



Sharing stories, finding solutions

Annual Report 2018-19



Chairperson and CEO Report



Marion Hansen
CHAIRPERSON



Antoinette Braybrook
CEO

Our first full year operating as Djirra has been exciting and productive. In developing our Strategic Plan 2019–2022 we reinforced our focus on a central strategic goal – to see all Aboriginal women strong, safe, independent, healthy and positive in their lives, culture and communities. The strategy ensures projects and actions will be implemented in a staged manner over the life of the plan. Importantly, the plan details the core principles that drive our work, our way, the “Djirra Way”.

In May we hosted a formal gathering to launch the Djirra Keepers. This group of highly respected Aboriginal women has supported Djirra’s work over the years. Acknowledging, validating and reinforcing Aboriginal women’s business based on cultural principles is Djirra’s way and it is at the heart of the Djirra Keepers.

Djirra now has seven offices across regional Victoria expanding our reach and delivering more specialist, culturally safe support services to Aboriginal women in their communities. We officially opened offices in Bendigo and Morwell in April, with strong attendance of community members and local partners at both openings, testament to the effective ground-work undertaken by the new regional teams. Our new lawyers and paralegal support workers in Ballarat and Echuca are operating from short-term accommodation until permanent offices become available.

Djirra is committed to strengthening the voice of Aboriginal women, advocating for change, influencing governments and challenging injustice. During 2018 and 2019, Victorian and Federal elections meant Djirra’s leadership was involved in extensive and intense activity; meetings were held with newly appointed Ministers and their advisors, as well as senior Department bureaucrats.

Djirra continued as an active member of the National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services (FVPLS) Forum. The National FVPLS Forum was united in calls for increased funding from the Federal Government, and engaged strongly in the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peaks as a part of the COAG Closing the Gap Refresh partnership.

Djirra further expanded its early intervention programs and support services. Our Community Engagement team delivered a record 57 Sisters Day Out®, Dilly Bag and Young Luv® workshops across Victoria with 1,811 Aboriginal women attending. Their participation enabled women to draw strength and support from each other while accessing Djirra specialist services.

Our Koori Women’s Place (KWP) offers practical support, facilitates direct and immediate contact with Djirra’s legal team, and provides companionship and cultural connection for women. A significant achievement was seeing the two-year KWP pilot transitioned to ongoing funding.

Djirra’s Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service (AFVLS) continued to strengthen its capacity and reach, as well as its engagement with mainstream providers who demonstrate understanding that their services must be culturally aware in order to appropriately support Aboriginal women. AFVLS entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) to ensure Aboriginal women presenting in Children’s Court Duty Lists throughout Victoria are offered a referral to Djirra’s culturally safe legal assistance.

Djirra continued to consolidate our work with women at risk of imprisonment, in prison, and after their release. The opening of our Bendigo office has strengthened our relationship with Tarrengower Prison for the benefit of Aboriginal women, including post-release support. This additional support sits alongside our Sisters Day In and Dilly Bag workshops, and weekly legal outreach services at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

The state-wide delivery of Flexible Support Packages continued to make a real difference to the lives of women experiencing family violence, providing immediate and practical support to 164 women over 2018–2019.

After years of talking and sharing, Djirra and Dardi Munwurro have formally agreed to a partnership themed as 'Women's Business, Men's Business, Everyone's Business, Our Cultural Way'. Initial planning has commenced to hold a national gathering in Melbourne in November 2020 at which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities will share, discuss and promote community led and implemented solutions.

In June, CEO Antoinette Braybrook and Advocacy Officer Meriki Onus participated in the United Nations Human Rights Council 41st session in Geneva. Their formal interventions called for urgent action on a broad range of issues including the rising incarceration rates of Aboriginal women, systemic removal of children from family and culture, and the abolition of ParentsNext.

Finally, our thanks go to our funders and partners whose renewed support is critical for Djirra's ongoing work. This includes the Governments of Victoria and the Commonwealth, the National FVPLS Forum, Lander & Rogers Lawyers and our many donors. We also sincerely thank our Board, staff, volunteers and our many other supporters for their enthusiasm and dedication.

A Note from the Chairperson

As Djirra's Chairperson, I congratulate all our staff for their remarkable work through another outstanding year. Our CEO was awarded a well-deserved Future Justice Prize 2018, which recognises her commitment to initiate and drive projects to advance future justice. Concluding an amazing financial year, Antoinette and Meriki were brilliant ambassadors for our women at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

I also acknowledge the outstanding contributions of my fellow Directors. It is a position that requires commitment and leadership and all bring a wealth of knowledge and experience that is highly valued. Thanks to Alan Thorpe, Darlene Thomas and Gail Crozier for their ongoing support and contribution. I am also delighted to welcome back to the Board Bernice Clarke, who has always been a vital contributor to Djirra. Alva Taylor stepped down from her position on the Board this year, and I thank Alva for her contribution and wish her all the best.

