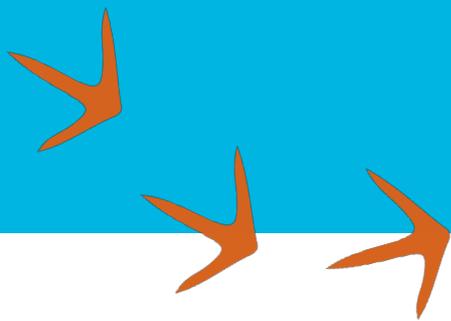


SNAPSHOT REPORT 2020



We acknowledge the Wadjuk Nyoongar people on whose land we meet and work and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.



**LOOKING
FORWARD**
MOVING FORWARD

IN THIS REPORT...

Kaya and welcome

In this report we provide a brief overview of 2020 project activities, marking the fifth year of the project.

It was a strange and challenging year overall, with COVID-19 to contend with and the uncertainty and disjointedness it brought us.

We hope that 2020 brought you learnings, reflections and insights.

We present our project progress in this report including:

- Progress on data analysis
- Commencement of a service experience evaluation
- Translation activities
- Reflections from services and Elders about COVID-19

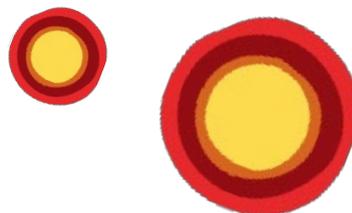
The Looking Forward Moving Forward Project is a research partnership between Aboriginal Elders and service providers in the mental health and drug and alcohol sector, peak agencies, and the WA Mental Health Commission. The Project aims to make services more accessible and responsive to Aboriginal families.

KEY ACTIVITIES 2020



Looking Forward team members with Elder co-researchers, Aunty Dot Getta (left), Aunty Helen Kickett (centre) and Uncle Charlie Kickett (right), Kwinana (Perth south metro area).

- **Service Evaluation**
 - Re-connecting with Elders post-COVID19
 - Qualitative interviews – shared leadership & ongoing relationships remain strong key themes
- **Significant impact of Elders on:**
 - Organisational governance
 - Workforce development & support
- **Service-level findings:**
 - Increase in Aboriginal leadership roles are key to supporting staff
 - Regional service & program expansion led by Elders with early community engagement & support
- **Increased invitations by Elders** to services to engage with a range of local community groups/centres



EARLY ANALYSIS

Qualitative data

23 service interviews
+
16 Elders' interviews



Strong themes related to relationships, leadership, increased confidence in service leaders and other staff.

- Evident that change is not uniform across an organisation
- Change is sustained where engagement with Elders is consistent and regular
- Pockets of innovation and Elders' influence exist, driven by organisational champions



Impact of Elders on organisational governance and their influence at Board level is highly apparent.

- **Organisational structure** is adjusting to reflect this. Further analysis will confirm this with service data comparisons between 2017 and 2020.
- **Workforce development is strong, with Aboriginal staff** increases across most service partners, and new positions being created and filled.
- Evident that **client engagement and outcomes remain mostly with Aboriginal staff in service organisations**, though some non-Aboriginal staff have seen an increased case load of Aboriginal clients. Further analysis will confirm this with service data comparisons between 2017 and 2020.
- **Increased program development and funding opportunities include the Elders**, especially in the set-up of new regional sites, with increased community engagement occurring up front.



Looking Forward research team members and service managers with Elder co-researchers, Aunty Irene McNamara (left) and Uncle Albert McNamara (front left).

