

West news

Connecting and partnering
with Aboriginal communities

Issue 5 – Spring 2019



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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.

In this edition, we highlight initiatives across West Division that are all working to strengthen the Aboriginal community, using tools including food, health, and the creation of culturally safe spaces.

Winda-Mara staff share a health rivalry as well as great meals when different work areas take it in turns to put on fortnightly community dinners that feed up to 60 men, women and children – rumour has it that the Land Management Unit really knows how to make a delicious pavlova.

Halls Gap primary health-care service Budja Budja has gone mobile, fitting out a van that will enable it to service almost 500 Aboriginal community members across 10,000 square kilometres. Budja Budja is also renovating its main clinic to meet the needs of the rapidly growing Aboriginal population in the area and surrounds.

Launches have been held throughout West Division

for the family violence agreement, *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*. Dhelk Dja is making it clear that combating family violence is everybody's business.

Increasing cultural safety was the driver for the unveiling of a striking glass panel featuring an Acknowledgement of Country in the Geelong office of the Department of Health and Human Services during Reconciliation Week. The glass panel, which was printed on Wathaurong glass, greets clients, staff and visitors in the reception area, as part of the *Advancing Moondani Initiative*.

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

Marcus Clarke message

West news needs you!

This publication, *West news: Connecting and partnering with Aboriginal communities*, aims to keep readers from all walks of life up to date on what is happening within the Aboriginal-focused space across the Department of Health and Human Services' West Division, both internally and within the funded sector.

It aims to showcase West Division's connections and partnerships with local Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders.

It's important that we promote Aboriginal community self-determined health, wellbeing and safety activities across West Division and encourage community participation in the community conversations.

Implementation of our main departmental strategy, *Korin Korin Balit-Djak*, and the companion strategies, *Aboriginal governance and accountability framework* and *Balit Murrup: Aboriginal social*



and emotional wellbeing framework, are well underway.

To ensure we are on the right track we need one thing – your feedback.

We are asking for just seven minutes of your time to make sure we hear your opinions and suggestions so *West news* can best serve your interests.

So what use is the survey you may ask? In a nutshell, we are seeking feedback to ensure we are providing a publication that is a true reflection of the interests and needs of our readership. By taking part in the survey, you're directly contributing to shaping the publication as well as providing us with a clear understanding of what you expect to see in these pages.

You can help by completing our short survey at <www.surveymonkey.com/r/West_news>.

It will only take about seven minutes to complete online. Alternatively, you can contact Sandy Hodge on (03) 5381 9719 or by emailing <sandy.hodge@dhhs.vic.gov.au> to request a hardcopy and return envelope.

Please note that all answers in this survey will be treated as completely confidential and analysed in aggregate form only.

Marcus Clarke
Manager, Aboriginal Engagement Unit,
West Division

Deputy Secretary's message

Dear Readers,

Well here we are already in the second half of 2019! And what a busy start to the year it has been.

In collaboration with our community partners, the department's Aboriginal-focused work during this period has been fast paced, with many important milestones being reached all contributing in some way to achieving the

overarching vision of *Korin Korin Balit-Djak* – 'Self-determining, healthy and safe Aboriginal people and communities'.

Of note are the governance and accountability structures, which are developing at an area level and further strengthening our important divisional work. The most recent West Division Aboriginal Governance Forum took place on the



19 March in Geelong.

You can view the outcomes from that meeting on page 6.

Paul Smith
Deputy Secretary,
West Division

Community benefits from MasterChef rivalry



Every second Wednesday, Winda-Mara head office puts its industrial kitchen to work, feeding up to 60 people through its community dinner program.

Winda-Mara Executive Assistant Laura Lovett-Murray says each of the Aboriginal Corporation's six units take a turn at hosting – but the Land Management Unit holds the mantle for being the best cooks.

'We have a healthy rivalry, but everyone

knows Land Management are the best cooks — they usually do a spit roast and pavlova and great fruit bowls.'

Winda-Mara has been running the community dinner program for several years, with the idea being to bring the local Aboriginal community together.

'It's great fun,' Laura says. 'We have about 30 to 60 people come along. There's always a large number of kids coming down to catch up with their mates, and

they run around kicking the footy.'

'I come in with my kids, as a way of connecting with others that you haven't seen for weeks. It's great to come and see how community is going, especially in the colder months.

'At various times we hold information sessions in the adjacent meeting room, but it's up to the community members if they want to attend, or they can just have a feed and go.'

