

# West news

Connecting and partnering  
with Aboriginal communities

Issue 2 – Summer 2018



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## Welcome to West news

The Department of Health and Human Services respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pays its respect to the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal peoples.

It has been a decade since the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made the National Apology to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian Government. In this newsletter we acknowledge this historic moment, reproducing part of his powerful speech.

We learn about Kirrip Aboriginal Corporation's journey over the past decade and the success of several projects made possible in Western Metropolitan Melbourne by *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government's strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012–2022*.

These include early years programs that link Aboriginal community members to culturally safe services, and a scholarship program that will lead to more people learning a holistic Aboriginal approach to wellness.

With the NDIS rolling out this year, we also find out how Aboriginal people with disabilities, and the organisations that support them, are being engaged in the NDIS system.

We trust you enjoy this edition of *West news*.

## Deputy Secretary's message

Welcome to the Summer Edition of *West news* – a newsletter that is committed to keeping you informed about what is happening across the Aboriginal health and wellbeing space of the West Division, within both the department and the funded sector.

Since the spring edition of *West news*, many exciting Aboriginal focused announcements have been made. These are intended to positively overhaul the current approach to improving the quality of life of Aboriginal communities and individuals living in Victoria, and revolutionising how Victoria's health and human services engage and work with Aboriginal communities.

In early October 2017,

the department officially launched its headline Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategy, *Korin Korin Balit-Djak* ('Growing Very Strong' in Woiwurrung language).

Korin Korin Balit-Djak is certain to be a game changer. It clearly sets out the direction for advancing self-determination and improving health, wellbeing and safety outcomes for Aboriginal people living in Victoria over the next decade.

It's an ambitious plan that was extensively co-designed and guided by Aboriginal communities/individuals, Aboriginal Organisations, the funded sector and other Victorian Government departments.



This edition of *West news* will lay out the key elements of Korin Korin Balit-Djak and highlight other key policies and frameworks that complement it.

I trust this newsletter will leave you excited and optimistic about the changing policy landscape, and its positive impact in assisting Aboriginal communities on a path to self-determination towards achieving optimum health, wellbeing and safety.

**Leanne Miller**  
Acting Deputy Secretary,  
West Division

## Marcus Clarke message

Hello everyone,  
Reflecting back on 2017, it can be chalked up as a game changing year for Aboriginal Communities and individuals with the advent of many announcements on new directions being made within the health and human services environment.

It was a year that really set a tone of doing things differently, of taking the time to listen and work alongside community to systematically dig through the mounds of evidence and sift through, and identify, what works. It was a year of giving community time to envision what optimal health, wellbeing and safety for all Aboriginal people at all ages and life stages looks like.

The result was the October 2017 launch of a bold new Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategy that will support and embed Aboriginal leadership and increase Aboriginal self-determination across the health and human services sector over the next decade. The strategy, *Korin Korin Balit-Djak*, enshrines self-determination as a core guiding principle underpinning and wrapping around the five domains and associated priority focus areas and actions visually depicted on page 3.

The critical work now for us all in 2018 is to turn the strategy into meaningful action.

New governance mechanisms, announced alongside Korin Korin Balit-



Djak, will assist to:

- **embed** Aboriginal community voices, leadership and decision making at all levels of the department to inform and drive decisions in policy making, service design, resource allocation, monitoring and evaluation
- **strengthen** accountability and transparency to the Aboriginal community
- **engage and promote** the diversity of Aboriginal voices – particularly from local communities

*Continued next page*

# Self-determination guides strategy

From page 2

- detail how the department will work with Aboriginal communities, community organisations, other government departments and mainstream service providers – now and into the future – to improve the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal people in Victoria.

It provides three interconnected levels of engagement for building stronger relationships between Aboriginal communities and the department.

## 1. Area Aboriginal Governance Committees

- provide a forum to capture localised Aboriginal perspectives, aspirations and challenges for their communities and identify actions that need to be addressed
- develop and oversee localised Korin Korin Balit-Djak health, wellbeing and safety action plans and allocate resources to support these
- strengthen the network of department-funded sector agencies required to deliver services to Aboriginal communities
- provide local monitoring of departmental responsibilities, in particular in relation to Aboriginal employment and inclusion, cultural support plans, Taskforce 1000 and other identified priorities.



