

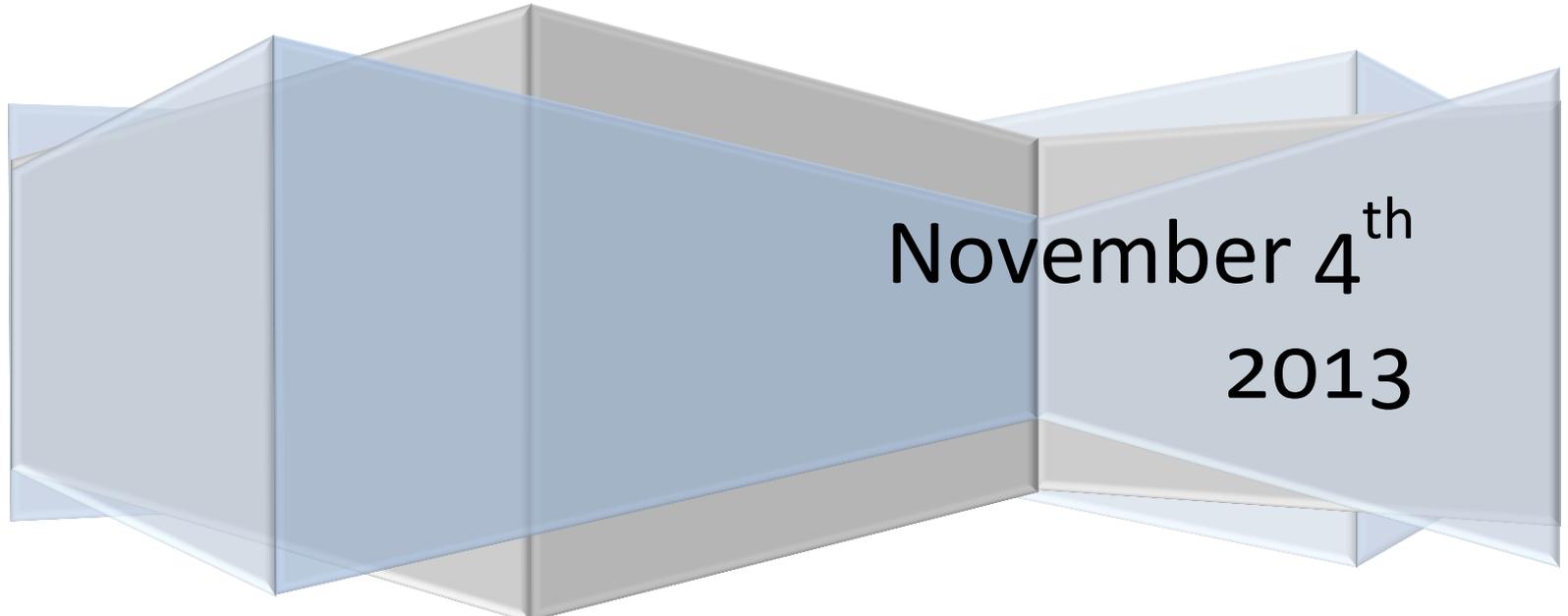
**Flinders Business School**  
**FLINDERS UNIVERSITY**

# **Understanding the Challenges of Managers from Non-Indigenous Backgrounds Working in Remote Australia:**

**A Cultural Competence Perspective**

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**November 4<sup>th</sup>  
2013**

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all the people who helped me during this project:

- ❖ My supervisors, Dr Pi-Shen Seet, Dr Jane Jones and Mr Tim Acker, for their support through the different stages of this research. Dr Seet for empowering me to make my own choices under his careful guidance, Dr Jones for her helpful recommendations and Mr Acker for making this research possible by contacting participants.
  
- ❖ The research participants for finding the time to talk with me about their personal experiences and opening up about the challenges they have faced.
  
- ❖ My loving parents, Angela and Tom, who encouraged and supported me so that I could further my education and who have put up with me throughout this entire process.

## Abstract

This study explores the challenges non-Indigenous art centre managers face, from a cultural competence perspective, when they work in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Other cultural challenges were also examined and how these challenges influenced managers' decision to remain in their job or resign is discussed. Besides contributing to cultural competence research, the research also finds that a multi-theoretical perspective is needed to explain the complexities of working in remote Australia. The study is also significant as it will help provide a deeper insight into improving various human resource management (HRM) issues at remote art centres including: high employee turnover, difficulty attracting suitable, qualified staff, inefficient training programs, unmet worker expectations and no career path or career development.

To explore these issues, 22 in-depth, semi structured interviews of non-Indigenous managers were conducted. From these interviews several cultural competence challenges were identified including: relationships, status, communication differences and differing views of time. In addition, four other cultural challenges emerged: the intracultural gap in Indigenous communities, the physical urban-remote cultural gap, culture shock and unmet expectations. Furthermore, two non-cultural tangible aspects were identified, monetary challenges and conflict and violence. Lastly, two other important findings also emerged from the interviews including, adaptation to remote communities/job and the reasons why managers stay or leave. The reasons managers resigned from their job were a significant finding and included: being tired or burnt out, feeling that goals had been achieved and/or for personal reasons.

## Declaration

I certify that the substance of this dissertation has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification, to the best of my knowledge.

I certify that any help received in preparing this dissertation and all sources used have been acknowledged.

Signature: Michelle Whittle

Michelle Whittle

Date: 4/11/2013

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Chapter 1 delivers a background to remote Australian art centres and the current HRM issues they face, and how this research relates to them. The key terms used for the research are also defined and the research objectives and proposition are stated. The importance of this research is then highlighted and an outline of the thesis is provided.

### **1.2 Background**

The focus of this study is on understanding the challenges non-Indigenous art centre managers' face whilst working in remote Australia from a cultural competence perspective. This project is conducted in association with the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP) and is a subset of a larger 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Economies project'.

Remote Australian art centres are generally incorporated organisations that have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists as their members (Davidson, 2009). The members elect a governing body and this governing body in turn employs staff. These are hybrid organisations that are cultural and commercial, local and global and fundamentally inter-cultural (Davidson, 2009). Generally non-Indigenous managers operate as inter-cultural mediators in remote art centres and have an important role in encouraging new forms of arts practice, nurturing and inspiring young artists, mentoring established artists and providing professional development advice (Davidson, 2009).

The management of remote art centres has traditionally been difficult and some of the human resource issues are characterised by the following:

- High turnover rates
- Difficulty in attracting suitable, qualified applicants
- Inefficient and ineffective training programs
- Poor management of workers expectations
- No career path or career development

Difficulty attracting suitable qualified applicants, inefficient training programs and unmet expectations are all strongly related to cultural competence (Williams, 2005). Improving cultural competence will in turn improve managers' skills, knowledge and experiences which will positively impact outcomes, specifically, increase retention (Williams, 2005). Cultural competence refers to an individual's ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds (Cross, Bazron, Dennis and Isaacs, 1989). This study, therefore, researches into the cultural competencies non-Indigenous art centre managers need in order to perform their job. There are two elements which affect cultural competence: endogenous and exogenous factors (Williams, 2005). Endogenous factors evolve from within the art centres such as the recruitment processes used and the training provided. Whereas exogenous factors, which are considered, are aspects external to the art centres such as managers' ages, gender and cultural background.

High turnover of staff results in valuable skills, knowledge and experience being lost (Pearson, 1995). At present, the majority of remote art centre managers work for around two years, at a maximum three, and then leave and do not return to work in remote

Australia (Acker, pers. comm. 2013). When a job is advertised there are usually about 20 applicants, of which six to seven are deemed suitable and interviewed, then one or two people are offered a position, but sometimes no one accepts the job offer. Often remote jobs are done with little or no training, orientation or support (Wright, 2000). Research into the staffing issues in remote art centres reported that 19 per cent of staff received some form of induction, while 66 per cent had no employment contract and 75 per cent experienced 'significant stress' at work (Wright, 2000). Most managers come from art backgrounds and appear to have unmet job expectations (Acker, pers. comm. 2013).

While there may be many reasons why these problems exist (e.g. high turnover, few suitable applicants etc.), research has shown that if managers feel they are meaningfully and competently performing their jobs, this will lead to better outcomes (McGrail, Humphreys, Joyce and Scott, 2012). Given the context of non-Indigenous managers working in remote areas, often independently, with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and reporting to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders, much of the competencies will involve working effectively across cultures. Hence this project will focus on these aspects.

A crucial factor in the success of art centres has been the employment of professional and dedicated managers. The arts centre model suits the artists whose prime interest and speciality is producing art while managers are employed to provide a different set of skills, expertise in marketing and an understanding of commerce and the fine arts market (Davidson, 2009). Art centre managers must buy, sell, document, conserve and transport art, accompany artists to exhibitions, host visitors, deal with intellectual property issues, administer grants, run projects, look after a small business, supply artists with materials and support the governing boards who employ them (Davidson, 2009).

Art centre managers are not easy to stereotype. They are people who need to be able to communicate cross-culturally and to cope with the distinctive pressures and stresses associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community living (Davidson, 2009). As a general rule, they have to be resourceful, energetic and resilient, yet, even with all these qualities, elements of their often pressured roles mediating as agents for artists with the market means that on average most last only two to three years before they are 'burnt out' (Wright, 1999).

### 1.3 Definitions

This section defines the key terms used throughout this project. As definitions used by researchers in this area are not uniform, it is important to include a summary of definitions for the major terms that are employed.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2011) 75 per cent of Australia is classified as 'remote' or 'very remote'. The ABS defines 'remote' or 'very remote' locations based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) and throughout this document the same definitions have been used (ABS, 2011) (*see Appendix 1*). The ARIA classifies localities by their 'remoteness', defined as the distance along road networks to service centres (a hierarchy of urban centres with a population of 5000 people or more) (ABS, 2011). Generally it is assumed that 'remote' is four hours' or more drive from an urban centre and 'very remote' is usually more than four hours' drive from a range of services and may be inaccessible by an ordinary car, this implies a non-bitumen road (ABS, 2011).

Australia is a highly urbanised country with the significant (75 per cent) majority of the population living in capital cities whilst only 3 per cent live in 'remote' or 'very remote' locations (ABS, 2011). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people largely outnumber non-Indigenous people in 'remote' and 'very remote' locations (ABS, 2011). This geographical distance can contribute to cultural differences. The gap between two cultures is defined as 'cultural distance' or the degree to which the cultural norms of one culture differ from another (Kogut and Singh, 1988). The farther apart two cultures are the less likely they are to have similar values and behaviours. Culture is difficult to describe as there are many levels to it, such as observable behaviours and unobservable values and assumptions (Schein, 1992). This project defines culture as the pattern of shared values, attitudes, and beliefs, often shared by a particular group of people, which affect their behaviour (Hofstede, 1994).

#### **1.4 Research Objectives and Proposition**

The objective of this study is to therefore:

*“investigate and understand the cultural challenges art centre managers from non-Indigenous backgrounds face when working in remote Australia”.*

In order to achieve this, the following four research questions (RQs) are addressed:

- RQ1. What cultural competence challenges arise when art centre managers from non-Indigenous backgrounds work within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Sector in remote Australia?
- RQ2. Are there other cultural challenges managers must face?
- RQ3. How do art centre managers, manage these challenges?

RQ4. How, if at all, do cultural challenges influence managers' decision to remain in their job or resign?

The research proposition is that improving cultural competence will reduce the challenges workers from non-Indigenous backgrounds face whilst working in remote Australia.

## 1.5 Importance of Research

Although cultural competence research had part of its roots in social anthropologists studying interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples (Mead, 1959, Benedict, 1934), much of recent research has focussed on trans-national groups. This study attempts to explore some of these more recent insights of cultural competence back in an inter-cultural indigenous/non-indigenous setting. In so doing, it hopes to identify gaps in the current research on cultural competence as well as aspects that need to be explored further.

In terms of policy, a prominent government objective is to grow the professional workforce in remote Australia (McKenzie, 2011). Attracting and retaining workers to remote Australia is a problem which is costing the government and businesses time, money and lost opportunity (Adcock, 2002). It is important to understand what challenges professionals face when working in these areas in order to create strategies to overcome these problems.

Investigation into the cultural competence of art centre managers in remote Australia is also needed, to improve the stability of the art centres (Rola-Rubzen et al., 2011). According to Tim Acker (pers. comm. 2013), success is linked to the non-Indigenous art centre manager.

The art sector is a significant contributor to the cultural and social life of remote Australia, often being the only non-welfare aspect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Art centres provide many services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They are often the single communal facility where men and women can interact socially (ORIC, 2012). Accordingly, they often become the main social and cultural hub of the community. Staff may also take on coordination roles for social activities as well as provide a range of services to assist artists beyond that which is directly related to art activities such as picking up and dropping off senior artists, supplying lunches and drinks, and acting as agents on matters of copyright, resale royalties and providing financial advice.

## **1.6 Outline of Thesis**

The thesis begins with the introductory Chapter 1, followed by four other chapters which represent each stage in the research. Chapter 2 comprises a literature review that focuses on previous research which has examined the challenges workers from non-Indigenous backgrounds face whilst working in remote locations. Drawing from this, a conceptual framework is proposed that underpins further discussion of findings later in the thesis. A detailed account of the research process is described in Chapter 3 and the implications of this research are discussed along with data collection methods. Chapter 4 combines the presentation of results and the discussion of both expected and unexpected findings in relation to current knowledge as discussed in Chapter 2. The concluding Chapter 5 addresses the research objective, to understand the cultural challenges art centre managers from non-Indigenous backgrounds face when working in remote Australia. Research limitations are acknowledged and recommendations are given for future research.

## Chapter 2 – Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 provides a literature review on the previous research that has examined the challenges managers from non-Indigenous backgrounds face whilst working in remote locations. The concept of cultural competence was reviewed, along with two perspectives on culture: national and organisational. Research on other cultural challenges was also reviewed including culture shock and expectations. Finally, human resource management issues related to working in remote locations were examined, specifically difficulties with recruitment and retention.

In remote Australian art centres specifically, there are human resource management problems associated with recruitment, retention and unmet expectations. The focus on cultural competence is relevant as these issues can be linked to cultural competence because there is a cultural distance between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and non-Indigenous managers (Altman, 2005). Selling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art requires careful mediation over vast geographic and cultural distances. Therefore, art centre managers must communicate cross-culturally and cope with the distinctive pressures and stresses associated with living in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community (Altman, 2005). To understand the cultural competence non-Indigenous art centre managers require, perspectives on both national and organisational culture need to be considered.

## 2.2 Cultural Perspectives

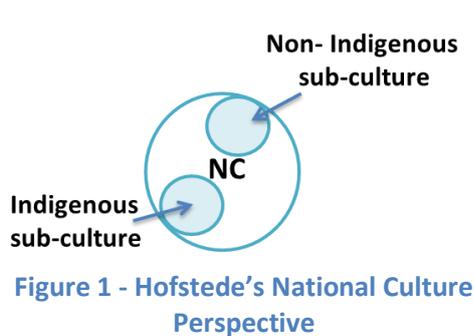
Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead are regarded as pioneers of cultural anthropology.

In 1934, Benedict published a book titled *'Patterns of Culture'* which became standard reading for anthropologists. The essential idea in the book is that culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action (Mead, 1959). Within each culture a few characteristics become the leading personality traits of the persons living in that culture. These traits comprise of an interdependent pattern of aesthetics and values in each culture which together add up to a unique gestalt (Mead, 1959). For example Benedict described in detail Native American rituals, beliefs and personal preferences amongst people of diverse cultures to show how each culture had a "personality" that was encouraged in each individual (Benedict, 1934).

Mary Bateson, the daughter of Margret Mead, is also a renowned cultural anthropologist for her contributions in a book titled *'Composing a Life'*, first published in 1990. The book challenges people of any age to think about how they will approach their later lives with imagination, curiosity, and enthusiasm (Bateson, 1990). It also makes readers question the world their children and grandchildren, born and not yet born, will inherit. Bateson's work influences the way people think about culture, whilst Benedict and Mead's theory of culture allows differences in cultures to be highlighted. These theories show that cultural competence is important as it allows a person from one culture to better understand people from another culture.

### 2.2.1 National Culture

The national perspective on culture refers to the set of norms, behaviours, beliefs and customs that exist within the population of a sovereign nation (Warner and Joynt, 2002). In 1982, Hofstede found that national cultures had similarities and differences which enabled



them to be grouped into different cultural dimensions, the most notable dimension being the individualism category (Muecke, Lenthall and Lindeman, 2011). Hofstede viewed national culture as a whole with subcultures within it (refer to Figure 1).

Australia is categorised as having a highly individualistic culture which emphasises individual rights and personal achievement, where people look after themselves and their immediate families (Muecke et al., 2011). Collectivist societies place more value on group cohesion, where extended family ties are important. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures were grouped into the mainstream culture yet their cultures can be closely compared with other collectivist cultures such as Asian and African kinship-groups (Muecke et al., 2011).

Contrastingly, in Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) theory subcultures are viewed separate to national culture (refer to Figure 2). As non-Indigenous Australians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have significantly different cultures this view is appropriate (Burbank, 2006).

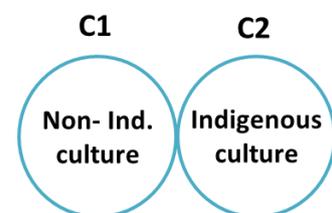


Figure 2 - Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner's National Culture Perspective

One study in the Northern Territory, identified relatedness and autonomy were highly valued by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders which made it difficult for them to work in

supervisory positions because they did not want to impede on workers autonomy (McRae-Williams and Gerritsen, 2010). In addition, workers felt a responsibility to share their wealth to those in need, which had a detrimental effect on employee motivation (McRae-Williams et al., 2010). As a result non-Indigenous staff faced daily challenges as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders did not turn up for work on time or failed to show up entirely. Consequently, non-Indigenous people often viewed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as lacking a work ethic or as lazy and incompetent (McRae-Williams et al., 2010).

One complex issue art centre managers frequently have to mediate is the competing cultural views regarding the value of art. Myers (2002) describes a situation where a non-Indigenous manager of a remote art centre allowed an astronomical price to be set for an Aboriginal painting. Later, another artist sought a similar price for a much smaller painting. When the manager indicated that they could not pay the same amount for the smaller painting, the artist's response was "Same Dreaming, got the same power" (Myers, 2002). Negotiating value cross-culturally is an ongoing process and often these cross-cultural pressures result in non-Indigenous art centre managers 'burning out' (Altman, 2005).

