

LOOKING FORWARD
MOVING FORWARD
PROJECT PROGRESS
REPORT

2021

We acknowledge the Wadjuk Nyoongar people on whose land we meet and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. Without their knowledge, stories, generosity and commitment the project would not be possible.



**LOOKING
FORWARD**
MOVING FORWARD

CULTURAL COPYRIGHT

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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.

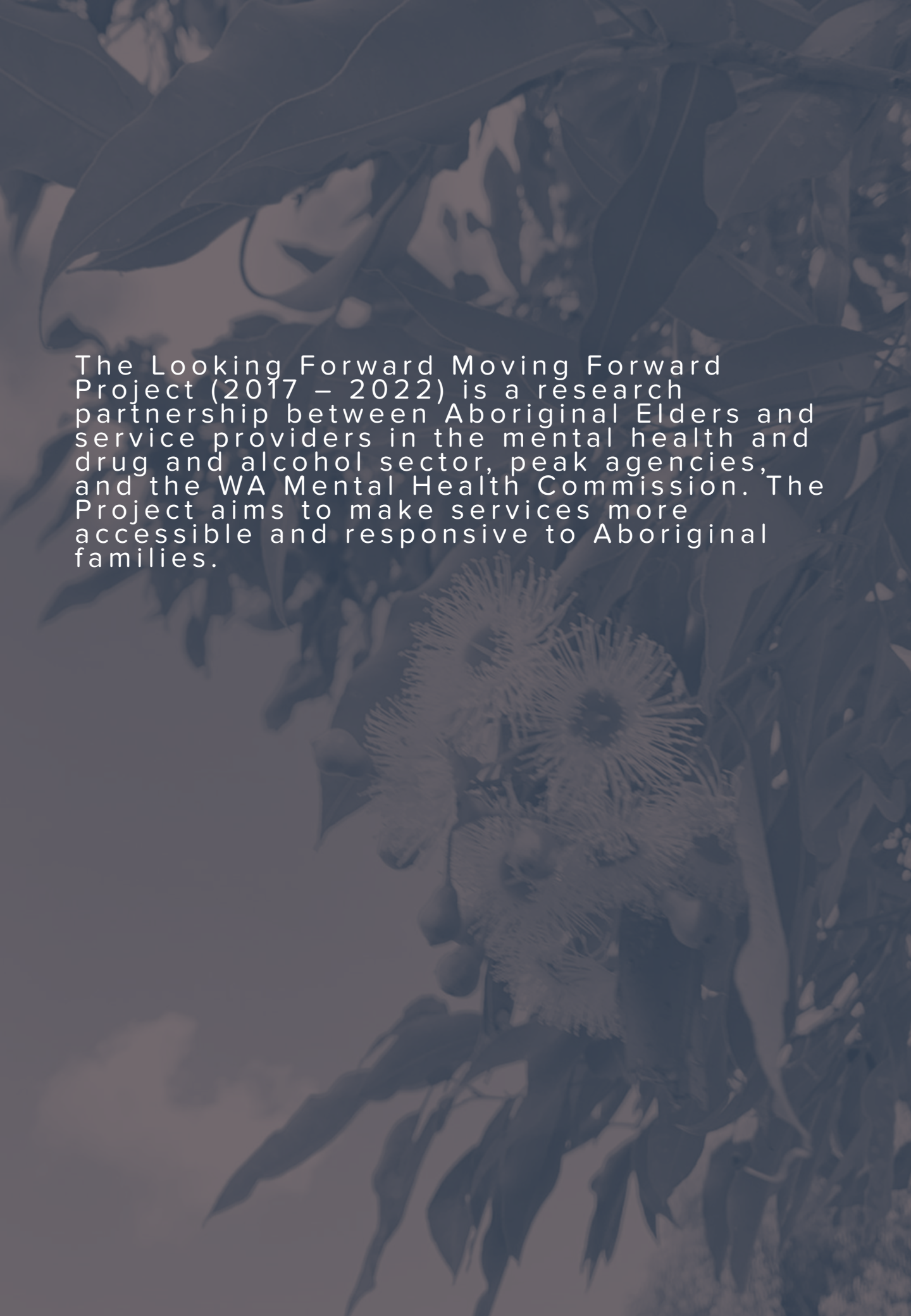
We also thank the School of Allied Health, Curtin University for their ongoing support for the project and the team.

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).

Cover photo: Eucalyptus (Corymbia) calophylla in flower, Cataby WA, by Cas Liber (2006). Public domain.

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The Looking Forward Moving Forward Project (2017 – 2022) 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.

REPORT CONTENTS



2021 ACTIVITIES



NEXT STEPS IN
2022



TRANSLATION AND
IMPACT



PUBLICATIONS



PROJECT TEAM
AND CO-
RESEARCHERS





Elders Aunty Doris (Dot) Getta (above) and Aunty Louise and Uncle Percy Hansen (below) celebrate the year at the Elders and co-researchers' Christmas Luncheon, 2021.

