



Sharing stories, finding solutions

Annual Report 2023-24



CEO Report



Antoinette Braybrook AM
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.



It never occurred to me that we would repeat a year as productive, compelling and challenging as our 20th anniversary year in 2022/23 which saw the opening of Djirra in the West, the launch of our 2023–2028 Strategic Plan, the celebration of our 100th Dilly Bag workshop, our focussed advocacy, across new and expanding platforms, to amplify the voices of Aboriginal women, and of course, our 20th anniversary gala.

But then along came 2023/24. The pace quickened, the intensity of our effort escalated beyond expectations, and here we were in our third decade signalling a new chapter with renewed focus and determination.

The **Voice to Parliament Referendum** challenged everyone regardless of their views or persuasions. Djirra advocated strongly for YES, and I joined many other Aboriginal leaders and advocates across the country campaigning for change. Despite the devastating result, we are in no way defeated. Djirra will continue to move forward drawing on the cultural strength and resilience of our past warriors, our elders and clans – just as we have been doing since invasion. And now we know there are 6.2 million YES voters standing with us as we fight for a better future for our people.

The launch of **Djirra in the West** in Melton during NAIDOC Week was a huge milestone for us. It is an important step in bringing to life our 22-year vision that will ultimately see full service Djirra offices across Victoria in locations that ensure no Aboriginal woman has to travel more than 100km or one hour to access holistic, life-changing support. In this first year at **Djirra in the West**, demand for our legal and non-legal services has grown over 14 times. Our impact, both in the Aboriginal community and with service providers in the west, has been evident and highly regarded.

This year, Djirra made significant progress on our advocacy goals. We welcomed the **Yoorrook Justice Commission's** report into Victoria's Child Protection and Criminal Justice Systems, to which Djirra provided a comprehensive submission and evidence. Djirra joined Commissioners and other sector leaders in calling for the urgent implementation of all 46 recommendations.

Significantly, after over a decade of advocacy by Djirra and others, the Victorian Government gave in-principle support to the Yoorrook recommendations about Aboriginal mums, and mums-to-be, having early access to culturally safe, independent legal assistance. In 2024/25, Djirra will commence work with government and partner agencies to design and implement this system.

Djirra continued our advocacy on the international stage. I was invited to join a Victorian Government delegation to attend the **Women Deliver Conference** in Rwanda, led by Natalie Hutchins MP, Minister for First Peoples and Treaty and Minister for Women. Convened every three years in a different country, this is the world's biggest conference to advance gender equality, attended by over 6,000 people from 2,000 organisations across 160 countries. It was an amazing event and an important opportunity for Djirra to shine a light – globally – on the experiences and self-determined solutions of First Nations women in Australia.

Ochre Ribbon Week launched with a beautiful Sisters Day Out event at Djirra in the West, where we again publicly called for action to end violence against our women and their children. The event was also marked by announcing Noongar woman Kirby Bentley as Djirra's inaugural Ambassador – and I'm delighted Kirby then went on to join the Djirra staff team.

Since inception in 2002, Djirra has heard thousands of devastating stories of violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women and their children in Victoria, none more distressing than murders and unexplained disappearances. Therefore, when the national **Senate Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children** was announced in 2022, Djirra acted immediately and effectively lobbied for a hearing to take place in Victoria.

Djirra, alongside Change the Record, provided a comprehensive submission to this important inquiry. We also gave detailed evidence at the only national hearing held in Victoria. In addition to our expert testimony, we supported and stood beside incredibly brave First Nations women telling their personal experiences of violence and loss, the heartbreaking impact on their families and communities, and the repeated failure of systems we should be able to trust.