There have also been international studies on cultural differences in terms of culture within a country and an indigenous context, the majority of which are from North America. For example, research shows many American Indians are reluctant to participate in mental health services due to their culture (Wendt and Gone, 2012). Knowledgeable individuals in tribal communities have routinely identified conventional treatment services as culturally conflicting and therefore alienating for many distressed Native people (Wendt et al., 2012).

Contrary to Western norms surrounding self-expression, many indigenous communities prohibit expressive talk outside intimate circles because Native people value personal autonomy, family reputation and lifelong social ties (Basso, 1990; Darnell, 1981, 1991). Most American Indian groups highly regard one's own personal autonomy and care is taken to avoid infringing on that of others which renders social interaction and interpersonal communication as potentially 'dangerous' affairs (Prussing and Gone, 2011). Asking direct questions imposes on others to provide answers, whether they are so inclined or not. Commitment to protecting and preserving personal autonomy frequently results in indirectness and ambiguous interpersonal interactions (Prussing et al., 2011). This is similar to aspects of communication in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures which need to be considered when interacting with people from a different national culture (Walsh and Yallop, 1993).

There are also considerable indigenous cultural divergences in Canada (Mills and Clarke, 2009). In recent decades, there has been a greater recognition among Canadian professional psychologists of the need for culturally competent treatment for indigenous clients. Subsequently there has been a major focus on improving the cultural competence of therapists in order to deliver relatively established psychotherapeutic packages to indigenous communities in a more welcoming and credible fashion (Wendt et al., 2012). For many years Western and non-Western cultures have also existed side by side in South Africa. However, the compatibility of management techniques across cultures is an issue which is gaining in importance (Jackson, 1999). A major concern is the contrast between Western ideas of management where people are regarded as a means to an end and non-Western cultures where they are viewed as having a value in their own right (Jackson,

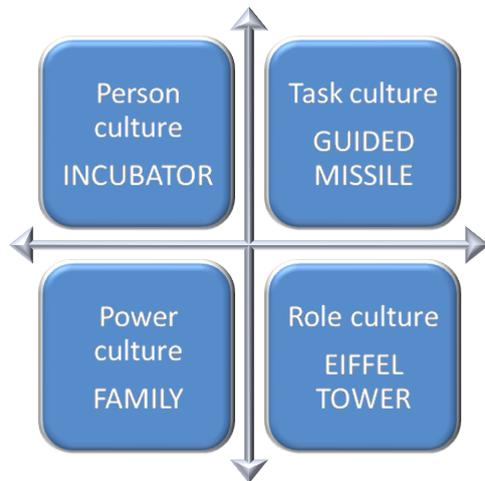
1999). Managers must also understand South Africa's network of social obligations based predominantly on kinship. Commitment and mutual obligations stem from group pressures to meet one's promises and to conform to social expectations (Jackson, 2002). It may be possible to reconcile these management differences but only through the cross-cultural training and development of managers (Jackson, 2002).

Although these international studies are useful in illustrating the differences between subcultures within one country it must be acknowledged that Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders differ from America and Canada's Indigenous people. In addition, focusing purely on cultural competence at a national/cross-cultural level neglects the organisational cultural perspective which is important, especially when people work in an organisational context. When examining the challenges workers from non-Indigenous backgrounds face whilst working in remote locations, exclusively looking at national/indigenous cultures will not provide the complete picture. Thus, it is important to incorporate perspectives on organisational culture as art centre managers work within an organisation.

### **2.2.2 Organisational Culture**

Organisational culture refers to a system of shared beliefs and values that guides an organisation (Schein, 1992). This is important to consider as art centre managers work within an organisational context. A strong organisational culture exists when employees respond to incentives because of their alignment to organisational values (Schein, 1992). A weak organisational culture is where there is little staff alignment with organisational values

and control must be exercised through extensive procedures and bureaucracy. Differences across cultures can influence whether staff have strong or weak organisational cultures (Schein, 1992).



**Figure 3 - Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's Quadrant Model**

Based on Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's Quadrant Model (*refer to Figure 3*) there are four metaphors which illustrate the relationship of employees to their notion of the organisation (Trompenaars and Prud'homme van Reine, 2004).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders belong in the 'family' category where culture is personal; with close face-to-face relationships existing while at the same time still being hierarchical (Trompenaars et al., 2004). For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders are important members of Indigenous communities and are often knowledge keepers of their people's history, stories, culture and language (ABS, 2011). In 2008, close to half (48 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in remote areas were likely to spend at least one day a week in the company of elders (ABS, 2011).

However, non-Indigenous Australians can be placed in the 'guided missile' category. The guided missile culture is task orientated where tasks are typically undertaken by teams or project groups (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997). The jobs members do are not fixed in advance, rather members must do whatever it takes to complete a task and what is needed may be unclear. All members are equal or potentially equal as their contributions

are not yet known (Hampden-Turner et al., 1997). Usually when the guided missile and family cultures work together and must be integrated the 'Eiffel Tower' approach emerges. The Eiffel Tower hierarchy is very different from the family culture with each higher level having a clear and demonstrable function of holding together the levels beneath it (Hampden-Turner et al., 1997). However, in remote art centres specifically, it is difficult for this culture to emerge as they have very flat organisational structures with few or no levels of management, which does not suit the Eiffel Tower dimension.

### 2.2.3 Integrating National and Organisational Cultural Theories

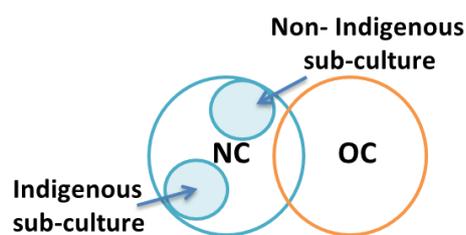


Figure 4 - National and Organisational Cultural Overlap

Both national and organisational cultures impact cultural competence. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) theoretical work allows analysis of both national and organisational cultural issues simultaneously (refer to Figure 4) and can be applied at

different levels: individual, organisational or national.

Their framework consists of seven cultural dimensions (refer to Figure 5) but this study focuses primarily on the five dimensions ticked in green, as there is not very strong evidence to support the other two dimensions (inner vs. outer directed and affective vs. neutral) in this context. This is appropriate as previous

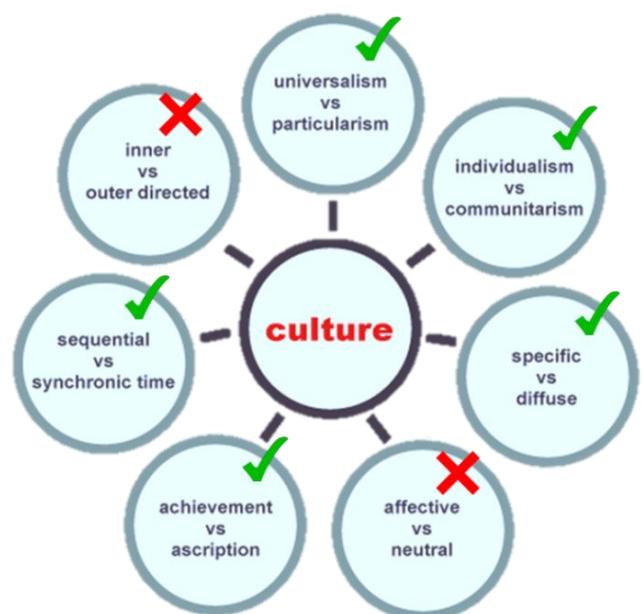


Figure 5 - Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's Cultural Dimensions

research in multinational enterprises and e-commerce have recognised that all the seven dimensions may not apply to different settings and there is a need to focus on relevant cultural dimensions based on the specific context (Kangaslahti, 2004, Tse, 2005).

### *i) Individualism vs. Communitarism*

In the individualism vs. communitarism dimension non-Indigenous Australians have a strong individualistic culture where individual happiness and self-fulfilment is important. Whereas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more communitarism orientated. Members of communitarian societies are integrated into groups and the quality of life for all members is seen to result from the extent to which individuals take care of others (Trompenaars et al., 2004).

### *ii) Sequential vs. Synchronised Time*

In the sequential vs. synchronised time dimension, people (non-Indigenous Australians) who see events as separate items in time and find order in an array of actions that happen one after the other, view time as sequential (Trompenaars et al., 2004). People who view time as synchronised see events in parallel synchronised together and find order in the coordination of multiple efforts. In remote regions of Australia few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are concerned beyond the ideals of daily living. For instance, wealth is not viewed as being for future investment, but as a consumption item for sharing with the clan (Pearson and Helms, 2013).

### *iii) Universalism vs. Particularism*

Furthermore, in the universalism vs. particularism dimension, universalistic (non-Indigenous) people focus more on rules than relationships and particularistic (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) people focus more on relationships than rules (Trompenaars et al., 2004). According to Pearson and Chatterjee (2010) universalism has a lack of resonance with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as they have a relatively low socio-economic status compared to that of the dominant non-Indigenous Australian population. Their economic, educational and basic human standards of living are inferior (Fuller, Buultjens, and Cummings, 2004). Therefore, when large corporations impose operating procedures, these are often perceived as “foreign” to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who attach greater importance to reinforcing community protocols and social relations (Pearson et al., 2010). Success is not measured in terms of tangible assets, but in the pluralism of familial relationships, religion, and spiritual connections (Pearson et al., 2013).

This particular cultural difference may also affect organisational efficiency. In some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities’ extensive consultation and negotiation may be more important than reducing the amount of time involved in a production process (Fuller et al., 2004). Alternatively, spiritual and religious concerns may be given increased priority in ways that lead to the interruption of business schedules (Fuller et al., 2004). Both social and business objectives therefore, become important in the management of remote art centres.

#### *iv) Achievement vs. Ascription*

In the fourth dimension, achievement vs. ascription, achievement orientated people derive their status from what they have accomplished. Conversely, ascription orientated people derive their status from birth, age, gender or wealth. Non-Indigenous managers may not have an ascription orientation as status has become more based on achievement in the Australian educational system (Marks, 1992). However, research shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are ascription orientated as throughout Australia the moiety system divides all members into groups. Once a person is born into a group their membership does not change throughout their life (Walsh et al., 1993). In addition, in Western society decision-making authority depends on organisational hierarchy and the position of the decision maker, but in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' decision making is public with speakers building on the arguments that are presented (Pearson et al., 2010).

#### *v) Specific vs. Diffuse*

Lastly, in the specific vs. diffuse dimension, specific oriented (non-Indigenous) people are direct and to the point. Whereas, diffuse people are indirect, convoluted and have seemingly aimless forms of relating (Trompenaars et al., 2004). Indirectness is the preferred method of interaction for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, a significant proportion of what is conveyed in face-to-face interactions may consist of non-verbal communication (Braysich, 1979). Tone of voice, facial expression, eye movement, gestures and posture are all highly significant elements of communication and may convey the true nature of the interaction more accurately than spoken words (Braysich, 1979).

This is consistent with Watts and Carlson's (2002) study which found Aboriginal people (in South East Queensland) may prefer not to answer direct questions about important personal details or to elicit a full account of an event. Rather observation and indirect questioning are accepted practices to gain information from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Watts et al., 2002). These cultural differences may prevent effective communication between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous people. When dialogue such as negotiation, discussion, or conflict resolution is lacking cultural competency, the process is likely to lead to unsustainable outcomes (Pearson et al., 2010). The two dimensions that are not within the scope of this study (inner vs. outer directed and affective vs. neutral) are discussed below.

#### *i) Inner vs. Outer Directed*

The inner vs. outer directed dimension which is not a focus of this research consists of people who are inner directed, who believe you can live the life you want to live if you take advantage of opportunities (Trompenaars et al., 2004). In contrast outer directed people do not believe that they can shape their own destiny. Australian managers often see themselves as ascending the 'career ladder' through their individual actions thus they are more inner directed (Warner et al., 2002). However, art centre manager jobs are not particularly well paid nor are there obvious career paths within the sector (Altman, 2005). Therefore this dimension applies less to art centre managers as often no career path or development is provided and is therefore not investigated in this study.

## *ii) Affective vs. Neutral*

In addition, in the affective vs. neutral dimension, affective orientated people display their emotions openly whereas people in neutral cultures do not show their feelings publicly (Trompenaars et al., 2004). This style of interrelating is reflected in the way people communicate their opinions and feelings through verbal and non-verbal communication. These interpersonal elements of interaction are important in terms of doing business since they can build or deter trust and understanding (Trompenaars et al., 2004). If managers are aware of these subtle differences it can help them avoid offending someone. However, as remote art centre managers will not be observed as part of this research, and it is hard via interviews to get evidence of affective behaviour (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2000), therefore this dimension will not be analysed.

Both national and organisational cultures have a profound impact on how people in businesses perceive things and behave (Tan and Lim, 2002). Cultures specify what behaviours are desirable in members as well as how things are to be evaluated. People of different cultures may experience difficulty interacting and understanding others which can result in poorly conducted cross-cultural negotiations (Tan et al., 2002). Negotiating is a way of life for managers, defined as a process by which two or more parties try to resolve perceived incompatible goals, it is central to a manager's job (Carnavale and Pruitt, 1992). Business and workplace negotiations are increasingly recognized as a critical component of management competency and are crucial to the implementation of business strategies in diverse contexts (Tan et al., 2002).

Managers in general must negotiate on a number of workplace issues i.e. budgets, project deadlines etc. Yet, despite its importance, the negotiation process is often misunderstood and poorly carried out (Tan et al., 2002). Culture will affect the way managers go about negotiating as cultural values affect negotiators' interests and priorities that underlie negotiators' positions on issues. Poor negotiations can lead to suboptimal outcomes and even conflict (Tan et al., 2002).

Cross-cultural business negotiations involve variables including the negotiator's behaviour, style, communication, time and power. All these variables differ across cultures therefore when negotiating managers need cross-cultural competence (Trompenaars et al., 2000). Effective cross-cultural negotiators learn to anticipate cultural differences, make sense of them and adjust their own behaviours to that of their counterparts. Negotiators must try to minimize cultural differences and place greater emphasis on common cultural values, in an attempt to build common ground (Tan et al., 2002). Although, cross-cultural negotiators must also be aware that individual culture members may not act like the cultural prototype, especially in certain situations.

### **2.3 Other Cultural Challenges**

In addition to the cultural competence challenges discussed, there may be other cultural challenges that non-Indigenous art centre managers may also have to manage. This study will focus primarily on two other challenges that have come up consistently in past research: culture shock and expectations.

### 2.3.1 Culture Shock

Another significant issue for non-Indigenous Australians working in remote communities is culture shock (Muecke et al., 2011). Culture shock is a general term used to describe the stress, anxiety, or discomfort a person feels when they are placed in an unfamiliar cultural environment, due to the loss of familiar meanings and cues relating to communication and behaviour (Muecke et al., 2011). It has been linked to poor retention rates of remote area professionals as it can undermine a worker's ability to function effectively and perform their tasks successfully which may contribute to a person's decision to leave a community (Muecke et al., 2011).

### 2.3.2 Expectations

Moving into a remote community creates a significant level of uncertainty and people will form expectations about their new environment (Black, 1992). Individuals who have accurate or met expectations usually have higher levels of adjustment and job performance than individuals with under-met or over-met expectations. Met job expectations can increase individual's job performance which in turn may improve employee satisfaction and retention (Black, 1992). Therefore cultural competence is vital as understanding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community culture will help art centre managers have realistic expectations of what work and living will be like.

Furthermore, unmet expectations may influence a worker's decision to leave an organisation (Pearson, 1995). Employees expect their job to provide a mix of features (e.g., pay, promotion, autonomy) which they value. The range and importance of these factors vary between individuals, but there will always be a difference between the experienced

and expected values. When the difference becomes sufficiently large there is less job satisfaction and the greater the likelihood of turnover. People who chose to stay in an organisation are predominantly better performers, so if people with unmet expectations leave an organisation it can reduce efficiency and may lower the quality of products and services (Pearson, 1995). Therefore if art centre managers are not culturally competent and their expectations are not met they are increasingly likely to leave the organisation. As a result productivity will suffer because it takes time to find a replacement and often during that time art centres are closed.

In addition, expectancy theories exist based on the idea that people believe there is a relationship between the effort they put in at work, the performance they achieve from that effort, and the rewards they receive from their effort and performance (Lunenburg, 2011). Victor Vroom (1964) was the first to develop an expectancy theory with direct application to work settings. Vroom's (1964) theory is based on four assumptions: one, people join organisations with expectations about their needs, motivations, and past experiences. These influence how individuals react to the organisation (Vroom, 1964). Two, an individual's behaviour is a result of conscious choice; people are free to choose those behaviours suggested by their own expectancy calculations. Three, people want different things from an organisation (e.g. good salary, job security, advancement etc.). Four, people will choose among alternatives so as to optimize outcomes for them personally (Vroom, 1964).

The expectancy theory based on these assumptions has three key elements: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence (Vroom, 1964). A person is motivated to the degree that he or she believes that (a) effort will lead to acceptable performance (expectancy), (b)

performance will be rewarded (instrumentality), and (c) the value of the rewards is highly positive (valence) (Vroom, 1964). Understanding what motivates non-Indigenous people to work in remote Australian communities and what they expect to gain from their experience will help art centres retain managers. If managers believe that good performance will result in valued rewards this will encourage them to work hard.

## **2.4 Cultural Convergence**

There have been studies to show that there is an increasing amount of cultural convergence (Watson and Clark, 1984, Burr and Mutchler, 1993). Cultural convergence refers to the growing similarity between national cultures, including the beliefs, values and aspirations of individuals across cultures, partly driven by globalisation (Sarala and Vaara, 2010).

However, this study will examine art centres in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities which studies show are struggling to catch up to the digital age (Indigenous Remote Communications Association, 2011), and thereby may be facing greater cultural divergence instead of convergence. Therefore reconciling cultural differences will still be a significant issue between non-Indigenous art centre managers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and elders.

## **2.5 Recruitment and Retention**

The recruitment and retention of workers in remote Australia is an ongoing, well documented problem. As competent and capable managers are vital to the success of remote Australian art centres recruitment and retention of staff is crucial. Success is often largely dependent on the cultural competence of managers and their ability to develop

trusting relationships within a community (Price-Robertson and McDonald, 2011). However, the majority of existing research in this area is in the health and mining sector.