I sincerely thank all the strong women we work with and for. Together we can and will stop violence against Aboriginal women.

Marion Hansen
Chairperson

Antoinette Braybrook
Chief Executive Officer

Acknowledgement

Djirra, our Directors, and our staff acknowledge the First Peoples and traditional custodians of the lands and waterways upon which we, and those connected to Djirra, work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present from the nations of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across this land.

About Djirra

Djirra is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO). We work towards a future where all Aboriginal women are strong, safe, independent, healthy and positive in their lives, culture and communities.

We are committed to ending family violence against Aboriginal women and their children through holistic and culturally safe specialist services, prevention programs and advocacy for change. Our services have state-wide reach. As an ACCO, the governance, leadership and key staff in our organisation are Aboriginal people, in our case mainly women.

Djirra's seventeen years of experience working at the frontline of family violence has given us a wealth of knowledge and cultural strength, provided in their own words by Aboriginal women expressing their own lived experiences. Djirra has embraced and reinforced self-determination as the foundation of everything we do: it is Our Cultural Way.

Djirra's Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service (AFVLS) provides holistic and culturally safe legal and non-legal support to Aboriginal people, particularly women, who experience family violence or sexual assault. Each client is assisted by a lawyer and support worker who together address the multitude of interrelated legal and non-legal issues our women face. Legal advice and representation is provided on intervention orders, child protection, family law and victims of crime assistance.

Our community education and engagement programs provide support for women through personal support and empowerment programs.

Djirra's Koori Women's Place (KWP) provides wrap-around support and works to build trusting relationships with Aboriginal women through our shared connection to culture. Aboriginal women can be referred for an appointment, walk in to our space or book into a workshop. Mainstream and Aboriginal service providers are available for appointments within the safety of the KWP.

Djirra also offers a range of workshops in Melbourne and regional areas:

- Sisters Day Out® is a wellbeing workshop where Aboriginal women support each other, get information about legal rights and options, and engage with mainstream and Aboriginal support services.
- Dilly Bag is a four-day residential program that draws on cultural principles to promote healing.
- Young Luv® is designed for young Aboriginal women aged 13 to 18 and focuses on promoting healthy relationships.

Our policy and advocacy work led by Aboriginal women in Djirra aims to achieve real systemic change through active engagement with government systems and decision makers, and more broadly across society.

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

Highlights

2018–19 has been a year of expansion and consolidation.

This year we developed and promoted our Strategic Plan committing to dedicate our effort and resources our way to achieve our goal that all Aboriginal women are strong, safe, independent, healthy and positive in their lives, culture and communities.

Provided a voice for Aboriginal women at the United Nations with Antoinette Braybrook and Meriki Onus' interventions at the Human Rights Council (HRC) 41st session and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP).

Launched the inaugural Djirra Keepers,

a gathering of powerful, influential and highly respected Aboriginal women who have committed their lives to promoting and advocating in their own way for Aboriginal women. The Djirra Keepers have all played a role in Djirra's journey and will be closely involved in our future.

Secured ongoing funding for our Koori Women's Place which has significantly increased the scope of its holistic and culturally safe services and support for our women and their children. KWP now offers an extensive calendar of cultural, wellbeing and employment workshops.

Formalised our partnership with Dardi Munwurro and committed to organise jointly a national gathering 'Women's Business, Men's Business, Everyone's Business, Our Cultural Way' to be held in Melbourne in November 2020.

Entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Victoria Legal Aid to ensure Aboriginal women who have experienced family violence presenting in Children's Court Duty Lists throughout Victoria are offered a referral to Djirra.

Secured partnerships with St Kilda Mums, the Salvation Army, Share the Dignity, Remedy Drinks and Safe Steps to deliver a Christmas Giving Tree event for our women.

Reclaimed our data sovereignty with in depth monitoring, evaluation and reporting of our programs to tell our story our own way.



Djirra Snapshot



We delivered

2,410

legal and non-legal support services to Aboriginal women escaping family violence, supporting our women's safety while prompting recovery and re-engagement in community to a total of **611** clients.

“Djirra saved my life and changed it for the better and forever.”