The local hospital, Heywood Rural Health, takes a turn at cooking four times a year, giving the community an opportunity to connect with health staff. Winda-Mara's Health team have also run a vaccination session, so diners could eat, then have a free flu shot.

'Universities, including the University of South Australia have come to do presentations on their courses, and other agencies have done talks on their services or current issues,' Laura says.

'For a lot of people who work outside Winda-

Winda-Mara community dinners have proved popular.

Mara, it's a good opportunity for them to come in and catch up with community and have a nutritious meal and have a chat with our staff.

'We have regulars coming every fortnight and you will get some faces you haven't seen for a while. It's a really good night out.'

Feeding up to 60 people is a big undertaking and the Winda-Mara staff must fit the food preparation in during the day around their normal duties. After 5pm, they volunteer their time to assist.

'It's around giving back to the community,' Laura says.

'Everyone takes great pride in what they cook ...but we all know if Land Management is cooking you are going to get a great feed – they do a really good dessert.'

Winda-Mara's smaller Hamilton office runs a community dinners program on a monthly basis. 'They are really well attended too,' Laura says.

OUR COVER: This year's highly successful Hoops Against Violence event in Horsham attracted over 100 participants and spectators during NAIDOC Week, including these basketball champs-in-training: (from left) Bungarie, Hudson, Cruz, Trent and Chace.

Photograph courtesy of Simone Dalton.



Aboriginal-led approach to ending family violence

Family violence is not part of Aboriginal culture but combating it needs an Aboriginal-led approach – that’s the message of community events held throughout West Division to launch the new family violence agreement, *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*.

Dhelk Dja, which means ‘good place’ in Dja Dja Wurrung, is a 10-year agreement between Aboriginal communities,

Aboriginal services and government. It sets out how they will work together and be accountable for ensuring that Aboriginal women, men, children, young people, Elders, families and communities are stronger, safer, thriving and living free from family violence.

The agreement builds on the *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities 10 Year Plan (2008–2018)* and

was developed with the input of 11 *Dhelk Dja* Action Groups throughout the state. The community-led action groups are place-based, Aboriginal groups that drive local action to prevent and address family violence through a partnership approach.

The groups facilitated input from community through Community Conversations, Aboriginal Partnership Forum Working Group meetings, Aboriginal Family Violence Co-design Forums, Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group (IFVRAG) meetings and the Aboriginal holistic healing co-design process.

At the end of 2018, communities came together to launch *Dhelk Dja* at events throughout West Division.

Dhelk Dja’s five strategic priorities

- 1 Aboriginal culture and leadership
- 2 Aboriginal-led prevention
- 3 Self-determining Aboriginal family violence support and services
- 4 System transformation based on self-determination principles
- 5 Aboriginal-led and informed innovation, data and research

‘Dhelk Dja is everyone’s business. Everyone, all services and all parts of government in Victoria are accountable for a future in which Aboriginal people live free from family violence. Only by working together and implementing Aboriginal solutions can we end family violence our way.’

– *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*



Photograph courtesy of Simone Dalton.



Spiritual smoking ceremony at Grampians launch of Dhelk Dja. Photograph courtesy of Simone Dalton.

Peaceful start to new agreement

Ending the day with a smoking ceremony provided a sense of peace at the Grampians launch of the new family violence agreement, according to Rhiannon Smith, the Dhelk Dja Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group (IFVRAG) coordinator for the region.

'The vibe was really quite peaceful; it was quite a calm, happy kind of day overall. When we did the Welcome to Country we didn't have a smoking ceremony at the start of the day – I left it to the very end.

'One of the young community members made a video for us of all the work we have done, with reflections of the first 10-year family violence plan. She included videos from two of the projects, which were quite triggering – it was children's views of family violence and it actually had them speaking in the video and drawing pictures of what family violence looks like to them.

'It had all of those

moments of looking back and thinking about why we are doing the work we are doing and what we have to do now. When it came to the end, I got everyone to do the smoking ceremony. It opened up a new path for us, a fresh new door. It was a bit of a cleansing almost. So, any negativity we might have felt, or trauma we might have held onto, we were able to find a bit of peace with it, which is what is needed. It was very spiritual and very connecting.'

Rhiannon says family violence service providers from throughout the Central Highlands and up as far as the Wimmera attended the Grampians region launch in Halls Gap.

'We also have a couple of metro fellas attend too.'

Rhiannon sits on the Integrated family violence committees for both the Central Highlands and for Wimmera South West.