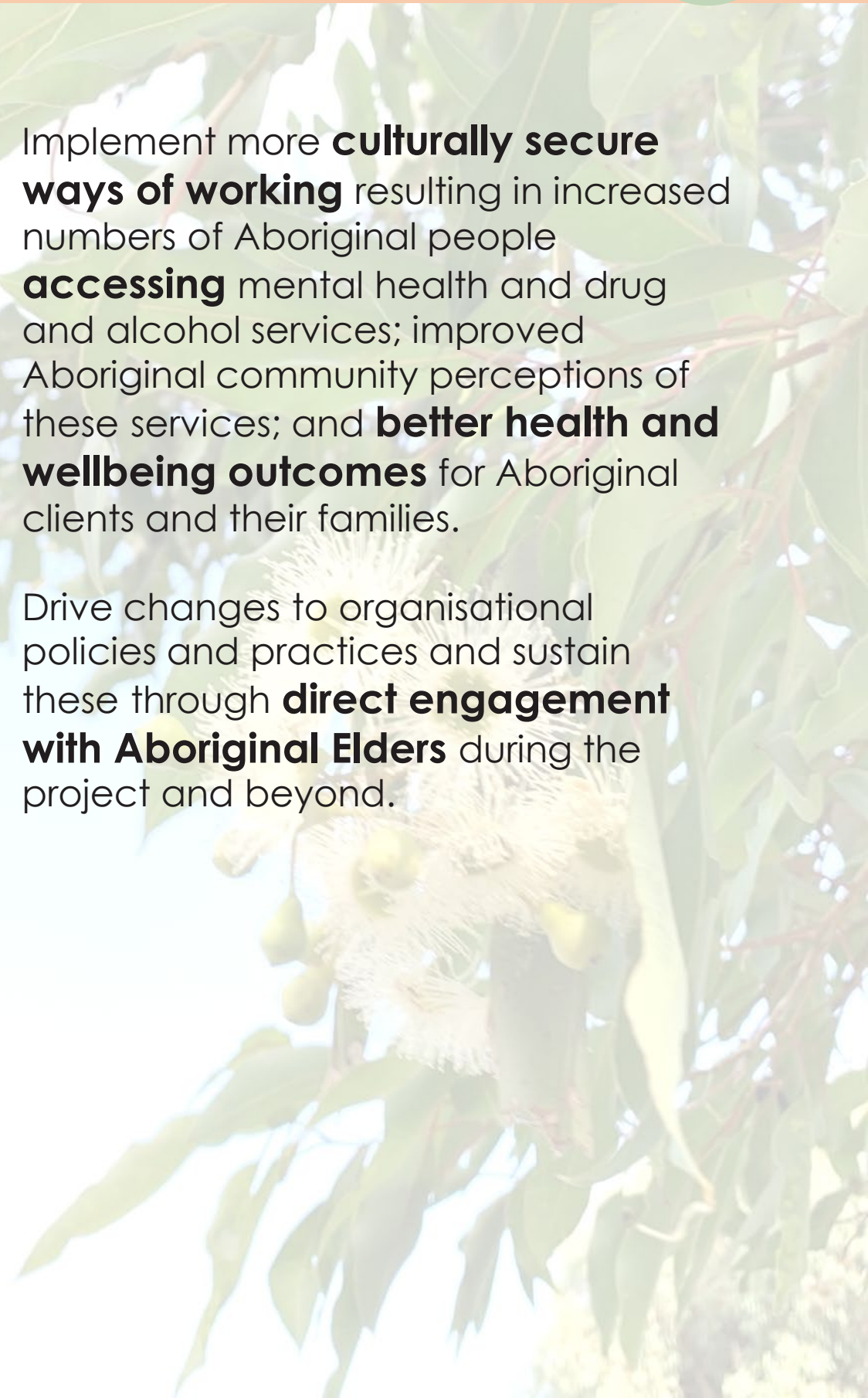
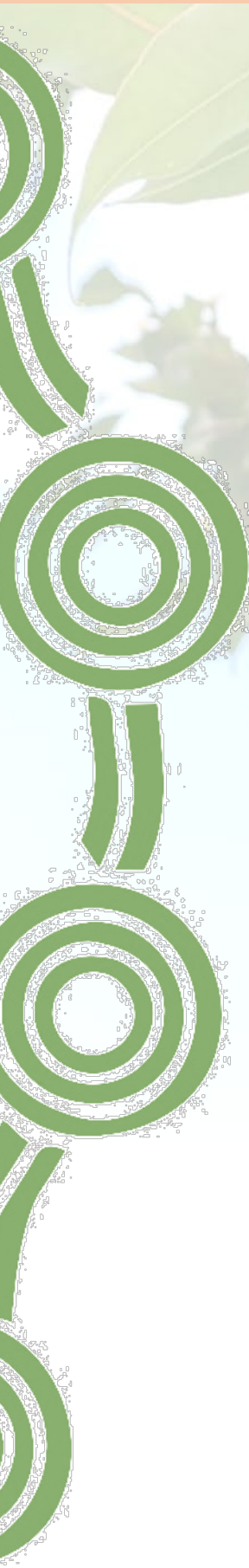


