



Sharing stories, finding solutions

# Annual Report 2021-22

# CEO Report



Antoinette Braybrook  
CEO

## Acknowledgement

Djirra acknowledges and respects the Traditional Custodians on whose lands we are fortunate to live and work, and we pay our respects to all Elders past and present.

The 2021–2022 financial year was characterised by consolidation, growth, and innovation. The challenges of the year brought out the best in our teams, our service delivery, the connections we build and maintain with our women, the strength of our cultural and community bonds, and our fearless leadership advocating for the rights of Aboriginal women. Djirra's achievements this year provide a valuable platform for the next phase of strategic development and the further realisation of our vision, as we move into our third decade of service to Aboriginal women and community.

This year Djirra has achieved exceptionally strong outcomes in the accreditation of our programs and systems. Self determination is at the foundation of everything Djirra does including the way we plan, design, and evaluate our work. We have continued strengthening our foundations after years of piecemeal funding and have commenced important planning for our next Strategic Plan (2023–2028). This work assists us to tell our own story, define our successes and measure our impact. It enables Djirra to build an Aboriginal led evidence base and describe to funders what works best and what outcomes matter the most to us – our choice, our voice.

Djirra remains an active voice within our peak body, the National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services Forum. My role as Co-Chair of Change the Record also ensures that Djirra continues to remain connected to and influence the national policy agenda. We sustained and sharpened our advocacy on a growing list of critical State and Federal issues, including raising the age of criminal responsibility, deaths in custody and the criminalisation of Aboriginal people, punitive child protection laws and policies, technology-facilitated abuse and the disproportionate impacts of gender-based violence on Aboriginal women and children.

Djirra continues our strong presence on key state forums and committees including the Aboriginal Justice Forum, Dhelk Dja and Closing the Gap Partnership Forum. Djirra attended the National Women's Safety Summit, where – in unison with other First Nations' voices – we called for a self-determined, standalone National Safety Plan by and for Aboriginal women. This sustained advocacy led to an election commitment from Labor for a standalone Plan. Djirra stands ready to work with government on the next phase of our journey to justice and a self-determined future for our women.

Over the course of this year, Djirra continued to streamline service delivery to Aboriginal people, predominantly women, across Victoria. Djirra has a 'no wrong door' approach. Regardless of the point of entry – phone, email, walk-in, at a workshop, or in community – Aboriginal women are supported, in a warm and authentic way, to connect with the right person, in the right service, and at the right time.

As well as the growing client demand, Djirra's Legal Services team has responded to the increasing complexity and seriousness of presenting legal matters, particularly young people with significant mental health and behavioral issues. Our Individual Support Services program has expanded considerably in staff numbers and geographic reach, with a growing reputation and footprint in the family violence service system.

In this financial year, as in others, Djirra seized both large and small opportunities: sometimes for organisation-wide initiatives and, at other times, bespoke projects for women benefitting from tailored responses. Before Christmas 2021, the Community Engagement team overcame a multitude of barriers stopping women in prison from participating in practical workshops to create bush bouquets, personally designed with a message destined for a family member. Through the determination of the Djirra team, these small gifts found their way to every part of Victoria before 25 December with an "I love you" message from a loved one in prison.

Djirra's exponential growth has been a catalyst for review and recalibration of our organisational structure and programming, consistent with our evolving vision. The Board has approved a new executive-level structure for Djirra with a Deputy CEO for day-to-day management, enhanced by a stronger executive team and a Strategic Advisor to support my expanded role as CEO. It is a carefully considered structure for future growth and provides opportunities for expansion and succession.

I thank all staff for their effort, energy and commitment this year, and the Board for their ongoing dedication and support. I look forward to a future with bigger and better opportunities as we celebrate our 20th anniversary of standing firm against family violence in the coming financial year.

## A note from the Chairperson

Djirra's Board has once again witnessed a year of intense work. Djirra has confronted challenges and forged new strategic relationships, redesigned our organisational structure, completed preparations for a new strategic plan, increased our client numbers, responded quickly to emerging needs, and much more; and all of this has been 'business as usual' for our resolute and talented team. Their work never ceases to amaze and inspire us.

This year in particular, Djirra has strengthened our approach to managing risks by developing a detailed risk management framework and implementing a new system to manage risks with quarterly reviews and reports. The Board has noted the wide-ranging approach to managing workplace health and safety, with an extensive range of specific procedures in place to identify and address workplace health and safety issues.