'We had the opportunity to work with the partnership forum with my chairs and the members into

moulding it into what it is now,' Rhiannon says.

The regions are now designing their own three-year action plans to feed into the statewide agreement.

'Violence against women and children is not our way,' Uncle Keith says. 'We can stamp out family violence.'

'We are all lining up with what the focus is but we are all going to be making and doing it our own way because each region is very different.

'I think change is already happening, I think we are very much leading that for the rest of Victoria.

I am very positive this is going to be successful, it already is. We have very strong communities in the region who are putting in that effort and work into making sure it is going to be even more successful,' Rhiannon says.

One of the signatories

to the agreement Uncle Keith Randall, who is also Chair of the Inner Western Metropolitan Dhelk Dja IFVRAG, says the statewide launch of the agreement in Mildura was 'really beautiful'.

'It brought together peak bodies and communities who committed to the agreement,' Uncle Keith says.

Led by the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum members, along with the Special Minister of State Gavin Jennings and Family Safety Victoria CEO Sue Clifford, the state launch had strong representation by the police, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, the Department of Health and Human Services, and youth and child protection services.

Uncle Keith says his local West metro launch in Tarneit was more a family-orientated event, with activities for kids attracting a crowd of more than 50 people who wanted to learn more about the new agreement.

West Division Aboriginal Governance Committee update

Trialling a self-determination focused funding allocation process and monitoring key project outcomes were just some of the items on the agenda of the West Division Aboriginal Governance Committee (WDAGC) in March.

The WDAGC is the division level of the three-tiered Aboriginal governance and accountability framework (along with statewide and local levels). It offers an opportunity for Aboriginal-led decision making as well as providing transparent monitoring and accountability for outcomes relating to the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal Victorians living in West Division.

The WDAGC develops and oversees the divisional action plan, provides oversight of local area action plans, allocates funding, identifies emerging issues and opportunities, and monitors and reports on progress on a range of outcome measures.

Data initiative

Initial area-based data infographics promise to provide a rich snapshot of how Aboriginal communities in West Division are faring on a range of outcome measures.

The infographics are part of a broader project to make it easier to utilise data to identify priority work areas, such as highlighting DHHS Areas that have high or low numbers of completed Cultural Support Plans.

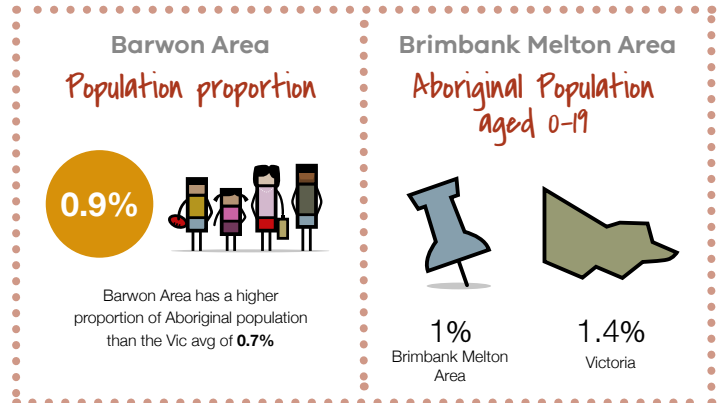
WDAGC discussed challenges facing the project, including data access, usage and limited availability of some data indicators.

It is expected the infographics and data will be a vital information tool to guide discussions during Area-based community conversations as the information they contain becomes more comprehensive.

Self Determination in Action

The WDAGC has trialled an approach to funding that empowers Aboriginal people to be the decision makers in relation to the funding and allocation of resources, rather than merely providing input to others who make the decisions.

The trial approach, with self-determination at its heart, has seen the Koori Caucus members of the WDAGC assess expressions of interest from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) for



small one-off projects.

The Koori Caucus allocated funding to:

- Community Camp (Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service);
- Family Camp (Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative);
- Knowing your Country (Kirrae Health Service Incorporated);
- Kandorr HEAL Program (Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative Limited);
- Facilitation of Improvement in Aboriginal Health Outcomes (Budja Budja Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd);
- Koori Wellbeing Ways (Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (partnership project); and,
- Leading Change, Strengthen and Building Strong Leaders (Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation).

The process was successful in not only empowering the

Koori Caucus to make decisions on funding for their community, but in encouraging discussions amongst ACCOs and community that served to inform the broader committee about issues across West Division.

