

# Many happy returns for CAN



Noongar Pop Culture workshop facilitators Curtis Taylor and Brian Lloyd. Picture: Tanya Voltchanskaya



AN independent study has found that the Community Arts Network (CAN) program with Noongar people in Narrogin, southern WA, has helped to address issues such as feuding, violence, poor school attendance and high rates of suicide.

And, according to the company that conducted the research, Resourceful Communities, for every \$1 spent \$18.58 in social value has been returned, one of the highest social returns ever recorded in the world.

CAN chief executive Jo Metcalf said that between 2010 and 2015, staff worked with the Noongar community and schools in Narrogin to deliver a variety of workshop programs.

CAN developed a community arts program called Strong Communities, Strong Culture, which included media, music, visual art, storytelling, fashion and language revival.

"This vindicates what we have intuitively known all along – creative programs that engage, inspire and motivate communities not only have a positive social impact, but an enormous economic impact as well," Ms Metcalf said.

"We knew our work in the region was having a profound impact, however we needed more than anecdotal evidence to support the value of the work."

So CAN commissioned the independent study to assess the social impact of its programs in the region. Social Return on Investment (SROI) uses a monetary value to measure how change is created through social, environmental and economic outcomes.

CAN's results were outstanding. The SROI analysis found that CAN was able to convert \$592,200 worth of government-funded community arts programs into \$11 million-plus in social value.

The research also concluded that CAN's work has been instrumental in encouraging Noongar students to return to school.

# More of the same