



**malpa**





For thousands of years Aboriginal people knew how to look after their health. They did this by teaching children all about medicine – bush medicine – and also how to look after people when they felt depressed, discouraged or sad.

The children grew up to be “Young Doctors”. Now, at the urging of Elders, this idea has new life in the 21st Century. The children learn about the old ways and about Western medicine and become health ambassadors.

“This is Aboriginal way to get a long life and we are proud of it.”

**Rex Granites Japanangka**

The children learn from Ngangkari, Elders, doctors, nurses, paramedics – anyone who knows things they want to know about good health. The knowledge gives them the power to be strong leaders for their people.

# powerful idea



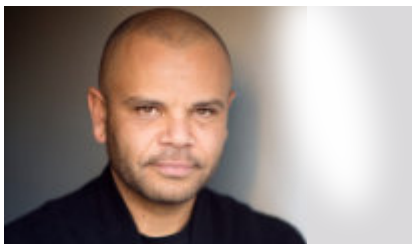
# elders - ambassadors



**Marlene Nampitjinpa**  
Pintupi Elder



**Riverbank Frank Doolan**  
Wiradjuri Elder



**Luke Carroll**  
Wiradjuri



**Uncle Jack Charles**  
Boon Wurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Woiwurrung and Yorta Yorta  
Ambassador in Perpetuity

The Elders said this must be done junkajura – black and white together. Malpa always has non-Aboriginal children involved. This has been very powerful as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal kids become close friends and everyone learns about the gifts of traditional ways of doing things.

“This program has had a such a profound impact on student and life outcomes of some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged students from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal backgrounds.” **Principal**

**Dr Corinne Walsh**, of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University, Canberra, commented that “Malpa’s Young Doctors is the most successful health programme for Aboriginal children in Australia.”

“Watching the kids engage with each other, learn techniques to look after their mental health and be excited about education was an absolute privilege. The work that Malpa is doing to support these communities is inspirational.”

**Dr Simon Judkins, Australasian College for Emergency Medicine**

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## SOME THINGS WE DID

“ It was so cool when we ran the Young Doctors Day for the kindie kids. We got to help them learn about all sorts of things, like brushing your teeth properly, blowing your nose and playing aboriginal games. We even took them on an emu parade of the school and helped them decide what bins rubbish should go in.

We played games that helped us decide what was the right way to behave when bad things happen to our friends or families. I learned heaps about looking out for my mates and how to tell when they are feeling bad. One of the things was learning that I need to be a good and loyal friend and help them when they are being bullied. ”

When the Ngankari trained the children to be healers, they also became leaders in their community. Malpa's Young Doctors learn important things so they can become respected leaders.

“The Young Doctors taught me the rights and wrongs. Standing up for yourself and looking after other people.” **Young Doctor**

“I've been able to help my mum sort out what's the right kind of food to buy. I told her about how they make bread white by bleaching it with chemicals. We now get grainy bread all the time.” **Young Doctor**

# leadership



## SOME THINGS WE DID

“ We learned all about the healthy eating plate and then we learned about bush tucker. We got to make up our own healthy plate using bush tucker and then the best bit – we made a huge mosaic for the wall of our bush tucker garden. A koori artist helped us with the art bit.

I loved the ‘Master chef feed the family’ challenge. We were told we had \$20 to spend to make a healthy meal for four. Neve, the nutritionist, had told us lots about how to eat well and helped us with our planning. We then were judged by Neve, the school deputy and Auntie Carol for taste, healthiness and use of money. I want to do that one again! ”





Young Doctors discover many things about making good food choices. They experience a wide range of healthy choices and how to make delicious meals. They learn about bush tucker and sometimes even create bush gardens to see and taste the benefits of traditional food as well as learning how to shop.

“I didn’t know how much sugar was in them soft drinks and juices. If you drink ’em you gotta run for a long way to use up all the sugar. I think water is the smartest thing to drink.” **Young Doctor**

He came home from Young Doctors and said we should buy zucchini. We never had that before. Now we get it all the time. And he showed us how grainy bread is better for us than that white stuff.” **Parent**

# nutrition



“ Using the “glitter germ finder” is lots of fun. Using glitter and ultraviolet light, we found that it can take up four washes to get our hands free of glitter germs. UNLESS ... we wash our hands properly in the first place. A fabulous way to learn hand washing in COVID times.

