



THIRRILI

Thirrili Ltd

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A “Thank you and farewell” from our Interim CEO

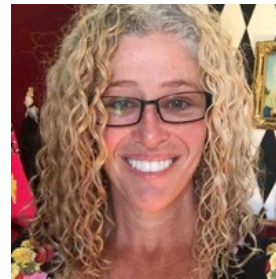
To have been part of the formidable leadership team of Thirrili has been a joy.

To have ‘taken the baton’ from former CEO Adele Cox, who set the organisation up for success and to have the opportunity to pass the CEO baton on to Jacqueline McGowan-Jones and the new Executive team is a career highlight for me.

It is an honour to work with people whose values, morals and commitments to families are so strongly aligned.

It is the commitment to these values, and taking the right action at the right time which enhanced the quality of Thirrili’s contributions to suicide

-involved families and I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to be part of the Thirrili footprint in the journey toward zero suicides in our communities.



Strength in unity has been the mainstay of Australia’s community controlled sector, through the good times and the bad.

In the past few months, Thirrili has demonstrated strength in unity by taking decisive action, mobilising resources and providing support.

We formed new partnerships, communicated more often and changed our investment strategies to remain effective.

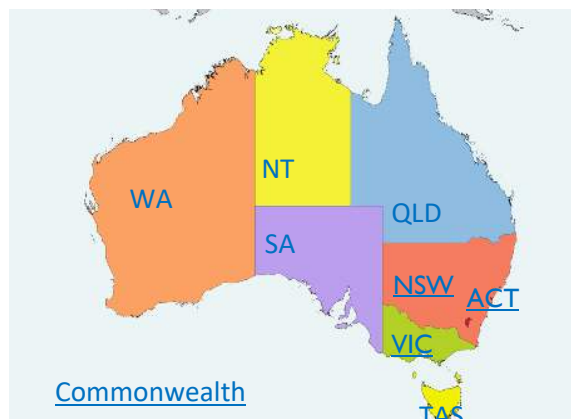
Our collective community actions not only stopped Covid-19 from spreading to vulnerable families, but reduced the negative impact of trauma, coordinated actions across national networks and continued to provide support to families across Australia.

In the past ten weeks, our postvention sector has had to perform a massive pivot - shifting

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COVID-19 information updated

While restrictions continue to ease and ‘normality’ has almost returned in some parts of the country, it is important that we understand that infections are still occurring. For the sake of our most vulnerable in particular, please follow the directions of the relevant Chief Health Officer or equivalent from each jurisdiction. Click below to keep informed about respective State and Territory information and from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) [here](#).



Our new CEO Jacqueline McGowan – Jones started today!

Welcome Jacqueline!

We hope to have a message from Jacqueline for the next newsletter.

Racism is killing us

The following is an unedited statement from the Chairperson, Lowitja Institute, Pat Anderson AO dated 15 June 2020.

The Black Lives Matters protests, here in Australia and across the world, are sounding cries of anguish and anger about the unrelenting impact of racism on our lives.

Reflecting on this, I was struck by an important comment from leading Aboriginal psychologist and academic Professor Pat Dudgeon.

“There are very few Aboriginal people who wouldn’t have suffered racism”, Pat said, going on to talk about a growing body of evidence showing that racism is detrimental to the mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Her words echo strongly in the work of the Lowitja Institute, the national institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.

Our work shows us that racism is widespread and it makes us suffer. It makes us sick.

We saw its scope and impact in key research that we funded many years ago, which documented very high levels of racism experienced by Aboriginal Victorians, and high levels of distress because of it.

Almost every person (97 per cent) of the 755 surveyed in 2011 in four Victorian communities had experienced at least one racist incident in the previous 12 months, with more than 70 per cent experiencing eight or more incidents a year.

Some of it included being called racist names, teased or stereotyped (92 per cent), being sworn at, verbally abused or subjected to offensive gestures because of their race (84 per cent), or being spat at, hit or threatened because of their

race (67 per cent).

