

# THIRRILI NEWSLETTER

December 2021



THIRRILI



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INDIGENOUS SUICIDE POSTVENTION SERVICE

CALL 1800 805 801

24 HOURS, 7 DAYS A WEEK



# MESSAGE FROM DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ANNETTE VICKERY

I would like to welcome our readers back. I hope you and your families are keeping safe and healthy in these challenging times, and I wish you a happy and fulfilled 2022. I am standing in for the CEO for now, until the Board appoints our next leader. You will know from our last issue, Jacqueline McGowan-Jones has been appointed the Commissioner for Children and Young People for Western Australia. We were sad to see Jac leave, but happy that she has accepted such a challenge, as we know she is more than equal to the task. We thank her for her love and commitment to our organisation, for being so generous in sharing her own stories and encouraging others to do the same. Jac built a flourishing, empathetic and energetic workplace culture at Thirrili, and we will ensure her legacy stays with us as we go into 2022.

*Thirrili is a 24/7 organisation, we are always available by phone to talk to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community members who have been impacted by suicide, near-suicide or other unexpected fatal event. We encourage community members to contact us through 1800 805 801 and have a yarn with our advocates.*



Former CEO Jacqueline McGowan-Jones



Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Annette Vickery

Now we are getting ready for 2022, and will be planning visits to communities to provide individual and family supports, but also to work alongside communities and develop plans to reduce future incidents of suicide. We will be in Shepparton from 4 January 2022 to 28 January 2022 and invite community members to drop by and catch up in person. As a national organisation we focus on postvention, which include working with communities to support the co-design of goals, initiatives, activities and programs which will restore capacity in our communities, build resilience and ensure our communities self-determine the ways in which they will prevent future incidents of suicide, near-suicide and other unexpected fatalities.

We are proud to do this work, and honoured so many communities gift us with their trust and invite us to come and work with them. We are looking forward to doing even more in 2022.



# BECOME AN ORGANISATIONAL MEMBER OF THIRRILI

**Thirrili welcomes applications for membership from Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and Organisations (ACCOs) or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health services/Aboriginal Medical Service (ACCHS).**

Thirrili is a not-for-profit organisation focused on contributing to the broader social, cultural and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the delivery of a culturally safe and responsive service supporting individuals and families affected by a suicide, or other traumatic incident causing death.

Thirrili also builds on the capacity of local communities and service providers to care for, and respond to, the impacts of suicides and other fatal incidents in their community, by strengthening individual, family and community resilience and social wellbeing whilst contributing to and addressing the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

We do not want to duplicate the amazing work already being undertaken by our ACCOs and ACCHS, rather we want to partner with our Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations, to support each other in the critical work we do. We want our communities to have a voice in the delivery of our services.

If your organisation would like to become a Member of Thirrili, please contact us via email [communications@thirrili.com.au](mailto:communications@thirrili.com.au) for additional information and a membership form.

*"the voice of the community is a key component of ensuring we are working with the community and walking the path towards healing together"*

## OUR MOB OUR STAFF

**Our staff are committed to being there for our mob in times of need**

Thirrili would like to introduce to you Thomas Cameron, He's a proud Wattandee Tribal leader and elder, Winjarroo Language speaker and teacher in the Midwest of Western Australia. Thomas is one of our Indigenous Suicide Postvention Advocate for Western Australia.

Thomas's story: I am the eldest of 14 siblings, I left school at 13yrs old to work and supported my parents to help raise my siblings. I am also the third generation of the stolen generation. I am fortunate to have my family around me, a roof over my head, and a loving wife, children, and a great grandfather from Bardi Jawi, Ngoongah, Martu and Wadjarri tribes of Western Australia.



I previously worked in the Commonwealth, State and remote Aboriginal communities do not come close to the positives of working for Thirrili. As an Advocate it allows me to speak and live in two worlds to ensure Aboriginal people and communities get the help they need through their time of grief and loss.

Read on to learn more about Thomas [click here](#)

### Thomas's tip to manager stress

*"I find that I can still make use of my life experience to encourage my families, friends, and colleagues to become heroes. When we fall, we get back up and have another go at life's challenges. Music, housework and fixing my cars is my method of dealing with stress".*

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## NEWS STORIES

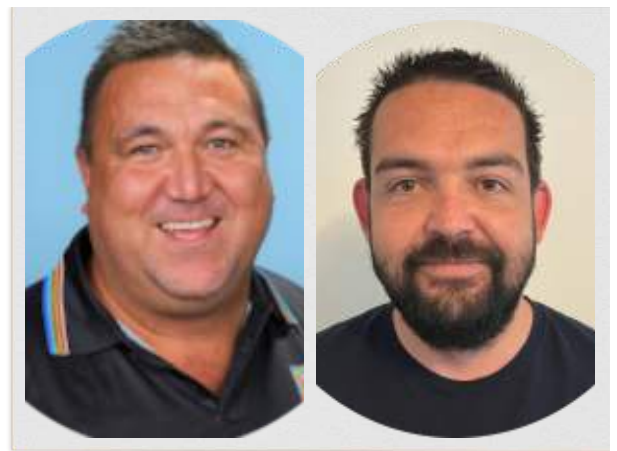
### Community gathering on Barkindji Nation (Outback NSW)