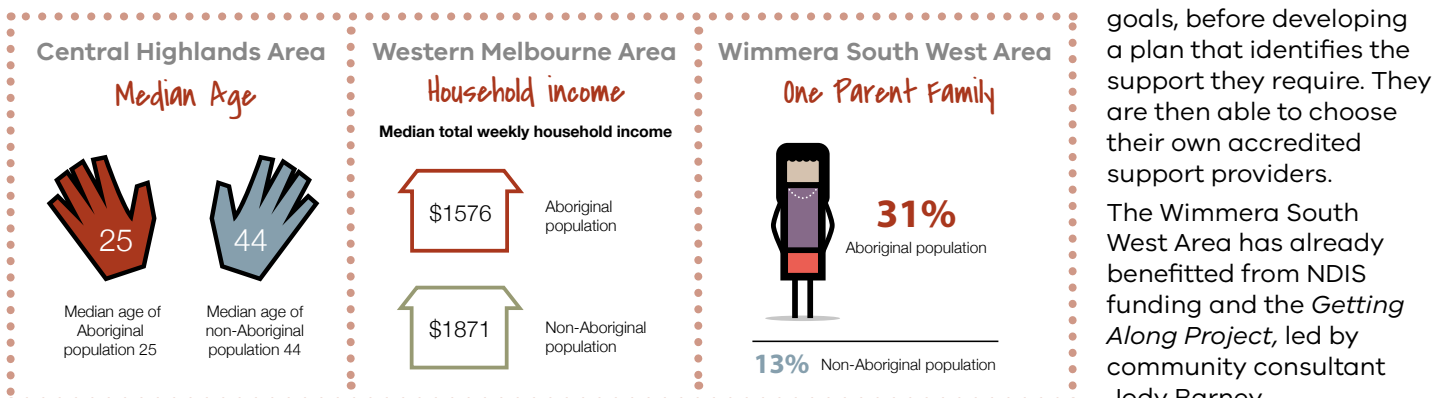
Once refined, the decision-making process will be adopted as standard procedure.

Understanding the NDIS

The Koori Caucus of the WDAGC allocated a total of \$275,000 in departmental funding to Barwon, Central Highlands, Western Melbourne and Brimbank Melton, to support their community members to understand, access and engage with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The NDIS has changed the way Australians with a disability, and 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 support they require. They are then able to choose their own accredited support providers.

The Wimmera South West Area has already benefitted from NDIS funding and the *Getting Along Project*, led by community consultant Jody Barney.



Bringing health care to the people

Lack of transport will no longer be a barrier for Aboriginal people who need health care in the Grampians/Ararat/Stawell region now that Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative has launched a new mobile van clinic service.

The mobile clinic *Tulku wan Wininn*, which means Health to You in the local Djab Wurrung language, is a modified recreational vehicle that offers two consulting areas.

The mobile clinic will provide health service delivery to almost 500 Aboriginal community members across 10,000 square kilometres, including Ararat, Stawell, St Arnaud, Gariwerd, Dunkeld, Mortlake, the western part of Beaufort and all towns in between.

Budja Budja is the only primary health care service in the Halls Gap area, and offers bulk billed GP services, nurse-based and allied health services from Tuesdays to Fridays.

Demand for its services has risen dramatically with the Aboriginal population it services growing by 69.8 per cent between 2011 and 2016, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The mobile clinic was the result of a feasibility study funded by Grampians Pyrenees Primary Care Partnerships, with the purchase costs shared between the National Indigenous Australians Agency, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Deakin University's Rural Health School, Warrnambool and Budja Budja.

Budja Budja CEO Tim Chatfield says, 'We found that transport is a big barrier to Indigenous people accessing health services – there is no public transport and their access to private transport is limited at times. Some people may have a number of small children at home and find it's too hard to pack them all into the car and drive into Halls

Jody supported Aboriginal community members with a disability, and the organisations that support them, to understand the intention of the NDIS, their entitlements under the scheme, and how to participate and navigate the system as it rolled out across the region in 2017.

Transitioning children to ACCOs

West Division has successfully transitioned the care and case management of 30 per cent of Aboriginal children in government and non-Aboriginal organisations to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations

(ACCOs). The move is part of the Transitioning Aboriginal Children to ACCOs initiative, which places an increased focus on investment into early support. The statewide goal, agreed to at the Aboriginal Children's Forum, is to achieve 80 per cent by the end of December 2019.

A second round of Learning and Innovation funding has also been made available to ACCOs that are registered providers for children in Out of Home Care. The funding has a focus on the prevention of out of home care with early intervention activities and strategies.



