

WOMEN BUILDING BELONGING

Marroorryawarrani
Ngambirriyawarrani
Yoowarnia

MARNINWARNTIKURA HEALING FRAMEWORK



THE HEALING
FRAMEWORK

MARNINWARNTIKURA



WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

© Marninwarnikura Women's Resource Centre



THE HEALING
FRAMEWORK

Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre has developed The Healing Framework with funding from The Healing Foundation and Philanthropic Support



Burbangana Group has a longstanding relationship with Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre providing expertise and supporting strategic priorities.

CONTENTS

Page 02

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Background

Methodology

What Marninwarntikura has done

Page 12

THE HEALING FRAMEWORK

What does the evidence say?

What is a Healing Framework?

Page 17

THE HEALING FRAMEWORK AT MARNINWARNTIKURA

Healing aware model to guide
organisational practice

Map of Journey to Healing Organisation





INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The project facilitated the development of a Marninwarntikura Healing Framework as a step towards supporting the development of a community wide Marrooryawarrani Ngambirriyawarrani Yoowarnia a Gooniyandi word meaning 'Gathering, Caring and Nurturing Together as One'. This work is part of the *Working Towards a Harm Free Valley Strategic Priority* within the Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre existing Strategic Plan (2015-2020). The Healing Framework has also informed the development of the new Strategic Plan (2022-2027).

Background

Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre (MWRC) has undertaken work to progress the Harm Free Valley Strategic Priority, since the development of the strategic plan in 2014. In fact, early work on developing a healing informed approach started before then with women coming together to identify needs and solutions. Notions of healing and positive living have informed Marninwarntikura throughout its formation and development over time.

This project intends to synthesise and build on work that has been undertaken to date and to contribute to an accessible and flexible framework to guide and support everyone working at Marninwarntikura. It will do this by deepening knowledge of healing and trauma aware practices, processes and approaches across the organisation.

Embedding a healing framework across Marninwarntikura, both within each program and across the organisation is an important step to support Marninwarntikura's contribution to the development of a community wide healing strategy.

Methodology

Review (desktop and face to face) of previous and current healing projects and activities across the organisation.

Review literature on First Nations Healing and Healing Frameworks including the Churchill Fellowship Report by Jane Pederson.

Consultation with Senior Leadership team and members from all teams across Marninwarntikura to explore the elements of healing in the Marninwarntikura context and seek information on what might go into a healing framework.

What Marninwarntikura has done

It is essential to acknowledge the cultural and vital role women across the Fitzroy Valley have had in creating safe and nourishing communities for many thousands of years. Since 1991 and the establishment of the Marninwarntikura Women's group and subsequently the Women's Shelter in 1995 the Fitzroy Valley women have continued to set the agenda for positive change in their communities.

In 2003 the Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre opened and gradually added services to support women, children and families to live well.

The Family Support and Legal Service provides additional support to women and families who have experienced family and domestic violence and recently both a social worker and counsellor have been employed to provide a more integrated and holistic approach to support women and families.

Since 2017, We Al-li have been delivering training to all Family Violence Prevention Legal Services on a "Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing Approach" and a companion manual has been developed to support this approach. The manual provides comprehensive information on the implementation and practice of a trauma integrated healing approach including the importance of Dadirri – deep listening and a poignant reminder *Ask: Not what is wrong with that person, but what has happened to that person and what is strong within that person* (Atkinson et al, 2017).

MWRC was also instrumental in supporting the establishment of the Men's Shed at Fitzroy Crossing through their relationship with the Minderoo Foundation.

In 2007 on behalf of women across the Fitzroy Valley communities, MWRC fought hard to get alcohol restrictions established in the community to help redress the impact of hazardous alcohol use across the community. These restrictions are still in place.

Women in the community have continued to identify harms affecting themselves and their families and seek ways to make positive change. Marninwarntikura continues to advocate for improved services, the need for systemic change and decolonising approaches.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD), LILILWAN, AND MARULU STRATEGY

In 2008 women of the Fitzroy Valley communities attended a Bush Meeting and identified the need to address FASD and related issues. The Lililwan FASD Prevalence Study commenced in 2010 as a partnership between Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services, Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre, The George Institute for Global Health and the University of Sydney. Parents and carers of 108 children born in 2002 and 2003 took part in the study. The prevalence of FASD was shown to be amongst the highest rates in the world.

The Marulu Unit at Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre in Fitzroy Crossing was set up to respond to the findings of the Lililwan Study and support families living with FASD and Early Life Trauma (ELT).