During the international **16 Days of Activism** campaign to end gender-based violence, I joined other family violence advocates to speak to over 5,000 people at Respect Victoria's annual Walk Against Family Violence. Djirra held our first-ever 16 Days of ACTIVEism™ event at Victoria Park in Melbourne. It was a huge success, attended by over 200 people including the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence Vicki Ward MP. Djirra also took our ACTIVEism to Canberra to meet with politicians and agitate for change. Whilst there, we led a very special walk around Lake Burley Griffin with Senator Jana Stewart and 40 advocates and allies to raise awareness of the devastating impacts of violence on Aboriginal women.

This year, Djirra commenced a major research study with the Centre for Innovative Justice, examining the prevalence of **misidentification of Aboriginal women** as the primary aggressor or perpetrator of family violence, and making recommendations for system and practice change. We expect to publish our report in 2025.

We have achieved so much over the past year – and this would not have been possible without our professional, hard-working, and dedicated **Djirra staff**.

I want to acknowledge all our **Board members** for their significant contributions, particularly our longstanding Chairperson, Marion Hansen.

Looking to the future, **Djirra's strategic priorities** remain clear: we will continue to deliver holistic, self-determined and culturally safe services to meet the needs of our women; we will expand our services to reach more Aboriginal women and their children across the state, including bringing to life our vision for Victoria's first ever Aboriginal Women's Centre; and we will continue to amplify and celebrate Aboriginal women's voices and experiences as we work together to end family and sexual violence.

A note from the Chairperson

This year has been full of growth, positive change, and achievement for Djirra. We continue to deliver life changing programs and supports to Aboriginal women and their children who are experiencing – or who are at risk of – family and sexual violence across Victoria.

We gave evidence to the landmark national inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children and to the Yoorrook Justice Commission inquiry into housing, health and education.

And we progressed with work to deliver on Djirra's ambitious 5 Year Strategic Plan.

Our CEO, Antoinette Braybrook, received a Deakin University Alumni Award in recognition of her dedication to advocating for, and amplifying the voices of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. This award, so deserved by Antoinette, was particularly special coming 23 years after Antoinette graduated with a Bachelor of Laws from Deakin's Institute of Koori Education.

The commitment and dedication shown by all Djirra staff, managers and leaders continues to make a real and significant difference to the well-being of Aboriginal women and their children who reached out to Djirra.

The Board extends our gratitude to Antoinette and the rest of the Djirra team for their hard work and commitment to Aboriginal women, and for amplifying their voices and experiences so that our women and their children can live free from violence.

As Chairperson, I also wish to thank all Board and Committee Members for their ongoing support and guidance.

Marion Hansen
Chairperson

Antoinette Braybrook AM
Chief Executive Officer



Marion Hansen
Chairperson

About Djirra

Djirra is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation with over 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.

We deliver holistic, culturally safe, specialist family violence support, legal services and case management, alongside cultural and wellbeing workshops and programs. Our services have state-wide reach, touching every part of Victoria to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Self-determination is the foundation of everything we do.

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 are an active member of First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence, the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are experiencing or at risk of family violence. Our CEO is also the co-chair of Change the Record, the only national First Nations led coalition of legal, health and family violence prevention experts.

"I think when you come in, especially if you're in like a crisis situation, you actually feel like you can just sit and you don't have to go straight into it. When I came here in my situation, it was sit down, have a cup of tea – let's just chill. We don't have to talk about anything, just sit and wait until I'm in a space where I'm able to ... D'you know? There wasn't that need to have to say straight away what's going on."

— Djirra client

"KWP workshops have been absolutely fabulous. Because they're not just teaching us other things that we can do, whether it be art or whether it be craft or whatever it is. It's about spending the time with our women. And learning about each other and about our culture and you know, being comfortable with who we are. Whereas out in society, not a lot of us are comfortable with who we are because of society expectations."