The Board has also been pleased to note the number of senior roles currently undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Djirra has maintained, from its inception, that the employment of Aboriginal women in frontline, executive and board positions would ensure that our commitment to self determination is realised – and so it is.

Antoinette Braybrook, as Chief Executive Officer, has maintained her dedication and leadership. In 2022, Antoinette gained recognition for her work, being a recipient of the Victorian award through the Australian Awards for Excellence in Women's Leadership.

The Board acknowledges with appreciation the hard work and commitment of all Djirra management and staff which is reflected in this year's growth and achievements. As Chair, I thank all Board and Committee members for their vision, support and contribution to Djirra.

**Marion Hansen**  
Chairperson

**Antoinette Braybrook**  
Chief Executive Officer



Marion Hansen  
Chairperson



# About Djirra

**Djirra is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation with 20 years' experience accompanying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and their children, on their individual journeys. We find solutions through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women sharing their stories, journeys, and experiences. Djirra celebrates women's strength and resilience. We are committed to a future without family violence.**

Djirra offers services and supports to

- people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who have experienced, or are at risk of, family violence.

We deliver holistic, culturally safe, specialist family violence services and programs, including

- cultural, wellbeing and personal development workshops and practical support through our Koori Women's Place and signature early intervention and prevention programs Sisters Day Out™, Young Luv™ and Dilly Bag
- support and case management services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children
- legal assistance with intervention orders, child protection, family law and victims of crime matters for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing or at risk of family violence
- workshops, support and legal assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in prison.

Djirra amplifies the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. We advocate for system-wide change to improve access to justice, eliminate systemic violence, and strengthen women's resilience. We campaign to change racist attitudes, behaviours, and actions. We stand firm with women in their decisions about their own lives.

Self-determination is the foundation of everything we do. Our Board, leadership, and many of our key staff are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our services have state-wide reach, touching every part of Victoria to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Our services operate out of our Melbourne head office and a growing network of regional locations, aiming to be accessible for all.

Djirra is funded through a range of sources, including state and federal governments, philanthropists and donors, and fundraising.

We are an active member of the National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services Forum, the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are experiencing or at risk of family violence.

# Highlights

**Djirra has continued to adapt to new challenges and take innovative approaches to meet increasing demand.**

This year we:

- **expanded our geographic reach**, with women from 158 Victorian postcodes accessing our online workshops (124 workshops)
- **linked Aboriginal women in prison to our online workshops** enabling connection to culture and community
- **exceeded our targets for client numbers** in our Legal Service
- **moved to new digital platforms**, including the launch of a successful *Young Luv Instagram Campaign*, targeted to younger audiences
- **became part of the new Closing the Gap Partnership Forum**, which is the Victorian Government's partner for decision making on Closing the Gap implementation
- **continued to grow Sista Yarns**, a weekly online space for Aboriginal women to come together and share stories, with Sista Yarns reaching its three-year birthday
- **significantly expanded our social media reach** to over 1,300,000 views
- **sharpened our focus on inclusion and diversity** with the launch of a new LGBTIQ+ inclusion project
- **were advised that Djirra's 'Yarnin about Cultural Safety' workshop is approved** for credits towards lawyers' Continuing Professional Development requirements
- **successfully undertook independent audits**, meeting all standards set under the National Accreditation Scheme for community legal centres, as well as Human Services Standards and QIC governance and management standards
- **responded positively to requests from universities** to offer highly sought after placements in Djirra's Legal Service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- **supported continued growth across all programs** by increasing our staffing to over 100 positions



## Legal Services



We delivered  
**1338**  
legal and related  
support services to



**681**  
Aboriginal & Torres  
Strait Islander people

who have or are experiencing family violence, supporting their safety while promoting recovery and re-engagement in the community.



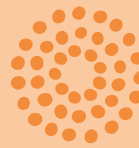
This included  
**37**  
Aboriginal & Torres  
Strait Islander women

in prison and post release through our outreach program.

## Koori Women's Place

**124** cultural and wellbeing workshops

**437** women supported



**894**  
visits to the service

*"I feel honoured and privileged to be a part of the group. I have always known my family history but have been brought up in a culture of denial. After those couple of days I feel free to be myself and to embrace all of me."*

(Dilly Bag participant)

## Early Intervention Programs



**8**  
Young Luv  
workshops

with young Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander women (aged 12-17 years old)



**105**  
women attended 11  
Dilly Bag workshops



**39**  
women attended 4  
early intervention  
and cultural programs

run in Tarrenhower Prison and Dame Phyllis Frost Centre

## Reach and Visibility



**11**  
submissions



**70**  
media releases  
and interviews

Social media reach to over  
**1,300,000** accounts

continuing Djirra's work to amplify the voice and visibility of Aboriginal women.