The second stage of this research known as the Bigiswun Kid Study is currently being undertaken and will focus on connecting with the families and seeking information from parent /carers and individuals on their needs now. The research will identify services accessed, gaps in service provision and ways to increase access and connection to the services that are needed now. This research will also explore Lililwan data including education and health management plans and inform the Marulu team on how we add value to existing supports.

MARNIN STUDIO

In 2013 MWRC established Marnin Studio, a social enterprise for local women to connect to country, culture, and identity. The program emerged from arts therapy practices and continues to embed a therapeutic approach in the studio, assisting women to produce products that provide a source of income and pride.

The Studio is developing a 20-year vision and is supporting community women with ideas and talents to transform these ideas into income generating activities.

BAYA GAWIY BUGA YANI JANDU YANI U

Baya Gawiy Buga Yani Jandu Yani U is a gathering and learning place where community members and children access programs and services that enhance the well-being of Fitzroy Valley children and their families. The Centre incorporates early childhood learning as well as a child and parent centre and mobile play groups.

The Baya Gawiy Early Childhood Learning Unit (ECLU) provides culturally appropriate learning and care to children 0–4 years. It addresses the diverse early development needs of children in the Fitzroy Valley by following a “two ways of knowing and doing” philosophy, – learning from Indigenous knowledges and perspectives alongside non-Indigenous knowledges and perspectives.



The Marninwarntikura Language and Cultural Wellbeing Program was established in 2018 to create inspiring spaces where local educators, language speakers and Elders can gather to share, learn, preserve, think and create in heritage languages. It is closely aligned with the Fitzroy Valley Living Curriculum to ensure connection to country and kinship systems and Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. This work is guided by the Language and Wellbeing Framework.

WORKING TOWARDS A HARM FREE VALLEY:

Marninwarntikura continues to strengthen its ability as an organisation and has implemented a key direction from its previous Strategic Plan – “working towards a harm free valley”. This work complements a series of workshops previously conducted with elder women, middle-aged women and young women on what harm and safety looks like (DSS Building Safe Communities for Women and their Children fund 2016-17). Healing work continues with training for staff on Mind Heart Connection and Emotional Freedom techniques.

Marninwarntikura also invested in the Churchill Fellowship work of Jane Pedersen. The fellowship explored Canadian and USA models and approaches working to break cycles of intergenerational trauma while enabling positive generational change for women, children and their families. The research has provided Marninwarntikura with several examples of best practice trauma informed and healing approaches designed and developed in different community settings. It reflects service delivery commitments across the organisation including in partnership with Social Ventures Australia (Marnin Studio), with Royal Far West, Australian Childhood Foundation (Marulu Strategy) and with a range of other external services and philanthropists.

Emily Carter

CEO

“We are breaking new ground. This is long-term work. There is no roadmap: we are learning as we go. It has been a long journey so far. It started here because of a crisis – people wanting a safe space from domestic violence. People were dying early from alcohol and the women called for alcohol restrictions. Families were saying there is something wrong with our children. So we had the FASD prevalence study. Our approach was no blame, no shame. There was so much need. And families felt guilt about it.

We need to do our work in a respectful way across the organisation. When people dip they need support. We need to lift each other up as colleagues. This community needs that. When we show each other compassion and respect, it flows into the community”.

Marninwarntikura also partnered with the Healing Foundation who supported a three year organisational and community development process to progress the harm free/healing work.

Previous and current staff positions have focused on progressing healing and harm reduction and building understandings of the trauma affecting people in the local region. This has included talking with community women, documenting the available services, developing a history of the Fitzroy Crossing region and building alliances and partnerships. A number of MWRC staff have undertaken the Graduate Certificate in Developmental Trauma and other relevant professional development.

In 2017 a series of “Working Together” workshops were held for the leadership team and staff from across Marninwarntikura to explore people’s understanding of trauma and to check in with how people felt the organisation was tracking against its stated values and guiding principles. These workshops were held in recognition of the need for an organisation aiming to be healing aware and trauma-informed to be able to critically reflect and assess its own progress in relation to creating conducive healing environments.

A draft road map to guide the Marninwarntikura Journey was developed (see attachment). At the first workshop Emily Carter, CEO summarised the journey to becoming a healing organisation so far, and the importance of looking inwards to enable the organisation to progress this important work.

Emily's comments reinforce existing research on becoming a healing/trauma-informed organisation, which acknowledges the complexity of the journey and the need for an organisation to do its own reflection and action to create a harm free environment as an essential part of the journey. It is important to recognise this as a deep and innovative community development practice that takes time, commitment and dedication to achieve the outcomes.