## 2. Divisional Aboriginal Governance Committee

- develop and oversee a divisional action plan
- provide oversight of the implementation of local area action plans and core portfolio responsibilities. In particular, Aboriginal employment and inclusion, cultural support plans, Taskforce 1000 and other identified priorities

- develop divisional reports outlining progress on department lead responsibilities which will be tabled at the Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum

- make decisions on the allocation of department funding
- identify emerging issues and opportunities
- monitor divisional data, KPIs and continuously evaluate in line with adhering to the agreed priorities and outcomes measures.

## 3. (Statewide) Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum

- set and oversee strategic directions in the context of all Aboriginal-specific matters relevant to departmental portfolio areas
- oversee and monitor strategic plans and frameworks including, but not limited to *Korin Korin Balit-Djak*, *Balit Murrup*, and *Barring Djinang* – the Aboriginal employment strategy
- identify emerging issues, opportunities and priorities contributing to departmental planning and budget development
  - inform funding allocations and



budget setting

- monitor data, KPIs and produce an annual report assessing progress against agreed priorities and outcomes measures
- support the work of the Aboriginal Evaluation and Research Committee
- identify opportunities to collaborate across Victorian Government mechanisms such as the Aboriginal Justice Forum and the Marrung Central Governance Committee.

All levels will facilitate joint leadership between Aboriginal communities and the department to guide and oversee all Aboriginal policies, programs and initiatives.

With self-determination at the heart of this new policy

environment and direction, it really is an exciting time to be involved with the Department of Health and Human Services.

**Self-determination is not simply another program or policy for government to roll out. It implicitly means that Aboriginal people take ownership, carriage and responsibility for designing, delivering and evaluating policy and services on their own terms. This will require a change from how things have been done in the past, but we are up for the challenge of making it a reality.**

Download Korin Korin Balit-Djak and the Aboriginal governance and accountability framework at [www2.health.vic.gov.au](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au)

## The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

### Drawing on lived experience

**A woman who has spent more than a decade working to improve the quality and cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities will lead the *Wimmera South West Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation NDIS Participant Readiness Project*.**

Community consultant Jody Barney is a Birri/Gubba Urangan woman from Far North/South East Queensland and a proud South Sea Islander with more than 40 years lived experience as a deaf Aboriginal and South Sea Islander woman.

Jody has worked with more than 170 communities across Australia during the past 25 years; engaging with over 27,000 people in a way that ensures the cultural safety of all community members.

In addition to being fluent in 11 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sign languages, Jody has knowledge of over 55 separate



*Jody Barney*

signing systems used in communities across the country.

In her project role, Jody will be the direct contact for clients, and will support and mentor staff within organisations to initiate NDIS conversations within their community.

She will also support the logistical work involved in organising venues and liaising with organisations to set up information sessions, to ensure it is done in a way that ensures cultural safety and is sensitive to community needs.

### Empowering community on the NDIS journey

**The department has launched a project to empower and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families as they embark on their journey with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in the Wimmera South West Area (WSWA).**

The NDIS has changed the way Australians with a disability, their family and carers, access supports.

Under the scheme, eligible participants go through a planning process to determine their needs and goals, before developing a plan that identifies the disability-related support they require. They are then able to choose their own provider for those supports.

After prioritising the need to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and organisations in the WSWA are ready for the NDIS transition, the Department's West Division has launched the Wimmera South West Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation NDIS Participant Readiness project, called 'Getting Along'.

The project aims to ensure community members with a disability, and the organisations that support them, understand the intention of the NDIS, their entitlements under the scheme, and how to participate and navigate the system as it rolls out across the region.

Experienced community consultant Jody Barney will lead the project, which will draw on the knowledge and lessons learned from

the NDIS trial in Barwon, called the Getting it Right Project.

That project demonstrated the need for the Department to engage with local government, disability services and the wider community sector about their readiness to support, in a culturally safe and appropriate manner, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who have a disability.

The project will also work with the NDIS team to ensure it understands the challenges to participation faced in the Wimmera South West by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have a disability, or support a family member who has a disability.

Organisations will be equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to support advocates appropriately and will be encouraged to discuss the possible service system implications for their organisation in supporting their community in the post transition environment.

It is anticipated that the project will develop cultural expertise, resources and supports that will continue to be available to community once it is complete.

Importantly, learnings from the project in relation to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have a disability, and any further supports they may require, will be communicated to organisations in the area.

### Wimmera South West

**The Wimmera South West Area (WSWA) includes 10 Local Government Areas (LGAs), three of which (Glenelg, Hindmarsh and Warrnambool) are ranked in the top 10 Victorian LGAs with the highest percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.**

The Department of Health and Human

Services funds six Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations/ Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCOs/ ACCHOs) in the WSWA to deliver services including health, disability supports, housing and homelessness services and family support services.