## Case Management



supported  
**390**  
people

with **320 support periods** opened (meaning clients were provided with a significant period of support)

*"Something that stands out to me from Djirra was at Christmas time I received a big food parcel which as a single Mum who had never asked for help before was so lovely to receive which took a lot of stress off me financially. It actually brought tears to my eyes."*

(Djirra client)



# Djirra Clients' Stories

**The client story below provides an insight into the experiences of many women who approached Djirra seeking legal assistance last year. All identifying details have been removed.**

*Bea is a survivor of family violence perpetrated by her ex-partner Steve, including physical and emotional violence that her children often witnessed. Bea fought very hard to protect her children but needed to find secure and safe housing for the family. Bea made the difficult decision to place her children in the care of their grandparents while she looked for housing. During this time, the Department of Fairness, Families and Housing (DFFH) removed the children from their grandparents' care and placed them into three separate placements across Victoria.*

*Initially, Bea was represented at court by a private firm, however, she did not feel as though her lawyer was listening to her. A friend recommended to Bea that she reach out to Djirra and upon engaging Djirra, Bea commented that she felt disillusioned with the whole system. Bea's previous firm had a different lawyer appear for her at court on each occasion, meaning that Bea had to keep re-telling her story. She felt like she wasn't making any progress.*

*Djirra worked alongside Bea to support her in addressing the DFFH's concerns. Bea's paralegal support worker at Djirra regularly checked in with her to determine what supports she needed, and to assist her in engaging with these services. The paralegal support worker also attended meetings and court with Bea.*

*One of Bea's children, Matt, was returned to Bea's care in July 2022. Matt has been thriving since returning to the care of his mum and is having regular and increasing contact with his siblings. Djirra continues to support Bea and hopes that all her children will be returned and together again at Christmas, ready for the new school year.*

**Djirra offers culturally safe, holistic and wrap around non legal services and programs. The case study below illustrates the way in which our Individual Support Services program and Koori Women's Place work together and alongside Aboriginal women to make positive changes in their lives.**

*Kayla is a young Aboriginal woman who had been experiencing family violence. This led to drug and alcohol dependency and a period of time spent in prison. Kayla was also experiencing homelessness and in her words was 'traumatised, completely out of touch with culture and in a really rough spot'. Kayla was referred into Djirra's Individual Support Services (ISS) by a family violence crisis service and was quickly connected to an Aboriginal case manager and an alcohol and drug practitioner.*

*Kayla accessed immediate practical support (clothes, toiletries and food parcels), was supported to secure long term housing, enrolled in an intensive rehabilitation program and was linked into counselling sessions.*

*Outside of Djirra, Kayla was navigating other mainstream services and ISS played a key role in coordinating support and providing advice to ensure that Kayla received a culturally safe and coordinated service.*

*The ISS team recognised Kayla's desire to connect with culture and to connect with Aboriginal women in a culturally safe space. Kayla was linked into the Koori Women's Place (KWP) and became a regular participant in KWP workshops, often attending weekly cultural and wellbeing workshops. Recognising the value of the workshops, whether a workshop on dealing with trauma, Indigenous healing, or making art, ISS advocated for Kayla to attend KWP workshops as part of her rehabilitation program.*

*Kayla has started a positive new chapter in her life and she describes how "connecting to culture has been so important for my recovery" and how coming into Djirra has given her purpose and turned her life around.*

# Financial Snapshot

Djirra achieved an operating surplus in the 2021–22 financial year and continues to grow, with extended funding agreements in place going forward.

A full copy of the financial report and auditor's report is available on request.