— Koori Women's Place participant

Highlights

Djirra continues its journey of growth and expansion, with many significant achievements over the year:

- Marked our first year of **Djirra in the West**.
- Delivered on Year 1 of our comprehensive **5 Year Strategic Plan**.
- Provided evidence to the **Yoorrook Justice Commission**, as part of its housing, health and education inquiry.
- Played an integral role in **Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children Inquiry**.
- Attended a **national crisis roundtable on gendered violence**, convened by Domestic, Family & Sexual Violence Commissioner Micaela Cronin.
- Participated in a **Victorian roundtable into the crisis of violence against women**, hosted by Premier Jacinta Allan.
- Delivered our **500th Koori Women's Place workshop**.
- Led and delivered Djirra's successful inaugural **16 Days of ACTIVEism™** campaign.
- Commenced scoping and design work for a **child protection notification and referral system**, after the Victorian Government gave in-principle support to Yoorrook recommendations for culturally safe legal assistance for parents and parents-to-be where there are child protection concerns.
- Advocated so that our key recommendations were reflected in the **Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP)**.
- Our advocacy contributed to **pay parity for legal assistance sector staff**, announced in the Federal Budget.
- Initiated a major **research project with the Centre for Innovative Justice** to examine the misidentification of Aboriginal women as perpetrators of family violence.
- Remained strong and loud in our **commitment to self-determination** following the Voice to Parliament Referendum.
- CEO chosen to be part of the Victorian delegation to attend the **Women Deliver Conference in Rwanda**, shining a light on the experiences of First Nations women in Australia.
- Delivered 500 hampers to Aboriginal women and their children across the state as part of our **Reverse Advent Calendar campaign**.
- Celebrated **Ochre Ribbon Week** with our inaugural Sisters Day Out at Djirra in the West attended by over 100 women and 15 services.
- Announced Kirby Bentley as our first **Djirra Ambassador**.
- Delivered **Sisters Day In at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre** ensuring our incarcerated sisters can access the same supports as the rest of our women.
- CEO **Antoinette Braybrook AM** received a **Deakin University Alumni Award** in recognition of her tireless advocacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women over 22+ years.
- Cultural Advisor **Aunty Wanda Bargo** was inducted into the **Victorian Honour Roll of Women** in recognition of her significant and lasting contribution to the Victorian community.
- Chairperson **Aunty Marion Hansen** received an award from the **Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum** in recognition of the instrumental role she played in the 20-year anniversary of the Indigenous Family Violence Task Force.



**SOLUTIONS FOR
ABORIGINAL
WOMEN,
BY ABORIGINAL
WOMEN.**



Legal services and non-legal support provided by our legal team

745 clients assisted
1,263 legal assistances provided
747 discrete legal assistances provided
516 ongoing legal assistances completed
343 non-legal supports provided

Early Intervention Programs

 **217** young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (aged 13–18 years old) attended **20 Young Luv® workshops**

 **132** women attended **14 Dilly Bag workshops**

 **1,024** women attended **14 Sisters Day Out® workshops**

Case Management

 **379** clients assisted
8,880+ total number of service hours

Koori Women's Place

50 cultural and wellbeing workshops
617 women supported



Cultural Programs

6 Yarning About Cultural Safety workshops
150 participants

Reach and Visibility

 **21** submissions to national and Victorian inquiries and committees

 **825** media commentaries and interviews

600,000+ impressions across social media, continuing Djirra's work to amplify the voice and visibility of Aboriginal women

6,665 new followers on social media
18% growth across social media channels

Top performing post:

National Sorry Day

Remembering the Stolen Generation and highlighting the punitive laws and systems that continue to increase the rate of child removals.

142,949 impressions
5,702 engagements

Djirra Clients' Stories

Financial Snapshot

Client names and any identifying details have been changed.

Danielle's Story

Danielle is an Aboriginal woman with two young children. She experienced significant violence from her ex-partner and has since been diagnosed with PTSD. She also experiences sensory sensitivity issues when under stress.

Danielle came to Djirra for assistance with obtaining a Family Violence Intervention Order (FVIO). Djirra's lawyer and paralegal support worker (PLSW) completed and filed the FVIO application, including supporting evidence.