The giant ear was lots of fun. We could take it apart and see how it worked and learn about which bits got blocked up. We really understood why we needed to keep our ears free from gunk. Now we are experts with the block and blow and we even got to teach the kindies how to do it. ”



Experience shows us and science reminds us that hygiene is the key to good health. Too many children are needlessly sick because they haven't learned simple hand and face washing. And understanding germs and bacteria can be the difference between life and death.

The Young Doctors also learn about COVID 19 and the best ways to live with that.

“I have taught my Nanna, Uncle and Mum how to blow their nose and how you need to cough into your elbow, so germs don't spread.” **Young Doctor**

“Daily ear and hearing care activities - nose blowing, face washing - are the most valued and will provide the greatest impact on stopping ear disease and preventing hearing loss.” **Doctor – Australian Indigenous Doctors Association**

“I have taught my brother and sister how to brush teeth properly and wash hands.” **Young Doctor**

“I taught those kids about how Aboriginal people had used certain leaves to make soap. Then we found them in the bush and made soap. They were fascinated.” **Traditional Knowledge Keeper**

# hygiene





**THE YOUNG DOCTORS PLEDGE**

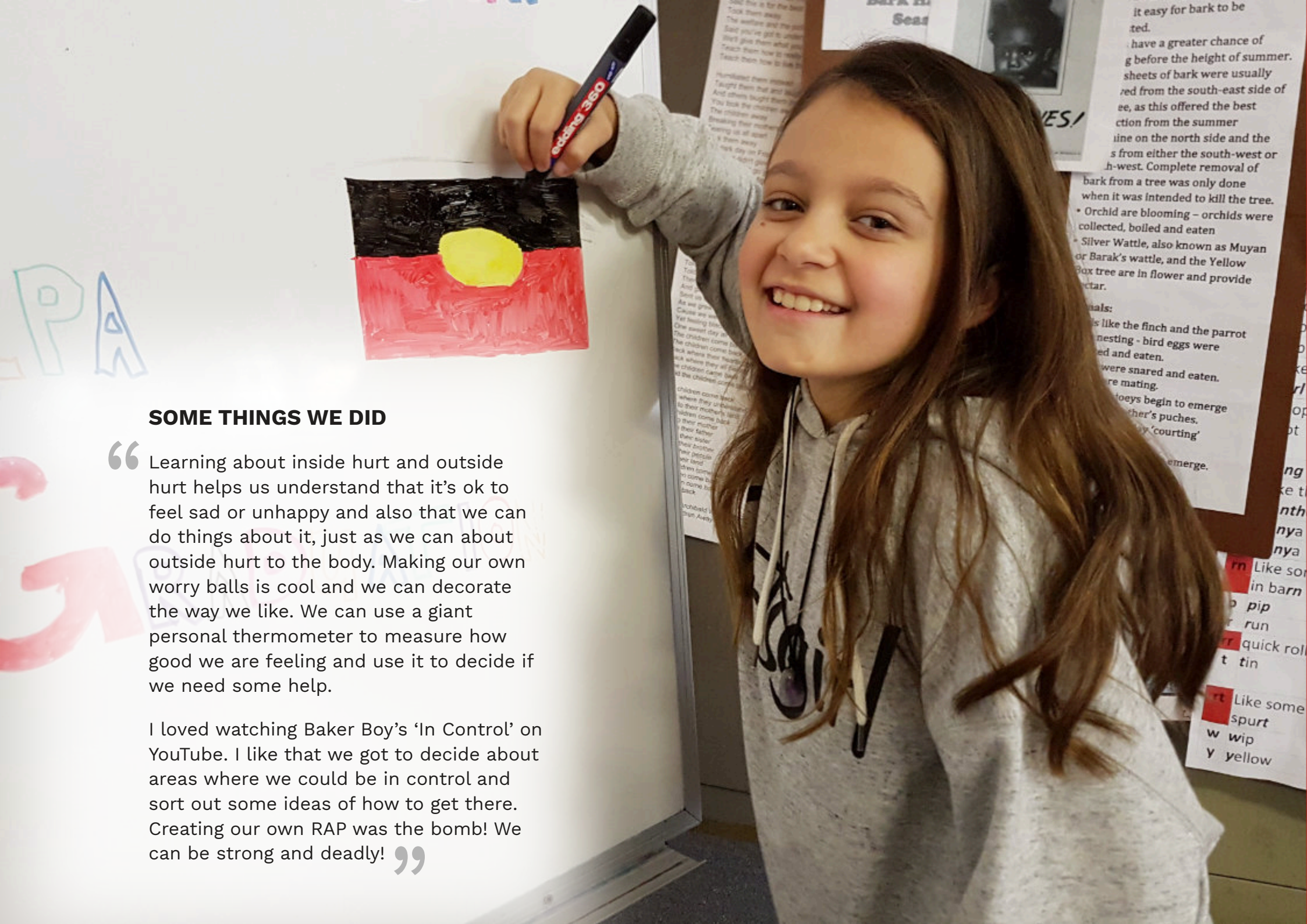
The Ngankari are skilled at knowing when any of their people were struggling with the thoughts in their head and in their spirit – their kurunpa. Young Doctors learn the importance of being emotionally strong and look out for other people who were having trouble keeping their spirits strong.