Sisters Day In participant

Our Koori Women's Place delivered

45

art, cultural, wellbeing and employment workshops, and welcomed or provided assistance to **239** women.



Djirra Keepers, May 2019

“The fact Djirra is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation makes a big difference, there's a greater understanding because programs are designed and delivered by Aboriginal women.”

KWP workshop participant

“I moved away from my country many years ago and being able to spend four days with women from my country at Dilly Bag was very healing for me.”

Dilly Bag participant

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.

We delivered a record number of

57

early intervention and prevention workshops in 2018–19.



Our early intervention and prevention programs reached

1,811

women in 2018–19.

Sisters Day Out 1,355

Dilly Bag 153

Young Luv 213

Sisters Day In 90



We provided immediate financial support to **164** Aboriginal women escaping family violence through our Flexible Support Packages.



Djirra Client Story

The client story below provides insight into the experiences of many women who approach Djirra seeking assistance at a critical time. The story illustrates how Djirra's programs work collaboratively to provide legal and non-legal support. All identifying details have been removed.

Laneva walked through the door of the Koori Women's Place in crisis. She was dressed in light clothing and shaking with cold. Although she had ended a violent relationship some months prior, Laneva's former partner continued to stalk and harass her. Two hours before making contact with the Koori Women's Place, her former partner had aggressively confronted Laneva on the street, stealing all her belongings.

Laneva had limited support, her children were being cared for by family interstate and she had been moving around staying at different friends' houses since the separation.

For many reasons, Laneva did not report the assault to police. She sought direct support from Djirra, a service she had heard about from friends. Overwhelmed by anxiety, Laneva felt the only "genuine" support available to her was the Koori Women's Place. Concentrating on her immediate circumstances our Senior Support Workers focussed on the things that would calm Laneva and assist her to think clearly and talk about what she wanted to do; warm food, a padded jacket and a safe place to recuperate were provided.

With the encouragement of Senior Support Workers, Laneva met with staff from Djirra's legal team at the Koori Women's Place to receive advice about her options. Actions were initiated immediately to assist her to obtain a family violence intervention order. After her legal consultation, the Koori Women's Place team assisted Laneva to make calls to Centrelink, her bank and a general practitioner as her phone, bank cards and medication had been lost with her stolen property. The Senior Support Workers also connected Laneva with a trauma counselling service, enabling her to receive the mental health support she requested.

Laneva continues to face challenges in securing housing and child protection has become involved due to concerns about safety and stability for her children. However, she has maintained engagement with the Koori Women's Place where she attends appointments with her lawyer. Laneva's lawyer continues to assist with her intervention order matter while also providing representation in her child protection proceedings. A Paralegal Support Worker has supported Laneva at her court hearings and when making a statement to police about her assaults.

A Paralegal Support Worker also opened a Flexible Support Package to fund some short-term accommodation and material aid where crisis services were unable to assist. Laneva is now on a housing wait list and funds from the Flexible Support Package will assist with some initial rent and establishing the home.

Laneva usually stops for a chat with Senior Support Workers when she visits her lawyer, and is considering joining one of our workshops or attending a Sisters Day Out. Laneva is taking it one day at a time, meanwhile the Koori Women's Place continues to provide practical support, safety and cultural connection.

Financial Snapshot

Djirra achieved an operating surplus in the 2018–2019 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.

Statement of Financial Performance for the Year Ended 30 June 2019

	2019 \$	2018 \$
Operating Revenue	8,828,718	6,698,881
Operating Surplus	108,341	57,094
Accumulated surplus at beginning of the financial year	2,469,007	2,345,216
Accumulated surplus at end of financial year	2,577,348	2,469,007

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2019

	2019 \$	2018 \$
Current assets		
Cash Assets	4,867,005	3,481,996
Receivables	929,118	22,583
Other	80,881	100,614
Total Current Assets	5,877,004	3,605,193

Non-Current Assets

Plant, Property and Equipment	2,165,142	2,201,580
Total Non-Current Assets	2,165,142	2,201,580

Total assets	8,042,146	5,806,773
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Current Liabilities

Payables	489,711	376,525
Financial liabilities	52,639	46,499
Current tax liabilities	380,884	161,796
Provisions	622,849	534,753
Other	3,918,715	2,218,193
Total current liabilities	5,464,798	3,337,766

Total liabilities	5,464,798	3,337,766
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Net assets	2,577,348	2,469,007
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Retained surplus	2,577,348	2,469,007
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Djirra team, April 2019