Multinational mining companies are finding it extremely difficult to attract, develop, retain, and obtain organisational commitment from managers to move to remote regions of Australia and adopt a very different lifestyle (Pearson et al., 2010). Promotion of the unique characteristics of rural practice, such as greater autonomy and the rewards of living in a small community is one strategy recommended to improve recruitment (Courtney, Edwards, Smith and Finlayson, 2002). This strategy could also be used in the recruitment of art centre managers by promoting the rewards of living in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community such as being able to facilitate cultural activities (Mahood, 2012).

Furthermore, turnover is high in rural and remote Australia which can be attributed to a range of complex reasons including personal, environmental, and work related. A recent allied health survey found that many practitioners leave rural practice due to personal factors (Schoo, Stagnitti, Mercer and Dunbar, 2005). For example it can be hard to find suitable work for a spouse or to cater to specific educational needs for the children of health professionals. Personal reasons may also explain why art centre managers leave communities, for example: feeling isolated and lonely while immersing oneself in another culture (Mahood, 2012).

Integration into remote communities also affects the overall satisfaction of health professionals and will influence a person's decision to leave the community (Lee and Mackenzie, 2003). Some professionals find integration difficult as certain communities are

perceived as being unreceptive to newcomers, have limited social facilities or few people of the same age (Lee et al., 2003). As mentioned art centre managers success depends upon their ability to develop trusting relationships within a community, if integration is difficult due to cultural differences and misunderstandings, this will reduce the likelihood of these relationships being formed.

## **2.6 Literature Gaps**

This literature review revealed several gaps in existing research including: cultural competence in the Australian context, employment of outside people into remote communities, intangible issues and relocation motives.

### **2.6.1 Cultural Competence in an Australian Context**

There is a lack of research on cultural competence and the effect it has on outcomes within an Australian context. Australia differs from other countries as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people share a unique history with distinct cultures and traditions, therefore research into the Australian context is needed. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain cultures that are distinct from that of mainstream, non-Indigenous Australia (Price-Robertson et al., 2011). This cultural difference has implications for remote art centres because if their services do not adapt to the contemporary cultural context, they have little chance of improving outcomes long-term. To be culturally competent, organisations need to ensure that cultural knowledge shapes the structure of the service; the specific practices and strategies employed; and the selection, training and actions of individual staff members (Price-Robertson et al., 2011).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are not a homogenous population, they have a diversity of cultures, experiences, histories and geographical locations (Phillips, 2004). These differences are recognised by the Committee of Deans of Australian Medical Schools which aims to reflect these cultural differences in their design, delivery and evaluation of health curricula. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture has endured since colonisation and carries with it over 40 000 years' worth of history and traditions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture includes claims to sovereignty; autonomy and enduring land ownership (Fourmile, 1994). Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities in contemporary Australia face immense challenges. Their strength and resilience is compromised by multiple complex problems, including historical and ongoing dispossession, marginalisation and racism, as well as the legacy of past policies of forced removal and cultural assimilation (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997). These issues contribute to the high levels of poverty, unemployment, violence, and substance misuse seen in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

A huge factor in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community life is obligation, people are indebted to others, and others are indebted to them in turn (Burbank, 2006). A lot of community activity is based on those cycles of obligation, interdependency and socio-cultural expectations e.g. travelling long distances for a funeral regardless of work commitments, whereas, non-Indigenous Australians do not have these similar obligations (Burbank, 2006). Often Aboriginal corporations in remote towns close for a few days when someone passes away and the clothing worn to the funeral by each mourner is appropriate to the person's connection to the deceased. This is an example of the particularist culture

where people focus more on relationships than rules. This cultural difference needs to be recognised and understood by non-Indigenous managers to avoid conflict arising.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders also have traditional kinship ties and strongly value personal relationships (Stevens and Balie, 2012). A study in the Northern Territory illustrated these collectivist values, finding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders use gambling to express kinship through sharing their wealth amongst family in a social setting (Stevens et al., 2012). However, non-Indigenous families have more of an impersonal, individualistic culture. Impersonal schedules are commonly adhered to such as 'mealtimes' and 'bedtime' and are generally fixed and will not vary depending on how one feels (Burbank, 2006). These differences between cultures need to be explored in order to understand how they affect the performance management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders artists by non-Indigenous art centre managers.

### **2.6.2 Employment of Outside People into Remote Communities**

There is also limited research on the employment of outside people into remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Rola-Rubzen and Gibbs, 2011). Previous research focuses on the recruitment and retention of health care professionals in rural Australian settings. Several studies have identified specific difficulties experienced by medical graduates working in rural locations, including community integration, which can significantly impact upon employee satisfaction (Murray and Wronski, 2006; McGrail et al., 2012). The importance of maximising community engagement and integration of new rural doctors for workforce recruitment and retention is widely recognised (Murray, et al., 2006;

Tolhurst, 2008). However, health care professionals receive a lot more resources and training and support in their work compared to art centre managers (Phillips, 2004). Therefore, these patterns may be similar but even more significant in art centres.

### **2.6.3 Tangible vs. Intangible Issues**

Much cultural competence research focuses on tangible outcomes such as turnover. Research by McDonald, Bibby and Carroll (2002) shows that low remuneration, inadequate financial rewards for after-hours work and problems arranging time off have all led to high turnover of rural general practitioners. Existing research also focuses on the barriers which affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce participation rates. In Burbank's (2006) study he found that the impersonal characteristic of Western societies repels many Aboriginal people, especially those from remote communities, when they want, or are required, to participate in Western institutions. The Federal Government wishes to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce participation in order to address their low socio-economic status (Pearson et al., 2013). Often government initiatives focus on tourism ventures and art centres as they can be pathways to greater economic and community development (Pearson et al., 2013).

There is however, a lack of research on intangible issues. There is not a broadly accepted definition of "intangibles" as it is actually an adjective for different concepts such as assets, investments, resources, etc. (Cañibano and Sánchez, 1998). However, the term intangibles in human resources often refers to intellectual capital (Vickery, 1999). Intangible resources are broadly considered as assets i.e. intellectual property rights, trademarks etc. and as skills i.e. capabilities and competencies, such as cultural competence (Hall, 1992).

There is specifically a lack of research on intangible cultural differences and how non-Indigenous Australians actually work to overcome them. To address this gap in existing literature research needs to focus on the cultural competence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians. Research shows the importance of cultural competence in other countries, for example the USA and Canada. Sørderberg and Holden (2002) found that in the USA and Canada if medical practitioners came from a rural background they were more likely to practice in a rural location and that a good match between physicians and their communities indicated higher retention, as does greater community integration.

#### **2.6.4 Relocation Motives**

Another weakness in existing academic literature is a lack of studies comparing the relocation motives in various types of jobs in remote areas. Alternate approaches to recruitment need to be taken with workers in different professions (Carson, Coe, Garnett and Zander, 2010). To fill this gap in existing literature, research focused on understanding the cultural challenges non-Indigenous art centre managers face while working in remote Australia is needed.

### **2.7 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework illustrated in *Figure 6* (pg. 38) depicts the research proposition that if non-Indigenous art centre managers' cultural competence is enhanced this will reduce the challenges they face and will improve organisational outcomes. As this study is focusing on a process it is qualitative in nature.

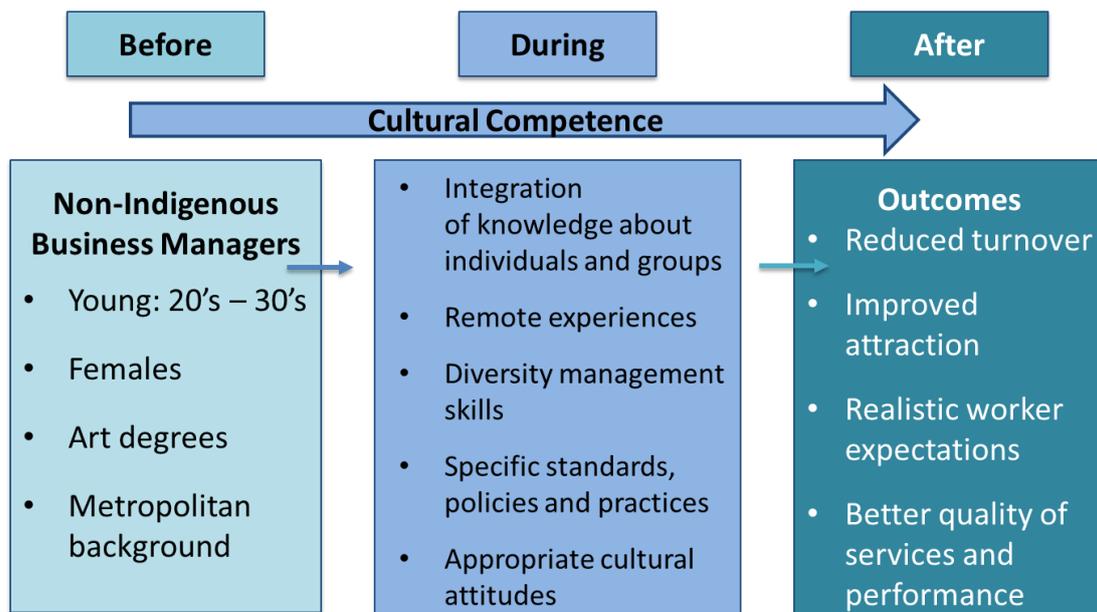


Figure 6 - Conceptual Framework

Furthermore, there are other stakeholders who might also be considered (refer to Figure 7). The local community are stakeholders as the dynamics of the surrounding community, regardless of how isolated, is a big factor and effects art centre management. Also external agencies such as the peak bodies, advocacy bodies and government departments including funding agencies impact upon art centre management. However, this study focused primarily on non-Indigenous art centre managers as the emphasis is on understanding the challenges non-Indigenous art centre managers' face from their perspective, while working in remote Australia.



Figure 7 - Stakeholders

In addition, other factors need to be considered that may also affect cultural competence.

These other factors were identified during the interview process, such as:

### *Tangible factors*

- Money: to what extent are Non-Indigenous art centre managers motivated by income and benefits?
- Education: understanding the (mis)match between non-Indigenous art centre manager's education and the job requirements.
- Gender/Youth: The majority of non-Indigenous art centre managers are single women in their twenties and thirties who must liaise with older male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders who have authority over the artists.

### *Intangible factors*

- Experience: Does prior experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people effect art centre managers' cultural competence?
- Personality: Are particular personality types better suited to work in remote communities?

These particular factors have been considered to determine the impact they have on non-Indigenous art centre managers' cultural competence and whether they influence their decision to take the job, the challenges they face whilst in the job and/or their choice to resign from their job and leave an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

## 2.8 Summary

To conclude, previous research shows that non-Indigenous Australians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have differing world views. Therefore, the differences between the cultural dimensions identified by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner may lead to cultural challenges non-Indigenous art centre managers must manage. Cultural competence will be vital in helping managers overcome these challenges and may also lead to better human resource management outcomes including improving retention. However, there are gaps in the current research (e.g. cultural competence in the Australian context, employment of outside people into remote communities, intangible issues and relocation motives) and also limited empirical studies in the non-health sectors in remote Australian communities, which this study attempts to address. The following chapter will provide a detailed description of the research methods used in this project.

## **Chapter 3 – Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of what research methods were used and the theoretical and practical considerations that support their selection. Described is the method used to provide data to investigate the issues identified in Chapter 1. First, the research methods are discussed then the procedures of data collection and analysis are explained. Finally, research limitations and the ethical responsibilities to stakeholders involved at the different stages of this research are identified.

### **3.2 Research Methods**

This was an exploratory study, focused on theory building and was qualitative in nature. The project involved interviewing non-Indigenous art centre managers to research into the cultural competence challenges they faced whilst working in remote Australia. This approach was appropriate as the issues were embedded within the fabric of organisations, specifically art centres.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

#### **3.3.1 Methods**

Based on the literature review provided in Chapter 2, the primary method of data collection chosen was in-depth, semi structured interviews because qualitative interviews allow complex matters to be explored (Rubin, 2012). Qualitative interviewing projects are especially important when the processes being studied are nearly invisible. This is supported by previous empirical studies (Hutchinson, Vickers, Wilkes and Jackson, 2009, Karreman and

Alvesson, 2009). Therefore this method of research is best suited to exploring the intangible aspects of cultural competence and allows art centre managers to elicit their own accounts of their experience and the challenges they have had to face while working in remote art centres.

### 3.3.2 Sample

The research was designed with a goal to interview a minimum of 20 non-Indigenous art centre managers using convenience sampling from a list of managers Tim Acker provided. Tim Acker is employed by Ninti One Ltd. as the Principal Research Leader for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Economies Project. Ninti One Ltd. is a not-for-profit private company established in 2003 and is the management company of the CRC-REP. Based on the agreement with the CRC-REP; Ninti One would source the respondents (see Table 1 for selection criteria of participants).

**Table 1 - Participant Selection Criteria**

Participant Selection Criteria			
Gender	Remoteness	Tenure	Currently / Non-currently employed

The CRC-REP did not feel it was necessary to interview Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. It would have entailed additional ethics clearances that would have been hard to obtain from the relevant agencies and the university within the set time frame of this study. In addition, different research instruments would have been required for Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islanders people as they have issues with literacy and discussing their culture with non-Indigenous people. For example, a study by Fuller et al. (2004) stated that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders find cultural questions asked by non-Indigenous tourists, offensive and an inappropriate means of transferring knowledge about land and ceremonial matters (Fuller et al., 2004).

The actual sample size for this study comprises of 22 participants: 21 non-Indigenous art centre managers, both currently and not currently employed in remote Australia and a General Manager for a Ninti One (*see Table 2*). Initially, the aim was to get a more representative sample that included a combination of non-Indigenous managers from different age groups, genders, backgrounds, lengths of tenure and remote communities. However, the majority of participants were female, had a fine arts background and longer tenures (three years and over). This is due to time constraints, involvement being dependent upon subjects' willingness to participate and those that Ninti One was able to secure consent from. These issues are addressed in detail under "Limitations of the Study" in the final Chapter. A majority of female respondents was expected as a recent survey of 78 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art centres revealed that most art centre managers are female (71 per cent) while only 29 per cent are male (Acker, pers. comm. 2013). In addition, most interviewees are not from the group of managers with short tenures. This was likely due to the fact that those who did not have positive experiences did not want to discuss them.

**Table 2 - Participant Profiles**

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	RE MOTENESS	CURRENT	BACKGROUND	STAY	TENURE	DURATION
ACM 1.	M	5	Y	30 years' experience in arts industry	No - wants to 'get out'	12 mths	45:00 mins
ACM 2.	F	0	N	Fine art	No – left due to being tired	3.5 yrs	39:30 mins
ACM 3.	F	4	Y	Fine art & museum studies	No – tired, wants a relationship	8 yrs	58:30 mins
ACM 4.	F	2	Y	Fine art & landscape/architecture	No – bored, tired	7 yrs	42:00 mins
ACM 5.	M	4	Y	Museum studies & cultural heritage	Not sure	8 mths	40:00 mins
ACM 6.	F	5	Y	Education & fine arts	Yes – loves the job	1.5 yrs	41:00 mins
ACM 7.	M	3	Y	40s years' experience industry	Yes – contract for 3 years	13 mths	41:00 mins
ACM 8.	F	0	Y	Arts administration& interior design	Yes – unique job, familiar	16 yrs	56:20 mins
ACM 9.	F	3	Y	History & art administration	Yes – still enjoys it	12 yrs	27:00 mins
ACM 10.	F	0	N	Art history	No – tired	3 yrs	41:40 mins
ACM 11.	F	3	Y	Utopia	Yes – at least 3 years	11 mths	45:30 mins
ACM 12.	F	3	Y	Masters in human rights	Not sure – too early to say	4 mths	30:15 mins
ACM 13.	F	5	Y	Business	Yes – still enjoys it	2 yrs	28:00 mins
ACM 14.	F	3	Y	Art cultivation	Yes - work still to be done	10 yrs	24:15 mins
ACM 15.	M	5	Y	12 years' experience in arts industry	Yes – loves it	3 yrs	46:30 mins
ACM 16.	F	4	Y	Fine arts	Yes – still learning	7 yrs	28:00 mins
ACM 17.	F	5	Y	Fine arts	Yes - loves job	6 yrs	51:10 mins
ACM 18.	F	0	N	Fine arts	No – reconnect with family	3.5 yrs	42:00 mins
ACM 19.	F	1	Y	Education	Yes – lots needed to be done	6.5 yrs	42:45 mins
ACM 20.	F	3	Y	Anthropology	Yes – loves job	2.5 yrs	33:40 mins
ACM 21.	M	3	Y	Fine arts	Yes – more work to be done	6 weeks	20:00 mins
GMNO 22.	F	0	N	General Manager for Ninti One.	N/A	-	30:00 mins

While the sample was biased in terms of tenure duration of participants, it was more representative in terms of their level of remoteness. Remoteness has been divided into six categories ranging from a scale developed by Tim Acker from 0 - 5 (see Table 3). The scale begins at 0 for art centre managers who are not currently employed or who work for various art centres located in different communities, and goes up to 5 for small isolated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that have only a few services.

**Table 3 - Remoteness Scale**

<b>0</b>	N/A: not currently an art centre manager or working for various art centres
<b>1</b>	Remote area town
<b>2</b>	Small remote area town or community close to a town/service centre
<b>3</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community - larger/reasonable services/accessible from a town/service centre
<b>4</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community - smaller community, isolated, limited services
<b>5</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community - small, isolation, few services

Given that there are roughly 80 art centres in remote Australia, 21 art centre managers represents about 25 per cent of the current population of art centre managers and this is a respectable sample size. The sample size was also consistent with an average acceptable number of interviews required for in-depth qualitative studies in general (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p.113) 'the necessary number of subjects depends on the purpose of a study' and 'may be due to a combination of the time and resources available'. Therefore the size and composition of the sample reflects what was possible to collect within the constraints set for this study.

### 3.3.3 Procedure

Participants were initially contacted by Tim Acker the Ninti One research supervisor and invited to participate in interviews which ranged from 20 minutes to one hour in duration (*see Table 2*). Participants were informed in a letter of introduction and information sheet (*see Appendices 2 and 3*), via email, that neither they nor their organisation would be identifiable from the data. Participants could also ask for information to be omitted at any stage and were reminded that participation is voluntary and that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time. Informed consent was given by each participant prior to an interview (*see Appendix 4*).