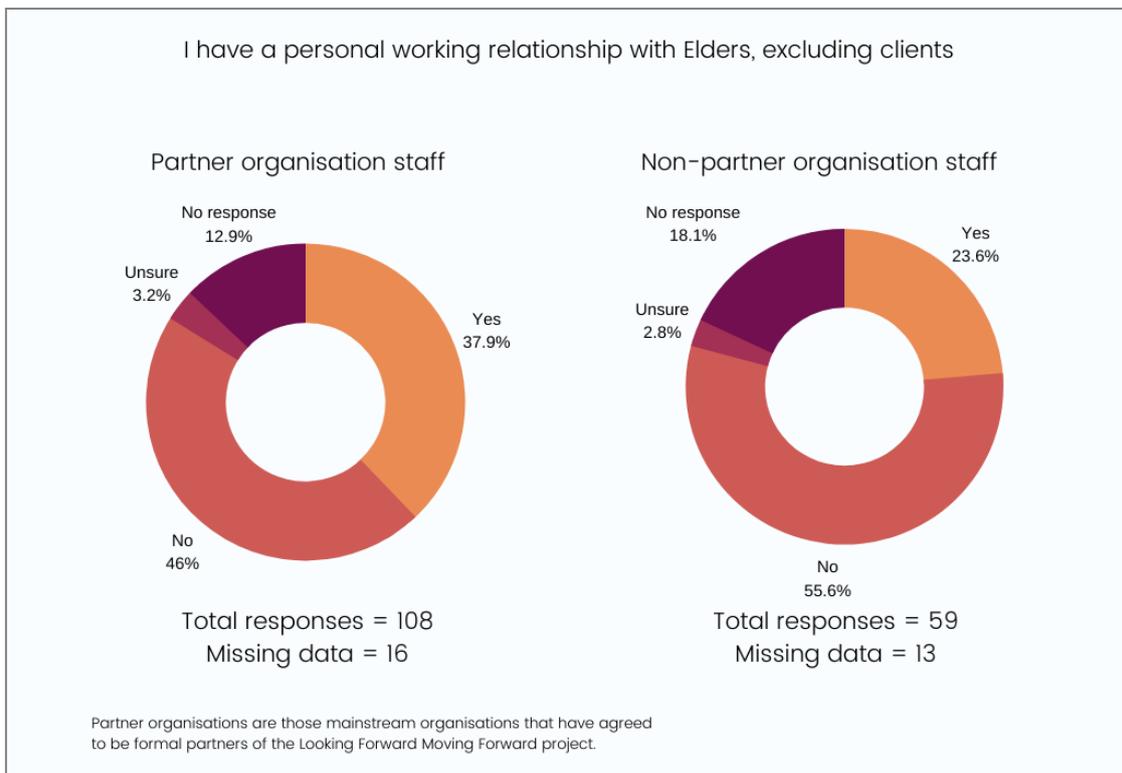
EARLY ANALYSIS

Quantitative data (Sector survey 2020)

In 2020, project partner organisations as well as randomly selected non-partner organisations participated in a **sector-wide survey**, distributed through their respective peak agencies, WA Association of Mental Health Services, WA Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies and the WA Council of Social Services.

The survey aimed to capture current service staff understandings, experiences and practices of **cultural security** when working with Aboriginal clients.

The survey results are inconclusive regarding a definitive understanding of cultural security. There were **significant missing data**, indicating that there is a possible lack of understanding of what cultural security is and what it may look like in practice.