Danielle had previously had terrible experiences in courtrooms and greatly feared encountering her ex-partner. The Court agreed that Danielle could appear remotely, so she chose the Djirra office where she could be supported by her lawyer and PLSW in person.

Danielle's sensory sensitivity issues and anxiety were flaring on the day of the hearing. Djirra's PLSW set up a room with dim lighting and sensory equipment to assist Danielle to remain calm and support her participation in the hearing.

However, Danielle's anxiety continued. Before attempting a debrief, the PLSW brought in a cup of tea and the lawyer asked if she would like to spend some time yarnning with a woman from Djirra's Koori Women's Place (KWP) before they continued. Danielle said yes. The KWP worker and Danielle sat together in the dimly lit room having a yarn about Danielle's country and family, while completing a painting together.

Once calm, Danielle talked with her lawyer about the next steps in her FVIO matter and together they formulated a plan that she was happy with. The plan helped Danielle to feel confident about facing the Court again and advocating for herself. At the next Court hearing, a Final FVIO was made, protecting Danielle and her two children who are now safe and together.

Jenny's Story

Jenny is an Aboriginal woman from regional Victoria. On a rare visit to Melbourne to celebrate her sister's birthday, Jenny went to the CBD to see a movie with one of her cousins. On the way back to the station, the Police intercepted the women. They started asking all sorts of questions and demanded that they showed ID.

Jenny tried to tell the police officers that they were being targeted because they were Aboriginal, but the Police wouldn't listen and instead ran their IDs through a Police check. It showed Jenny had an outstanding warrant for breaches of a FIVO, where she had been misidentified as the perpetrator by her ex-partner.

Jenny was taken into custody, denied bail and sentenced to Dame Phyllis Frost women's prison (DPFC). During her time in prison, Jenny became desperately anxious and depressed. Her landlord terminated the lease on her rental property and she was cut off from her family.

Jenny was first introduced to Djirra through a Sisters Day In workshop at DPFC. For a few hours, Jenny escaped the cold and lonely prison environment and was welcomed into a warm space where she could unwind, feel strong in culture and enjoy time with other Aboriginal women. In the workshop, she made a beautiful piece of artwork which would be sent home to her family. Jenny also spoke to a Djirra case manager who realised how anxious she was and linked Jenny to a Djirra lawyer.

For the next few weeks, Djirra's case management team visited Jenny regularly and organised a range of post-release supports. This included securing safe housing close to her sister and referrals into other services.

When Jenny was released, she went straight to Djirra's KWP where the team set her up with essentials, including toiletries, clothing, food parcels and transport. Jenny continued to speak to her Djirra lawyer and worked to have the FIVO against her withdrawn.

Jenny has kept her connection with her case manager, has linked into Djirra's family violence counselling program, and attends Sista Yarns on Zoom each week.

Djirra's operations resulted in a modest surplus this year, outperforming expected budgeted results. Grant funding increased substantially, enabling Djirra to increase staff numbers and provide additional programs and support to Community in response to demand. Djirra's retained surplus indicates a position of financial strength as we look to achieving further goals in line with the 5 Year Strategic Plan.

Statement of Financial Performance for the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Operating revenue	16,291,270	13,132,134
Operating surplus/(deficit)	314,016	(261,485)
Accumulated surplus at beginning of the financial year	7,635,610	7,897,095
Accumulated surplus at end of the financial year	7,949,626	7,635,610

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current Assets		
Cash assets	13,116,215	11,561,900
Receivables	274,076	4,129,548
Other	179,322	187,249
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	13,569,613	15,878,697
Non-Current Assets		
Plant, property and equipment	2,041,676	2,030,834
Right-of-use assets	478,563	653,789
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	2,520,239	2,684,623
TOTAL ASSETS	16,089,852	18,563,320
Current Liabilities		
Payables	938,673	907,332
Financial liabilities	-	-
Lease liabilities	190,498	208,209
Current tax liabilities	158,922	6,018
Provisions	939,590	625,718
Deferred income	5,601,912	8,710,148
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	7,829,595	10,457,425
Non-Current Liabilities		
Lease liabilities	310,631	470,285
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	310,631	470,285
TOTAL LIABILITIES	8,140,226	10,927,710
NET ASSETS	7,949,626	7,635,610
RETAINED SURPLUS	7,949,626	7,635,610