The information requested from participants helped to unpack the nature of their work and identify the challenges they face. Through these interviews the experiences, motives and opinions of non-Indigenous art centre managers were explored in detail. The interview guide was divided into three parts, there were questions relating to what the participants were studying before the job, how they managed on-the-job and what was to happen after their contract ended or they left the community (*see Appendix 5*). This guide was based on the themes identified in the conceptual framework in Chapter 2. Although the interview protocol may appear highly structured, the number, order, content and form of the questions were modified as each interview unfolded, to obtain as detailed accounts as possible, following up on unique answers from each participant (Kvale et al., 2009).

However, adhering to the initial sequencing of questions wherever possible was advantageous as it helped maintain the focus of all interviews on collecting data relevant to

addressing all research sub-questions within a short time frame. Data collection commenced on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, 2013 and was completed on the 3rd of September, 2013. It also provided a systemic approach which improves the reliability of interviewing as a qualitative method (Kvale et al., 2009). The issue of reliability is concerned with trustworthiness and comparability of participants' answers when they are asked similar or very different questions (Kvale et al., 2009). Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 55) stated that 'data collection is inescapably a selective process, that you cannot and do not "get it all" even though you might think you are and can'.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing process that often follows the interviewing stage where the interviewee and the researcher co-create the knowledge about a phenomenon (Kvale et al., 2009). In this case data analysis commenced once all interviews were transcribed. To ensure the continuity of the analysis process interview recordings were transcribed in full verbatim either by the primary researcher who had conducted the interviews or by a third party professional transcription team.

The unit of analysis was the individual and consisted of thematic analysis of the conversational data. Thematic analysis allowed themes within the data to be identified, examined and recorded. A theme is a patterned response or meaning identified from the data that is related to the research questions (Ritchie and Lewis, 2006). A researcher's judgement is the key tool in determining which themes are more crucial as it is not

necessarily the frequency at which a theme occurs that makes it important. It is ideal that the theme will occur numerous times across the data set, but a higher frequency does not necessarily mean that the theme is more important to understanding the data (Ritchie et al., 2006).

### 3.5 Resources

The resources needed for this project were minimal. The CRC-REP provided \$7,500 in funding to assist with the costs associated with this study. Costs included the transcription of interviews and the telephone bills associated with conducting interviews over the phone.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval for this project was obtained from the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at Flinders University on the 2nd of June, 2013, prior to data collection commencing. Approval for this research was necessary as it involved working with human subjects. In acknowledgement and respect of the rights to participate in research based on an informed decision, free and informed consent was obtained from each research participant by following strict procedures (*see Appendix 6*). Ethical researchers are concerned with the reliability of collected data, or in qualitative research its trustworthiness (Kvale et al., 2009). To ensure clarity and minimise bias in participants' answers, an explanation was provided that they would gain no personal benefit through their participation.

### 3.7 Summary

The process of research design involves a series of decisions on multiple levels that ultimately determine its robustness: what is considered as knowledge, how it can be known, sampling decisions and methods of data collection and analysis. In this study 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling to satisfy the minimum selection criteria. The interviews were analysed by thematic analysis. Qualitative methodologies vary depending on research needs and are difficult to standardise. Therefore, the coherency of research objectives and approaches to meeting them, as well as the transparency of reporting on the process of applying those approaches, is not only crucial for the quality of the research itself but is also an ethical obligation to future researchers and users. The following chapter will discuss the results from the interviews.

## Chapter 4 – Results

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter combines the presentation and discussion of results to establish what cultural competence challenges art centre managers from non-Indigenous backgrounds face when working in remote Australia. Each participant was questioned as to what they were doing before the job, how they managed on-the-job and what happened when they left the community. The aim was to explore what cultural competence challenges and other cultural challenges exist, how they are managed and what influence they have on a managers' decision to remain in their job or resign.

### 4.2 Findings

#### 4.2.1 Cultural Competence Challenges

Based on the responses from the 22 interviews conducted, a number of cultural competence challenges were identified. The transcripts were analysed for key themes using a qualitative research method, specifically 'recurring regularities' (Patton, 1990) including recurring phrases in the verbatim expressions of interviewees.

##### *i) Relationships*

Two patterns emerged regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders view of relationships: communitarian values and importance of family relationships. First, how communitarian communities view relationships differ significantly from individualistic ones. Interviewees felt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are very communitarian orientated. This is evident from quotes in Table 4, where participants explain that people living in remote

communities place importance on group cohesion, decision making and relationships. Communitarian orientation manifests into a cultural challenge when non-Indigenous art centre managers (who are typically individualistic), have to make important decisions but are required to consult with artists first. The importance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders place on relationships also causes challenges for art centre managers as they must build a rapport with artists before they are able to manage effectively. Often these relationships can be difficult to establish as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are used to watching non-Indigenous people come and go from communities.

Second, many art centre managers felt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders place high importance on family relationships which can lead to organisational goals becoming less of a priority. As seen in Table 4, artists’ families come first and their work comes second. This creates cultural challenges for art centre managers as they need to consider both social and business objectives on a daily basis. When negotiating with artists it is important that managers consult with members from each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family group before making decisions which can often become a time consuming process.

**Table 4 - Relationships**

Interview Number	Interviewees’ quotes
ACM 1.	<p><b><i>Communitarian Values</i></b>  <i>“If an individual made a decision the group won’t allow that to be carried out anyway.”</i></p>
ACM 2.	<p><i>“I never felt like they were making decisions that were all based just on their personal interests and in fact if anything, there was one artist who tended to sort of always propose things that suited him but he ended up getting yelled down by the rest of the committee.”</i></p>

ACM 3.	<i>"If we have a serious issue or something like that, the executive will call a meeting and everyone will sort it out as a group."</i>
ACM 4.	<i>"When there is like contentious things coming up that we have got to address, then yes, the group definitely makes it. In relation to money and things I think people are getting a little bit more autonomous."</i>
ACM 17.	<i>"There's all sorts of things with relationships and avoidance relationships, things that we don't have in our society. People that aren't allowed to share space, people that aren't allowed to communicate with each other and you have to work around it; otherwise you can't get the work done."</i>
ACM 20.	<i>"People here are really used to people coming and going. So they don't build a bond with anyone, they come across to people as being very cold and a very unwelcoming community, it took a long time for them to see that I wasn't going anywhere and that we had big visions."</i>
ACM 1.	<i>"What's key is building up that rapport. I mean I'd say if you were coming into this community it would take a few years to be in a position where you can operate effectively. You certainly need to learn people vary. I mean most Indigenous people here are shy, they are not really that outgoing so it does take a while to talk to them and understand them and get them to trust you I suppose but once you have got that trust it is a lot easier."</i>
<b>Family Relationships</b>	
ACM 17.	<i>"The mainstream ways of negotiating with artists and in all the communities, just don't work out here. You have to go through family lines... There are five key families here and I need to make sure, regarding any important decisions to the art centre, I have to make sure that all of these family members are in the room."</i>
ACM 1.	<i>"I certainly know that family comes first so if it involves their own family then everything else goes out the window... I mean the community life is what impacts most."</i>
ACM 7.	<i>"When I first came up here you had to be adopted by a family to stay here to be a part of the community, otherwise you could be... harassed, physically assaulted and so forth just because you were an outsider. What happens is one of the families who you work with would adopt you into their family so then you had a place in the relationship structure."</i>
ACM 4.	<i>"I do think they focus more on relationships than rules and I think they struggle as well with staff in an organisation because they want to get to</i>

*know and trust people. They make it about the individuals rather than the position, they'll personalise it, it's about the individual it's not about the role of that individual. That's a generalisation and for some it won't be but on the whole, yes. I always say 'look don't make it about me there will be someone else doing this job' like you can say it til you're blue in the face but I don't think on a whole most people are thinking about what's happening in a year or two."*

ACM 3. *"Out here the values are all sort of around family and you know really strong sense of connection to country and care for country... Sometimes I really want people just to hold onto the art centre and work for the art centre but often it's all about your relationship with people and that can be a bit exhausting sometimes like, sometimes especially in central Australian culture there is very much this idea of you help me I help you and you know obviously if I am working for 100 people a week I can't do personal favours for 100 people a week."*

### *ii) Status*

Participants also identified that value is placed on one's status in a community. Table 5, illustrates art centre managers perspective of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders derive their status predominantly from age, gender and interrelationships. This can create a cultural challenge for art centre managers if they are viewed by people in the community as lacking status e.g. being single with no family. If art centre managers lack status then they may find it difficult to be respected and listened to. Challenges related to status can also arise when artists feel their status is being threatened for example: if they have not sold many paintings compared to others, then artists may get violent or abusive to re-establish their power.

**Table 5 - Status**

<b>Interview Number</b>	<b>Interviewees' quotes</b>
ACM 11.	<i>"The older ladies they want to assert their spot and if their works don't sell the way they want them to, well, then they have to show the public that they've still got power. So sometimes they try to put me down and humiliate me, and start arguments at meetings and bully me, and it's a nuisance."</i>

ACM 4.	<i>“There is definitely respect given to people that are more senior. From the artists back to the staff, they are pretty much respectful and when we were developing our artist/ art centre agreement that was a big thing - respect and that you’ve got to work together.”</i>
ACM 2.	<i>“When I was talking to one of the older artists and he said to me ‘oh are you married?’ And I said ‘no.’ And he said ‘do you have any children?’ And I said ‘no.’ And he said ‘oh you’re nobody then.’ And I thought yep, ok this is the gap between this view of the world and my world”</i>

### *iii) Communication Differences*

Cultural competence challenges arise in communication between non-Indigenous art centre managers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Participants highlighted that although different languages are spoken the challenges predominantly stem from difficulties understanding body language signals and that it is not culturally appropriate to say ‘no’ in a direct way.

As seen in Table 6, respondents describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as having a more indirect style of communicating, where non-verbal communication (body language signals) may convey the true nature of an interaction more accurately than spoken words. This concept is important for art centre managers to grasp otherwise the meaning of what someone has said will be misinterpreted and miscommunications will result. Art centre managers must also learn how to say ‘no’ indirectly as to not offend. This has important implications for managers because they are not always able to agree with everything artists want, yet if they are not culturally sensitive when declining or rejecting a request it can lead to conflict. This cultural challenge if not well managed may lead to ineffective communication which may result in negative organisational outcomes i.e. lower productivity.

Table 6 - Communication Differences

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
GMNO 22.	<i>"I think it's more what sits around the language that is a problem, where if someone's saying yes when they actually mean no, that's hard to get your head around. It looks like they're agreeing with you but they really are not."</i>
ACM 5.	<i>"It is more the subtlety of the language, not the language itself but the body language and what's behind the words that I find more difficult to interpret. Yeah, when someone tells me something but it could possibly mean something completely different to the words that I have heard."</i>
ACM 15.	<i>"At the end of the day you learnt to say no and you learnt 20 different ways to say no, you learnt to lie. You really learnt to lie. You learnt to come up with any myriad of excuses that meant you wouldn't take the car out that Sunday afternoon because you had worked for 6 days and you wanted to rest."</i>
ACM 16.	<i>"The way we're brought up is very different. We hold important something like manners ourselves, and then just the simple thing of somebody saying please and thank you is hard to get from an Indigenous person here."</i>
ACM 8.	<i>"I would say no even though culturally it's not really appropriate to say no at all... It takes a while to find out just what yes and no means and what these little hand signals mean and what's the polite way to say no."</i>
ACM 3.	<i>"It is considered very rude to say no to people. So if someone comes in and says can you come and collect wood, saying no would be considered really rude. So what you can say is: 'oh I'd really love to help you collect wood today but I've got a telephone conference ladies, I can't unfortunately', and you try and negotiate around that to get a solution... Occasionally it is really ok to say no."</i>

#### *iv) Differing Views of Time*

Another cultural challenge that became evident was different views regarding time. As seen in Table 7, based on participant responses time can be separated into two categories: time in the past/present and future sense and the time locals expected their managers to work.

First, in the past/present and future sense non-Indigenous most participants felt that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are more focused on the present. One explanation provided by ACM 15. is that many remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are disadvantaged/marginalised therefore people's needs are immediate.

Second, most participants also felt that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders place almost constant demands on their time, with many managers referring to the hours they work as '24/7'. Complex and unrelenting demands impacts upon managers' work-life balance and in some cases lead to feelings of being 'burnt out' if clear boundaries were not implemented. This finding does not relate to differing views of time in the short-term vs. long-term but rather the different views of who owns a managers' time. Non-Indigenous managers have a more specific view and regard what they do with their personal time as their individual right. However, managers felt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders hold a more diffuse view which is that organisations own managers' time (this is discussed further in Chapter 5).

Therefore, managers were often required to do work out of 'work-hours' that was not directly related to being a manager in the traditional sense. For example: managers had to drive people to the hospital or help people contact Centrelink. These additional demands on one's time can cause managers to feel pressured, stressed and exhausted which may cause them to burn out.

Table 7 - Differing Views of Time

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
ACM 1.	<p><b>View of Time as Past/Present/Future</b></p> <p><i>"I don't think time exists. There is only one time and that's the present... That whole transfer of knowledge that whole style of life is disappearing. Connections to the past and those things that were very strong are getting weaker and weaker. With the internet and Facebook and Twitter, with everything these days, people are living in the moment, there is not much thought of the future."</i></p>
ACM 4.	<p><i>"In the long run it's about the future but on the day to day it is about exactly that, the day to day."</i></p>
ACM 3.	<p><i>"It can be very frustrating sometimes, like no one wears a watch or really keeps to a time. You know, if there is a cultural imperative people will always go down that track so they won't necessarily come to a meeting on time so you have to do a lot of driving around, trying to find people, picking people up and people hate meetings."</i></p>
ACM 17.	<p><b>Demands on Art Centre Managers' Time</b></p> <p><i>"You can't do the job in a 40 hour week, you're working 60 hours a week minimum, you have to expect to work on weekends and you have to be able to put in long days... I ask the Directors that I work for, if I become really tired, I ask for them to allow me a weekend and they try and speak to all the artists. I mean, it doesn't really work, but they'll try and ask the artists to make sure I'm left alone over the weekend."</i></p>
ACM 16.	<p><i>"We do long days and I often take some work home but I leave the building. I leave the building because one thing that actually is very tiring is the locals, they're very demanding in many ways."</i></p>
ACM 18.	<p><i>"It's absolutely nowhere near a 9 to 5 job. It's almost like a 24 hour a day job in some ways and that doesn't mean that you are working all the hours in the day but being in like an isolated community like that, people would come to your door and things like that, and at times that was hugely challenging."</i></p>
ACM 6.	<p><i>"I think that in any job in a community you realise that you don't actually leave work. It's like you are living at work because the challenges are really emotional like you are in a totally different environment culturally... I think that's why people burn out because living and working in a remote community is one in the same thing."</i></p>

ACM 9.	<i>“For those first few years I worked 24/7, I used to get so tired I couldn’t speak. It was kind of all consuming.”</i>
ACM 1.	<i>“There is a limit of what you can do on a day to day basis. You tend to find that 75 per cent of your time you spend dealing with issues that aren’t really what your job is supposed to be but that happens. It is just like being a Centrelink agent or a welfare agent. Your artists come in and they want to ring the bank or send a fax to Centrelink and I mean it is the same everywhere. Half the time you can be dealing with someone who has got family problems and you are almost a counsellor or it could be that someone is walking around the art centre with an infected foot and you have got to take them to hospital.”</i>

#### 4.2.2 Other Cultural Challenges

Four other cultural challenges emerged from the interviews that non-Indigenous art centre managers have to manage: an intracultural gap in Indigenous communities, an urban-remote cultural gap, culture shock and unmet expectations.

##### *i) Intracultural Gap in Indigenous Communities*

As can be seen from Table 8, some respondents felt that each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is different with its own cultural protocols. Therefore if an art centre manager went to another community they would have to learn about an entirely different culture again. In addition, there are intracultural issues between art centre managers and other non-indigenous people working and living in remote communities. These intracultural gaps lead to cultural competence challenges that art centre managers must manage in their daily operation of remote art centres.

**Table 8 - Intracultural Gap in Indigenous Communities**

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
ACM 20.	<i>"The cultural protocols and the community priorities compared to other communities I had lived in and worked in were completely different and probably it took me over a year to adjust."</i>
ACM 13.	<i>"If I went from here to another community, you basically have to start all over again, you have some knowledge but you can't assume that that knowledge is going to be appropriate for where you are, so you have to really just listen and learn as you go."</i>
ACM 7.	<i>"While we (art centre managers) may think we know what's going on, really we don't and I have always taken the point of view that yes I know a little bit about what's going on but I certainly have no idea how everything works."</i>
ACM 11.	<i>"You know what kind of culture shock I have? With White fellas around me. That's a White fella culture you're not normally used to (white fellas working in remote communities). They're very different people than you would meet in a city."</i>

### ***ii) Urban-Remote Cultural Gap***

Furthermore, quotes in Table 9 show some respondents felt a physical urban-remote cultural gap exists between non-Indigenous Australians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. A majority of participants felt that in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the Indigenous community's world view is vastly different to those living in urban regions, to the point where it could be considered a different country's culture.

Table 9 - Urban-Remote Cultural Gap

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
ACM 17.	<i>"It's such a different world and such a different environment out here. The APY Lands was more foreign to me than any place I'd been abroad and I've travelled significantly with my family."</i>
ACM 6.	<i>"When you are working in an Indigenous community this is just a completely different culture. I may as well be in a different country."</i>
ACM 11.	<i>"People from remote communities are very different to urban Indigenous people."</i>

### iii) Culture Shock

As seen in Table 10, as a result of being immersed in a vastly different culture, certain respondents felt they experienced culture shock. Most participants located in very remote communities (score of three to five on remoteness scale) suffered from extreme culture shock whereas people located in less remote communities did not find cultural differences shocking but more so surprising. One way to overcome this cultural challenge might be to transition art centre managers from less remote communities into more remote communities, rather than to employ someone into a very remote community who has no prior experience working in one.