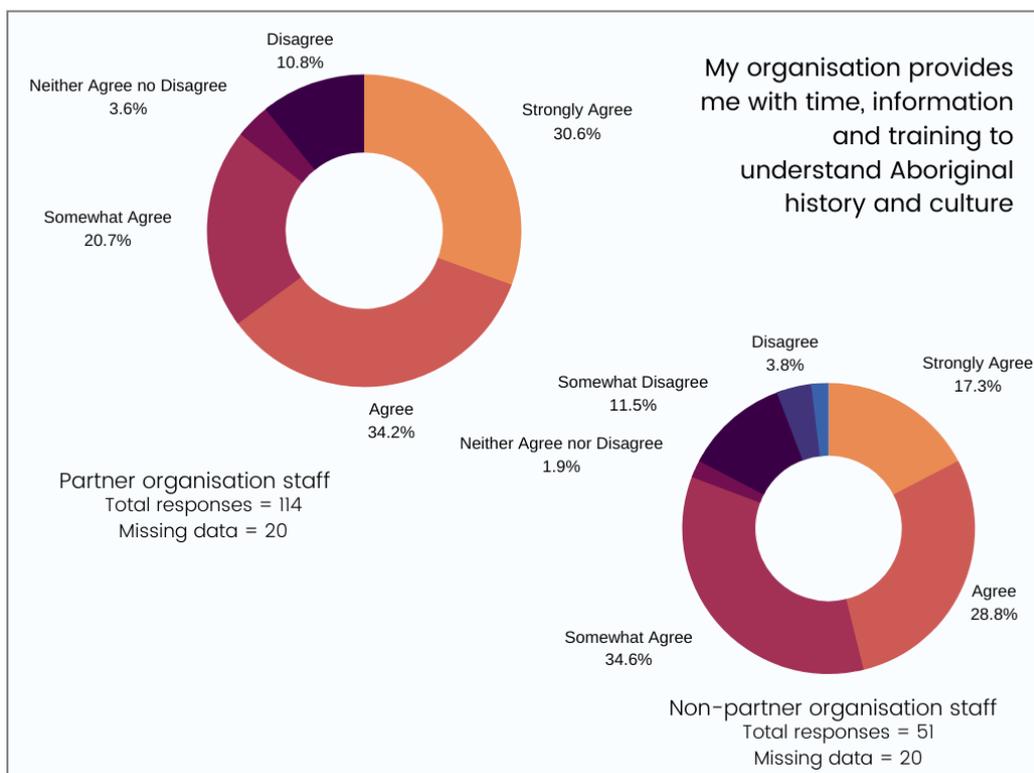


Despite these missing data, it is apparent that staff employed in the partner organisations had more **working relationships with Elders** (37.9%) than staff in non-partner organisations (23.6%).

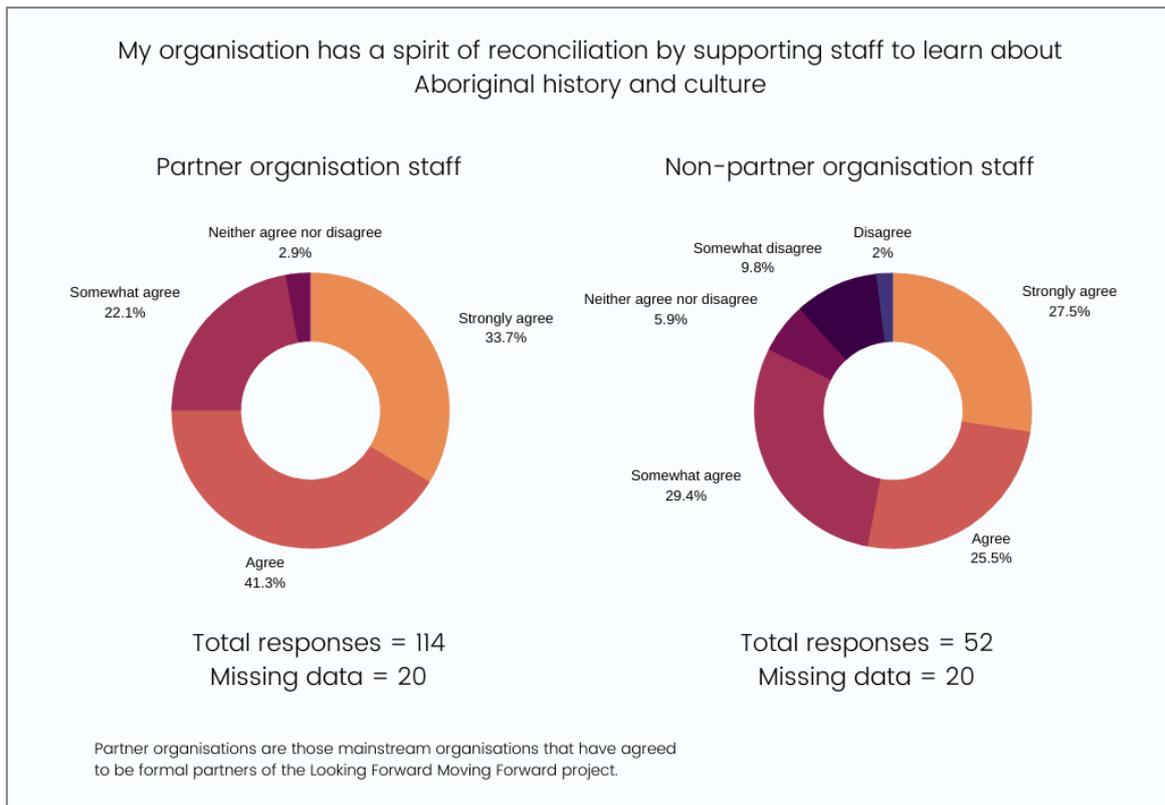
Daily, weekly or monthly interactions with Aboriginal people both within and external to the workplace was evenly spread across non-Aboriginal staff from both partner and non-partner organisations. There is an opportunity then that through these interactions, links could be made to integrate these experiences into **professional development opportunities** and perhaps to seek guidance from Elders and community members in the co-design of these activities, to enhance cultural security across the sector.

