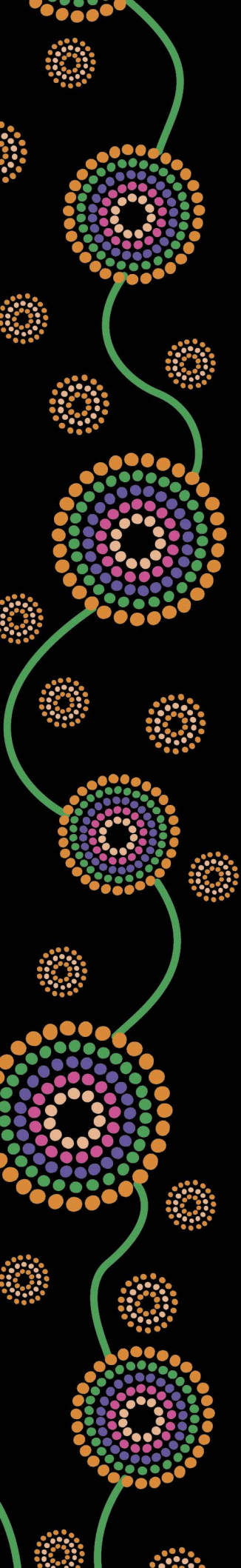




Sharing stories, finding solutions

# Annual Report 2017-18



# Chairperson and CEO Report



Marion Hansen  
CHAIRPERSON



Antoinette Braybrook  
CEO

**In the 2017–18 financial year, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria become Djirra, a name with a deep cultural meaning for our organisation. We launched this name at our Gala in March celebrating our 15th year. Djirra represents who we are and what we do, and heralds a new phase in our journey as an organisation committed to supporting Aboriginal women’s voices, wellbeing, safety, and cultural identity.**

The year has seen significant reform across the family violence sector, with Djirra continuing to advocate strongly for systemic change to improve Aboriginal women’s access to justice, safety and equality. We launched our powerful ‘Hidden Figures’ campaign and worked with Governments, communities and supporters across the sector to contribute to vital reforms. One such reform is *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong People, Strong Families*, the new Aboriginal-led Victorian agreement committing Government, Aboriginal services, and communities to work together to address violence against our people. We also played a key role highlighting the voices, needs and experiences of Aboriginal women in the development of the 4th Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement, The Orange Door support and safety hubs, new Koori-specific court supports and initiatives, and through engagement in the newly created Aboriginal Executive Council established to advance Aboriginal self-determination in Victoria.

At a national level, we continue to work with the other 13 Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLSs) around the country through the National FVPLS Forum to ensure Aboriginal women’s voices are amplified and heard. We are advocating strongly for justice and family violence targets to be enshrined as part of the ‘refreshed’ Closing the Gap Framework. We are seeking a dedicated National Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women, and we are continuing to call for a greater investment and reinstatement of our national program with a direct allocation of funding.

In every step we take at a local, state-wide and national level, we are committed to standing beside and working for Aboriginal women who trust us to share their stories to influence change.

Funding flowing from the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria is enabling Djirra to expand to a truly state-wide service and to provide new, vital services to women.

One new service is our thriving Koori Women’s Place, a unique cultural initiative which supports Aboriginal women across Metropolitan Melbourne to lead strong, independent and positive lives as they confront the ongoing trauma of family violence. The Koori Women’s Place provides a culturally safe service model, offering the right support in the right way, designed by Aboriginal women and for Aboriginal women.

Djirra’s holistic legal service, now called the Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service, continues to support Aboriginal people experiencing family violence. Over the last year we have planned the expansion of our legal services into new regions serviced by Djirra offices in Ballarat, Bendigo, Morwell and Echuca. These new offices will sit alongside our established offices in Mildura, Warrnambool and Bairnsdale, reinforcing our capacity to stand strong at a state-wide level and expand access and reach to address unmet need across the state.

As the state-wide provider of Flexible Support Packages for Aboriginal women, we provided vital and immediate support to 122 women escaping family violence over 2017–18. Our Flexible Support Packages provide life changing opportunities for women to become, and stay, free from violence, while promoting recovery and re-engagement in the community, employment and education.



We doubled the number of Sisters Day Out®, Dilly Bag and Young Luv® workshops delivered across the state, extending the reach and impact of our early intervention and prevention program.