Table 10 - Culture Shock

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
ACM 17.	<i>"I experienced crazy levels of culture shock. I was probably quite ineffective in my role for the first six months because I was paralysed with culture shock. When I came out here I absolutely dropped my bundle with culture shock."</i>
ACM 16.	<i>"It's a massive culture shock and I still find that even on a weekly basis there's something that will shock me or disturb me culturally, we're so opposite in many ways, it's hard to come to terms with."</i>

- ACM 20. *“If you were interviewing me about the first ever time I went to a community, then I would say definitely (experienced culture shock).”*
- ACM 8. *“Absolutely, yes, I felt so white and so out of place, I really did. It took me a while... eventually the reverse happens where you feel so comfortable there and you feel really uncomfortable when you go to a city. But it takes a little while for that second skin to grow and I think, for a while you feel really like you’re an imposter and everyone can see that you have no idea. There’s people talking in a different language, even the other staff they know all these little words and gestures and everything, so there’s this easiness that everyone else has of communicating.”*

#### *iv) Unmet Expectations*

A subset of culture shock was that there were unmet expectations for appointees. As seen in Table 11, there were two different responses when participants were asked if the job of an art centre manager was what they were expecting. Interviewees either felt it was not what they were expecting or they were not sure what to expect so they came into the community with an open mind. In most cases when the job was not as expected the explanation was that there was much more involved in the job than they originally thought, for example the job description did not match the responsibilities and tasks required.

Having unmet expectations resulted in some art centre managers taking a longer time to adjust to their new environment. Since accurate or ‘met’ job expectations can increase individual’s job performance which may improve employee satisfaction and retention, an understanding of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and culture is vital. It will help managers to have realistic expectations of what work and living in a community will be like.

**Table 11 - Unmet Expectations**

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
ACM 20.	<i>"It was not as I was expecting, nothing ever is, nothing is ever as you expect it to be in a community. It was a really different community compared to the ones I had lived in."</i>
ACM 16.	<i>"When I first arrived here I actually didn't know what to expect at all, I had not a clue and then it took a while to get used to. There's so many aspects to the job that you really don't consider when you first start, you just think its art production you know, selling, helping the artists achieve their goals and sales and marketing but there's so much more to the job."</i>
ACM 13.	<i>"I thought it would be quieter, it certainly isn't quiet, but I don't know that I came in with any great expectations really. I probably didn't realise it would be as demanding as it is."</i>
ACM 11.	<i>"I knew what the job would be like, but what I didn't know and what I didn't find out til the end of the month is that we were actually in a financial mess. I had not been told at all that the centre was bankrupt more or less."</i>
ACM 3.	<i>"I think I came in without too many expectations I mean it was such a foreign thing to sort of do and it was kind of a strange thing. I didn't really have any because there was so many unknowns I don't think I had any really strong expectations."</i>

### 4.2.3 Non-Cultural Tangible Aspects

While exploring cultural competence challenges two non-cultural tangible aspects were identified that were difficult to classify and cut across all cultural dimensions. These were: monetary challenges and conflict.

### *i) Monetary Challenges*

Monetary challenges was a common theme identified throughout the interviews. Quotes in Table 12 illustrate how some art centre managers found it difficult to help families living in remote communities manage their money and explain the benefits to artists of saving money for the future. These monetary challenges defy neat categorisation as they were able to be placed into various cultural dimensions.

One participant (ACM 1.) described how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists often share their wealth with their extended family which illustrated the communitarian nature of their culture. This communitarian tendency artists' have to share their income with their family members put increased pressure on art centre managers who felt they needed to consistently sell more and more artwork. This also illustrated the importance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people place on their relationships, which highlighted the particularistic nature of their culture.

Another theme that emerged was that status was not based on achieving large sales. ACM 5 states that neither fame nor fortune motivated artists; this is likely because artists are no more respected in the community regardless of if they sell a lot of paintings. Therefore, monetary challenges interact with various dimensions of cultural competence in a complex way and often produce contradictory results e.g. art centre managers felt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have a short-term view of time as they spend the money they earn almost immediately.

Table 12 – Monetary Challenges

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
ACM 17.	<i>"Part of the job that's incredibly challenging is financial management, helping older people, and families, together, manage money."</i>
ACM 1.	<i>"Most of my artists are elderly and when they get any money their children and grandchildren come down and rob them and that is probably the toughest part of it. It is probably a lack of understanding in the community about where the money comes from and how we work."</i>
ACM 16.	<i>"Money story, it's always a challenge. The locals are not very good at budgeting their money and you become the lifesaving element of money in a community, and it just puts so much pressure on you. You're trying to sell paintings constantly, not just for one artist but for 40 artists and one's not getting as much as the other and there's a lot of jealousy involved with that and nothing ever being quite good enough. Money is always big pressure."</i>
ACM 5.	<i>"Neither fame nor fortune here is actually a motivator for artists so my biggest struggle has been how to motivate. I can say 'hey listen these guys would love to have a sculpture, they are ready to pay good money, make it' but six weeks later, eight weeks later... I mean it would have been five days' worth of solid work but nothing. And it would have guaranteed the artists in the long run a proper income of \$6000 - \$7000."</i>
ACM 1.	<i>"There is certainly no such thing as a rainy day, you know, putting anything away for a rainy day... They are painting it one week and we are selling it the next. That causes other problems when you've got one artist selling a lot of art and the others not. It's not called disposable income for nothing. I mean \$5,000 - \$10,000 can disappear in about 20 minutes."</i>

## ii) Conflict and Violence

Another challenge identified from the data was that art centre managers must deal with conflict and violence due to the nature of their work. Conflict occurred in various forms from verbal abuse to physical, non-verbal abuse and was a common issue that emerged as something participants had to learn how to cope with. The more intimidation and violence

art centre managers witnessed the more severe culture shock they experienced. As seen in Table 13, the reasons for this conflict and violence vary. This was not a challenge identified in the literature review but it does add to the understanding of the pressures art centre managers are under and may also explain why some managers resign.

**Table 13 – Conflict and Violence**

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
ACM 18.	<i>“There was a couple of instances early on where there was some kind of community fighting that played out in or just outside the art centre and I found that confronting and scary at the time.”</i>
ACM 7.	<i>“I’ve had to sit on one side of the desk while someone screams and yells at me on the other side and they will wipe all the stuff off the desk in front of me and they will tell me ‘I will punch you out’ and all that sort of stuff. And you’ve got to sit there and just let it go past because if you react physically then of course you put yourself in a position where all that person’s family can then come along and beat you up because of pay back. So you’ve got to accept it but don’t take it personally, so you come back to work the next day and just let it all go and move on.”</i>
ACM 1.	<i>“Facebook starts so many fights here it’s not funny. Everybody is slagging each other on Facebook and that causes a bloody riot and that goes on for weeks. It happens every couple of days and it’s not just our community it is every community.”</i>
ACM 2.	<i>“I found the violence confronting because I hadn’t really been exposed to violence like that before and it freaked me out about how many people died. I’d gone to one or two funerals total before and now I was going every month. That was very disturbing.”</i>
ACM 5.	<i>“I have been attacked, I have had my house broken into, I’ve had my windscreen smashed. So there are occurrences that happen in community and nobody ever prepared me for that really.”</i>
ACM 6.	<i>“A run-down of just the community, individuals and mental health issues, that would have helped a lot. The first day I was working here some... a poor lady was having a psychotic episode and came screaming into the art centre and swung an axe at me. I had absolutely no idea what was going on.”</i>

ACM 10. *“I got into trouble in terms of people got really angry when I hadn’t listened to them. Like I was so ‘just go away’ or whatever, and then it was like ‘oh no’ they came back with a crow bar or something. That only happened once and she was crazy.”*

#### 4.2.4 Other Findings

In addition to the cultural challenges discussed, other findings also emerged from the interviews including, adaptation to remote communities/job and turnover.

##### *i) Adaptation to Remote Communities/Job*

The longer art centre managers remained in their job the better they adapted to work and life in a remote community. Two patterns emerged in this finding: 1) there were rewarding aspects involved and 2) there were personal attributes people needed. First, a significant belief participants held was that being an art centre manager was one of the hardest jobs they had ever had but it was also the most rewarding. According to Table 14, participants with longer tenures (over three and a half years) were adamant that despite the challenges there were rewarding aspects to their work. These included the intrinsic satisfaction participants felt at helping artists improve their work and that they were continually learning which kept the job interesting.

Second, long-term participants who had observed other art centre managers come and go referred to some key personal characteristics people needed to be adaptable to work and life in a remote community. People needed to have the right mindset, be patient and self-aware (have a strong sense of self). Without a strong sense of self, people were likely to feel the effects of isolation and cultural challenges. Along with a strong sense of self, a genuine

respect for others and other cultures was needed and it was important to also be flexible and resilient as rigid views, expectations and plans are likely to come unstuck in remote communities.

**Table 14 – Adaptation to Remote Communities/Job**

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
	<p><b>Rewarding Aspects</b></p> <p>ACM 18. <i>"It's definitely the hardest thing I have ever done but also the most rewarding. It's just sort of a holistic experience in many ways. It's hard to describe ... it's so yin and yang, you see some things that you just wished you had never ever seen, experienced things that are so hard that you don't know if you are going to get through it and then you have these little kind of miracles, for want of a better word, that sort of are scattered along and they are transformative."</i></p> <p>ACM 17. <i>"I think the most rewarding element of the job is seeing what happens when artists step up their work and start making an income through their paintings... their ability to have some control for one's life in an environment where it's very difficult for individuals to have a sense of control."</i></p> <p>ACM 16. <i>"You're always learning and it's really true, with this job you never stop learning, it never stops changing, and consequently never stops being interesting. There's always another goal to achieve, like with the artists you want them to pass the next certificate, you want the new artists to paint their best painting, you want the older artist to get their first solo exhibition, you want to win an award for a young artist. There's always something to achieve."</i></p>
	<p><b>Personal Attributes</b></p> <p>GMNO 22. <i>"Patience, empathy, being considerate, thoughtful, highly creative... most of the art centre managers I know that have stuck it out are strong, so resilience is important."</i></p> <p>ACM 16. <i>"You need to be really, really flexible, you really do have to clean up dirt off the floor, and then greet the local dignitary... You've got to be a real all-rounder to cope with all of that as a person I think."</i></p>

ACM 21.	<i>"I think patience is the key and being willing to try not to force things to happen all at once because yeah, it's not going to happen like that and be willing to make plans but also to be adaptable with those plans and make lots of compromises."</i>
ACM 12.	<i>"You have to be fairly broadminded and also accept there are cultural differences and not be judgemental about them."</i>

### *ii) Reasons Why Managers Stay or Leave*

Reasons why managers stay or leave were identified during the interviews. First, as seen in Table 15, the main reasons participants stayed in their jobs and communities were because of the connections and relationships they built with the artists, the goals they desired to achieve and that they found it enjoyable work. Therefore, it was evident most non-Indigenous art centre managers were intrinsically motivated to stay.

Second, issues outside of cultural competence drove managers' decisions to leave remote communities. As seen in Table 15, the reasons people left included: feeling tired or burnt out, feeling that goals had been accomplished and/or for personal reasons i.e. wanting to find a partner and start a family. This highlighted that being an art centre manager is a complex role and other factors effect managers' decision to resign. Thus a multi-theoretical perspective is needed to understand the reasons managers leave which will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Table 15 – Reasons Why Managers Stay or Leave

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
<b>Reasons Managers Stay</b>	
ACM 6.	<i>"I feel so lucky to have met these incredible people who have gone through so much, you know, hell and back, really just hell and back and they are still so strong and they are still so beautiful and that's why you stay."</i>
ACM 12.	<i>"Everybody will leave at some point and I will return to the city one day, but there's definitely some things that I would like to see done here, for the sake of the gallery and for the sake of the person who comes after me but I think more than anything for the sake of the artists."</i>
ACM 13.	<i>"As long as I'm enjoying the work and feel challenged and feel that I can do something that makes a difference, well not makes a difference, but you know helps promote and continue the growth of the art centre and the community, I'm happy to be here."</i>
<b>Reasons Managers Leave or Considered Leaving</b>	
ACM 10.	<i>"I was tired and I knew that I had kind of achieved everything that I had wanted to achieve. I set up the art centre and got a really good reputation for the artists, got exhibitions at really good galleries and I felt like ok... I just knew I wanted to go and have another life after the desert."</i>
ACM 5.	<i>"I wanted to run away a month ago. I will most certainly monitor my emotional and mental wellbeing and if it gets too much then I will not stay around for nothing. If it affects my health, why should I have my health deteriorated supporting people who will not necessarily support themselves?"</i>
ACM 4.	<i>"I cannot work the equivalent of what feels like three jobs in one anymore and I'm a bit bored and also I don't want to live in this environment anymore. That's probably the biggest thing."</i>
ACM 3.	<i>"I'm sort of giving myself about another 6 months and then I'd actually quite like to leave. I think one of the hardest things; I mean I am so busy that you know there is some personal stuff like I would quite like to have a relationship. I don't necessarily want to have a relationship in community because that can be a bit complicated; it is a bit like a fishbowl. Also I just don't want to leave here really burnt out, like it is a really challenging job and I'd like to leave here sort of feeling like I'm still functional and doing a good job."</i>

### 4.3 Summary

Based on the results from the 22 interviews conducted a number of cultural competence challenges were identified that art centre managers must manage including: relationships, status, communication differences and differing views of time. In addition, four other cultural challenges emerged: the intracultural gap in Indigenous communities, the physical urban-remote cultural gap, culture shock and unmet expectations. Furthermore, two non-cultural tangible aspects were identified, monetary challenges and conflict and violence. These were difficult to classify as they cut across all cultural dimensions. Lastly, two other findings also emerged from the interviews including, adaptation to remote communities/job and the reasons why managers stay or leave. The following chapter concludes the thesis by summarising the findings to the research questions and objective.

## Chapter 5 – Conclusions & Implications

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the conclusion to the thesis and builds on the findings presented in Chapter 4 by discussing them relative to the original research questions. Section 5.2 summarises the major findings from the research study with reference to prior research. Section 5.3 discusses the implications for theory, and section 5.4 examines the practical implications of the research. The conceptual framework is revised in section 5.5 and the limitations of the study are addressed in section 5.6. Section 5.7 outlines future research directions and the final section (5.8) draws a conclusion about the research objective.

### 5.2 Summary of Findings

This section summarises the major findings from the study with respect to each of the research questions in turn, beginning with the first research question:

**RQ1.** *What cultural competence challenges arise when art centre managers from non-Indigenous backgrounds work within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Sector in remote Australia?*

Based on the findings in Chapter 4, a number of cultural competence challenges were identified that art centre managers must manage, including: relationships, status, communication differences and differing views of time.

#### 5.2.1 Cultural Competence Dimensions

Three of the five cultural dimensions examined in this study were found to apply more strongly in the context of this study. Those dimensions being: 1) individualistic vs. communitarian, 2) universalistic vs. particularistic and 3) specific vs. diffuse.

### *i) Individualistic vs. Communitarian*

Based on participant responses it was identified that non-Indigenous art centre managers felt that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders highly value personal relationships, family ties and group cohesion. These findings are in accordance with Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) individualistic vs. communitarian cultural dimension. Existing literature shows that non-Indigenous Australians have a strong individualistic culture (Muecke et al., 2011) whereas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are often more communitarian which creates cultural competence challenges for art centre managers. They need to consider both social and business objectives on a daily basis and often cannot fulfil both. Managers may need to do things outside of their job description to build relationships with artists and decision making can be a time consuming process as each family group should be consulted.

### *ii) Universalistic vs. Particularistic*

The importance placed on relationships by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders led managers to often do work that was not directly related to being a manager in the traditional sense. This was supported by existing research that found non-Indigenous Australians are more universalistic; therefore, focusing more on rules than relationships, yet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are particularistic, placing more value on relationships (Pearson et al., 2013). Based on the interviews with art centre managers and existing research (e.g. Fuller et al., 2004) universalistic characteristics do not resonate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as they have a relatively low socio-economic status compared to that of the dominant non-Indigenous Australian population. This created another cultural challenge for art centre managers as they must cope with more responsibilities, trying to meet business objectives while fostering significant relationships with people.

### *iii) Specific vs. Diffuse*

The findings from the interviews revealed that communication difficulties arose around understanding body language and that it is not culturally appropriate to say 'no' in a direct way. These findings were supported by existing literature that found a significant proportion of what is conveyed in face-to-face interactions between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders consists of non-verbal communication (Braysich, 1979). Tone of voice, facial expression, eye movement, gestures and posture are all highly significant elements of communication and convey the true nature of an interaction more accurately than spoken words (Braysich, 1979). According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's specific vs. diffuse cultural dimension, non-Indigenous Australians are more specific oriented preferring a more direct style of communication. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders fall at the diffuse end of the spectrum as they prefer to be more indirect, therefore, art centre managers must learn the true meaning behind spoken words and learn to be less direct so they do not unintentionally offend.

Issue regarding time ownership were also identified. Non-Indigenous art centre managers hold a specific view and regard their time as their own but Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders view of time ownership is more diffuse. These conflicting perspectives are in accordance with Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) theory which found managers from specific oriented cultures segregate out the task relationship they have with subordinates and insulate these from other dealings (Trompenaars, 1993). However, diffuse oriented people engage in multiple areas of people's lives and at several levels of personality at the same time (Trompenaars, 1993).

Therefore, art centre managers felt that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders placed constant demands on their time. Thus managers felt they were required to do work in their personal time that was not directly related to being a manager in the traditional sense and these additional demands on one's time caused managers to feel pressured, stressed and exhausted. This is in line with existing research that found rural doctors become stressed when they work in rural and remote communities as they are constantly on call (Murray et al., 2006; McGrail et al., 2012).

#### *iv) Ascription vs. Achievement*

Evidence was also found to support this cultural dimension but to a lesser extent.

Participants identified that value is placed on one's status in a community. This is in line with the findings in existing literature that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are ascription orientated, where status is derived from birth, age, gender or wealth (Walsh et al., 1993).

Throughout remote Aboriginal Australia the moiety system divides all members into groups and once a person is born into a group their membership does not change throughout their life (Walsh et al., 1993). However, non-Indigenous managers are typically achievement orientated for example they derive success from art sales, business development etc.

Therefore, if managers do not understand how status is valued it can lead to cultural competence challenges; for example: managers may not feel they are treated with much respect and become frustrated as they do not understand why. Thus, it is important art centre managers understand how value is placed on one's status and where they fit into that community.

### *v) Sequential vs. Synchronised Time*

Different views of time in the past/present and future sense were identified as a cultural competence challenge. Just as different cultures have different assumptions about how people relate to one another, so too do they approach time differently (Trompenaars et al., 2000). However this differed from Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) sequential vs. synchronised time cultural dimension. Although participants did not refer to time as either sequential or synchronised the concept of time was still identified as a cultural challenge. This was more in line with Hofstede's (1994) short-term vs. long-term cultural dimension which will be discussed later in this chapter in theoretical implications.

