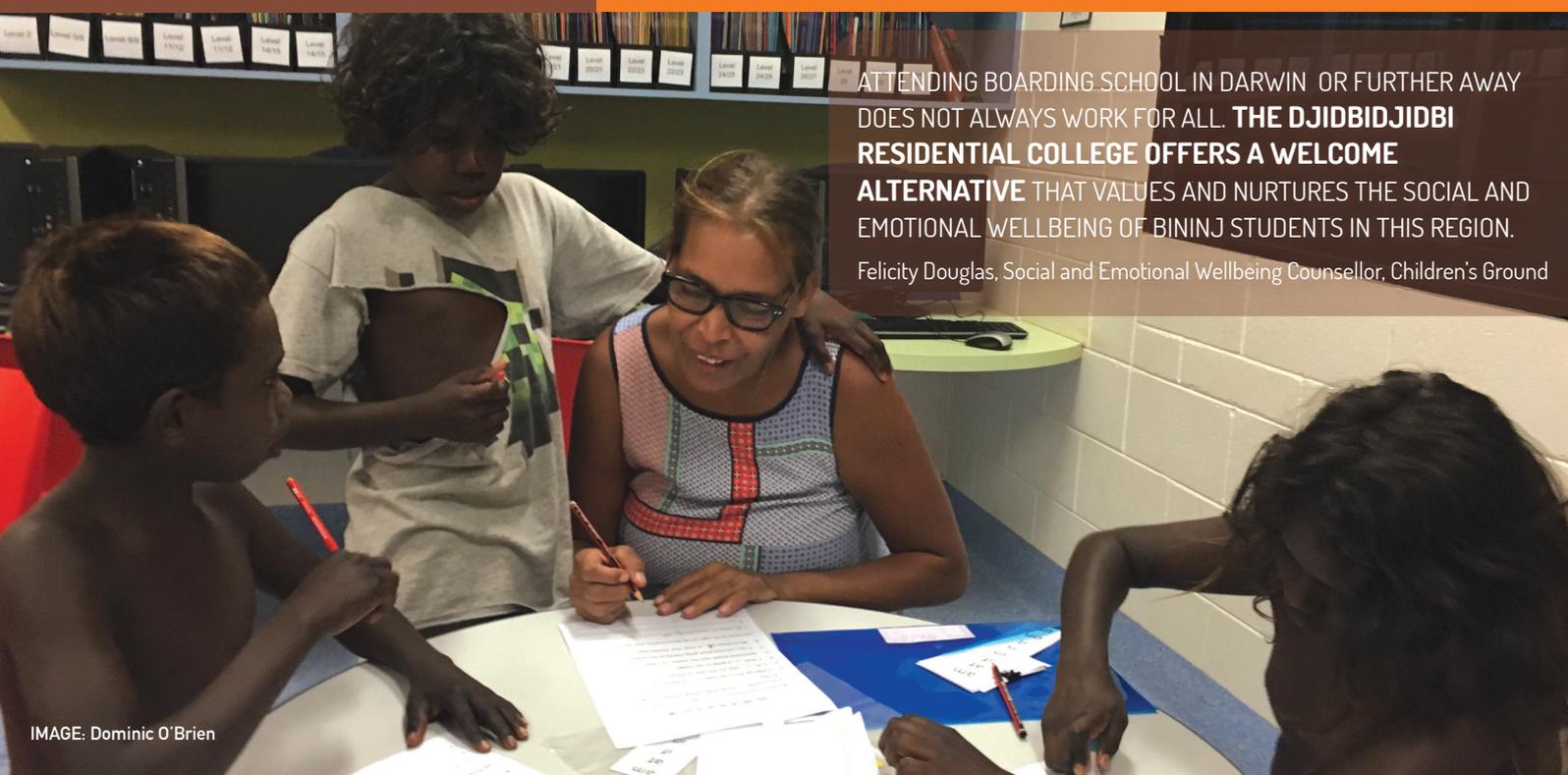
As well as supporting students' studies at the Jabiru Area School, the College organises extracurricular activities such as regular health checks, homework sessions, on-country learning which integrates with the curriculum, family nights and sporting activities. College staff also currently support three students in their part time work outside of school. Students boarding at DjRC attend Jabiru Area School on a daily basis.