This is also reflected in the responses to the statement: “My organisation provides me with time, information and training to understand Aboriginal history and culture organisation.”

Thus, there appears to be a **strong commitment** to learning and engaging with Aboriginal people in order to develop cultural security across the sector.



Service staff also acknowledged the high degree of organisational commitment to a **spirit of reconciliation** by supporting staff to learn more about Aboriginal history and culture.



The **sector survey results** will be collated and analysed along with survey data collected in 2018. Trends and themes will be extrapolated to present an overview of broader sector understandings about cultural security and the ways in which this could be further developed through the **ongoing engagement with Elders** and Aboriginal community members.

A short follow-up survey will be conducted in mid-2021 firstly to clarify the missing data from the 2020 results and secondly to confirm how and in what ways the Elders have created impact within organisations.

SERVICE EVALUATION

Client and worker service experience survey

The **service evaluation** currently underway is due to be completed in late 2021. It is a **complex evaluation** which takes into account the diverse arrangements and structures of the partner organisations. It includes multiple semi-structured interviews, service data and reporting, and a three-way service experience survey that captures the shared experiences of clients, support persons and service workers.



Top: Associate Professor Michael Wright with Elder co-researchers, Aunty Moya Newman and Aunty Oriel Green.
Bottom: Service site of a project partner organisation located in the Peel region (Perth south metro area).



COVID-19: COMMUNITY AND SERVICE REFLECTIONS

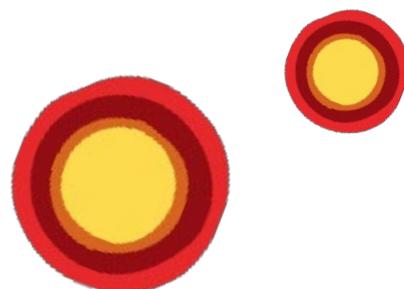
“... I miss the Elders, that we’re not having our regular meetings with them during COVID.”

2020 was a tumultuous year. The experiences of COVID-19 across the local community and within services were varied and destabilising for many. We reconnected with the Elders and the partner organisations to see how they were holding up during this time. The fear generated by the pandemic was real and felt, as one Elder reflects:

“I just hope that things will change because it’s got to this stage, and look what’s happened this year. We had COVID taking over the country everywhere, you know, and what have we done? We haven’t got something that’s going to stop us from getting that, and how scared are people? I’m scared. I’m scared. I don’t want it to come back here in WA.”

A range of service initiatives emerged, including providing regional clients with mobile phones to continue to access services, to setting up laptops for Elders to join executive meetings where feasible.

Some Elders described how they felt as busy as ever during the restrictions, not only supporting family, but also maintaining contact with services with whom they worked.



Both Elders and service staff acknowledged the strain on both their resources and their wellbeing during the lockdown and the restrictions that followed. It gave pause for reflection, resetting focus and also a chance to deepen existing connections due to the ability to have regular phone and web conference contact.