In December our NSW Advocates [Stephen](#) and [Zac](#) visited the Barkindji Nation (Central Darling Shire) in north western NSW). Stephen and Zac were invited to support a community Christmas party along with other service providers as the community has been experiencing an endless amount of Story business and COVID cases though out the year. During their visit, they had a chance to meet Uncle Owen Whyman, Barkindji Elder and founder of the Indigenous Party at Wilcannia, NSW. Uncle Owen Whyman, has been a massive influence in the community about getting things done! They spoke about how his community needs to 'keep moving forward on with bring people together even in sad times'

During their visit Jay Little from Wellways also came to visit the community, and Stephen, Zac and Jay offered their help to make the community party a success by contributing to the following activities;

- Attend a Welcome to Country & Totum Dancers
- Assisted with preparing meals for the Christmas party
- Yarning with the community about Thirrili service and the work we do
- Played a few games of touch footy
- Attended Local Movie Premiere 'Just a Girl" by Andrew Furphy
- Watching fireworks

It was a great night for all and was attended by over 200+ people from the community. Stephen and Zac are planning to revisit various communities this year to find out where they are going check out Facebook and Instagram for updates.



Stephen Smith and Zac Nix, Indigenous Suicide Postvention Advocates - NSW

### Together, Thirrili & StandBy Support After Suicide visited NSW communities

Together, Thirrili Ltd (Indigenous Suicide Postvention Service) and StandBy Support After Suicide visited 10 communities in South Eastern NSW in December for the Let's yarn about suicide community visits. Their visits were open community members, services providers, interested parties and those bereaved or impacted by suicide are invited to attend.

Both services did a presentation on the support and services that they provide for clients, families, community groups and sporting teams, and services providers in the local towns. Explaining that anyone can make a referral like family, friends, community members, police, social workers. but also explaining that they need the consent of the client whom they are referring to the service for Thirrili make that contact.

From this trip, they have engaged with 86 people, a good start to the end of 2021, we have plans to visits more communities around the country this year and look forward to spreading the word about Thirrili and StandBy Support After Suicide in 2022.



### Cultural healing workshops in Perth

Over two Saturdays in late November and early December, Thirrili Ltd's [Regional Coordinator Lesley Radloff](#) facilitated cultural healing sessions with Noongar Elder Mrs Vivienne Hansen from Binyaarns Bush Medicine and Natural Skin Products.

The first workshop was limited to a family group, while the second workshop was opened to Aboriginal women from the Perth community. Participants gained the benefit of Mrs Hansen's qualifications in Naturopathy, research and experience, followed by hands-on sessions. During these sessions, participants gained an insight on how Noongar people used natural remedies in the past and how they remain relevant today.



Smoking Ceremony - Cultural Healer Vivienne Hansen & Lovine Samson

During the course of the two workshops which was attended by over 30 individuals, Mrs Hansen taught both groups all about natural soap, medicinal remedies for pain, cold, headaches, teas and abrasions. The workshop as presented was definitely a safe place and as the day progressed, participants felt comfortable enough to share their stories, their personal journeys, as well as their grief and loss. Mrs Hansen took participants through a Smoking Ceremony, to ward off unwanted and unpleasant spirits and to surround everyone with blessings to end the workshop.

Each happy participant left the sessions, armed with sachets of bush brew for teas, bush foot spa products and bush potpourri, which were all made with the guidance of Mrs Hansen, along with extra supplies to replenish their sachets.



Cultural Healer Vivienne Hansen and attendees



Adella-May Bartlett with Noongar Elder Margaret Colbung



Cultural Healer Vivienne Hansen



Jill Abdullah & Regional Coordinator Lesley Radloff

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**QLD team visiting their communities**

Recently, [Chenoa](#) and [Karen](#) completed an engagement in Cairns, Mareeba, Kuranda & Yarrabah. Throughout the five days that they were there, they met with numerous service providers – a particular highlight was being invited to attend the Elders Christmas Luncheon in Cairns. This group meets together monthly, to have something to eat and network. Participating in this luncheon included correctional services and Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Team from Wuchoperan along with other members of the Cairns community. Overall, it was great to meet face to face, and to further discuss the ways our services could work together in the future.

Chenoa and Karen made the trip up to Kuranda to meet with the lovely staff from Ngoonbi Community Services, and they were able to map out where their staff are located throughout the region and how they have been travelling considering the pandemic. They were lucky enough to make a quick pit stop to see the flowing Barron Gorge before heading off to their next meeting. This engagement highlighted just how important it was for services to band together and work collectively to ensure families bereaved by suicide are robustly supported in such a challenging time.

This year the QLD team plan to travel to Mt Isa, Mornington Island, Roma & St George – so if your service would like to catch up and learn more about what we do, please give us a call 1800 805 801.



