



Signatories to the Call to Action recorded at the Allawah! Burdiyas! Elders Call to Action Community Conference, Point Walter, 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022.

## Allawah! Burdiyas! Elders Community Conference A Call to Action statement ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS. WORK TOGETHER AND WALK TOGETHER.

1. **There is a need for policy and guidelines to be developed to ensure an Aboriginal voice is included, heard and acted on.** Being led and held by the Elders will ensure an enduring commitment to cultural practice and security is embedded in service design and implementation.
2. Government and services must be accountable for their commitment to cultural security. **Their actions should clearly demonstrate how they value the knowledge, expertise and leadership of Elders, Burdiya to Burdiya (Boss to Boss).**
3. To **demonstrate such commitment**, the Elders expect a written response from Government and Service Managers that invites their engagement, within the coming six months, to work with them in ways that acknowledge their **expertise, knowledge, and leadership**.
4. **An expectation that such commitment would ensure:**
  - a. The recruitment of Aboriginal people to Executive positions and on agency Boards,
  - b. More secure and long-term employment for Aboriginal staff, including ongoing professional support and development, resources and funding,
  - c. An Aboriginal role in related staff recruitment and selection, and
  - d. Clear plan to decolonise ways of working with First Nations Australians.

**An effective plan must be resourced and sustained long-term, with dedicated funding allocation.**

5. **Government and non-Government sectors need to reach out and accept the knowledge and expertise of the Elders.** It may include coordinating and funding an annual Elders conference, establishing, supporting and resourcing Elder Circles, and directing employees to actively build relationships and engage regularly (minimum 3 monthly) with Elders.
6. **Proactive engagement with Elders means listening to and acting on Elders' advice.** Engagement and action, Burdiya to Burdiya (Boss to Boss,) is both necessary and expected and must be utilised by senior staff. Working Burdiya to Burdiya sends a clear message of respectful engagement and commitment to other employees.
7. **A critical starting point for an empowered Aboriginal Voice** is for Government and non-Government services to accept and support the Uluru Statement. The Elders state that this demands an approach that is relational and reciprocal, a two-way learning.
8. **The Elders involved in the Looking Forward Project have focused on the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol sectors. However, other sectors can greatly benefit from the learnings and findings from project.** Critically, ensuring access to Trauma Informed Care is essential in addressing the impact of Colonisation experienced by Aboriginal people.
9. **Effective action means working with current Elders, and also initiating succession planning to support and develop the next generation of Elders.** It is critical to find ways and resources to bring Elders and youth together.
10. **Knowledge gained through direct lived experience is immensely invaluable.** The individual and combined knowledge of the Elders' lived experience is impressive. Elders expect that their knowledge and the knowledge and experiences of the community **must form a critical part of the basis of action that is relevant to Aboriginal people.** Their knowledge and expertise should be listened to, heard and acted on.

This statement is an outcome of the Allawah! Burdiyas! Elders Community Conference held at Point Walter on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022. Actions speak louder than words. Work together and walk together.

## BACKGROUND

The Allawah! Burdiya! Elders Community Conference is a translation outcome of **Looking Forward Moving Forward Project**, funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, 2017 – 2022. It consists of ten partner organisations and a co-researcher group of over twenty Aboriginal Elders. The project aims to change the way organisations respond to Aboriginal families seeking support for mental health and drug and alcohol concerns by ensuring services are culturally safe.

Organisations work “Burdiya to Burdiya” (Boss to Boss) with community Elders to ensure an Aboriginal worldview is foremost in decisions made that impact on and benefit Aboriginal people. For more about the project please visit  
<https://debakarn.com/our-work/looking-forward-moving-forward/>

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