More than half (54 per cent) reported having their property vandalised because of race.

This is not just abhorrent and an infringement of our rights. This causes life-long harm.

Studies here and from around the world tell us that racism is associated with causing psychological distress, depression, poor quality of life, and substance misuse. Prolonged, it can have significant physical health effects, such as on the immune, endocrine and cardiovascular systems.

Worryingly, our study showed that 40 per cent of participants indicated that they had experienced racism within the justice system and 30 per cent within health care systems.

We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will not seek out health care and will not work in health services if we do not feel culturally safe.

And we know from the families who took their heartbreak to the streets the last two weekends that racism in the justice system can be brutal and fatal.

Have things changed since the Lowitja Institute commissioned that landmark research?

Not according to new ANU research which showed that three out of four Australians who tested for unconscious bias hold a “negative implicit or unconscious bias against Indigenous Australians”.

And not according to the everyday experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Yet instead of taking urgent action, our government criticises us for our protests. Instead of working to address historic injustice, our Prime

Minister diminished it, declaring we should not be “importing the things that are happening overseas to Australia” and that “there was no slavery in Australia”.

How can the leader of our country not know our history?

So, as the cries of #BlackLivesMatter continue to ring out across the globe, where do we go from here in Australia?

We need to acknowledge that racism is deeply entrenched in Australia and is a public health emergency for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

That terrible reality is there to be read clearly in the current National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan, which identifies racism as a key driver of ill-health.

It is there to be read in the Uluru Statement to the Heart. In the critiques of the Closing the Gap strategy.

It is in the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody which has at their heart, as Professor Megan Davis said last week, the need to address “the structural powerlessness that renders Indigenous voices silent” in our nation.

It is time to end that silence. And it is time for governments to hear us.

Pat Anderson AO
Chairperson
Lowitja Institute



“...racism is associated with causing psychological distress, depression, poor quality of life, and substance misuse.”

Significant community events

Coming of the Light

Wednesday 1 July 2020

Go to:

<https://www.qm.qld.gov.au/Find+out+about/Aboriginal+and+Torres+Strait+Islander+Cultures/Gatherings/Coming+of+the+Light+Torres+Strait+Islands>

NAIDOC Week

POSTPONED UNTIL DATES TBC

Go to: <https://www.naidoc.org.au/>

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day

Tuesday 4 August 2020

Go to:

<https://aboriginalchildrensday.com.au/>

International Day of the World's Indigenous People

Sunday 9 August 2020

Go to:

<https://www.regions4.org/events/international-day-of-the-worlds-indigenous-peoples-2020/>



First Nations mental health support network

Black Dog Institute is creating a network of First Nations people for the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Centre, which will work towards building and delivering programs, services and

care aimed at improving mental health outcomes.

While the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Centre is not scheduled to launch until early 2021, Black Dog Institute 'shone a light' on the network during Reconciliation Week to raise awareness and encourage those with lived experiences to come forward and connect with the organisation.

To read the full story as contained in National Indigenous Times, click below:

<https://nit.com.au/black-dog-institute-building-first-nations-mental-health-support-network/>



Domains to change

In the coming days, web addresses and email addresses for Thirrili will be changing.

This will be another of the many positive changing and innovations which we have implemented over the past 3 months or so.

We are excited that we will no longer be Thirrili.com.au;

rather, our domain will now be Thirrili.org.au which better reflects that we are a registered charitable organisation.

The National Indigenous Postvention Service will also have its own domain.

We will publish details of all the changes as soon as they are implemented.

Punitive policing doesn't make Aboriginal people safer. Community solutions can.

In an opinion piece in the Guardian Australia, Sarah Hopkins and Daniel Daylight suggest that for our First Nations communities the current model of policing makes people feel scared, marginalised and angry and look at how public resources be invested towards better outcomes.