“Two students who are brothers have had trauma throughout their life. They tend to act out and misbehave and have low school attendance. During Young Doctors the boys were so quiet and well behaved. I've never seen them so happy.” **Leader**

“I have been teaching for twenty eight years and I have never seen children grow so much in confidence, emotionally and socially, in such a short time.” **Leader**

# belonging





## SOME THINGS WE DID

“ Learning about inside hurt and outside hurt helps us understand that it’s ok to feel sad or unhappy and also that we can do things about it, just as we can about outside hurt to the body. Making our own worry balls is cool and we can decorate the way we like. We can use a giant personal thermometer to measure how good we are feeling and use it to decide if we need some help.

I loved watching Baker Boy’s ‘In Control’ on YouTube. I like that we got to decide about areas where we could be in control and sort out some ideas of how to get there. Creating our own RAP was the bomb! We can be strong and deadly! ”

“It was important for me to have my daughter doing this project to show her a little bit of how I was brought up. Going to an all-Aboriginal school and learning from and respecting my Elders and their land. Learning their way of doing things and speaking their language. My daughter says that the highlights were the friendships she made and memories she will keep forever. My overall view is this should be in every school.” **Parent**

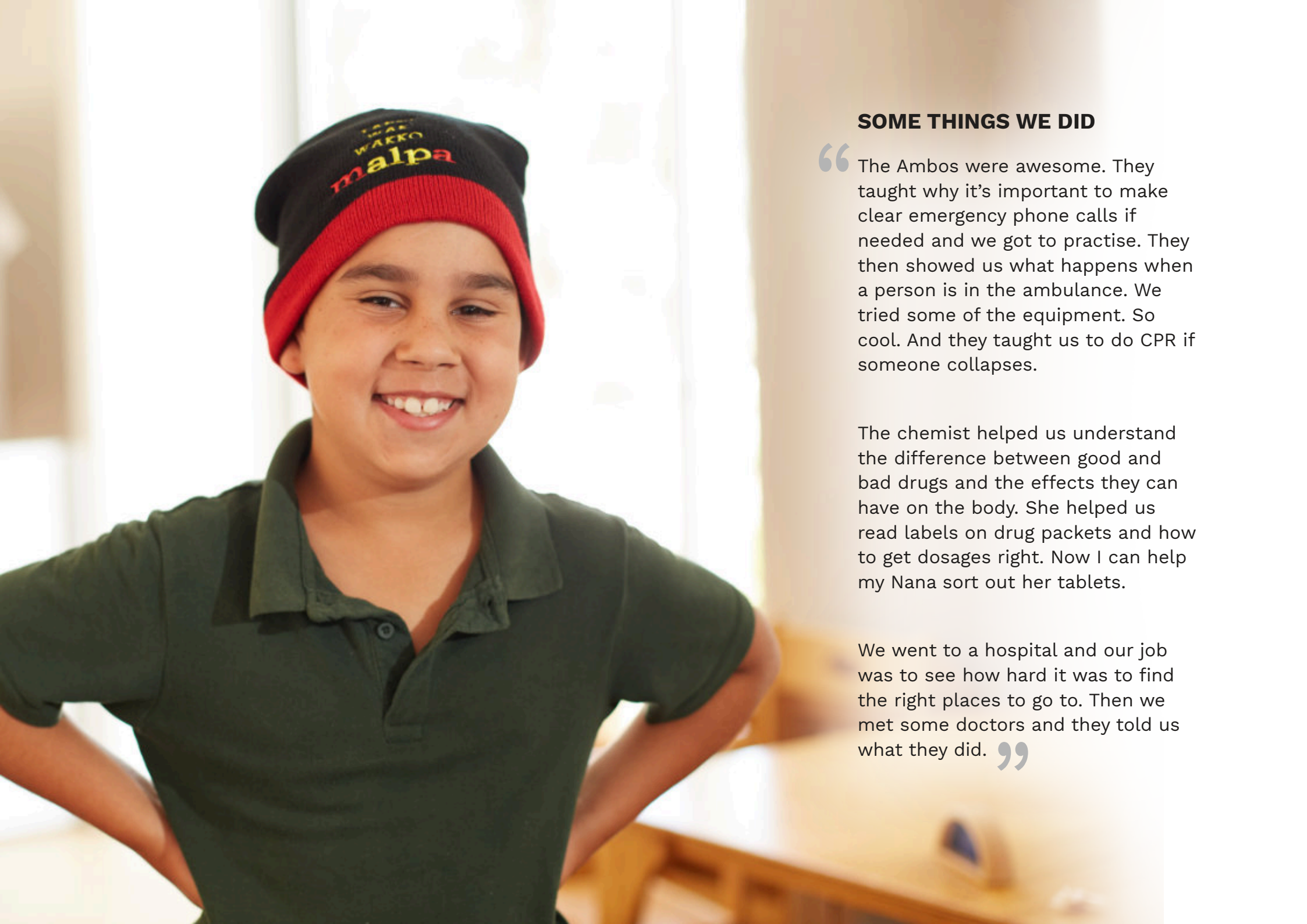
“It’s like connecting to your culture like always – like when you’re not – when you’re weak with your culture, you’re not learning about your culture. And when you’re strong, you’re always learning about it and you have elders talking to you. It’s sort of like knowledge when you’re strong.” **Young Doctor**