# Giving our kids a healthy start

**Innovative early years projects are encouraging more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in Western Metropolitan Melbourne to engage with culturally-safe health and wellbeing services.**

The two Koolin Balit early years projects\*, Footprints to Success and Babaneek Booboop, have been running since 2016.

Footprints to Success focuses on addressing the health and wellbeing service gaps and access inequalities affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in Brimbank, Maribyrnong and Wyndham. It is jointly led by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Moondani Balluk (Victoria University) and cohealth.

To date, Footprints' Aboriginal Key Support Workers have assisted more than 70 families and over 100 children to navigate the health and early years service

systems with confidence – and supported organisations to remove barriers to access and provide flexible and culturally safe services.

The project's workers attend community events and are regularly present at organisations that service high numbers of community members, including cohealth's Braybrook Community Hub, the interim Wyndham Aboriginal Community Centre, Tweddle Child and Family Health Services in Footscray, and Werribee Mercy Hospital.

Babaneek Booboop, meaning 'Mother Child' in Woiwurrung language, focuses on promoting the health and developmental outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Melton and Moorabool.

Led by Djerriwarrh Health Services, Babaneek Booboop's outreach model has engaged with more than 34 families and 56 children.



*Consortium partners of the Footprints to Success project.*

The project's Aboriginal Pathway Workers support client access to a range of services in the areas of prenatal appointments, maternal and child health checks, kindergarten enrolments, allied health services, transitioning to school and referrals to family support services.

Project Coordinator Charry Owens says, 'The workers continue to achieve positive community engagement, linking families to services which they may not have previously accessed, or may not have been aware of.'

The project has also been able to deliver health promotion, cultural and education activities.

Critical to the success of both these projects has been the establishment of consortia that collaborate to develop strong relationships of trust, and build a holistic, culturally-appropriate service system that is responsive to the needs of Aboriginal families and is informed by a trauma lens.

The development of solid relationships between the workers and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families has also been key. The workers focus strongly on deep listening, building trust and respect with the families before building the families' confidence and capacity to navigate the service systems.

For more information about these programs, please contact Dianne Szkirka on 0429 334 672 or [dianne.szkirka@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:dianne.szkirka@dhhs.vic.gov.au)

\* Made possible with funding from Koolin Balit: Victorian Government's strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012–2022.

*The Babaneek Booboop program celebrating Aboriginal Dads on Father's Day: Charry Owens, Project Coordinator; Dianne Fleming and Cheryl Cooper, Pathway Workers; Peter Webster, Executive Officer, Kirrip Aboriginal Corporation.*



## The 10th Anniversary of the National Apology

DHHS staff gather to hear the long-awaited apology.



Tuesday 13 February 2018 will mark the 10th anniversary of the then-Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian Government.

*'I move that today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.*

*We reflect on their past mistreatment.*

*We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation's history.*

*The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.*

*We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.*

*We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.*

*For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.*

*To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.*

*And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.*

*We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.*

*For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.*

*We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.*

*A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.*

*A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.*

*A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.*

*A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.*

*A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.'*

**Prime Minister Hon Kevin Rudd MP**

### Apology an important step on the road to reconciliation

Thousands of Australians gathered outside Parliament on 13 February 2008, to hear the long-awaited apology that was widely seen as a watershed moment for reconciliation in Australia.

The apology followed the 1997 tabling of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)'s *'Bringing Them Home Report'* into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

That report found that between 10 to 30 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were taken from their families between 1910 and 1970 under forcible removal policies that were racially discriminatory, and genocidal in intent.

As the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community was already well aware, the impact of these policies on most victims was negative and profoundly disabling.

The report handed down 54 recommendations, including the need for an apology and acknowledgement for the Stolen Generations as a single step in a process of reparation.

Holding a day of commemoration was another one of the report's recommendations, with Sorry Day now held on May 26 – the anniversary of the tabling of the report.

You can download the report at [humanrights.gov.au](http://humanrights.gov.au)

# Culturally safe space provides vital community hub

**Ten years after it first opened its doors, Kirrip Aboriginal Corporation has cemented its role as a provider of a safe community space for Aboriginal community members residing in Melton and surrounding areas.**

A group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members established Kirrip in 2007, operating on the belief that the Aboriginal communities of West Melbourne were missing out on essential services. With over 175 members registered, and around 100 Aboriginal community members walking through Kirrip's doors each week, the organisation has successfully created a space to experience social and cultural connectedness, have a voice and celebrate culture and identity while promoting self-determination, community healing, wellbeing and advancement.