**RQ2.** *Are there other cultural challenges managers must face?*

### **5.2.2 Other Cultural Challenges**

There were four other cultural challenges which emerged from the interviews that non-Indigenous art centre managers must also face: the intracultural gap in Indigenous communities, the physical urban-remote cultural gap, culture shock and unmet expectations.

#### *i) Intracultural Gap in Indigenous Communities*

Participants felt that each Indigenous community was different, with its own cultural protocols. Therefore an art centre manager would need to learn about an entirely different culture if they were to work in another community. This is in line with existing literature by

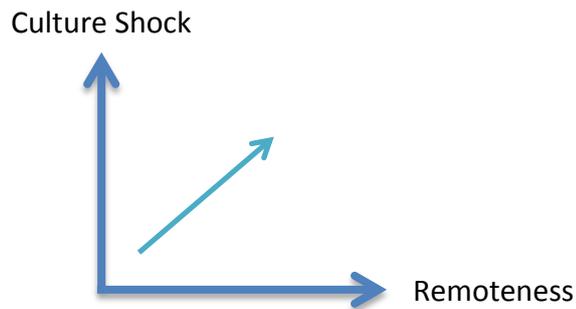
Phillips (2004) which suggested that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are not a homogenous population and have a diversity of cultures thus within each remote community different cultural protocols apply. Also, intracultural issues between art centre managers and other non-Indigenous people working and living in remote communities were identified. These intracultural gaps were not discussed in the literature review but also lead to cultural competence challenges that art centre managers must manage in their daily operation of remote art centres.

### *ii) Urban-Remote Cultural Gap*

In addition, prior research suggested that geographical distance caused cultural differences to arise (Altman, 2005), therefore a physical culture gap was expected to exist between urban and remote Australia. This urban-remote culture gap was identified by a majority of participants who felt that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world views were vastly different to those of urban, non-Indigenous regions, to the point where it could be considered a different country.

### *iii) Culture Shock*

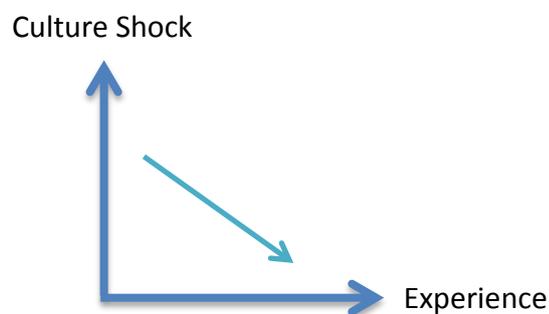
Culture shock was identified as another cultural challenge non-Indigenous art centre managers experienced. As previously defined, culture shock describes the stress, anxiety, or discomfort a person feels when they are placed in an unfamiliar cultural environment (Muecke et al., 2011). A relationship was found between participants who experienced culture shock and the remoteness of those communities (*refer to Figure 8*).



**Figure 8 - Relationship between Culture Shock & Remoteness**

Participants located in more remote communities (score of three or higher on the remoteness scale) suffered from more severe extreme culture shock than those located in less remote communities. Not only did non-Indigenous people beginning work in remote communities have to adapt to the culture in their new workplace, but they also had to adapt to living in a remote area where resources and services were limited.

In addition, culture shock usually applies to people who initially enter a new environment and then they overcome it (Muecke et al., 2011). In this case, the study found there was an inverse relationship between culture shock and art centre managers' experience (*refer to Figure 9*).



**Figure 9 - Relationship between Culture Shock & Experience**

Generally the more experience an art centre manager had working in a remote community the less culture shock they experienced and the better they were able adapt to work and life in a community. This might be due to the fact that someone with more experience had more accurate or realistic expectations and therefore was less shocked by the cultural differences which exist in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

#### *iv) Unmet Expectations*

Unmet expectations were the fourth cultural challenge identified. Participants either felt that their job was not what they were expecting or they were not sure what to expect so they deliberately had few expectations. As, Black (1992) stated individuals who had accurate or met expectations usually had higher levels of adjustment and job performance than individuals with under-met or over-met expectations. Therefore non-Indigenous art centre managers are taking longer to adjust to work and life in remote communities than they would if their expectations were more accurate.

However, literature suggested that unmet job expectations may influence a worker's decision to leave an organisation (Pearson, 1995). Yet, in this study that does not appear to be the case, the reason managers leave will be discussed further in the fourth research question section.

### 5.2.3 Non-Cultural Tangible Aspects

Two non-cultural tangible aspects which were difficult to classify and cut across all cultural dimensions were identified. These were monetary challenges and conflict and violence which were not identified in the literature review.

#### *i) Monetary Challenges*

Monetary challenges defy neat categorisation as they were able to be placed into various cultural dimensions. Different cultures value money differently. Existing literature found communitarian cultures place less value on money (Leung and Bond, 1984) but in this study, this was less evident, as art centre managers often had to deal with difficulties arising around monetary challenges. This is likely because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are very economically disadvantaged.

The findings from the art centre managers' perspective revealed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists often share their wealth with their extended family demonstrating the communitarian nature of their culture. This also illustrated the value art centre managers felt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders place on personal relationships which highlighted their particularistic orientation. In addition, the short-term view of time was demonstrated as most artists spend their money straight away and do not save for the future. Finally, a link to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' ascription orientation was drawn as artists do not earn status or respect within a community based on the amount of money they earn.

## *ii) Conflict and Violence*

The second finding was that art centre managers must also deal with conflict and violence within the community or between themselves and the artists. Conflict and violence were not challenges identified in the literature review but add to the understanding of the complexities art centre managers negotiate, which contributed to the reasons why some managers resigned. Conflicts within communities arise for numerous reasons but conflict between non-Indigenous art centre managers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders may be due to cultural differences. A handful of participants described times when they had come into conflict with artists or faced violent repercussions when they had not listened to artists needs or said 'no' to them in a culturally insensitive manner. Therefore, the more culturally competent art centre managers are the more conflict and violence they may avoid or the more capable they will be of managing it.

**RQ3.** *How do art centre managers, manage these challenges?*

## **5.2.4 Management of Challenges**

In understanding how art centre managers managed these cultural challenges it emerged that participants adapted to work and life in remote communities and were motivated to manage these challenges by intrinsic rewards.

## *i) Attracting Managers Who Can Adapt*

The longer art centre managers remained in their job the more they adapted to work and life in a remote community. In order to cope with all the challenges art centre managers faced, long-term participants felt there were key personal characteristics that enabled

people to be more adaptable. Non-Indigenous art centre managers need to have the right mindset, be patient and self-aware, along with having a genuine respect for other people and other cultures. It is also important to be flexible and resilient as rigid views, expectations and plans are likely to come unstuck in remote communities. This finding is in line with observations made by Scougall (2008) suggesting people working in remote communities should possess similar personal attributes, sensitivities and understandings. By harnessing these qualities managers will be more successful at managing the cultural challenges they face. Therefore organisations need to attract managers with these qualities so that they will be more adaptable.

Furthermore, participants with longer tenures (over three and a half years) were adamant that despite the challenges there were rewarding aspects to their work. These rewarding aspects were intrinsic e.g. participants felt satisfied helping artists improve their work and the job was stimulating as they were continually learning. Therefore organisations need to recruit managers who are intrinsically motivated as the rewarding aspects associated with this work are intrinsic.

**RQ4.** *How, if at all, do cultural challenges influence managers' decision to remain in their job or resign?*

### **5.2.5 Influence of Cultural Challenges**

Based on the findings from the interviews cultural challenges may influence managers' decisions to stay in their job but did not appear to be the primary reason managers leave.

An art centre manager is a complex role to manage and other factors effect managers' decision to resign.

### *i) Reasons Managers Stayed*

The main reasons non-Indigenous art centre managers stayed in their job and communities was because of the connections and relationships they built with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, namely the artists. In addition, several participants stated they wanted to remain working for an art centre until they had accomplished a set of desired goals. These goals were usually to help artists improve their skills, improve their education or professional practice and to contribute to the lives of people within the community.

### *ii) Reasons Managers Left*

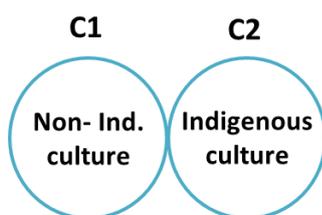
There were various reasons non-Indigenous art centre managers left or considered leaving their position including: being tired or burnt out, feeling that goals had been achieved and/or for personal reasons i.e. wanting to find a partner and start a family. This is in accordance with existing research which found that many practitioners leave rural practices due to personal factors (Schoo, et al., 2005). Although cultural challenges can lead to art centre managers feeling burnt out, other factors outside of cultural competence triggered managers' decisions to leave remote communities. These additional reasons may impact on the recruitment, motivation and retention of managers into remote communities; however, they were not in the scope of this study, which focused on exploring the cultural competence challenges non-Indigenous art centre managers must manage.

### 5.3 Theoretical Implications

Chapter 2 provided a review of theories on national and organisational culture which helped to explain the differences between non-Indigenous Australian and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This section will re-examine each of these theories in light of the findings from the interviews.

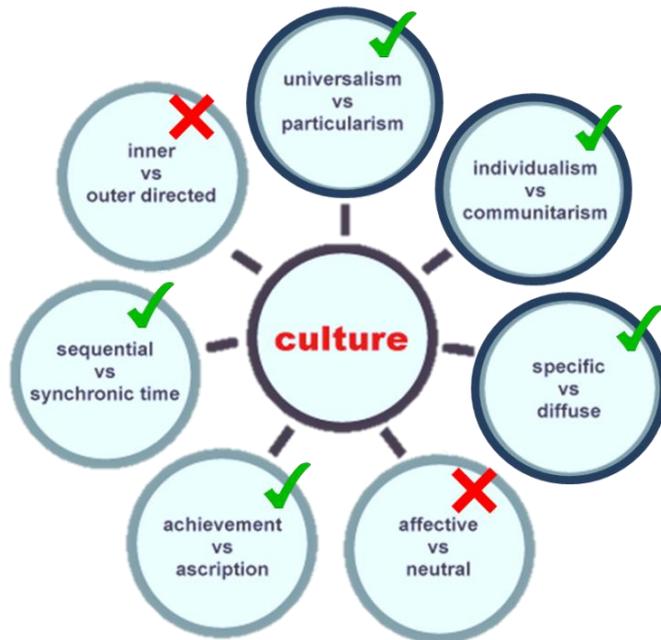
#### 5.3.1 Usefulness of National Culture Perspective

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s (1997) theory on national culture proved particularly useful in identifying the cultural competence challenges art centre managers must manage. Several cultural dimensions applied to the non-Indigenous Australian and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context, including: individualism vs. collectivism, achievement vs. ascription, specific vs. diffuse and universalism vs. particularism (Trompenaars et al., 2000).



**Figure 10 - Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner's National Culture Perspective**

In particular, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s (1997) theory enabled two cultures (Non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) to be viewed separately which was appropriate as they are significantly different (as shown in Figure 10, which is a replication of Figure 2).



**Figure 11 - Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's Cultural Dimensions Applicability**

However, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turners cultural dimensions did not apply perfectly. As mentioned, three of the five cultural dimensions examined were found to apply more strongly in the context of this study. Those dimensions, highlighted in bold in Figure 11 were: individualistic vs. communitarian, universalistic vs. particularistic and specific vs. diffuse.

One dimension that differed from Trompenaars and Hampden-Turners (1997) theory was the sequential vs. synchronic time dimension. This was more in line with Hofstede's (1994) short-term vs. long-term orientation cultural dimension and is discussed further in the following section (5.3.2).

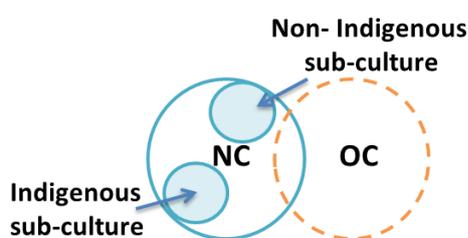
### 5.3.2 Time Dimension Difference

In the sequential vs. synchronised time dimension, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner believe people either view events as separate items in time and find order in an array of actions that happen one after the other (sequential). Or people view time as synchronised and see events in parallel, synchronised together and find order in the coordination of multiple efforts. However, this dimension does not apply to this study which found people viewed time differently. Instead, the results of the interviews showed that art centre

managers felt that few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were concerned beyond the ideals of daily living. This is more related to Hofstede’s national culture theory which also grouped culture into different cultural dimensions.

Hofstede’s cultural dimension, long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation describes a society’s time perspective (Hofstede, 1994). Long-term oriented people (non-Indigenous Australians) attach more importance to the future and foster pragmatic values oriented towards rewards, including persistence, saving and capacity for adaptation. Short-term oriented people’s (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders) values are related to the past and the present, including steadiness, respect for tradition, preservation of ones face, reciprocation and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede, 1994).

### 5.3.3. Usefulness of Organisational Culture Perspective



**Figure 12 - National and Organisational Cultural Overlap Usefulness**

The focus of this study was on national and organisational cultures since they both impact cultural competence. However, organisational cultural issues were found to apply to a lesser extent in this context (*refer to Figure 12*). Although,

art centre managers work for organisations they are not organisations in the usual sense.

Based on the results from the interviews there was little evidence that strong or weak organisational cultures exists. Therefore, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s Quadrant Model (2004) offered little insight into remote art centres organisational culture.

Remote art centres have very flat organisational structures as often the non-Indigenous art centre manager is the sole employee. Consequently, most art centre managers felt they were working alone and not part of an organisation, in a traditional sense. This is likely due to remote art centres being different from typical organisations as often the board of directors comprise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders who employ one non-Indigenous manager. As a result remote art centre cultures are heavily influenced by the culture within communities.

#### **5.3.4 Expectancy Theory**

According to Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory people will be motivated if they believe that strong effort will lead to good performance and good performance will lead to desired rewards. However, this theory does not apply well in the context of working in remote Australian communities. Most participants felt that the more effort they put in, the more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders demanded of them. As such continuous demands were placed on managers regardless of the effort they put into their work and they felt they were not rewarded for the all the effort they put in. However, several participants did arrive in remote communities with expectations based on past experiences. This did influence how they reacted to working and living in a community and the level of culture shock they experienced.

#### **5.3.5 Cultural Convergence**

As discussed in Chapter 2, cultural convergence refers to growing similarities between national cultures including the beliefs, values and aspirations of individuals across cultures

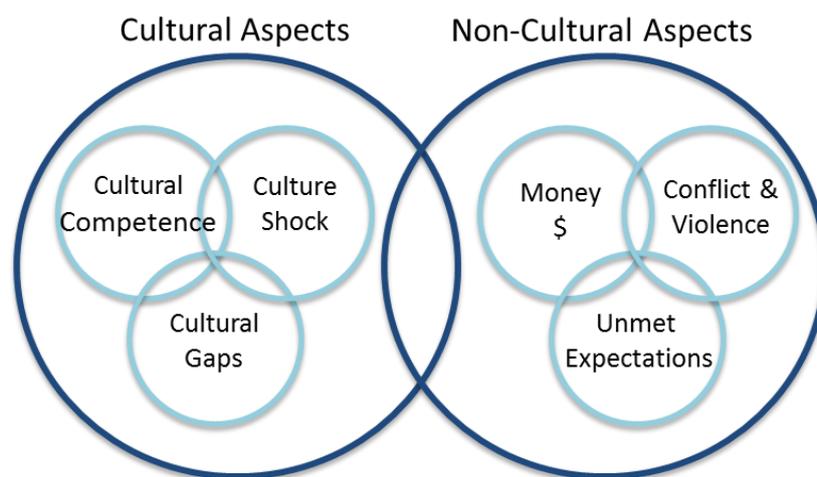
(Sarala and Vaara, 2010). Although, this was not in the scope of this study as the sample size was relatively small, there was some evidence to suggest that cultural convergence applies in this context. One participant (not identified for confidentiality reasons) had married a local woman and their children have grown up in the community.

### **5.3.6 Understanding the Challenges: A Multi-Theoretical Perspective**

The study found that besides cultural factors, art centre managers faced issues that involved many other complex and non-cultural factors. Hence, a multi-theoretical perspective is needed to understand the challenges managers face whilst working in remote Australian art centres. First, while cultural competence was helpful as several cultural competence challenges were identified, it provides an incomplete view as other cultural challenges e.g. culture shock and cultural gaps emerged. Thus, other cultural aspects need to be considered. Furthermore, a third perspective is needed as non-cultural challenges also emerged including: monetary challenges, conflict and violence and unmet expectations.

Many of these aspects also overlap with each other and may have many different layers of complexity depending on the context. For example, as discussed above and in the suggestions for further research below, given that many of these remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are significantly economically disadvantaged relative to metropolitan areas, it may not be culture but more tangible non-cultural aspects like issues surrounding money and access to essential services i.e. health and education, that are more significant contributors to the challenges that art centre managers face. Also, some of the evidence seems to be contradictory when interpreted through existing theories. For

example, while it is noted that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists seem to have a longer term perspective to culture, when it comes to money, this perspective does not seem to apply as they spend the money they earn almost immediately. In addition, it seems that money is a complex issue where different value systems are at play. Not only may non-Indigenous art centre managers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists have very different views but even between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders there may be different perspectives. Therefore, in order to better understand the challenges of art centre managers in remote areas, a multi-theoretical perspective is proposed, given it is a complex role with numerous cultural and non-cultural challenges that overlap (*refer to Figure 13*).



**Figure 13 - Multi-Theoretical Perspectives**

## 5.4 Practical Implications

Five practical implications emerged from the findings of this study: recruitment, preparation, training, boundaries and support. To meet the requirements of the CRC-REP full details of these practical implications are found in Appendix 7.

### **5.4.1 Recruitment**

Participants felt that the job description provided to them during the recruitment process was insufficient and did not describe the true nature of the job they were expected to perform. Therefore, the people recruiting for these jobs need to be honest with applicants about the challenges they would need to manage. Conversely, applicants must be open and honest about their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and their ability to cope with living in a remote community.

### **5.4.2 Preparation**

Most participants felt they were underprepared when they arrived into a community as a result of the lack of information provided to them during the recruitment process.