As of 2016 an additional Senior Teacher is employed at Jabiru Area School to coordinate, develop and implement education, training and employment programs for Bininj students in their last three years of school. DjRC students at the Middle and Primary School levels attend regular classes with other Bininj and Balanda students and are provided with an additional two hours per day of classroom support and school based tutoring with College staff.

The close relationship between DjRC and the school and the shared understanding of supporting the children to grow in a complex cultural environment is pivotal to the success of the children attending the College.

**THE COLLEGE IS
ACHIEVING SIGNIFICANT
AND UNPRECEDENTED
RESULTS**

This relationship is underpinned by a memorandum of understanding between Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation (GAC) and the Northern Territory Education Department which provides a small amount of funding to the College. The Kakadu West Arnhem Social Trust provides funds to employ the Senior Teacher supporting Bininj students in their final three years of school.



ATTENDING BOARDING SCHOOL IN DARWIN OR FURTHER AWAY DOES NOT ALWAYS WORK FOR ALL. **THE DJIBIDJIBBI RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE OFFERS A WELCOME ALTERNATIVE** THAT VALUES AND NURTURES THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING OF BININJ STUDENTS IN THIS REGION.

Felicity Douglas, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellor, Children's Ground

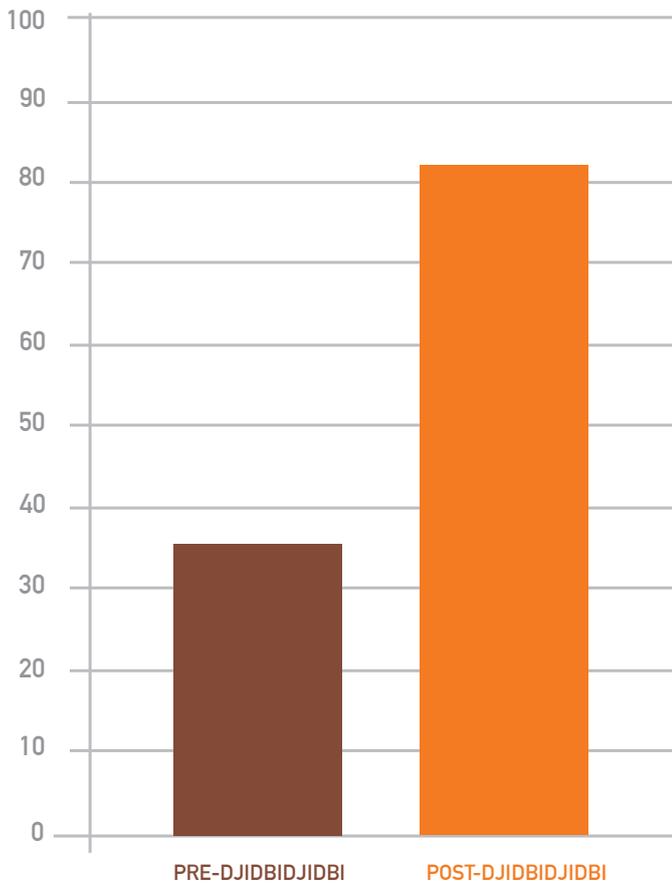


DJIBIDJIBBI RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE HAS **TRANSFORMED THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF THE MIRARR KIDS**. JABIRU AREA SCHOOL STAFF WORK CLOSELY WITH COLLEGE STAFF TO SUPPORT STUDENTS AND TO MAKE THE CURRICULUM MEANINGFUL AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT.

Phil Maunder, Former Principal Jabiru Area School

IMAGE: Dominic O'Brien

JABIRU AREA SCHOOL INDIGENOUS COHORT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE



The impact of this pragmatic bi-cultural model of education is already being demonstrated through dramatic increases in school attendance and unprecedented student outcomes.

This extraordinary spike in average school attendance for Aboriginal students at Jabiru Area School can be attributed to the existence, support and structure of DjRC. Prior to 2012 the average attendance rate for Aboriginal students at Jabiru Area School was 36%. In the years since the College opened the school attendance of Aboriginal students staying at DjRC has continued to increase and is now at an average of 82%.