Djirra has strengthened vital legal and non-legal wrap-around support for Aboriginal women at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (the Centre), and our Community Engagement team has delivered ‘Sisters Day In’ and Dilly Bag workshops at the Centre, significantly increasing outreach services to our women in prison. The Dilly Bag program has also reached many Aboriginal women on community corrections orders, and the number of Koori women exiting prison and accessing our Koori Women’s Place continues to increase.

At Djirra, we know what we do makes a difference. So we are planning for a time when safety, justice and equality are a “given” for all our women: a time when Aboriginal women in Victoria are not 25 times more likely to be hospitalised or killed as a result of family violence; a time when responding to family violence is only one part of our work; and a time when Djirra can embark on more projects and initiatives that build the strength, resilience and wellbeing of all our women, through promoting and drawing on women’s business, to achieve a brighter future for our communities and generations to come.

Finally, we would not be where we are today without the critical support of our funders and stakeholders including the Victorian Government, Federal Government, philanthropic bodies and pro bono partners and the energy, passion and talent of our Board, staff, volunteers and supporters.

## A Note from the Chairperson

As Chairperson, I want to recognise Antoinette Braybrook’s outstanding contribution as CEO over these past 16 years. Among her many achievements this year, Antoinette presented at 19 conferences and public speaking engagements across Victoria, Australia and internationally, powerfully presenting Djirra’s commitment to the ongoing and critical task of preventing violence against Aboriginal women and children. Her relentless work continued at a national level as the Convenor of the National FVPLS Forum and as the Co-Chair of the Change the Record Coalition. Crucially, Antoinette led Djirra’s team to attain excellent financial and operational results against the goals set by the Board.

I am privileged to have served on the Djirra Board since its inception and continue to be impressed by the expertise, leadership and commitment of my fellow Directors. We welcomed Alan Thorpe, Alva Taylor, and Gail Crozier as new Board members over the year. Each brings extensive experience working with Aboriginal communities across Victoria. I also extend my deep thanks to Board member Bernice Clark, who remains a vital contributor and leader in forging the organisation’s new path as Djirra. Valued Board members Jaynaya Williams, Bernice Clarke and Damien Goodall stepped down from the Board during 2017–18 after making enormous contributions over many years. I’d like to thank them for the wisdom, leadership, commitment and support they all brought to the Board.

Finally, to all the courageous women we work with – your strength and resilience, and that of your children, continues to drive us to find enduring solutions to end family violence.

**Marion Hansen**  
Chairperson

**Antoinette Braybrook**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Acknowledgement

Djirra, our directors, and our staff would like to thank the First Peoples and traditional owners of the lands and waterways on which we work and live and on which our clients across Victoria work and live.

We pay our respects to our Elders past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our boundaries from all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander nations.





## About Djirra

**In March 2018, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria ushered in a new era and became Djirra. The work that we commenced 16 years ago goes on but our momentum has intensified and our reach has extended across Victoria.**

Djirra remains a place of belonging; a place that belongs to all Aboriginal women. We chose to rename our organisation because, in the beginning, our title reflected a decision of government. We knew it was time to reclaim our destiny and define our purpose with a cultural name that has meaning for us.

Djirra is the Woiwurrung word for the reed used by Wurundjeri women for basket weaving. Traditionally, when women gathered to weave, important talks took place and problems were solved. Djirra symbolises Aboriginal women today, still coming together to share stories, support each other and find solutions.

As Djirra, we remain a specialist Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation with state-wide reach, committed to supporting people who experience family violence and sexual assault – predominantly women and their children. We continue to provide specialist frontline legal and non-legal services, early intervention and prevention programs, community education, and policy and advocacy work.

Addressing family violence remains the core focus of what we do, and we provide culturally safe wrap-around services and supports which are confidential and trusted by Aboriginal women.

As Djirra we are expanding our services to broaden our positive and holistic approach to Aboriginal women's wellbeing, safety and cultural identity. In July 2017 we commenced a pilot project which we have long argued and fought for – our Koori Women's Place – a culturally safe place where Aboriginal women come together to feel supported, heard and understood.

The Koori Women's Place (KWP) is a unique cultural initiative supporting Aboriginal women to lead strong, independent and positive lives as they confront the ongoing trauma of family violence. The KWP provides a culturally safe service, offering the right support in the right way, through relationship with Aboriginal women and connection to culture. The KWP is based at our Abbotsford office and is staffed by experienced Aboriginal women who have life skills, knowledge and long term connections with external support services which are utilised as we accompany women on journeys of their choice toward better futures which they determine.