It means a lot to our mob that the young people learn the old ways and the new ways together. That’s the key to the future.” **Local Elder**

“Young Doctors gives my child a real sense of family. She doesn't have any family living here apart from me and her siblings. And it gave her a real sense of family and belonging, which is missing in her life.” **Parent**

# emotional wellbeing





## SOME THINGS WE DID

“ The Ambos were awesome. They taught why it’s important to make clear emergency phone calls if needed and we got to practise. They then showed us what happens when a person is in the ambulance. We tried some of the equipment. So cool. And they taught us to do CPR if someone collapses.

The chemist helped us understand the difference between good and bad drugs and the effects they can have on the body. She helped us read labels on drug packets and how to get dosages right. Now I can help my Nana sort out her tablets.

We went to a hospital and our job was to see how hard it was to find the right places to go to. Then we met some doctors and they told us what they did. ”



Feeling good about talking to doctors, dentist and other health staff is really important. Learning the art of describing your symptoms and understanding what is being said makes a real difference to how quickly people heal. Young Doctors learn to do this and have an interesting time doing it.

“My favourite is learning about everything.” **Young Doctor**

“We did a trip to the Aboriginal Medical Service. Cool. We learned how to talk to doctors and nurses.” **Young Doctor**

“Our mob went to the big hospital. We did stuff like bandaging and fixing up your arms if you break them.” **Young Doctor**

# health literacy





## SOME THINGS WE DID

“ The creek was yukky – rubbish everywhere and the water looking dirty and green. We came up with some ideas to make it better and thought about why it was important for our own health. I mean, who’d want to swim in that muck. You could get really sick. I liked that we were able to make a difference.

We did this thing called “you smoke you choke”. Deadly Dan taught us about how smoking affects our bodies, even if it’s not you smoking but someone else in the house. Lungs go all black and sludgy, like dirty river mud. And its not just the lungs – it’s all of your body in the end. It can even kill you. I showed my mum and dad the pictures and they’ve promised to cut down on smoking.

They only smoke outside now but I want them to stop altogether. I’m scared they’ll die. ”



Pintupi Elder **Marlene Nampitjinpa** says “We need to sing our country up, give it life, to let it be what it wants to be. If we don’t sing up country, it dies, if Country is sick, me and my people are sick.”

And she is right. The Young Doctors learn about keeping their environment healthy and also keeping their household environment healthy and safe so they can be healthy.

# environmental health





**malpa**



**AIDA**  
AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS  
DOCTORS' ASSOCIATION



Supported by Australian Indigenous Doctors Association **AIDA**

Australasian College for Emergency Medicine **ACEM**

Endorsed by National Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation **NACCHO**

We are members of National Rural Health Alliance **NRHA**

Australian Council of Social Service **ACOSS**



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**The Malpa Project** uses an Aboriginal approach to child health with Aboriginal people controlling the design and delivery of projects

**Malpa** has run projects in the NT, SA, NSW, Victoria and the ACT.