An ongoing discussion regarding language and terms such as healing and trauma-informed is underway at Marninwarntikura. Capturing the language that reflects community aspirations and understandings is an important aspect of the Healing Framework development.



VISION

We work in partnership with Aboriginal families and Communities to strengthen systems and sustain purposeful, engaged, and healthy lives.

We provide a holistic approach and respect the importance of language and culture for individual, family and community wellbeing.

PURPOSE

Marninwarntikura is a community led centre of inspiration for Aboriginal women and their families. We support Fitzroy Valley families by:

- Providing strengths-based and trauma responsive services
- Promoting safety and wellbeing
- Undertaking innovative and community led research
- Engaging in two-way learning – balancing Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing with other contemporary world views.
- Supporting children to have a strong start in life
- Working to strengthen families across all stages of life
- Creating livelihoods that enable people to thrive
- Employing professional, ethical and passionate people working in 'two-way' teams, combining expertise, knowledge and skills

All our work is guided by our Healing Framework **Marroorrywarrani Ngambirriyawarrani Yoowarnia a Gooniyandi word meaning 'Gathering, Caring and Nurturing Together as One'**, with trauma informed and FASD responsive practice embedded within our programs. We provide a holistic approach and respect the importance of language and culture for individual, family and community wellbeing. We acknowledge the lasting and continuing impact of colonisation and discriminatory practices for Aboriginal people in the Fitzroy Valley.

VALUES

- We value and respect every person, operate with empathy and embrace diversity.
- We encourage and support personal growth, pride and leadership.
- We take responsibility for our own actions and are accountable to the community
- We work collaboratively.
- We are ethical and act with integrity.
- We strive for safe, sustainable practices and care for and nurture our environments.

SHARED BEHAVIOURS

- Inspire and support each other for positive change and growth
- Plan and communicate across our teams
- Respect and care for each other
- Promote wellbeing and resilience
- Learn deeply with and from each other
- Lead by example

9

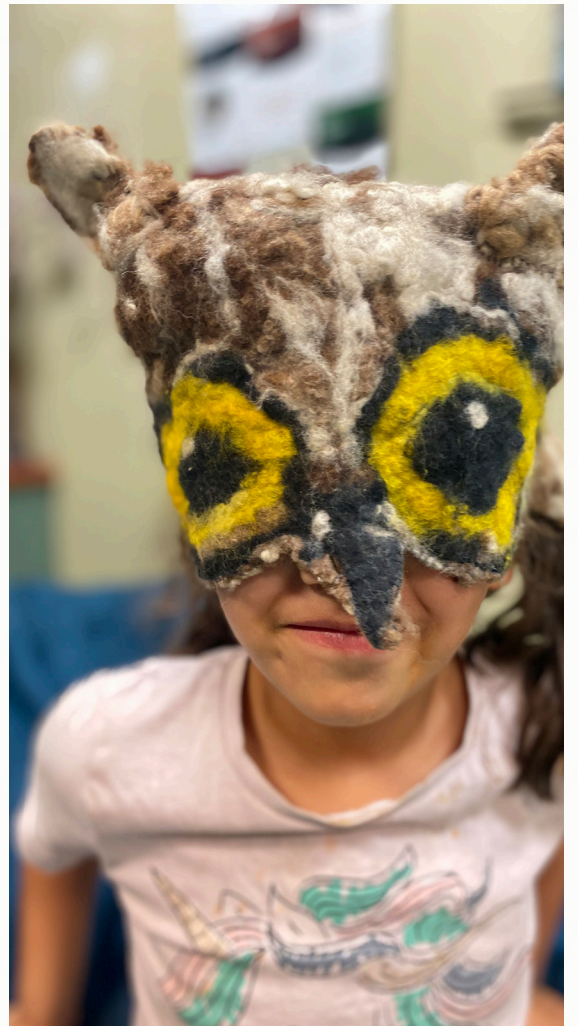
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our Work is:

- Accountable to our communities
- Supportive of community empowerment
- Transformative
- Building community knowledge - ensuring learnings are translated into practice and shared with community
- Informed by emerging knowledge, lived experience, and grounded in healing
- Responsive to lived experiences in our advocacy for individuals and, for systemic change
- Solution focused
- Guided by cultural authority and women's voices

We:

- Support individuals to heal in their own way
- Put the safety and wellbeing of children and families at the forefront of everything we do.
- Support measures that contribute to thriving communities and positive change including alcohol restrictions
- Advocate for community led change and solution focussed initiatives
- Acknowledge community resilience, celebrate the strengths of Fitzroy Valley families, and
- Acknowledge the cultural expertise and unique experiences of our communities.