The authors discuss examples of doing better, including a local initiative in Bourke NSW where the Maranguka project is credited with cutting major offences by 18% and domestic violence and drug offences by 40%.

To read the full story, go to:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/15/punitive-policing-doesnt-make-aboriginal-people-safer-community-solutions-can>

Initiatives that keep Aboriginal people out of jail save lives. Editor



Wellbeing for Elders

The Australian Health and Medical Resource Council have released a fantastic resource for Elders.

This resource provides practical tips for Elders to take care of their mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19.

Given many of us have been spending more time than usual at home to stay safe from COVID-19, it can mean loneliness and isolation.

If that sounds like you, this resource can help you beat that isolation, grow your skills, take care of yourself and stay mentally well and strong.

https://www.ahmrc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/AHM_Wellbeing-for-Elders_Online.pdf

New posters from Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit)

Our friends at Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia, the national Indigenous wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention leadership body, has launched three new posters to assist Indigenous Australians to stay healthy and strong during the coronavirus outbreak.

The new posters are money stress, wellbeing and mental health support and add to the seven 'tips' posters Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia has already published.

Designed to appeal to a wide cross section of Indigenous audiences, these posters are available on the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) website [here](#).

Scholarship program ready to kick off

Thirrili's Postvention Scholarship Program is about to kick off with 15 people about to take their places as our first trainees. The word is that many of the 12 women and 3 men bring strong competencies to the program which is a great outcome.

We have brought together a Deadly team to teach the course and are currently negotiating to obtain the services of a highly qualified and respected person as Lead Instructor.

One thing you can be sure of, the person we are talking with is a Deadly woman, she understands the postvention sector deeply and specialises in Aboriginal mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, health professionals' self-care and trauma.

We will let you know as soon as we have secured her services.

As Assistant instructors we have Critical Response Advocates with on the ground experience.

Chenoa Dowling was born in Nambour on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland and grew up in Townsville. She moved to Brisbane in 2010 to study a Bachelor of Social Work at university. During this time Chenoa gained experience working with Indigenous families as a Family Support Practitioner, aiming to keep families together – especially those at risk of entering the child protection system.

Passionate about working with families, with strength in working with young children. Chenoa has also worked within a counselling framework with individuals involved in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, in addition to travelling throughout Australia to provide social and emotional wellbeing support to families impacted by the Stolen Generation.

Shannon Kearing is a Nyoongar man from the south west of Western Australia.

He has been teaching culture for over 30 years through Nyoongar cultural dancing, bush foods and medicines, cultural awareness and history, as well as being a cultural ambassador in Germany.

Shannon has previously worked for Moorditj Koort Health and Wellness Centre as an outreach officer, and spent 7 years at Relationships Australia before that, holding various roles as an outreach worker, Men's Group Coordinator and facilitator, co facilitated grief and loss workshops.

With lived experience of losing his son to suicide in 2013, Shannon and his family holds the annual Isiah Kearing Memorial Cup Basketball Carnival to promote good mental health.

We will likely bring you the names of the students in next newsletter and will continue to bring updates as the course progresses.



National Indigenous Postvention Service (NIPS) notifications 2020: updated every issue

Updated 15 June 2020. Tragically, we have received several reports this week of suicides and incidents involving trauma. Of course, the respective Coroner in the relevant jurisdiction will ultimately determine the cause of death in each instance.

	Gender			State or Territory*						Total
	Male	Not known at this time	Female	QLD	WA	NT	VIC	NSW	SA	
Completed suicides	42	2	16	20	13	98	8	5	5	60

Age range	17 and younger	18-30 inclusive	Older than 30	Not known at this time	Total
Completed suicides	10	29	15	6	60

	Total
All other incidents include attempted suicides and/or traumatic incidents with or without fatalities	33

Crisis contact numbers

- ⇒ Lifeline: 13 11 14
- ⇒ Suicide call back service: 1300 659 467
- ⇒ Coronavirus mental health support line 1800 512 348
- ⇒ Kids Help Line: 1800 551 800
- ⇒ MensLine Australia: 1300 78 99 78
- ⇒ Beyond Blue: 1300 845 745
- ⇒ GriefLine: 1300 845 745 (midday to 3am AEST 7 days a week)
- ⇒ Thirrili After Suicide support 1800 805 807

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T H I R R I L I

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from face to face work with families in crisis to providing local and regional skills and resources where trends show our work is needed.