The scope of our work expands as women in different locations and diverse circumstances share their stories, express their hopes and focus on finding solutions: early intervention programs delivered in communities; Djirra offices spread across the state; the Koori Women's Place; lawyers and paralegal support workers in the women's prisons; and advocates pushing for reforms and resources in ministerial offices and government forums.

All of Djirra's work is designed by and for Aboriginal women, and is deeply respectful of and connected to community.

## Highlights

**We are Djirra ... a place where culture is shared and celebrated ... and in 2017–18 we**

**Grew significantly** due to strong investment by the Victorian Government in recognition of the value of our unique and successful early intervention programs and holistic legal and non-legal support services.

**Increased our reach** with major strides towards true state-wide coverage through funding secured to open new offices in Bendigo, Ballarat, Echuca and Morwell, taking our total number of offices across Victoria from four to nine, and increasing vital access for Aboriginal women across Victoria.

**Delivered a calendar of cultural and wellbeing workshops** reaching 81 women at our newly established Koori Women's Place – a culturally safe space where Aboriginal women come together to feel supported, heard and understood. The Koori Women's Place supports Aboriginal women's safety and wellbeing, strengthening women's business and reclaiming traditional roles.

**Continued to stand strong for our sisters inside** increasing our legal outreach work at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, enabling vital legal and non-legal wrap-around support for Aboriginal women who have experienced family violence and are behind bars.

**Achieved international recognition of Djirra's work** when our CEO was listed as an inaugural international gender justice champion by the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice. Our CEO will feature on the Gender Justice Legacy Wall to be housed in the new International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands.

**Influenced systemic change** through nine submissions to Victorian policy and law reform enquiries and our support for the National FVPLS Forum to produce seven submissions of national importance for Aboriginal women, families and communities.

**Amplified the voices of Aboriginal women** through engaging regularly with over 22 separate forums and advisory groups, ensuring the needs of Aboriginal women are front of mind at the decision-making table.

**Hosted the Secretariat for the Change the Record Coalition**, which drives national advocacy to change the record on the disproportionate imprisonment rates, and rates of violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**Formed partnerships** with leading community sector services, notably PANDA, Jesuit Social Services and Oxfam, to strengthen our response capability to women's issues.



# Djirra Snapshot



We've delivered

**663**

legal services to **442** clients

“Through Young Luv, I learnt that being in an unhealthy relationship is not good for your health.”

Our Koori Women's Place has delivered cultural and wellbeing workshops, from bush medicine to basket weaving and jewellery making to a total of

**81**  
women

“Sisters Day Out for me is the importance of sisters looking after themselves. Knowing who to call for assistance.”

“The Dilly Bag program is a must for all Aboriginal women of all ages. I feel stronger being able to share my story in a safe place with other Aboriginal women who know and understand.”



We also delivered **224** non-legal support services to Aboriginal women escaping family violence, supporting our women's safety while prompting recovery and re-engagement in community.

Our Sisters Day Out workshop participant numbers increased by

**52%**

We have now reached over

**10,000**

women through our Sisters Day Out program

Our CEO and staff presented at



conferences, and public speaking engagements across Victoria and Australia – providing a strong voice on the prevention of violence against Aboriginal women and children.



Our Early Intervention and Prevention programs reached

**1794**

women in 2017–18

**Sisters Day Out 1364**

**Dilly Bag 136**

**Young Luv 197**

**Sisters Inside 97**



We provided immediate financial support to **122** Aboriginal women escaping family violence through our Flexible Support Packages.





# Djirra Client Story

**The case study below provides an insight into the lived experience of the women we work with. It demonstrates the holistic services offered by Djirra. All identifying details have been removed to ensure privacy.**

Lucy, a 26 year old mother with three children, first made contact with Djirra's legal team from prison, where she was serving a six month sentence for assault. Lucy's life has been one of constant violence, instability and crisis; she was raped as a teenager and lived with a father who was violent and abusive towards her mother and siblings. Lucy left home at sixteen and thereafter became involved in relationships with men who perpetrated family violence against her and her children.