THE HEALING FRAMEWORK

What does the evidence say?

WHAT IS HEALING?

Certain themes have emerged on what healing means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is despite the fact that healing can mean many things to different people and it is not always a word people will relate to. Participants in the Voices from the Campfires report (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team 2009, p 11) described healing as:

- Holistic
- A journey that involves time and pain
- A 'therapeutic dialogue with people who are listening'
- Recognition of pain, issues and how individual stories fit 'into the collective story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trauma'
- A change involving personal renewal and evolving cultural traditions
- Hope for the future
- Connecting with your identity and spiritual self (SNAICC, p 12)

This is reflected in the Pederson report which focuses on the importance of recognising the social determinants of health, interconnectedness of different teams and the inclusion of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation (2010, p 9) states that the 'journey of healing is one that enables people to be restored to wellbeing and wholeness'. However, it is essential to recognise that healing is a journey rather than an end point (SNAICC, p 11).

'Healing gives us back to ourselves. Not to hide or fight anymore. But to sit still, calm our minds, listen to the universe and allow our spirits to dance on the wind ... [and] drift into our dreamtime. Healing ultimately gives us back to our country. To stand once again in our rightful place, eternal and generational. Healing is not just about recovering what has been lost or repairing what has been broken. It is about embracing our life force to create a new and vibrant fabric that keeps us grounded and connected.'

<https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-topics/healing/traditional-healing/>

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The social determinants of health are worth mentioning here to ensure a holistic view of health and what contributes to better or worse health and healing.

The social determinants of health include:



- the social and economic environment,
- the physical environment, and
- the person's individual characteristics and behaviours.

That is the circumstances in which people grow, live, work and age. These can be measured by indicators that reflect an individual's own personal situation—such as their income, education, employment, and levels of social support and social inclusion. For First Nations people social determinants also include factors such as cultural identity, family, participation in cultural activities and access to traditional lands (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018).

An understanding of the context in which people live is critical to ensuring any approaches to healing are informed by this broader context.

WHAT ARE THE FEATURES OF HEALING APPROACHES?

In 2012 SNAICC issued a report outlining promising practice for healing programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families. Four areas were identified:

- Address the causes
- First Nations ownership
- First Nations world view
- Strength based approach

Similar to much of the recent literature the report claimed the importance of the following: reclaiming history; safety; ownership; holistic and relational world view; flexible; impart cultural knowledge and pride; build capacity and readiness to heal; restore and build relationships.

Research undertaken by the Healing Foundation also found that healing programs should be holistic based on a whole of life view and inclusive of the social, emotional, cultural, spiritual, and physical wellbeing of the whole community. To be successful any approach to healing must aim to increase social and cultural identity and self-esteem, cultural knowledge and skills and cultural connectedness, extending to family and community and drawing on First Nation's cultures and healing practices.

Importantly the level of healing required has a direct correlation to the impact of colonisation and the legacy of trauma, loss and grief (McKendrick, J et al *Healing Foundation*).

Later work undertaken by the Healing Foundation (2014) identified eight elements of a quality healing program.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Programs: A Literature Review, Healing Foundation

While these elements are based on healing programs for individuals and communities, several of these elements are applicable to an organisational approach to healing, including the importance of:

- understanding and recognising the impact of trauma
- addressing issues in the community context
- strong leadership
- proactive approach rather than reactive
- evidence of what works, including monitoring of the organisation
- building staff, management and governance capacity (Healing Foundation, 2015)

What is a Healing Framework?

A Healing Framework is a way of describing an approach to healing, to guide the understanding and implementation of both the intention and activities toward healing.

An example of a Healing Framework developed by the Canadian Aboriginal Healing Foundation (SNAICC 2006, p 13) is:



Diagram Source: Aboriginal Healing Foundation Canada

The MWRC Healing Framework Marroorrywarrani Ngambirriyawarrani Yoowarnia has been built from discussions across the organisation. These discussions have informed the content of the Framework and it is to these we now turn.



HEALING FRAMEWORK AT MARININWARNTIKURA

Marninwarntikura

WOMEN BUILDING BELONGING



What is its purpose?

- To articulate and understand the context/history
- To ask the question – What is happening? Without judgement or blame
- To support storytelling, building understanding, reduce isolation and contribute to a shared experience of change and healing
- To lift people up and provide examples of “what is a life well lived”
- To be aspirational and hopeful – holding out possibility
- To contribute to system change
- To frame the responsibilities and actions across the organisation

What is important for healing?