Board of Directors

Chairperson

Marion Hansen

Deputy Chairperson

Alan Thorpe

Directors

Darlene Thomas

Gail Crozier

Bernice Clarke – from 20/11/2018

Alva Taylor – until 20/11/2018

Nidhi Sirohi, Ruth Storer, Adeline Thomas, Nick Toonen, Charlotte Watson, Claire Weigall, Casey Williams, Jaynaya Williams, Echo Ping Yu

2018–19 Former Staff

Sophonra Armatolos, Marguerite Bourke, Elizabeth Brown, Linnea Burdon-Smith, Kasey Cassady, Renee Cumming, Lauren Galvin, Rebecca Grouios, Patricia Halls, Liza Harwood, Tracey Hawkins, Teagan Heywood, Rashmi Kumar, Georgia MacGuire, Jane McNally, Kemu Qoroya, Brandi Salmon, Jessica Saunders, Jenny Sharp, Maylene Slater-Burns, Abby Smith, Fleur Smith, Kate Stowell, Courtney Ugle, Laura Vines, Lisa Williams

Staff

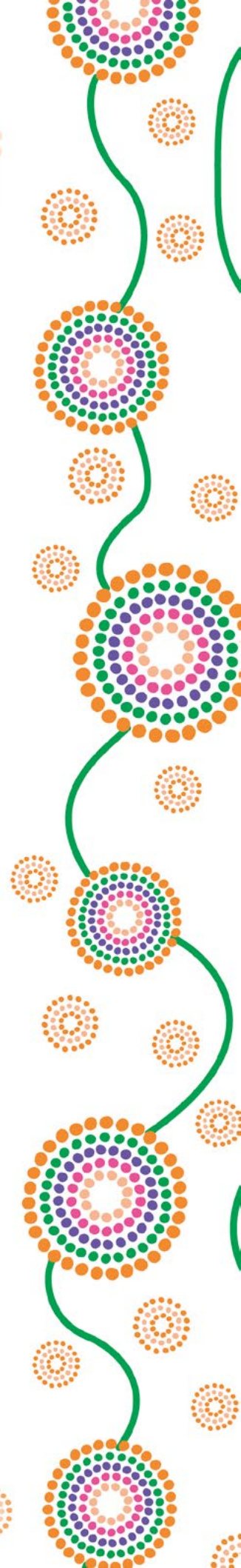
2018–19 Staff

Brad Aitken, Eulia Armatolos, Sissy-Amelia Austin, Kim Avers, Anne Bambrook, Carly Baque, Maggie Barford, Wanda Bargo, Antoinette Braybrook, Amanda Bresnan, Shelley Burns-Williamson, Trish Carberry, Em Castle, Kate Chapman, Sandy Clark, Vicki Clark, Janelle Cooper, Shanel Cubillo, Lucy Daniel, Melissa DeSantis, Wendy Dodd, Alice Dowling, Deb Edsall, Tahnee Edwards, Calinda Egan, Simone Elias, Kelly Faldon, Tanayah Fernando, Marlena Flynn, Dale Gerner, Tanaya Harradine, Sheadeen Hearn, Kehndra Hooker, Lasi Kailea, Rebecca Kelly, Chloe Kenny, Teresa Kypranou, Natalie Larsek, Anne Lenton, Kate Lightfoot, Nicole (Dotti) Mazga, Victoria Murray, Alana O'Neill, Meriki Onus, Georgina Panetta, Terri Pollard, Kathryn Robb, Jacinta Rose, Megan Ross, Carole Sarasa, Ada Sculthorp, Martika Shakoore, Barbara Shalit,

Volunteers

Pat Brown and Mary Smith

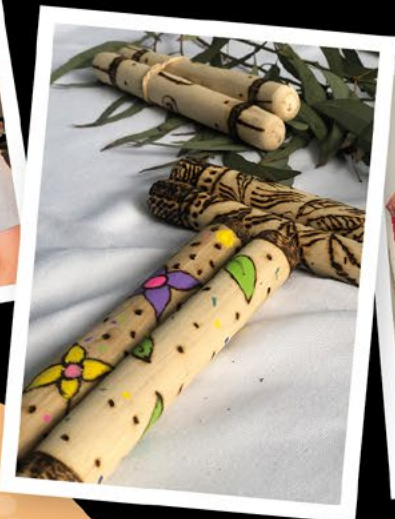
“Together we stand up, speak out and act to stop violence against Aboriginal women”



We are Djirra



Mildura



Echuca

Bendigo

Ballarat

Melbourne

Bairnsdale

Warrnambool

Morwell



Sharing stories, finding solutions

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