Board of Directors

2023-24

Marion Hansen (Chairperson)
 Karen Bryant
 Gail Crozier
 Alan Thorpe
 Darlene Thomas
 (until 17/11/23)

Christopher Harding
 Courtney Ugle
 Darcie Swain
 Denize Hooton
 Echo Yu
 Eleanor Gamble
 Eliza Nowicki
 Eyob Ghezai
 Felicity Griffin-Clark
 Ffion Doran-Gorman
 Fleur Ward
 George Selvanera
 Georgia Millington
 Georgina Norris
 Georgina Panetta
 Gulli McLennan
 Hannah Barraza
 Hannah Robert
 Heidi Middleton
 Hilary Glaisher
 Jade Reid
 Jade Rigby
 Janeille MacNeill
 Jaye Moore
 Jaynaya Williams
 Jessica Pocock
 Joanne Kakafikas
 Jody Kelly
 Juliette Murray
 Kaila Glare
 Kate Bowman
 Kate Mohay
 Kathryn Robb
 Kaycee Ah Kit
 Kelly Faldon

Kirby Bentley
 Kirrilli Roberts
 Ky Singh
 Kylie Harcourtts
 Lasi Kailea
 Laura Costello
 Lesly Zambrano M.
 Leticia Burton
 Louise Monahan
 Lulu Banay
 Madison Morgan
 Maggie Barford
 Maria Pejovski-Aleksovski
 Marthea Stamatopoulos
 Mary Morison
 Michelle Atkinson
 Michelle Easson
 Monique Chong
 Morgan Carey
 Nahualli Portillo-Baskett
 Natalie Pejovski
 Nick Toonen
 Nidhi Sirohi
 Nikalah Periorellis
 Nikita Chappell
 Paigan Impey
 Paris Rovedi
 Polly Morton
 Rawinia Pierce
 Rebecca Richards
 Rebecca Steunenberg
 Rhiannon Smith
 Riley Cooper
 Rose Hunt
 Samantha Smith

Saskia Colberg
 Savannah Marques
 Sheadeen Standley
 Skye Gooch
 Stephanie Dowling
 Summer Medley
 Tahnee Edwards
 Taylor Morgan
 Taylor Rawson
 Tearra Charles
 Teresa Kyprianou
 Tina Klinkaew
 Torie McWilliams-Murray
 Trish Carberry
 Upma Paton
 Vicki Clark
 Wanda Bargo Braybrook

Staff

As at 30 June 2024

Adeline Thomas
 Alice Pryor
 Ally Gilbert
 Amelia Hogan
 Amy Moore
 Anna Wark
 Anne Bambrook
 Anne Lenton
 Antoinette Braybrook
 Antoinette Gentile
 Ara Hoek
 Bianca Charles
 Casey Williams
 Chantelle Ormsby
 Charlotte Brady
 Christina Lynch
 Christine Spence

Casual Staff

Catherine Weir
 Melina Ciavarella

Volunteers

Annabelle Smith
 Biftu Reggasa Tulu
 Ella Marcus
 Georgia Stark
 Jazz Licht
 Keshi Moore
 Mary Hatley-Smith
 Mary Smith
 Mia Schlicht
 Shabnum Cassim
 Stella Barker
 Yasaswi Wijesuriya



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.



Respect Victoria • Holding Redlich Social Justice Fund
City of Melbourne • Gilbert and Tobin • Creative Victoria



Sharing stories, finding solutions

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (ICN 4068), operating as Djirra ABN 47 125 370 108

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