- Knowing history (decolonisation)
- Making connections
- Creating safe spaces
- Importance of being on country – calm, relief, lack of stress, peace
- Ability to set boundaries
- Being able to access the right kind of support
- Self-care – identifying needs, denormalising stress
- Creative and lateral solutions

What are the guiding principles?

- Culture at the centre “Culture is Healing”
- Working with people where they are at
- Showing people what “good” looks like
- Family and community led
- Leadership
- Flexibility
- Build relationships and partnerships
- Caring, nurturing, empathy, understanding
- Working from people's strengths
- Privileging family voices
- Marninwarntikura being there for the long journey

What kinds of Activities?

- Sharing information
- Creating connection
- Supporting autonomy and choice
- Healing and trauma aware practice – integration into all aspects of organisation
- Acknowledging feelings
- Responding to and supporting people to navigate government policy and systems



- Importance of relationships – building trust
- Advocacy both individual and systemic
- Referral integrated services across Marninwarntikura and external referral
- Leadership and modelling
- Culturally informed practice
- Language learning
- Building confidence and self-esteem, positive mental health and wellbeing
- Embedding cultural parenting, practices, language
- Yarning
- Nurturing self and others

Similar to much of its work, Marninwarntikura is once again providing leadership across the Fitzroy Valley communities. Based on the literature and the organisational discussions there is a great deal of consistency on the content and value of Healing Frameworks. This framework will provide essential guidance on the roles, responsibilities and actions required across the organisation to progress a culturally informed and consistent approach to healing activity. It will make a further contribution to the future development of a community wide healing strategy.

Marninwarntikura Resources:

This is a list of recent resources developed by Marninwarntikura that inform the organisation's healing and trauma informed practices:

- Integrating Understandings of Trauma and Healing into Everything We Do internal booklet 2018
- Revised edition of Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and complex trauma resource for educators (2018). Previous version published in 2014
- Jandu Yani U Positive Parenting for Families 2017
- Jane Pederson Churchill Fellowship Report 2016 (referred to as the Pederson report)
- Jandu Yani U (for all families) Project Report December 2019

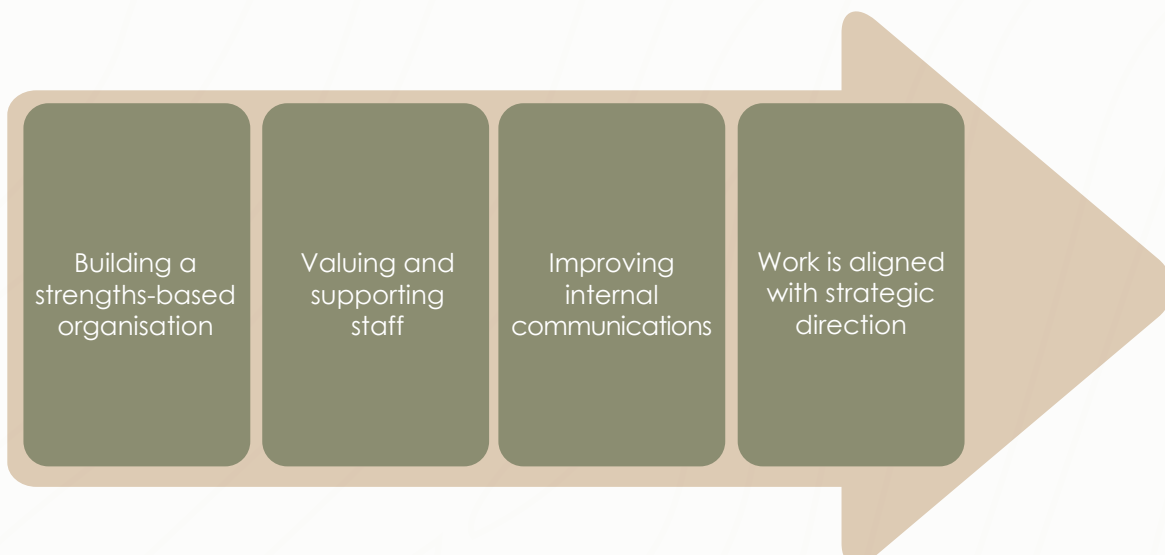
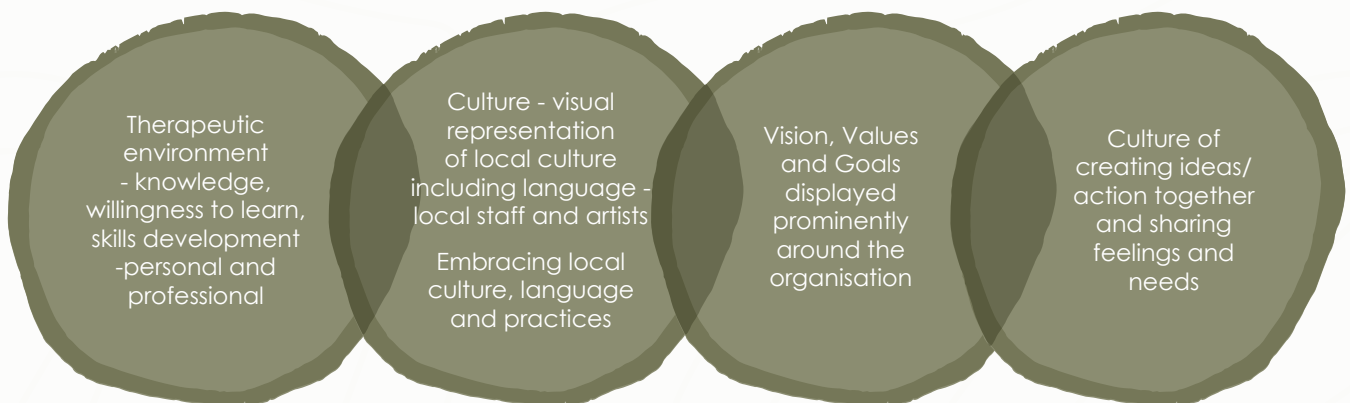
Healing aware model to guide organisational practice