*(Left to right)
Registered nurse Jen Farrer with community member Cody Hayne.*

Gap and there is also a large Aboriginal prison population in the area that we need to service.

'The mobile service is designed to overcome those challenges and bring a number of health and medical services directly to our community. It will enable Budja Budja's medical and health staff to visit patients in their homes, at schools, at community centres and to be present at community events on specific days and to offer a variety of needed services.'

The clinic will have a focus on chronic health diseases and mental health services, but it will also provide education and health promotion with outreach allied health professionals and counsellors.

In addition to the mobile service, Budja Budja is undertaking a \$1 million

grant expansion of its 80-year-old clinic in Halls Gap with funding from Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and Aboriginal Victoria. Due to be completed in December 2019, the extension will provide for a more contemporary clinic layout, offer two GP consultation rooms, two treatment rooms, staff offices, increased patient waiting area and ambulance and disabled patient access.

The extension will enable the service to open five days a week, with extended hours, and offers the possibility of having two GPs on site at times.

'It's all happened at once, but we are happy. There are exciting times ahead,' Tim says.

Room for reconciliation



During Reconciliation Week, the Geelong office of the Department of Health and Human Services reinforced its commitment to creating a culturally safe space for Aboriginal clients, staff and visitors by unveiling a striking panel with an Acknowledgement of Country printed on Wathaurong glass placed in the reception area.

The design on the glass represents the creator spirit of Bundjil, the Wedge tailed eagle, and three local landscapes: the You Yangs; Corio Bay; and, the Barwon River.

Barwon Area Director Pam

Williams says the move was part of the area's Advancing Moondani Initiative.

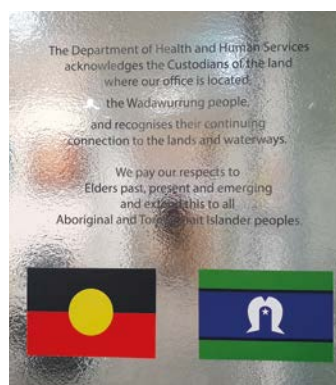
'The initiative aims to design, develop and implement culturally appropriate, respectful and welcoming public spaces in the Geelong and Colac offices, increasing cultural safety for clients, staff and other key stakeholders,' Pam says.

'It is fundamental in demonstrating our commitment to Aboriginal people and families, the local Aboriginal community, our wider stakeholders and all Aboriginal departmental staff.

The room-naming ceremony at the department's Geelong offices.

Two office meeting rooms have also been given Wadawurrung names.

Following permission from the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation, the meeting rooms have been named Koling Wadangal (Ko ling Wa-da-gnar!), which means 'Let us walk together' in Wadawurrung, and Wurri-Ki Ngitj (Woo-roo-kee nitch), which means 'To talk together' in Wadawurrung.



Acknowledgement of Country

'Within the context of self-determination and reconciliation, the department acknowledges and values the ability to walk and talk the journey together with our clients, staff and other key stakeholders throughout the delivery of our wide range of health and human services programs,' Pam says.

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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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Contributions to *West news* are welcome. However, please note that we cannot print every article received. The decision to include an article will be made by the Editor and we reserve the right to edit material.

Contributions may be forwarded to: Marcus Clarke, Manager Aboriginal Engagement Unit, West Division email: <marcus.clarke@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

Contact details

MARCUS CLARKE Manager – West Division	Warrnambool P: 03 5561 9462 M: 0428 428 552 E: marcus.clarke@dhhs.vic.gov.au
JULIE JOSE Senior Adviser – Barwon Area Lead	Geelong (Mon, Wed, Thur, Fri) M: 0419 535 264 E: julie.jose@dhhs.vic.gov.au
LINDI DIETZEL Senior Adviser – Brimbank Melton Area Lead	Geelong M: 0408 425 798 E: lindi.dietzel@dhhs.vic.gov.au
JULIAN HARVEY Senior Adviser – Central Highlands Area Lead	Ballarat P: 03 5333 6014 M: 0409 351 567 E: julian.harvey@dhhs.vic.gov.au
VACANT Senior Adviser – Western Metro Area Lead	Geelong/Footscray (contact Marcus Clarke)
SANDY HODGE Senior Adviser – Wimmera Area Lead	Horsham P: 03 5381 9719 M: 0439 837 014 E: sandy.hodge@dhhs.vic.gov.au
SYD FRY Senior Adviser – South West Area Lead	Geelong P: 03 5226 4712 M: 0458 332 998 E: syd.fry@dhhs.vic.gov.au