In 2013, Kirrip's Board of Directors successfully lobbied Melton City Council for space, which resulted in the current site of Kirrip House in Melton South. In 2016, the Department of Health and Human Services supported Kirrip to employ an Executive Officer to build its community and program base\*.

Kirrip now offers a range of programs including: a weekly Elders group, a weekly playgroup, fortnightly cultural youth, boys and men's programs, weekly parents group, and the Marla women's group.

Community members in crisis regularly turn to

the community owned and controlled Aboriginal organisation for help with a range of issues, including everything from family violence, child protection, housing and food security to cultural separation.

Executive Officer Peter Webster says, 'Kirrip is not a service provider but a community hub that can direct community to the right service. Kirrip is very good at engaging community and is the perfect place to assist those services that are struggling to engage with community.'

Vital to Kirrip's success has been the tireless work of its Executive Officer, community volunteers and the Board of Directors.

Kirrip is now represented on a number of local and state government

committees and has formed strong partnerships with many organisations in the western suburbs of Melbourne, including other Aboriginal community controlled organisations, and local health, family and education services.

Future plans include the finalisation of Kirrip's strategic and business plans to enable the organisation to access ongoing funding opportunities, increase the number of programs, and introduce new services for community, including the establishment of carer's groups, an after-hours women's group and a youth group.

Kirrip is also working in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service to provide

the Aboriginal community in the western suburbs with a culturally safe health service.

Aboriginal community members from all over Australia are welcome to access Kirrip's services, but only those who live within a 50km radius of Kirrip House are eligible to become a registered member.

'Community do not need to be a member of Kirrip to utilise our services, however, being a member entitles you to vote at special meetings, annual general meetings and apply to become a Kirrip board member,' Peter says.

\* Made possible with funding from *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government's strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012-2022.*

*Kirrip Board members Ashleigh Vandenburg, Heather Gillard, Renee Sleigh, Marie Seghal and Charmaine Hamilton.*



## Scholarships to promote Indigenous wellness

**Local communities in Melbourne's west are set to benefit from a holistic Aboriginal approach to wellness after scholarships\* enabled two community members to become accredited Wayapa® practitioners.**

Wayapa incorporates earth mindfulness, meditation and movement that can be used daily to connect to the environment and to quiet the mind. It shares Aboriginal culture and teaches the importance of acknowledging Traditional Custodians of the land, and becoming a Custodian of the Earth.

Wayapa is the only known Indigenous Wellness and Earth Connection Practice in Australia to be certified by the International Institute for Complementary Therapists.

Scholarship recipients Lisa de Santa-ana and Rowena Price have now successfully completed the Wayapa Wuurrk Practitioner Diploma Course and are now qualified to deliver Wayapa workshops.

Both Lisa and Rowena intend to share their learnings to benefit local Aboriginal communities.

Currently, Lisa is a Koorie Engagement Support Officer at the Department



*Lisa de Santa-ana*

of Education and Training.

'I am one of the Stolen Generation people. My grandfather is Thomas Connors (Connors) and we are still looking for our mob from South Australia,' Lisa says.

'I was very honoured to receive a scholarship to be a Wayapa Practitioner. I feel this has resonated with me on caring and looking after ourselves and country.'

Lisa plans to share Wayapa with the schools and services she works with and, in particular, students who are disconnected and are trying to find their way.

'I am looking at starting a not-for-profit company to be able to teach Wayapa after hours and use the funds earned to give back



*Rowena Price*

and support our students in school with supplies.'

Rowena, a proud Yorta Yorta and Palawa woman, moved from Swan Hill to Melbourne with her son nine years ago to become a teacher.

'I wanted to complete the course because Wayapa encompasses everything that I also believe in, and it gives me a platform on which to grow and share my own knowledge. In particular, I was able to unpack Connection to Country and what this means to me,' Rowena says.

Rowena has already begun delivering Wayapa workshops and dreams of one day having a self-sustainable farm where people can come, stay and be fully immersed in Wayapa.

Rowena says it is impossible to measure the impact and value of the scholarship that made it possible for her to learn Wayapa.

'How do you measure the scholarship's power to provide me with key missing links to my identity, the strength of the message I now share, and the impact this has on future generations?'

\* The scholarships were made possible with funding from *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government's strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012-2022*.

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This publication may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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