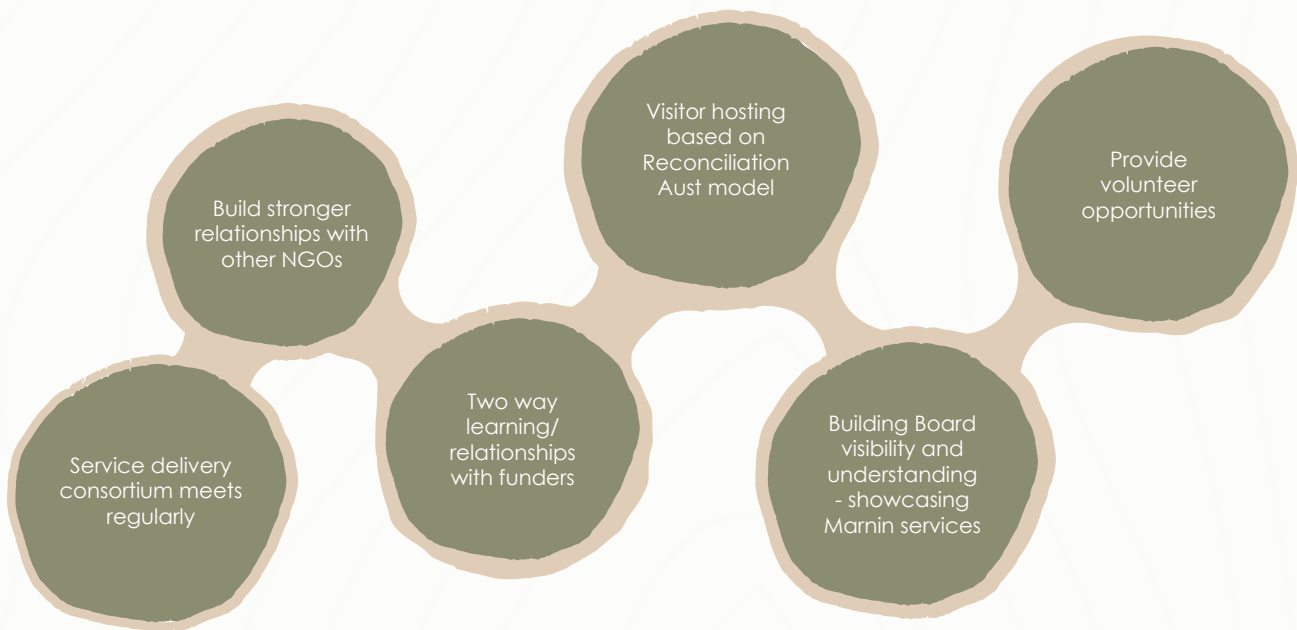
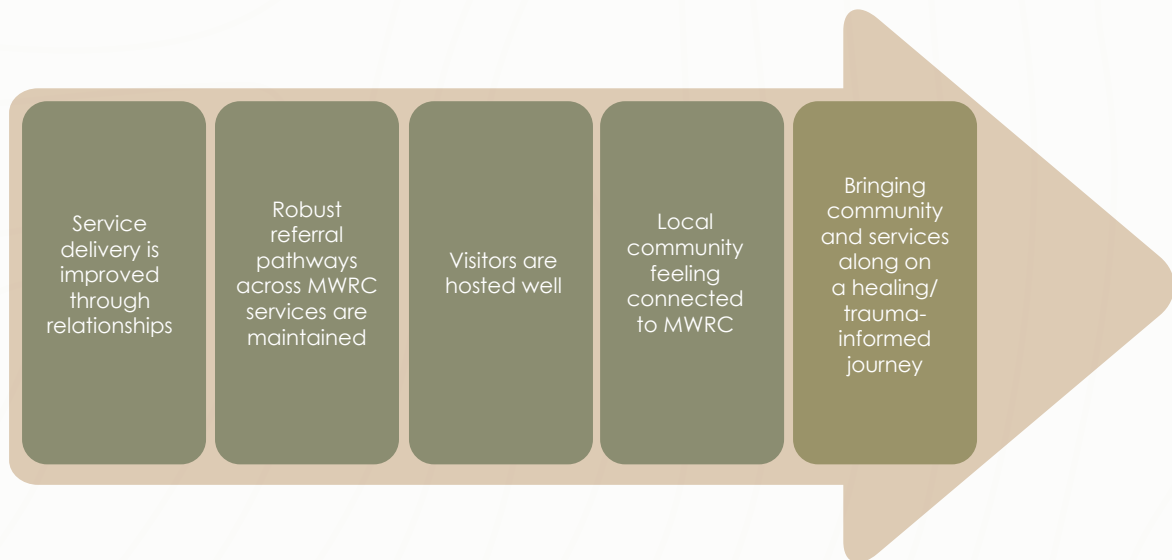
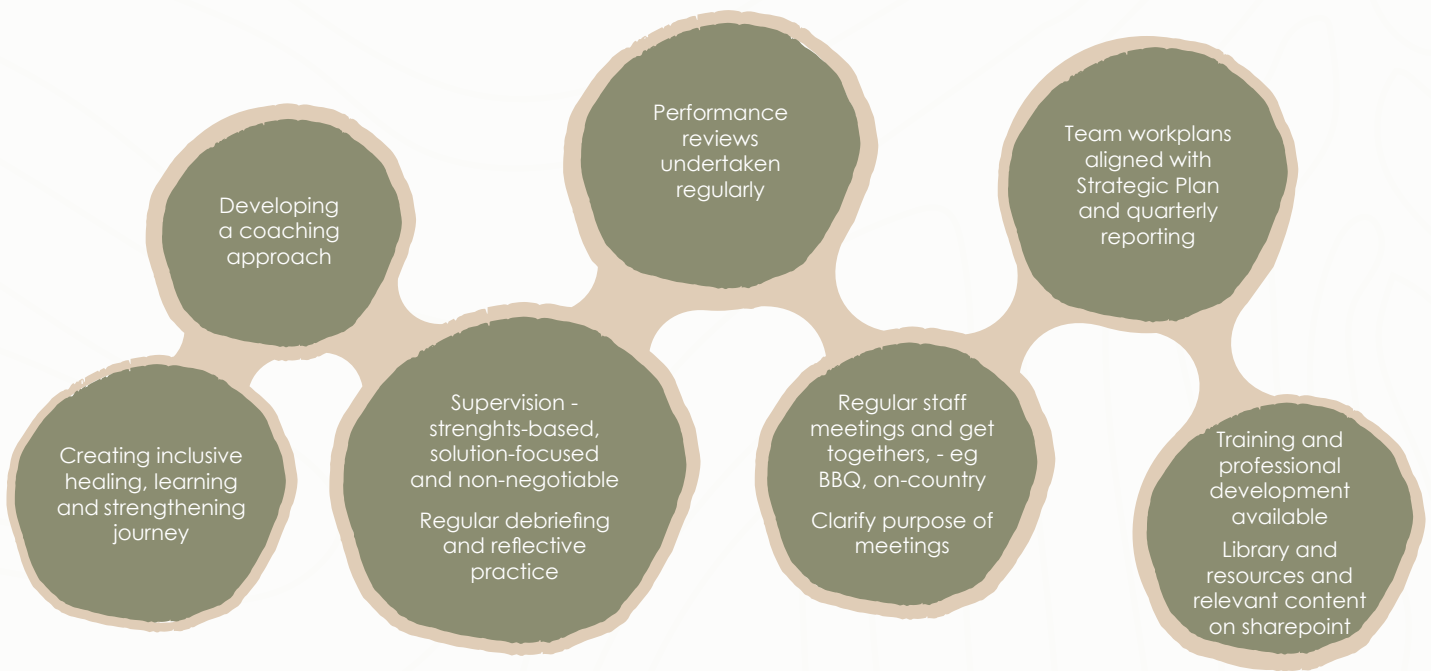
Board	Leadership	Team members	Examples of processes
Positive healing oriented value system			
<i>The board's role is to provide community-based leadership for the organisation on the development of a positive, healing oriented value system.</i>	<i>The leadership team's role is to implement a positive, healing oriented value system (healing framework) and to ensure coherence and cultural safety across the organisation.</i>	<i>Team member's role is to ensure that services are provided in a culturally safe, trauma informed way that ensures safety, dignity and respect for community members and other staff</i>	Dedicating time to debriefing and yarning up Selection and induction processes for board and staff which embed healing awareness and trauma informed practice Employee support, including strengths-based supervision and access to cultural and external supervision Regular strengths-based reflection through a decolonising lens
How do we know if our values are transparent and reflect the community's expectations? How do Board members envision healing for their families and communities? How does the Board assess its decisions to ensure they are focused on organisations values? How are we encouraging open communication among board members, and between the board and the rest of the organisation?	How are we encouraging open, values-based communication within the management team, and with the rest of the organisation? How are our values reflected in opportunities for staff to debrief and discuss issues they might be having in a safe environment? How could we better align staff care with our values? Do we actively engage in applying decolonising processes? Do our hiring practices address the values, knowledge and experience we are looking for in our staff? Do we provide training for our staff on healing aware, trauma informed practice? Do we have an effective Employee Assistance Program that understands trauma in our context? Do we support a process of critical internal reflection to guide our practice?	How can we ensure we have the time and space to debrief? What do we understand about the trauma in our community and the way this impacts feelings and behaviours? Do we have a process in place to recognise and manage our own triggers? What can we ask of others in supporting us to do this? In what ways are we providing a safe environment for those accessing our services?	
Positive healing oriented value system			
The Board's role is to provide direction on the development of governance policy which embeds values and aligns with the healing framework	Leadership team role is to ensure implementation of policies and procedures	Staff's role is to work within the policies and procedures and to provide feedback on what is working or not	Clear policies and procedures – developed collaboratively and widely owned and understood across the organisation
How are our values communicated in our policies and procedures? Are there identifiable actual or potential issues in the organisation which require a healing policy response? How familiar are our board members with our policies? Could induction for new board members and refresher for existing board members be helpful?	Does our organisation have policies addressing violence, lateral violence, conflict of interest and family relationships, and understanding and recognition of cultural load and the added burden Aboriginal people carry. Are the policies clearly articulated, with no room for misinterpretation, enabling staff, board and women and families we work with to understand the issues? Are policies part of the induction process for management?	How can the policies and procedures be used to guide our practice? Can we better use policies and procedures to maintain our health and wellbeing?	