The Mirarr have always had a long term vision for Djibidjibbi and know that the opportunities this facility provides should be available to the broader Aboriginal population of the Kakadu region. Now after almost four years of operation the evidence is clear: the Djibidjibbi Residential College is not only functional but achieving significant and unprecedented results for the students it supports.

Clans across the Kakadu region have observed the immense benefit to students that the College can provide and many families are seeking to enrol their children in coming months and years.

With appropriate assistance the Mirarr can continue to dramatically improve Indigenous education outcomes and opportunities will continue to flow to children and their families across the Kakadu region.



DJIBIDJIBBI IS WORKING OUT WELL FOR MY KIDS. MY DAUGHTER PHILLIPA FINISHED YEAR 12 WHILE SHE WAS LIVING THERE AND SHE HAD **GOOD SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND STAFF**. LAST YEAR PHILIPPA WORKED AT DJIBIDJIBBI HELPING HER FAMILY SO THEY COULD KEEP GOING TO SCHOOL.

Annie Ngalmrama, Mirarr Traditional Owner

LOOKING TO A BRIGHT FUTURE

Students at DjRC have multiple opportunities for success and College staff work hard to ensure they are supported in whichever direction they choose to go. Several students are interested in part time work and the College supports them in their jobs at the Jabiru post office and the supermarket.

Four of the Senior Secondary students are undertaking school based apprenticeships. Three including Emma and Nakkita (pictured below) are on a pathway to becoming National Park Rangers and another student has undertaken an apprenticeship in Business and Administration.

Phillipa Douglas and Nonica Hardy, two young Mirarr women from Djirrbiyuk community, are outstanding role models for the children at Djidbidjidbi and in the wider community. In 2013 with the combined support of DjRC, the school and their families, Phillipa and Nonica became the first Mirarr children to graduate year 12. The girls' strong connection and commitment to Djidbidjidbi continued beyond graduation through their employment as support workers at the College. In 2016 Nonica is continuing in this role. She is a wonderful guide and support for her younger relatives as well as providing invaluable insight and knowledge to other staff.

“ BEING AT DJIDBIDJIDBI HELPS ME GET TO SCHOOL EARLY EVERY DAY. I LIKE IT. IT IS GOOD BECAUSE I AM WITH FAMILY AND NOT LIVING WITH STRANGERS.

Nakkita Hardy, student



IMAGE: Dominic O'Brien



IMAGE: Dominic O'Brien

I COME TO DJIDBIDJIDBI BECAUSE IT HELPS ABORIGINAL KIDS TO GET A LIFE AND A FUTURE. I HOPE I CAN GET ONE TOO.

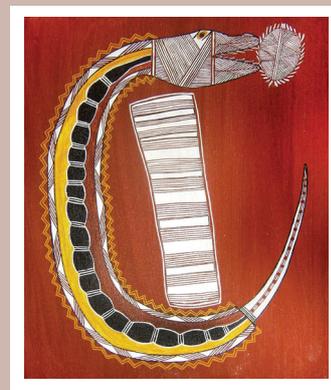
Corben Nabarnadi, student

Corben Nabarnadi is a Mirarr Traditional Owner and resident of DjRC. Corben, a year 10 student, has excellent school attendance and is well known for his hunger to learn and his avid interest in history. He is a regular in front of school assembly receiving achievement awards and had a leading role in the end of year concert.

Corben was recently awarded Young Citizen of the Year 2016 for his contributions and achievements both at school as well as in the wider community. He was recently nominated Djidbidjidbi Student Leader by his peers and is keen to further develop his leadership skills.

Corben is proud of his identity and family and is already navigating a successful path in a complex bicultural environment. DjRC is committed to ongoing support for Corben and all students as they identify and pursue their goals for the future.

The name Djidbidjidbi refers to a sacred and important site on Mirarr country; Mt Brockman or King Brown dreaming. The College logo depicts Djidbidjidbi (King Brown snake) and was painted by Mirarr Traditional Owner Mark Djandjomerr.



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