Consequently, adjusting to work and community life was more difficult. Therefore, organisations must do more to help managers prepare themselves for the transition into their job and the community. Participants suggested several ways they had attempted to prepare themselves which could benefit others, including: researching the art centre specifically and talking to other people who had worked in the community. It should be the responsibility of the organisation to help managers find this information and make these connections. Existing research into rural health and education workers showed they are prepared for the cultural challenges in their roles as these issues are explained in their inductions (Phillips, 2004; Marks, 1992).

### **5.4.3 Training**

No formal training is provided for art centre managers before they commence work in a remote community. Generally the only training managers receive is on-the-job and it was

common to hear from participants that in hindsight they could find training courses to take if they knew where to look. The lack of training before beginning the role may be due to an insufficient or non-existent handover because the previous manager had already left. Being underprepared and then lacking sufficient training has implications for managers' abilities to manage not only the cultural challenges they will face but also general work pressures. This may lead to people feeling overwhelmed and influence their decision to leave their position which was found to be one reason rural health workers resigned (Lee et al., 2003).

#### **5.4.4 Boundaries**

Clear boundaries concerning when a manager was prepared to work and with respect to what a manager was prepared to do were vital. This view was supported by Kerrie (2002) who suggested that remote health practitioners implement boundaries to survive the day to day challenges of working in remote Australia. Clear boundaries helped some non-Indigenous art centre managers successfully manage cultural challenges and were important so managers did not become too involved in local politics or community issues and remembered the primary purpose of their job.

#### **5.4.5 Support**

Lastly, art centre managers felt they lacked support from government and peak bodies. Most participants felt they were better supported by artists and the locals within the community. Evidently, most managers would appreciate the opportunity to be able to talk to other people who shared their experiences and who understood what they are going through because working in a remote community can be extremely isolating. Participants suggested more support could be offered through a counselling service where managers

could debrief. This is in line with existing research on remote health workers which stated remotely located employees should have access to a confidential counselling service for themselves, their partners and dependent children (Schoo et al., 2005).

## 5.5 Revised Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrated earlier in Chapter 2 is revised in *Figure 14* to better reflect the challenges identified in the study. It now depicts the research proposition that if non-Indigenous managers' management of both cultural and non-cultural aspects is enhanced this will reduce the challenges they face. Thus, before managers begin work they need more preparation and training and during their employment they need to be supported which will lead to improved organisational outcomes i.e. management retention.

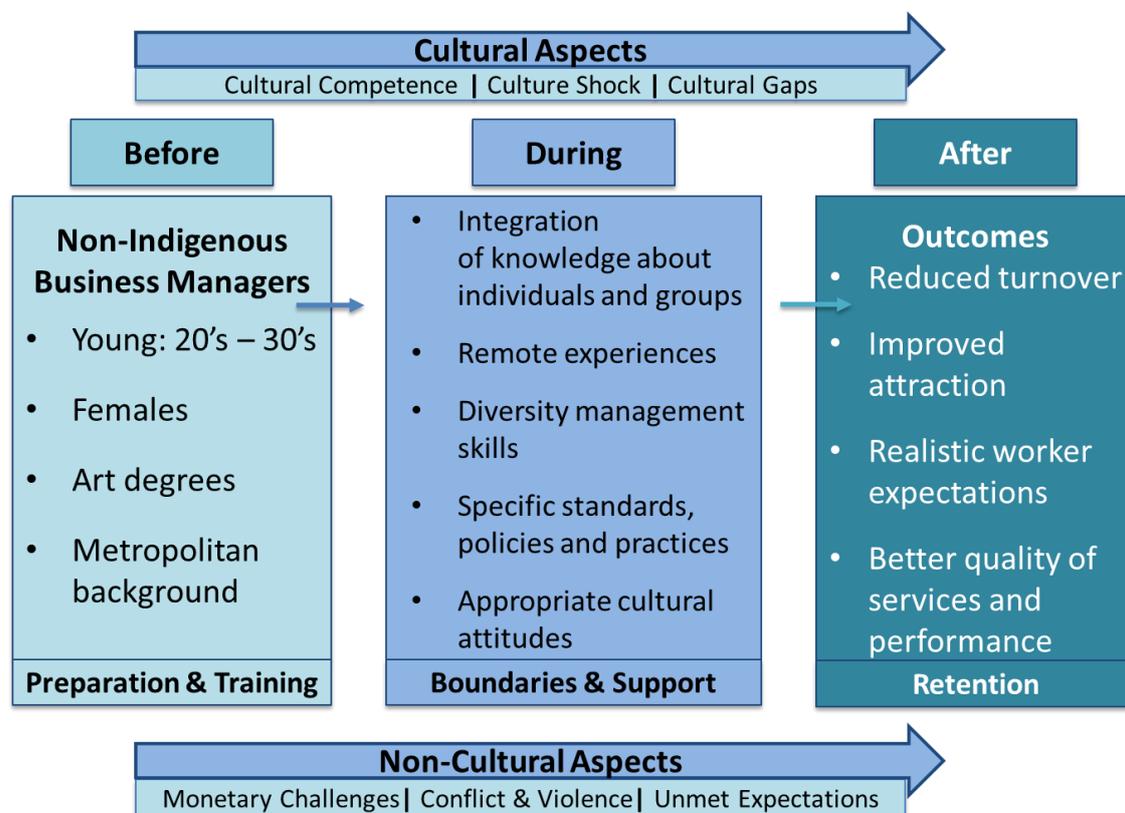


Figure 14 - Revised Conceptual Framework

## 5.6 Limitations of the Study

### 5.6.1 Sample

A criticism of qualitative research is the generalisability of results from a small sample (Liebersohn 1992; Lukka and Kasanen 1995). However, this research does not aim to produce results that are universally applicable. As Yin (1994) correctly points out, the purpose of case study research is to generalise to theory not to the population as a whole. Since convenience sampling was used, the issue of sampling bias was also a concern because the sample was not representative of the entire population. The sample differed from an ideal sample as it was not randomly selected. The majority of participants were female, had a fine arts background and longer tenures. Although the majority of participants were female this was appropriate as most art centre managers are female (Acker, pers. comm. 2013). However, because most interviewees had longer tenures (three years and over) remoteness (how remote the community art centre managers worked in) was used in the selection criteria instead of tenure.

There were also more currently employed art centre managers interviewed than non-current ones. This was likely because those who had left were less willing to participate as they did not have positive experiences and did not want to discuss them. Unfortunately, the possible effects of having an overrepresented sample of currently employed art centre managers means that the true depth of the challenges managers must face might not be depicted. Those who left because they were burnt out might have provided richer examples of the challenges they had to manage.

Further, the sample size for this research is relatively small and does not cover other stakeholders. There are roughly 80 art centres in remote Australia, from which 21 non-Indigenous art centre managers participated in this study. Other stakeholders were not interviewed as this study focused on understanding the challenges non-Indigenous art centre managers face from their perspective, while working in remote Australia.

### 5.6.2 Procedural Issues

Completion of interviews was dependent on individuals' willingness to participate and interviews were subject to retrospective bias. There was also an issue of control which was a major concern when designing interviews. A highly structured interview may have led to confirming the researcher's presupposition instead of generating new knowledge (Kvale et al., 2009). However, the lack of structure did result in some accumulation of incoherent data that was not used to answer the research questions. To minimise this problem interviews were semi-structured, where possible interview questions were developed but used only as a guide. There were also time constraints as this project had to be completed by the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2013.

Every written report has its limits and in qualitative research it is difficult to provide examples from each interview for every idea discussed. However, to minimise this weakness the discussion of findings includes a variety of examples. Certain participants were quoted more frequently than others for three reasons: 1) their responses were well articulated and eloquent, 2) they had been in the job longer and/or 3) they provided more detailed descriptions of their experiences.

### 5.6.3 Credibility of Interpretation

Credibility refers to the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of a study. In this study construct validity was evident as a clear chain of evidence was established which enables the reader to follow how the researcher went from research questions to conclusion (Farquhar, 2012). Reliability refers to the absence of random error so that if the study was repeated, researchers would arrive at the same insights (Farquhar, 2012). Therefore, transparency and replication are important. Thought was given to the development of tables where information about the research was presented in an accessible manner to the reader which illustrates the transparency of the research. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 3, trustworthiness was demonstrated through the adoption of appropriate and well-recognised research methods. To obtain honest data from participants iterative questioning took place in data collection dialogues.

### 5.6.4 Researcher Bias

Another limitation that is acknowledged is researcher bias (or internal validity) which refers to the innate biases which can distort the perceptions of the researcher such that objectivity and scientific rigour are lost. However, the use of comparative interview analysis helps to achieve theoretical rigour, since multiple interviews allow the corroboration of findings to occur (Eisenhardt 1991). In addition, interview recordings were transcribed in full verbatim and care was taken during data collection to prevent any subjective views influencing participant's responses. Furthermore, surrogate information error was avoided in this exploratory study as participants were asked open-ended questions which allowed different perspectives to be provided. This made it difficult to overlook an alternative response which increases the value of the results as participants were allowed to be honest.

## 5.7 Suggestions for Further Research

This study focuses on the intangible aspects of cultural competence but as the monetary challenges identified show, further research may be needed to explore two aspects: 1) cultural resilience and 2) tangible challenges to remote Australian work.

First, by increasing cultural competence and cultural convergence and reducing culture shock, cultural resilience could be improved (*refer to Figure 15*). Cultural resilience refers to the degree to which the strengths of one's culture promote the development of coping (Clauss-Ehlers, Yang, and Chen, 2006). Resilience can be defined as a process, capacity or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenges or threatening circumstances (Masten, Best and Garmezy, 1990, p. 426). Although cultural resilience was not in the scope of this study further research could find that improving art centre managers' cultural resilience may lead to better organisational outcomes, for example: lower turnover and increase staff satisfaction.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \uparrow & & \uparrow & & \downarrow & & \uparrow \\ \text{Cultural Competence} & + & \text{Cultural Convergence} & - & \text{Culture Shock} & = & \text{Cultural Resilience} \end{array}$$

Figure 15 - Cultural Resilience Equation

Second, besides cultural differences there are additional tangible reasons non-Indigenous workers have problems working in remote communities. These include:

- Supply of essential services: The provision and maintenance of essential services can affect the viability of remote communities, and the wellbeing of people living in

these communities (ABS, 2006). Water supply, sewerage systems, power, and rubbish disposal are critical elements in the development of a healthy living environment. The supply of adequate water for drinking and washing is a basic health requirement. Electricity is a basic amenity for a range of purposes, including the refrigeration of food, while the disposal of sewage and rubbish is important in preventing the spread of disease (ABS, 2006).

- **Reliability of services:** The supply of essential services is necessary for creating a healthy living environment and poor quality or unreliable infrastructure in remote communities can both interrupt the supply and limit the usefulness of these services. While most people living in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities had access to essential services in 2001, many experienced disruptions to supply (ABS, 2006).
- **Health services:** Geographic remoteness can be a barrier to health care services for many people living in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as accessing particular health services may involve multiple forms of transport and overnight stays (ABS, 2006). These can add to health care costs and reduce patients contact with family and friends.
- **Connections to the wider community:** Transport and communication technologies enable people living in remote communities to access a wider range of information and services than may otherwise be available (ABS, 2006). Given there is a reliance on road transport, cuts to road access can substantially affect service availability for

people in remote communities. In 2001, 76 per cent of communities with a population of 50 people or more, that were not located in towns with major services, could not use roads into or out of the community for at least one day in the previous 12 months (ABS, 2006). Communications infrastructure such as telephones, postal services and television are a means for people in remote communities to access services and information, and to communicate with family and friends in the wider community. In 2001, 34 per cent of larger remote communities did not have mail delivered within the community. These communities accessed mail from a post office box, or other central point, located outside the community (ABS, 2006).

These additional reasons non-Indigenous workers have problems working in remote communities must also be considered. They may impact on workers recruitment, motivation and retention into remote communities. However, this study's focus is purely on exploring the cultural competence challenges non-Indigenous art centre managers must manage.

Furthermore, future longitudinal research should be conducted into non-Indigenous art centre managers with longer tenures in order to identify how those who have stayed in their role for over three years have managed to adapt and learn. This was not in the scope of this study but would be beneficial for future researchers. Are people with longer tenures more successful art centre managers and if so, what are they doing that is keeping them in their role for longer and preventing them from burning out?

Another area for further research is the relationship that exists between culture shock and remoteness. Would transition from less remote communities into more remote communities help people overcome culture shock? Rather than employing people into very remote communities who have no prior experience working in them.

## 5.8 Conclusion

The objective of this study was to

*“investigate and understand the cultural challenges art centre managers from non-Indigenous backgrounds face when working in remote Australia.”*

I feel this objective was met as the answers provided by the interview participants helped shed light onto what cultural challenges arose when they worked in remote Australian art centres. As discussed, both cultural competence challenges (i.e. relationships, status, communication differences and differing views of time) and other cultural challenges such as culture shock and cultural gaps were identified as issues art centre managers had to manage on a daily basis.

However, other non-cultural challenges also emerged from the interviews (i.e. monetary challenges, conflict and violence and unmet expectations) which resulted in the theoretical perspective of this studying being broadened. The results showed a multi-theoretical perspective was needed because it was apparent that art centre managers' roles were more complex than originally thought.

Furthermore, I feel that how art centre managers, manage these challenges helped in understanding the issue. The findings showed that art centre managers managed the challenges by adapting to work and life in remote communities and implementing boundaries to maintain some semblance of a work-life balance. Interestingly, these cultural challenges did not appear to be the primary reason managers resigned. Other factors affected managers' decision to leave including: being tired or burnt out, feeling that goals have been achieved and/or personal reasons i.e. wanting to find a partner and start a family. Therefore, to explore the research objective further tangible challenges to remote Australian work should be investigated.

To conclude, the original research proposition (that improving cultural competence will reduce the challenges workers from non-Indigenous backgrounds face whilst working in remote Australia) needed to be revised given the additional challenges identified. Several cultural competence challenges emerged which provided an incomplete view as other cultural and non-cultural challenges were identified and overlapped.

Overall, this project provides information that art centres operating in remote Australia may find useful in order to improve management of human resources and their human resource practices. Art centres are the most reliable, secure and ethical source for acquiring art made in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities therefore it is essential that they are well managed and sustainable (Davidson, 2009). Thus attracting and retaining workers to remote Australia is vital and understanding the challenges non-Indigenous art centre managers face helps when creating strategies to overcome these problems.

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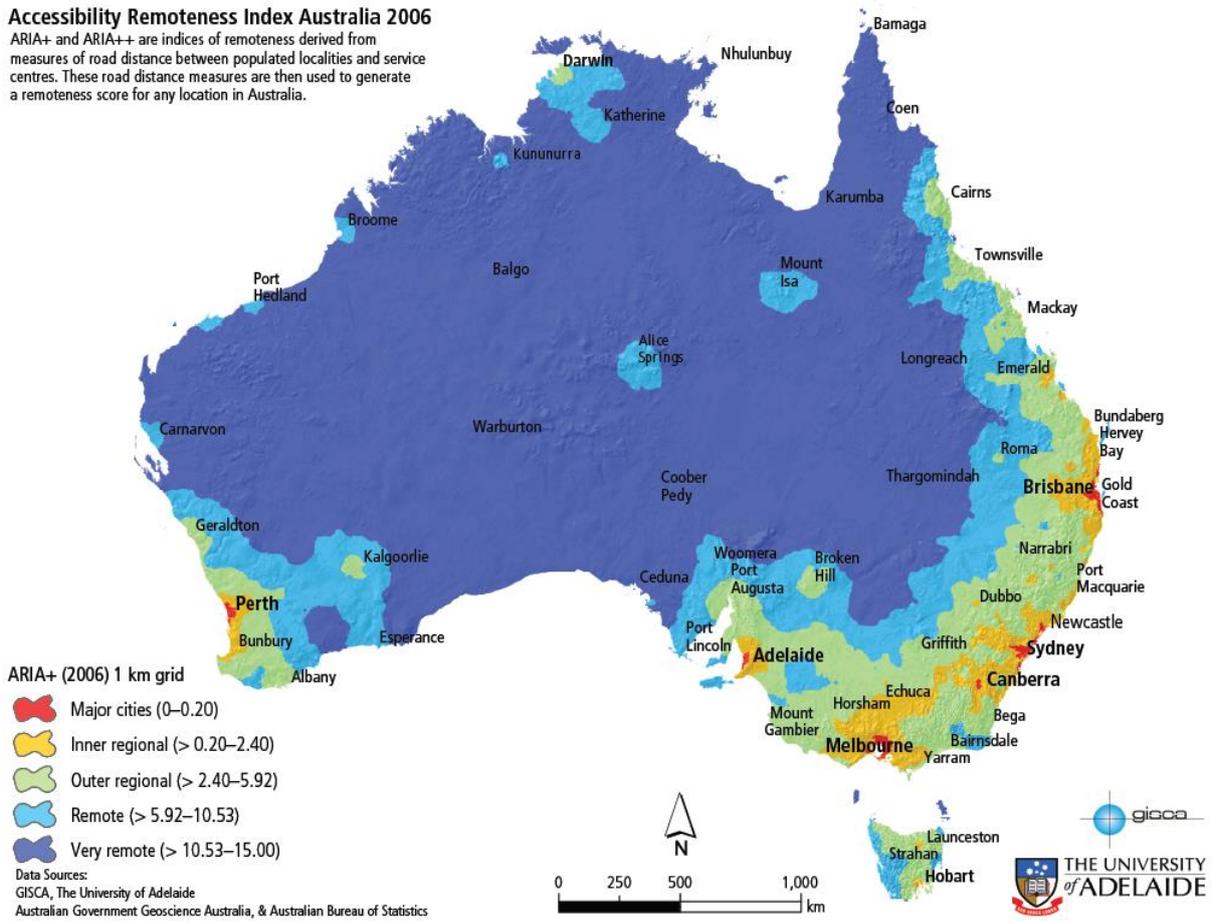
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# Appendix 1 – ARIA 2006 Map

## Accessibility Remoteness Index Australia 2006

ARIA+ and ARIA++ are indices of remoteness derived from measures of road distance between populated localities and service centres. These road distance measures are then used to generate a remoteness score for any location in Australia.



## Appendix 2 - Letter of Introduction



Flinders Business School  
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### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter is to introduce Miss Michelle Whittle who is an Honours student in the Flinders Business School at Flinders University. My name is Professor Pi-Shen Seet and I am her project supervisor. Michelle will produce her student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity.

She is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of "Understanding the Challenges of Managers from Non-Indigenous Backgrounds working in Remote Australia: a cultural competence perspective".