Map of Journey to Healing Organisation*



22





* developed by managers and staff at Working Together workshops 2017 to guide the development and implementation of a healing aware and trauma informed approach at Marninwarntikura.



References

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Healing Foundation 2014 Prospective cost benefit analysis of healing centres. Canberra, ACT.
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation 2015 Healing Informed Organisations.
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Programs: A Literature Review.
4. Atkinson, V., Atkinson, C., Burke, A., Wrigley, B., Collard, H., & Carroll, M. 2017 Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing – Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Companion Manual. Commonwealth of Australia.
5. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. Australia's health 2018. Australia's health series no. 16. AUS 221. Canberra.
6. Blignault, I. & Arkles, R. 2015 Collective Healing for Members of the Stolen Generations: Summary Report Healing Foundation. Canberra.
7. KPMG 2012, Healing Centres, Report for Healing Foundation.
8. McKendrick, J et al Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Programs: A Literature Review, Healing Foundation.
9. Pederson, J 2016 Empowering Women and Children to Overcome Intergenerational Trauma, Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, Canberra
10. Reynolds, V. The Zones of Fabulousness: Resisting vicarious trauma with connection, collective care and justice-doing in ways that centre the people we work alongside, Context 164, 2019 <https://vikkireynolds.ca/writings/articles/>
11. SNAICC 2012 Healing in Practice: Promising practices in Healing Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families



THE HEALING FRAMEWORK

mwrc.com.au