Chenoa Dowling and Karen Dodd, Indigenous Suicide Postvention Advocates - QLD

**WE ARE VISITING OUR COMMUNITIES**

Our Advocates support and attend community events all over the country. Here is a list of their upcoming visits and events that they will be attending.



Pop up community connections space at Shepparton Bridge Club, 95 Orr St Shepparton VIC from 4 January 2022 - 28 January 2022

[Click here](#) for the news story done by Max Stainkamph from Shepparton News



# INCOMING NEWS FROM ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

**Established in late March 2020, Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia is the national leadership body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, mental health, and suicide prevention.**

Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) is governed and controlled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples belong to the oldest living cultures on Earth. These cultures sustained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities for tens of thousands of years, and remain a source of pride, strength and wellbeing in the present.

In common with Indigenous peoples in many countries, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples connect their mental health to strong Indigenous identities, to participation in their cultures, families and communities, and to their relationship to their lands and seas, ancestors, and the spiritual dimension of existence.

This holistic concept of health that includes mental health is referred to as social and emotional wellbeing.

Nine key principles of social and emotional wellbeing were identified in the 1989 National Aboriginal Health Strategy, expanded in the 1995 Ways Forward Report, and summarised in the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2004-2009.

These enduring principles are adopted in the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration and appended to it. Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia takes its name from the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration as it contributes towards the shared goal of "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership across all parts of the Australian mental health system to achieve the highest attainable standard of mental health and suicide prevention outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

To find out more, visit [www.gayaadhuwi.org.au](http://www.gayaadhuwi.org.au)



**Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

**Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT), the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health peak body in the Northern Territory.**

AMSANT has been working with their member services to consider how best to respond when there is an attempted or alleged suicide in their community, both in the immediate and long term. As part of this work, guidelines have been developed to provide holistic guidance to staff in remote Aboriginal Community Controlled primary health clinics to support clients, family & community following an attempted or alleged suicide.

AMSANT have been kind enough to share these guidelines. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide holistic and culturally safe advice about how to respond to community & staff members affected by an attempted or alleged suicide. You can access the guidelines via the [AMSANT SEWB website here](#)



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## OUR SERVICES

Your call will always be answered by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person

We support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities to deal with grief and trauma experienced as a result of:

- The suicide of an immediate family member; and/or
- The death of an immediate family member because of a fatal traumatic incident other than suicide

National Indigenous Suicide Postvention Service can be contacted  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 1800 805 801

Proudly supported by the National Indigenous Australians Agency

## WHO TO CONTACT - OTHER SERVICES?

If you, or someone you know, may be at risk of harm you can also contact any of the services listed below for help:

- [StandBy Support After Suicide](#)
- 1300 727 247
- [Lifeline](#) 13 11 14
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) 1300 659 467 (cost of a local call)
- [Kids Helpline](#) 1800 55 1800
- [MensLine Australia](#) 1300 78 99 78
- [Beyond Blue](#) 1300 22 4636
- [Standby NT](#) 0418 575 680 OR (08) 8944 6666 (free of charge support)
- SA Virtual Mental Health Response 1800 841 313 (SA only)

## CALLING CULTURAL & TRADITIONAL HEALERS

Join our register now!

Here at Thirrili, we work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities to support their cultural, social and emotional wellbeing following a loss to suicide or other fatal traumatic incidents. As part of our work, many of our clients request support and access to cultural and traditional healing. As a national service, that means we need to know who is available in what locations to support our people.

If you, or your organisation or business, provides cultural and/or traditional healing (you might even be a Narrative Therapist) – either to be delivered individually, or to a community, and you would like to be on our Register Of Healers, please send the following information to [admin@thirrili.com.au](mailto:admin@thirrili.com.au)

1. Name (individual and organisation)
2. Region where you work or provide supports
3. Do you offer group healing or individual or both?
4. ABN number (if no ABN, please advise)
5. Your hourly rates (exclusive of GST)
6. Types of Services you provide

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## STATISTICS – SUICIDE DATA UPDATE

Thirrili recognises that each number reported above represents an individual and wishes to acknowledge the devastating effects suicide and self-harm can have on people, their families, friends, and communities.

The following tables shows a total of 118 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander completed suicides have been reported to Thirrili from 1 January to 31 December 2021, by jurisdiction, age and gender.

Jurisdiction	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Other	Total
Completed Suicide	22	16	27	14	30	0	21	0	0	130

Age	Under 18	18 - 24	25 - 34	35+	Not known at this stage	Total
Completed Suicide	23	22	34	37	14	130

Gender	Male	Female	Not known at this stage	Total
Completed Suicide	81	42	7	130

The following tables shows a total of 32 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fatal incidents have been reported to Thirrili from 1 January to 31 December 2021, by jurisdiction, age and gender.

Jurisdiction	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Other	Total
Other Trauma involving a Death	4	3	8	4	8	0	7	0	0	34

Age	Under 18	18 - 24	25 - 34	35+	Not known at this stage	Total
Other Trauma involving a Death	7	4	8	5	10	34

Gender	Male	Female	Not known at this stage	Total
Other Trauma involving a Death	17	12	5	34