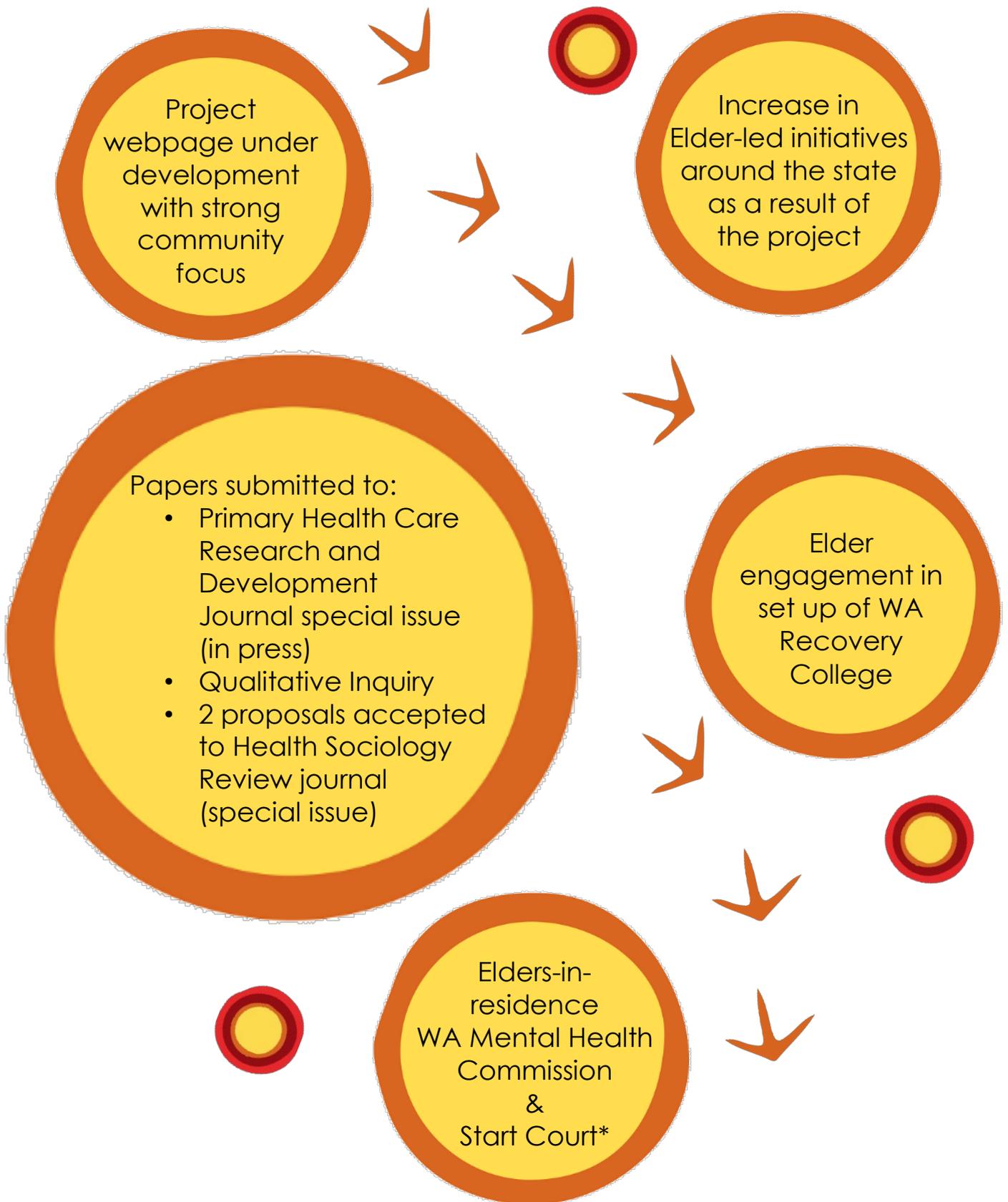
There was renewed confidence about communicating with Elders that seemed to permeate into other areas of work resulting in a general rise in confidence:

“...we’ve had really good feedback on how good our communication has been through COVID in terms of keeping people informed about the risks, the plans we have, the response we’re making, the reasons we have to change this, that and the other. You know, we’ve really, I think, stepped up in terms of that whole area of communication to staff.”