We formed partnerships with national networks of coroners officers, funeral directors, and traditional healers; worked with Aboriginal Medical Services, the Office for the Commissioner of Mental Health SA; NIAA, mental health leaders from across the country, StandBy and non-government services to reduce the impact of poor mental health during lockdown.

We used this time to reflect on where the organisation was positioned at the end of the first stage in establishing an Indigenous led postvention sector in Australia.

With NIAA granting an extension of our funding through until December 2020, we were able to use the past ten weeks to:

- *work with Funeral Directors to facilitate changes in funeral practices. This work, led by the former NT team, will have long lasting effects and has strengthened the quality of advice and support between postvention services and the national network of funeral directors.*
- *improve the quality and frequency of our reporting a to NIAA through an internal audit process.*
- *redesign our service to greatly enhance local and regional efforts through the introduction of new positions to coordinate the development of comprehensive, well coordinated services and support.*
- *establish a national partnership with National Stand-By to enhance and extend the value of our emerging postvention sector in Australia.*
- *fund community community controlled health organisations to deliver cultural and healing services for families*
- *engage Indigenous businesses in*

our supply chain supporting our agency meeting Indigenous procurement targets

- *introduce a postvention scholarship program which will see the first 16 scholarship holders participating in a six week training program; and*
- *implement an internal small grants program to:*
 - ⇒ *support bush medicine and cultural healing workshops for suicide involved families*
 - ⇒ *create and evaluate the impact of safe spaces for young people who are returning to communities after being hospitalised for suicide attempts*
 - ⇒ *develop and distribute COVID-19 health and hygiene packs across South Australia*
 - ⇒ *develop guidelines and make available bush medicine for families impacted by suicide*
 - ⇒ *Distribute trauma informed back packs for children who are left vulnerable because of the need to move away from home, as a result of suicide.*

Thank you all for your support and for your engagement during my time as interim CEO, and congratulations to the board for the recruitment of Jacqueline McGowan - Jones.

I wish you all every success, and for making good the promise we need to make to all suicide involved families: to provide the very best of ourselves, at the very worst time of their lives.

Good bye for now,

Kerry

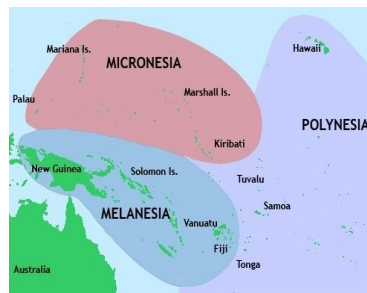


Understanding our shared history

In the wake of wide commentary following *Black Lives Matter* protests, the question of slavery on our shores became the subject of an article in *The Age* on Friday 12 June 2020 and continuing conversations following its publication.

In the article, Emeritus Professor Clive Moore, University of Queensland School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry recounted that "The Australian, New South Wales and Queensland governments have acknowledged that the Pacific labour trade was unsavoury at best and slave-like at worst."

The coercion of people through trickery and kidnapping to work as labourers was known as



'Blackbirding'. While this practice occurred in other parts of the world as well as Australia, from the 1870s, the blackbirding trade on our shores focused on supplying labourers to plantations, particularly the sugar cane plantations of Queensland.

To read the article in full, go to: <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/pm-wants-focus-on-indigenous-incarceration-not-slavery-history-20200611-p551ob.html>

For further reading, [click here](#) for "HARDWORK" by Professor Moore, a bibliography of sources in relation to South Sea Islanders.

