





## singing out with desert pea media

Desert Pea Media (DPM) is an Australian charitable organisation giving voice to the struggles, hope and heart of Indigenous young people through music videos.

*Lately I been struggling, I been losing sleep  
// Days turn into nights, nights turn into  
weeks // Can't think, can't eat, nightmares  
on repeat // The weight of the world feels  
like it's holding me down // The pressure  
and the pain feels like a thundercloud // I'm  
underwater bubbling, I'm struggling to stand  
// But I'm stumbling, tumbling, trying to get  
to dry land*

'Thundercloud' by B-Town Warriors is one of roughly 160 music projects produced by DPM. In the video, young Indigenous girls and guys rap and sing passionately about the challenges they face and hope for something better.

The young people are from Bourke High School in northern central NSW and this song came together over a five-day DPM workshop. Desert Pea Media CEO and creative director, Toby Finlayson says the pressures of living in two worlds are bigger than ever for young Indigenous Australians. He says, "This was a brave and emotive production driven by young people to inspire and support mobs to be resilient, healthy, and feel supported."

Since it started in 2002, DPM has worked in around 75 remote and rural Indigenous communities from the Torres Strait to the Western Desert of Australia. "Every

community is so different. The common thread is how talented and connected young people are," Toby says. "DPM is creating dialogue around social change, following a process of 'the real'; what's happening in their community, 'the ideal'; what they hope their world would look like, and 'the bridge'; how they get there."

When the crew arrive in a community, they start with a 'yarn circle'. This is where they invite elders, senior leaders, young people, parents and grandparents to gather and have a conversation about what's happening in their community.





*“We hear the good and bad... substance abuse, mental health, suicide, violence. It’s a space for people to have a voice and speak on the realities of their lives.”*

Themes and words from these conversations are written on a whiteboard and shaped into song lyrics. *“The young people and community members make all the decisions about what’s used and which stories are told, and DPM creatives help shape it,”* Toby says.

**What does the presence of an elder bring to the creative space?** It’s an opportunity for intergenerational conversation, which

doesn’t happen very often. Technology and popular culture don’t foster that kind of connection between young people and elders. Having an elder present gives some historical social, political and cultural context. Their knowledge and experience adds depth. It’s the appropriate and right way of doing things in the community.

**Why are disadvantages still present for Original Nations People?** The trauma of colonisation is staggering. The generational trauma and violence, and ongoing social and cultural oppressions still exist today for a whole range of reasons from poverty and isolation, to big changes in diet and popular culture. The list is a long one that speaks of the pressures

Indigenous people deal with every day. Healing takes time.

**How can young people build an inclusive Australia?** You can volunteer. There are organisations which hold space for non-Indigenous people to connect. AIME (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience) is a good one. Also, take the time to learn, meet and build connections with Indigenous people. That’s what it’s all about – connecting. Start wherever you can.

To support the work of Desert Pea Media, read more and donate at [www.desertpeamedia.com](http://www.desertpeamedia.com)