Galup (Lake Monger), Perth WA.

PROJECT TRANSLATION



* Start Court is a Magistrates Court that specialises in dealing with offenders who have mental health issues. It is based within the Central Law Courts in the Perth WA. It offers a program that combines access to mental health supports and services (including alcohol and other drug support if necessary), with regular appearances before the Start Court Magistrate. The program can take up to six months to complete. URL. https://www.magistratescourt.wa.gov.au/S/start_court.aspx.

NEXT STEPS



Service Experience Survey

- 4 service partners, n~150 clients
(Nov 2020 → June 2021)



Service Evaluation

- Analysis of interviews (coding to be completed March 2021)
- Collation of service data (e.g. number of clients, Aboriginal staff, governance structure)
- WA Mental Health Commission impact evaluation (survey) for 2021



Sector survey analysis underway

(to be completed March 2021)



4 x publications

currently under development,
1 accepted for publication

ELDER CO-RESEARCHER GROUP

Over 20 Elders work with the Investigator team alongside the partner organisations. Most have been working with the partner organisations for at least three years and have established firm and open relationships with key staff members, in particular executive staff. Collectively, the Elders have **significant knowledge of Nyoongar cultural protocols** and are regularly involved in community-based events, activities and initiatives, along with their organisational links, to advocate for and support their community and families. For example, most of the Elders are, or have been, health workers, educators, tradespeople, storytellers, artists, musicians, researchers, youth workers and respected healers and carers. One Elder in particular, sat on the review committee to input on Aboriginal perspectives for the revision of the WA Mental Health Act (2014). Most continue to represent their community on local and statewide committees and attend conferences upon invitation, conduct Welcome to Country and other ceremonies, and **provide cultural supervision and guidance** to numerous Aboriginal corporations, mainstream organisations and community-run centres in their localities.

Aunty Joanna Corbett
Aunty Margaret Culbong
Aunty Carmel Culbong
Aunty Dot Getta
Aunty Oriel Green
Aunty Louise Hansen
Uncle Percy Hansen
Aunty Vivienne Hansen
Uncle Mort Hansen
Aunty Liz Hayden
Uncle Jim Hayden

Aunty Helen Kickett
Uncle Charlie Kickett
Aunty Irene McNamara
Uncle Albert McNamara
Aunty Moya Newman
Aunty Charmaine Pell
Aunty Millie Penny
Uncle Fred Penny
Aunty Cheryl Phillips
Aunty Teresa Walley
Aunty Sandra Wilkes
Uncle Peter Wilkes

INVESTIGATORS

Associate Professor Michael Wright, Curtin University

Professor Alex Brown, South Australian Medical Health Research Institute

Professor Patricia Dudgeon, University of Western Australia

Mr Timothy Marney, former Mental Health Commissioner, WA

Professor Elizabeth Geelhoed, University of Western Australia

Professor Steve Allsop, Curtin University

Associate Professor Ashleigh Lin, Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia

Professor Fiona Stanley, Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia

Associate Professor Geoff Smith, Health WA, University of Western Australia

Mr Glenn Pearson, Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia



Top: Aunty Irene McNamara (back) and Aunty Sandra Wilkes (front) with service staff and Executives at a co-design workshop.

Bottom: Aunty Millie Penny and Aunty Oriel Green with community members, service workers and researchers at an earlier community forum meeting.



SERVICE PARTNERS

The Mental Health Commission of Western Australia

Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH)

Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS)

Western Australian Network of Alcohol & other Drug Agencies (WANADA)

Hope Community Services

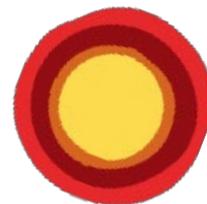
MercyCare

Palmerston Association

Richmond Wellbeing

RUAH Community Services

St John of God Health Care Midland



Due to the Elders' cultural status in the community, there are cultural expectations that the [executives and senior leaders work directly with the Elders](#), that is, "burdiya to burdiya" (boss to boss).

Service Partners have [committed](#) to engage their key staff members in the Project, including board members, executive staff, clinical managers, and Aboriginal staff members.