## Statement of Financial Performance for the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Operating Revenue	13,097,952	12,963,624
Operating Surplus	1,291,550	2,861,776
Accumulated surplus at beginning of the financial year	6,605,545	3,743,769
<b>Accumulated surplus at end of the financial year</b>	<b>7,897,095</b>	<b>6,605,545</b>

## Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash Assets	12,600,395	9,434,060
Receivables	4,543,596	5,043,697
Other	218,433	134,227
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>17,362,424</b>	<b>14,611,984</b>
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>		
Plant, Property and Equipment	2,068,130	2,054,858
Right-of-use assets	682,077	319,860
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>2,750,207</b>	<b>2,374,718</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>20,112,631</b>	<b>16,986,702</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Payables	460,357	488,962
Financial liabilities	–	25,211
Lease liabilities	237,612	176,502
Current tax liabilities	826,022	670,769
Provisions	595,971	653,715
Deferred income	9,607,614	8,208,800
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>11,727,576</b>	<b>10,223,959</b>
<b>Non-Current Liabilities</b>		
Lease liabilities	487,960	157,198
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>487,960</b>	<b>157,198</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>12,215,536</b>	<b>10,381,157</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>7,897,095</b>	<b>6,605,545</b>
<b>RETAINED SURPLUS</b>	<b>7,897,095</b>	<b>6,605,545</b>



## Board of Directors

### 2021-22

Marion Hansen (Chair)  
Karen Bryant  
Gail Crozier  
Darlene Thomas  
Alan Thorpe

## Staff

### 2021-22

Onor Ali  
Michelle Atkinson  
Ngalnya Atkinson  
Sissy-Amelia Austin  
Anne Bambrook  
Lulu Banay  
Maggie Barford  
Antoinette Braybrook  
Wanda Braybrook  
Trish Carberry  
Vicki Clark  
Riley Cooper  
Amanda Cox  
Ffion Doran-Gorman  
Fiona Dundass  
Tahnee Edwards

Kelly Faldon  
Tanayah Fernando  
Antoinette Gentile  
Kaila Glare  
Skye Gooch  
Simone Gristwood  
Kylie Harcourtts  
Hayley Harrison  
Taylor Henderson  
Ara Hoek  
Danielle How  
Quinn How  
Rosemary Hunt  
Vulase Kailea  
Blessing Keabilwe  
Chloe Kenny  
Tara Kortel  
Teresa Kyprianou  
Natalie Larsek  
Anne Lenton  
Kate Lightfoot  
Christina Lynch  
Torie McWilliams-Murray  
Summer Medley  
Georgia Millington  
Agatha Moar  
Amy Moore  
Madison Morgan  
Taylor Morgan  
Juliette Murray  
Nekeita Murray  
Georgina Panetta  
Sandra Patten

Natalie Pejoski  
Maria Pejoski-Aleksovski  
Nikalah Periorellis  
Martin Pike  
Catherine Plunkett  
Terri Pollard  
Margaret Portelli  
Taylor Rawson  
Rebecca Richards  
Kathryn Robb  
Anne Roberts  
Nidhi Sirohi  
Rhiannon Smith  
Christine Spence  
Sheadeen Standley  
Rebecca Steunenberg  
Tori Stuchbery  
Victoria Sweetman  
Eyob G. Tewelde  
Adeline Thomas  
Maddison Thorpe  
Nicholas Toonen  
Sharon Villanueva  
Catherine Weir  
Casey Williams  
Jaynaya Williams  
Echo Ping Yu

### Volunteers

Pat Brown  
Mary Smith

### Former staff 2021-22

*Thank you to all former staff for their contribution to Djirra*

Eulia Armatolos  
Kanisha Bamblett  
Elizabeth Bloom  
Janelle Cooper  
Francesca Demetriou  
Debbie Edsall  
Calinda Egan  
Natasha Ferre  
Marlena Flynn-Flessner  
Leah Fuller  
Adair Garemyn  
Lilly Jackson  
Miriam Kelly  
Rebecca Kelly  
Therese Kelly  
Sze Lim  
Elizabeth Maclean  
Kalinda McEachran  
Sharon Mongta  
Victoria Murray  
Annie Nash  
Amy Peek  
Shakira Reid  
Barbara Shalit  
Meena Singh  
Jessica Szwarcbord  
Charlotte Watson  
Marissa Williamson

*"I have been a client of Djirra for five years now since leaving my children's father due to domestic family violence. I feel fortunate and am extremely grateful to have had Djirra by my side during some tough times. I wouldn't be where I am today without their support, assistance, and guidance ... The team at Djirra are compassionate, accommodating and friendly. I really appreciate their dedication, understanding, check-ins and support they provided. Thank you to all that have stood by my side and have kept us safe."*

Djirra client



# We are Djirra



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. The word Djirra symbolises our connection with Aboriginal women today, coming together to share stories, support each other and find solutions.

## Djirra acknowledges the support of all our funders.

We thank all our members, supporters, generous donors and our pro bono lawyers, Lander & Rogers, for their ongoing support.



Sharing stories, finding solutions