Lucy kept very much to herself while in prison. She reluctantly decided to attend Djirra's 'Sisters Day In' because of the persuasive efforts of one of the prison's Aboriginal Liaison Officers who has seen first-hand the positive effect 'Sisters Day In' has on many women. Lucy was anxious and fidgety upon arrival but settled quickly when she was warmly welcomed by one of the Aboriginal women who knew her mother. She was introduced to others, decided to have her hair cut and a shoulder massage and then joined the craft table where others were making toys for their children.

When the presentation on family violence was delivered, Lucy seemed totally absorbed, and very soon after asked to speak privately with a Djirra lawyer who was in attendance. Lucy disclosed that she had experienced family violence and this had led to her losing care of her child. Her older children were with her mum but she was very worried about the welfare of her two year old who was in out-of-home care. Lucy was having difficulty contacting her private child protection lawyer whose details she provided. The Djirra lawyer completed the standard intake process, took instructions from Lucy and provided some initial advice. Upon her return to the office, Djirra's lawyer made contact with Lucy's lawyer and the necessary documentation was finalised for Lucy to be transferred, as a client, to Djirra's legal service. Djirra lawyers and paralegal support workers maintained contact with Lucy during their twice weekly prison visits.

On the day of her release Lucy made a beeline for Djirra's Koori Women's Place (KWP) in Abbotsford. She had already arranged to meet her lawyer and paralegal support worker there, and during the interview they opened a Flexible Support Package for Lucy to deal with her immediate needs, which included a phone, food vouchers and a Myki card. Lucy spent an hour or so in the KWP chatting to other Aboriginal women who were attending a textiles and screen printing workshop. She left early in the afternoon with some new clothes selected from the KWP's 'Dressing Room' along with toys for her children, who she was planning to visit that afternoon.

Now many months later, and with the assistance of her paralegal support worker and the Flexible Support Package, Lucy has her own rental home, quite close to her mum's place, where she lives with two of her children. She is a regular at KWP workshops, and the efforts of her Djirra legal team are still focussed on representing her in her child protection matter and reunification with her youngest child, now three and a half.

# Financial Snapshot

Djirra achieved an operating surplus in the 2017–2018 financial year and remains in a strong financial position.

A full copy of the financial report and auditor's report is available on our website [www.djirra.org.au](http://www.djirra.org.au) – search 'Annual Report'.

## Statement of Financial Performance for the Year Ended 30 June 2018

	2018	2017
Operating Revenue	6,698,881	4,589,807
Operating Surplus	57,094	66,697
Accumulated surplus at beginning of the financial year	2,411,913	2,345,216
<b>Accumulated surplus at end of financial year</b>	<b>2,469,007</b>	<b>2,411,913</b>

## Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2018

Current assets	2018	2017
Cash Assets	3,481,996	2,645,710
Receivables	22,583	132,761
Other	100,614	38,417
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>3,605,193</b>	<b>2,816,888</b>

Non-Current Assets	2018	2017
Plant, Property and Equipment	2,201,580	2,126,655
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>	<b>2,201,580</b>	<b>2,126,655</b>

<b>Total assets</b>	<b>5,806,773</b>	<b>4,943,543</b>
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Current Liabilities	2018	2017
Payables	376,525	215,569
Financial liabilities	46,499	23,526
Current tax liabilities	161,796	161,405
Provisions	534,753	355,035
Other	2,218,193	1,776,095
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>3,337,766</b>	<b>2,531,630</b>

<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>3,337,766</b>	<b>2,531,630</b>
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<b>Net assets</b>	<b>2,469,007</b>	<b>2,411,913</b>
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<b>Retained surplus</b>	<b>2,469,007</b>	<b>2,411,913</b>
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## Board of Directors

### Chairperson

Marion Hansen

### Deputy Chairperson

Alan Thorpe (from 21/11/2017)

### Directors

Darlene Thomas

Jaynaya Williams (until 28/7/2017)

Damien Goodall (until 21/11/2017)

Bernice Clarke (until 1/2/2018)

Alva Taylor (from 30/5/2018)

Gail Crozier (from 20/6/2018)