Service partners have been encouraged to step back from conventional and business-like ways of working and connect on a more personal level with a [greater focus on building relationships](#).

INTRODUCING NEW PROJECT STAFF

Dr Anne-Marie Eades – Senior Research Fellow

I am a Noongar woman from the Minang and Willman clan groups in Western Australia. I'm the youngest sibling of ten and a mother and grandmother. In my previous work I identified the critical role that family plays in providing informal supports in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



My work aims to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal women and their families by identifying systemic barriers associated with child removal for Aboriginal families in Western Australia.

Savannah Travia-Dann – Administrator

Since joining the team in February, I feel I have become more competent and efficient in the area of research, as this role has had opportunities for me to 'test the water'. I have enjoyed learning the processes and connecting with the Elders as well as other community members. This has been my dream job, I've loved being able to walk between both worlds.



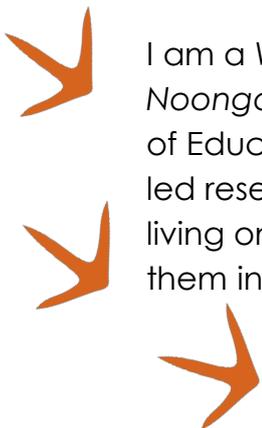
Kate Taylor – Research Officer

I joined the team in early 2020 to support the writing up of findings for publications and sharing the learnings. I have been deeply inspired by the project and those involved – Elders, services and community – as well as the Looking Forward team. It is a privilege to work in a space that is focused on building better relationships between services and community to ultimately improve the health of Aboriginal people.



Nicole Ilich - Analyst

I am a *Wadjella* (non-Aboriginal) researcher living on *Noongar Boodjar*. I am currently completing a Masters of Education. I also work on an Elder and Community led research project focused on Aboriginal children living on *Noongar Boodjar*. I am privileged to learn from them in my journey as a researcher, and as a person.



These new staff have been an invaluable addition to the team and work alongside current team members, Tiana Culbong and Margaret O'Connell.

THANKS

We thank the Elders for [maintaining their trust](#) in the team and in the service staff, especially in the face of a pandemic. We acknowledge their wisdom and guidance.

A special thank you to the [Nyoongar community](#) for continuing to show us the way in this research. We remain committed to this journey with a strong vision to make a [real difference](#) in the lives of those experiencing mental health and drug and alcohol concerns.

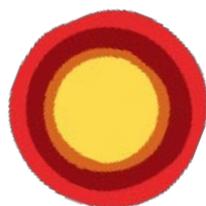
Funding

The Looking Forward Moving Forward Project is funded by a National Health and Medical Research Council Partnership Project Grant with financial and in-kind support also committed by the 10 service partners.

We also thank the School of Allied Health, Curtin University for their ongoing support for the project and the team.

Ethics

The Looking Forward Moving Forward Project has been approved by the Western Australian Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee (HRE772) and the Human Research Ethics Committee at Curtin University (HRE2017-0446).



CULTURAL COPYRIGHT

The knowledge in this work embodies traditional knowledge of the Nyoongar people. It was created with the consent of Elders of the Nyoongar Community. All rights are reserved. Dealing with any part of this knowledge for any purpose that has not been authorised by Elders or their representative may breach customary laws and also the Australian Commonwealth Copyright Act 1968 and amendments. The traditional knowledge/traditional cultural expression rights and communal moral rights remain with the Nyoongar people. Use and reference is allowed for the purposes of research or study provided that full and proper attribution is given to the author or authors, and those who hold and are custodians of the traditional knowledge. For further enquiries about permission to use this information contact Dr Michael Wright. m.wright@curtin.edu.au

Suggested Citation

Wright, M., O'Connell, M., Culbong, T., Eades, A-E., Taylor, K., & Travia-Dann, S. (2020). Looking Forward Moving Forward Project Snapshot Report. Curtin University, Perth, Australia.

© Copyright 2020. Curtin University, Perth, Australia.



**LOOKING
FORWARD**
MOVING FORWARD



Curtin University