She would be most grateful if you would volunteer to assist in this project, by granting an interview which covers certain aspects of this topic. This will only take approximately 60 minutes of your time on one occasion.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Since she intends to make a tape recording of the interview, she will seek your consent, on the attached form, to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed, and to make the recording available to other researchers on the same conditions. It may be necessary to make the recording available to secretarial assistants for transcription, in which case you may be assured that such persons will be advised of the requirement that your name or identity not be revealed and that the confidentiality of the material is respected and maintained.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on +61 8 8201 2840, by fax +61 8 8201 2644 or by e-mail: ([pi-shen.seet@flinders.edu.au](mailto:pi-shen.seet@flinders.edu.au)).

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Pi-Shen Seet  
Flinders Business School

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 6053). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Secretary of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 5962, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email [human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au](mailto:human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au)

## Appendix 3 - Information Sheet



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### INFORMATION SHEET

**Title:** “Understanding the Challenges of Managers from Non-Indigenous Backgrounds working in Remote Australia: a cultural competence perspective.”

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#### Description of the study:

This study is part of the project entitled “Understanding the Challenges of Managers from Non-Indigenous Backgrounds working in Remote Australia: a cultural competence perspective”. This project will investigate the human resource issues associated with recruiting, retaining and engaging staff in challenging, remotely located, cross-cultural jobs. This project is supported by Flinders University Business School.

#### Purpose of the study:

This project aims to find out:

- How do art centres and enterprises recruit business managers?
- What do managers consider when deciding to undertake an assignment in remote Australia?
- How do managers overcome challenges they face?

**What will I be asked to do?**

You are invited to participate in a one-on-one interview which may take approximately 60 minutes to complete. Participation is entirely voluntary.

The interview will be undertaken with a research student/investigator who will ask you a few questions about your experiences working in remote Australia, your views about returning to suburban Australia and about any challenges you have had to face. The interview will take no more than an hour, on one occasion, over the phone or at a mutually agreed location (public venue, workplace or in a private residence), depending on your preference. The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder to help with analysing the results. Once recorded, the interview will be transcribed (typed-up) and stored as a computer file and then destroyed once the results have been finalised.

**What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?**

The sharing of your experiences will help your enterprise and other companies in remote Australia produce appropriate policies or programs to help professionals address the challenges they face such as culture shock, poor adjustment and unmet expectations.

**Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?**

You will be anonymous. The interviews will be typed-up and saved to the Flinders University IT system and a copy will be kept with supervisor Dr Pi-Shen Seet. Any identifying information will be removed and your comments will not be linked directly to you or your organisation.

**Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?**

The investigator anticipates few risks from your involvement in this study. If you have any concerns regarding anticipated or actual risks or discomforts, please raise them with the investigator.

**How do I agree to participate?**

Participation is voluntary.

You may answer “no comment” or refuse to answer any questions and you are free to withdraw from the interview at any time without effect or consequences. A consent form accompanies this information sheet. If you agree to participate in the interview please read and sign the consent form and send it back to me via email: [whit0825@flinders.edu.au](mailto:whit0825@flinders.edu.au).

**How will I receive feedback?**

Outcomes from the project will be summarised and given to you by the investigator if you would like to see them. To request this report, please contact the investigator on the email provided above.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.**

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 6053). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Secretary of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 5962, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email [human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au](mailto:human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au)

## Appendix 4 - Consent Form



### CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

“Understanding the Challenges of Managers from Non-Indigenous Backgrounds working in Remote Australia: a cultural competence perspective.”

I .....  
am over the age of 18 years and hereby consent to participate as requested in the letter of introduction, for the research project, on understanding the challenges of recruitment, work and retention of workers from the non-Indigenous community in remote Australia.

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to the audio recording of my information and participation.
4. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the information sheet and consent form for future reference.
5. I understand that:
  - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
  - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
  - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
  - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on my employment.
  - I may ask that the recording be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.
6. I agree/do not agree\* to the tape/transcript\* being made available to other researchers who are not members of this research team, but who are judged by the research team to be doing related research, on condition that my identity is not revealed.

**Participant’s signature**.....**Date**.....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

**Researcher’s name**.....

**Researcher’s signature**.....**Date**.....

## Appendix 5 - Interview Protocol



### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Project title:** “Understanding the Challenges of Managers from Non-Indigenous Backgrounds working in Remote Australia: a cultural competence perspective.”

Thank you for taking your time to participate in this research.

Your responses to this interview are completely confidential and anonymous. I will code your personal details in the final research report and any publications to maintain your anonymity. This protocol will be used as a framework for the interview. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

---

What is the title of your job: .....

Which remote community/ies do/did you work in? ..... For how long (collectively)? .....

Are you originally from a remote community or have you had any prior experience working or living in remote/regional Australia? ..... If so for how long? .....

What was the nature of that work? .....

Have you had any previous training (specific to the role you are currently in or otherwise) in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders or remote locations? .....

If so, in your opinion what was the value of this training to your role/experiences?

#### **BEFORE**

1. Can you please describe what area you were working or studying in before you became an art centre manager?
2. Can you please describe why and how you came to take up the job as an art centre manager?
  - a. Prompt on motivations (extrinsic/ intrinsic)
  - b. Prompt on personal preparations/organisational preparations.
  - c. Prompt on what, if any, were their expectations about the job and working in remote Australia before taking on the job.

## **ON THE JOB**

3. Can you describe how you adjusted to your work when you first arrived?
  - a. Prompt on personal adjustment
    - i. Prompt on issues of culture shock
  - b. Prompt on inter-cultural adjustment, especially in interactions with Indigenous people – need to get as many examples/ stories as possible.
    - i. Need to prompt on what problems there were, whether there was any resolution and how.
  - c. Prompt on support/training by organisation.
    - i. Prompt on how the organisation could have better helped/ supported.
  - d. Prompt on support by other stakeholders or people (e.g. friends, other workers etc.
4. How would you say things have changed over time? – focus on examples how the manager changed personally, managerially etc.
  - a. Prompt on examples of what improved between themselves and the art centre workers, elders and why?
  - b. Prompt on examples of what continued to be problems and why.
  - c. Prompt on whether and how the organisation helped or did not help.

## **AFTER**

5. What life or work-related lessons have you learned after (while) you completed (completing) your term as an art centre manager?
6. Would you continue in a new contract – why/ why not?
7. What suggestions would you have for other non-Indigenous Australians who are thinking about applying for the art centre manager jobs?
8. What suggestions would you have for better attraction, motivation and retention of art centre managers?

Prompt: For the Peak bodies and government?

Thank you this concludes this interview. I will send through a copy of the transcript for you to have a look over. Do you have any questions?

## Appendix 6 – Ethical Considerations

Strict ethical procedures were adhered to when asking people to participate in this study.

When participants replied that they were willing to participate in the study the principal researcher arranged a suitable date and time for the interview to be conducted and ensured that each signed consent form was returned prior to the interview commencing. Verbal agreement was again received from participants to begin the interview and for it to be recorded during the telephone call.

At the beginning of each telephone call participants were also reminded that participation was voluntary, that they could ask for information to be omitted at any stage and that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time. All participants were personally thanked at the end of each interview and informed that a copy of the transcript would be made available to them so that they could check its accuracy if they felt so obliged. They were also reminded that they could request a summary of the project results by contacting the researcher using the details provided on the information sheet. To ensure the confidentiality of the interview data and preserve the anonymity of the interviewees and the organisation they work for, their names and specific locations were not identified in either the interview transcripts or thesis.

## Appendix 7 – Practical Implications

There were five practical implications which emerged from the findings of this study: recruitment, preparation, training, boundaries and support.

### 1. Recruitment

Based on the earlier discussion in Chapter 1, art centres in remote Australia have an issue with recruitment. As seen in Table 16, there were two main reasons why participants chose to work in remote art centres: 1) they appreciated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and wanted an opportunity to help and encourage artists, or 2) they felt they did not know much about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and wanted to experience life in a remote community.

Table 16 - Recruitment

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
ACM 16.	<i>"I had a keen interest in art and I came to this area predominantly to discover the indigenous people of Australia, I didn't know anything about them and I really wanted to get to know them."</i>
ACM 5.	<i>"I was looking into Indigenous communities because I always loved Indigenous art, it was always on the top of my list and I also wondered if I could make a bit of a difference with people while doing my work."</i>
ACM 21.	<i>"I'm always wanting to apply myself in situations where it's beneficial to cultural change and helping people who are less than privileged, underprivileged."</i>
ACM 8.	<i>"Friends would talk a bit about that part of the world and I think it just sparked in me an interest in seeing how I would go in a community because I knew other people who worked in communities."</i>
ACM 3.	<i>"I felt that being an Australian I didn't have a great understanding of Aboriginal Australia. I really felt that I wanted to learn more about community life and what was happening out in the community."</i>

However, people who choose to work in remote communities for the first reason must be careful not to want the job solely to 'make a difference'. This is a noble reason but often ends in disaster as people who want to change the world often burn out because living in remote Australia is often more challenging than first thought. People need to be content with minor achievements of change as it is unlikely they can change entire community social and political systems.

The recruitment process needs to be more transparent as a majority of participants felt that the job description was not accurate and did not list the full extent of work tasks managers were expected to perform. Recruitment of art centre managers requires a reciprocal relationship to exist between potential employees and employers. Candidates must be honest in their applications regarding their level of understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and their ability to cope with living in a remote community.

Conversely, employers need to be honest with applicants about the challenges they will need to manage. This includes providing candidates with an honest depiction of the financial position of an art centre, the hours that they will be expected to work and the cultural challenges they will face.

## *2. Preparation*

Due to the lack of information provided during the recruitment process the majority of participants felt underprepared when they first arrived into a community. In Table 17, participants identified ways they had attempted to prepare themselves although the general consensus was that there was no way to be fully prepared for life and work in a community.

Nevertheless, several participants felt the most effective approach to prepare oneself for the environment was through volunteering at an art centre in a remote community before moving there to work. Although it would not fully prepare someone as each community is different, it was viewed as the ideal approach because if people are provided with an opportunity to visit an art centre in a remote community before commencing work they will have more realistic expectations and it may reduce feelings of culture shock.

**Table 17 - Preparation**

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
ACM 21.	<i>"I don't know how you could prepare for it, a bit of research on the internet about the place; just years of experience and education....all the rest is just guess work really."</i>
ACM 3.	<i>"In preparation I went around and did my research and talked to a lot of people who had actually done that role. I just read up a lot on the Indigenous art industry."</i>
ACM 7.	<i>"Do your homework and make sure you have a really good sense of what goes on. Although, I don't think you can ever do enough homework because you're immersed in the situation. I mean it's never exactly as you envisaged, it always changes."</i>
GMNO 22.	<i>"I certainly think that if you were going to go and live there and you hadn't seen the community that would be quite unwise. Go in prepared in a physical sense; take the things that you need to actually make your life comfortable in that environment. Don't rely on things being out there because what you haven't got becomes a focus of what's wrong when you live in these places."</i>
ACM 11.	<i>"They (art centre managers) should actually volunteer at an art centre for a substantial amount of time, not just two or three days, but say at least two weeks, if possible, a month and see what it's like and see what it's like to be out in a remote community."</i>
ACM 19.	<i>"Volunteer first, see if you've really got it in you. Go and get some experience under your belt, volunteering is a really good thing to do."</i>

### 3. Training

The common story participants told was that training courses were available but people have to go searching for them as they are not offered directly. Participants also felt that often attending these courses was impractical because the training was provided outside of the community and as the sole employee, they could not leave. As seen in Table 18, as a result the majority of training seemed to occur through locals in the community and from other art centre managers.

Table 18 - Training

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
ACM 17.	<i>"There wasn't any formal training as such, but it was definitely something that you were learning every day you were in work."</i>
ACM 6.	<i>"I had no training with working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There was no training, the training I got I had to find myself, so my training has been via other art centre managers."</i>
ACM 1.	<i>"I opened the doors to a place that was probably shut for 12 months beforehand. Cleaning up the mess, starting from scratch. So there had never been any specific training, it's always been on the job."</i>
ACM 18.	<i>"No formal training as such but certainly on the job sort of training. So I had engaged with cultural training through the job."</i>

Providing only cultural awareness training may not be a sufficient solution to helping managers overcome the cultural challenges they face. Ultimately art centre managers must become culturally competent to be able to function effectively in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Considerable reflection about one's own culture, values, personality and previous experiences may be useful in understanding one's capacity to work collaboratively with a variety of people in remote Australia. Therefore, identifying a potential cultural 'mentor' will assist with this learning.

#### *4. Boundaries*

Art centre managers felt they faced complex and unrelenting demands and many of these demands were linked by non-Indigenous managers to the high levels of disadvantage in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Consequently, managers felt responsible for performing tasks and helping people in ways, which impacts upon their work-life balance. Therefore, as seen in Table 19, some art centre managers implement boundaries between art centre related work and non-work to manage these demands to avoid becoming 'burnt out'.

Managers who successfully managed the cultural challenges they faced understood their role within a community and implemented clear boundaries when they first arrived. For example: if a manager did not want to work on Sundays, they would not work on Sundays from the beginning. If art centre managers were not careful they could lose sight of the 'big picture' and become too immersed in daily issues which may overwhelm them.

Another perspective would be to manage the expectations of new art centre managers so that implementing boundaries would not be necessary. If non-Indigenous art centre managers' expectations are well managed during the recruitment process then people with more flexible boundaries could be hired. Organisations should explain to applicants that there will be constant demands made of their time once they arrive in communities. Thus art centre managers would understand that they need to be flexible and that in their role there would be few boundaries.

Table 19 - Boundaries

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
GMNO 22.	<i>"You've got to go into them (art centre manager jobs), starting them like you want to finish them. So, if you want Sundays off in this job, then you don't work Sundays from the start. You don't go in there saying, I'm going to have to work 7 days a week to actually make this job work, what you do is you go in there and say, I'm going to give this job my best shot but I'm going to have Sundays off. So you're just never available on a Sunday and they (the community) will get to understand it, they're okay, fine, they're not available on a Sunday because the boundaries have got to be clear in these jobs and I think they get blurred all the time."</i>
ACM 14.	<i>"It could be a 24/7 job if you don't put boundaries in place. I have my times, which I have decided to have, and I have very little time because I have decided to do that. It is a demanding job, but you could make it a lot more demanding than what it is, if you don't stick your rules of maintaining you finish work, finish this and do something else."</i>
ACM 18.	<i>"I had boundaries in myself about what was okay and acceptable for me so if I believed something to be beyond reasonable and something that I couldn't manage then in the nicest way possible I would say no, even though culturally it's not really appropriate to say no at all."</i>
ACM 6.	<i>"I think the previous manager had been giving a lot but she only lasted 6 months so I think she burnt out because she didn't have those you know strong kind of boundaries."</i>
ACM 10.	<i>"I started going ok I'm not going to survive so I think yeah I did create clear boundaries and I think that helped me survive. You know like nothing on the weekend. Like I might be in the house or I might be doing promotions on the computer or I might choose to do emailing at night or I might be selecting canvases on the weekend or I might even go into the art centre but it was like no artist contact."</i>
ACM 15.	<i>"I could either be a burnt out resource and leave all bitter and twisted as a lot of the previous managers had and other people in the community had or I could make myself a sustainable resource and somehow find my niche in that organisation and set boundaries that work for me. Those boundaries being a buffer between your work and your home and not being at beck and call 24 hours a day."</i>

## 5. Support

As seen in Table 20, participants felt more supported by local people from communities than by government and peak bodies. The peak bodies are key organisations within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art industry, responsible for providing services to their members including training, professional development, information and resources (Davidson, 2012). There are currently five peak bodies for artists and art centres in northern and central Australia (Davidson, 2012), including:

- The Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA)
- Desart: the Association of Central Australian Aboriginal Art and Craft Centres
- Ananguku Arts: supporting artists the in Anangu Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara Lands and South Australia.
- Aboriginal Art Centre Hub of Western Australia (AACHWA): the peak advocacy and support agency for Aboriginal art centres in the Great Southern, Mid-West, Gascoyne, Goldfields and Pilbara regions of Western Australia.
- Indigenous Art Centre Alliance (IACA): representing community-based art and craft centres of North Queensland and the Torres Strait.

This lack of support makes an art centre managers' job much harder and more difficult to cope with. Consequently, participants were asked what more could be done to provide additional support. The majority of participants suggested a counselling type service be offered as they would value the opportunity to talk with other people who understood what they were experiencing and enduring.

Table 20 - Support

Interview Number	Interviewees' quotes
ACM 19.	<i>"The community itself were my support."</i>
ACM 10.	<i>"From the artists and community I felt 100% supported but in terms of the peak body at the time, they had a sort of dodgy, well not dodgy manager but he didn't know how to support people, he didn't know how to support me. Then from other art centre managers that kind of grew, like I found my support slowly."</i>
ACM 17.	<i>"No one touched base with me from either of the peak bodies until I was in my third month of work. No one reached out and made a phone call to see how I was going. I came in for a job with a terribly burnt out predecessor, who was incredibly emotional, bursting into tears and then was very angry. So that was difficult. There wasn't any support initially."</i>
ACM 20.	<i>"There was no support... it was a blank canvas, just start again, which is really bad for the community. The government really needs to do something more about supporting art centre managers and also making sure that dodgy ones don't come into community. And definitely the Peak bodies, I actually think need to do a hell of a lot more than what they're doing."</i>
ACM 7.	<i>"I think it would be really good if there was some sort of mentoring activities, not the immediate managers who have left because they have got too much baggage invested, but someone who has had experience and who can just simply say 'oh right well these are the things that may happen' and someone they can ring up and say 'this has happened and what's your sort of experience of this.' So it's not the previous person but someone who's neutral, that sort of thing."</i>
ACM 2.	<i>"I think the opportunity for people to come together and share information and experiences is really useful."</i>
ACM 15.	<i>"There probably needs to be some form of counselling service. Art coordinators aren't trained in counselling so maybe a fall back, some people who are feeling isolation and culture shock. You know from people who have actually been there. I mean there's not the support that a teacher gets or a nurse gets in the community and we know that. So that's our lot, we are our own little entity and we don't have a huge union you know that teachers have, a union that nurses have that makes sure there is welfare and a duty of care. So the duty of care rests on your executive committee and that's great but sometimes the executive committee are the artists who are possibly the ones you need, are the ones you may have a confrontation with."</i>