## Staff

### 2017–18 Staff

Eulia Armatolos, Sophronia Armatolos, Kim Avers, Anne Bambrook, Maggie Barford, Antoinette Braybrook, Wanda Bargo, Linnea Burdon-Smith, Shelley Burns-Williamson, Trish Carberry, Emily Castle, Kate Chapman, Janelle Cooper, Shanel Cubillo, Renee Cumming, Wendy Dodd, Debbie Edsall, Tahnee Edwards, Simone Elias, Kelly Faldon, Dale Gerner, Patricia Halls, Liza Harwood, Teagan Heywood, Kehndra Hooker, Chloe Kenny, Rashmi Kumar, Teresa Kyprianou, Natalie Larsek, Anne Lenton, Nicole Mazga (Dotti), Adeline McDonald, Grace Naug, Alana O'Neill, Meriki Onus, Margaret Portelli, Jacinta Rose, Megan Ross, Brandi Salmon, Ada Sculthorp, Martika Shakoor, Barbara Shalit, Nidhi Sirohi, Fleur Smith, Kate Stowell, Nick Toonen, Laura Vines, Charlotte Watson, Claire Weigall, Casey Williams, Echo Ping Yu



### 2017–18 Former Staff

Onor Ali, Melanie Ashman, Rebekah Ashman, Thelma Austin, Kaitlin Boyd, Jenna Davey-Burns, Fesili Falea'i, Amy Greer, Natasha Hamilton, Tanya McDonald, Ruth Milne, Caitlin Murphy, Geerthhana Narendren, Sam Nixon, Codie Schaefer, Summen Sharma, Kirsten Sullivan, Jaynaya Williams



### Volunteers

Pat Brown, Mary Smith and Alice Dowling

## Supporters

We express our appreciation to the following:

### Federal Government Funders

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

### Victorian State Government Funders

Department of Justice and Regulation

Department of Health and Human Services

Victoria Legal Aid

Department of Premier and Cabinet

### Pro Bono Supporters

Lander & Rogers Lawyers

Herbert Smith Freehills

### Gala Event Partners and Supporters

Victoria Legal Aid

Lander & Rogers Lawyers

IT for Business

Department of Justice

Koori Justice Unit

Department of Health and Human Services

City of Melbourne

Horner Recruitment

MRC Foundation

Relationships Australia (Victoria)

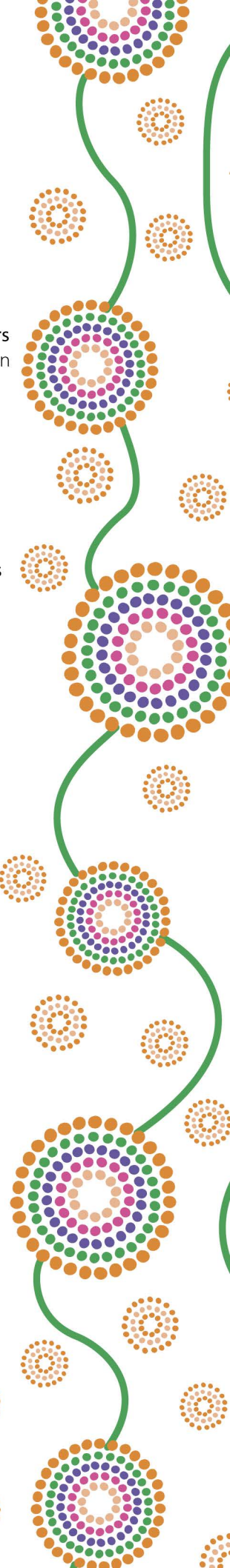
Ernst & Young

City of Darebin

City of Yarra

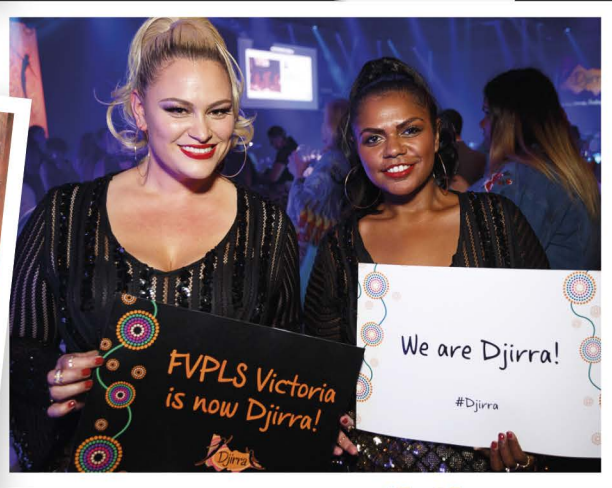
Telstra

**Together we stand up, speak out and act to stop violence against Aboriginal women**





# We are Djirra



Sharing stories, finding solutions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria operates as Djirra

ABN 47 125 370 108