PROJECT AIMS



Implement more **culturally secure ways of working** resulting in increased numbers of Aboriginal people **accessing** mental health and drug and alcohol services; improved Aboriginal community perceptions of these services; and **better health and wellbeing outcomes** for Aboriginal clients and their families.

Drive changes to organisational policies and practices and sustain these through **direct engagement with Aboriginal Elders** during the project and beyond.





KAYA WANJU

HELLO, WELCOME

Working together to create
systematic change

[Learn More](#) →

The Looking Forward Research Team is based on Whadjuk Nyoongar Boodjar. We acknowledge the Whadjuk people as the spiritual and cultural custodians of the land on which our offices reside. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging for without their knowledge, stories, generosity and commitment our projects would not be possible.

We extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their lands and culture.

Our Vision

We see a future where Aboriginal people feel confident they can access any mental health or drug and alcohol service in Western Australia knowing they will receive culturally secure and responsive care.

2021 ACTIVITIES



This report will outline key activities undertaken in 2021, including:

Ethics amendments submitted to the WA Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee and Curtin University:

- Co-designed MHC Impact Evaluation survey instrument (approved by WAAHEC)
- The team has completed an internal project ethics audit

Client/Worker/Family Service Experience Survey

- Outline of early analysis and key themes

Key learnings from the Service Experience Survey implementation

Developing translation/impact stories

www.debakarn.com

2021 ACTIVITIES



The project funders, National Health and Medical Research Council, granted an extension to June 2022, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the scheduled project activities.

This impacted greatly on the service evaluation and delayed the start of the Service Experience Survey within the trial service sites.

→ Project acquittals are due Nov 2022

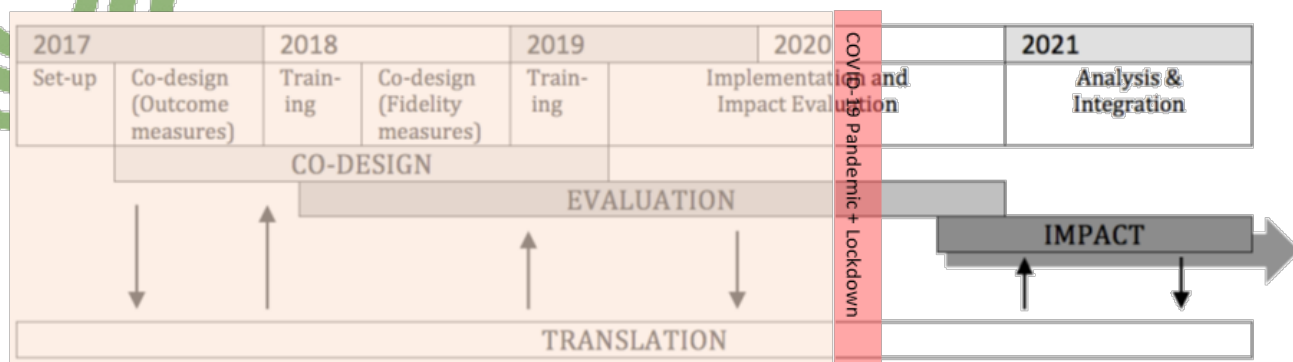


Figure 1. Project timeline and the direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and lockdowns.

CODE:

PART 1: Client's self-reflection on wellness

Please tick your response to each statement below. You can add a comment if you wish to.

Rate the statements below according to how you feel right now.

1.1 On a daily basis, I have all the things in my life I need to be happy and healthy.

1.2 There is meaning in what I do in my daily life.

1.3 I am able to work, keep busy and get involved in activities around me.

1.4 I feel hopeful for a better future for myself.

1.5 I feel strong and full of energy to do what is needed.

1.6 I can handle painful or upsetting emotions such as anger or sadness.

Not at all 1 A little 2 Somewhat 3 A fair bit 4 A lot 5

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Additional Comments
(Add anything you think might influence your responses.)

2021 SERVICE EXPERIENCE SURVEY



The Service Experience Survey was implemented between March and October 2021.

Early analysis results from the Service Experience Survey are telling us a positive story about the relationships between service workers and Aboriginal clients.

7 Aboriginal workers (N = 15, n = 7) were responsible for almost **74% of the data collected**

→ make up ~50% of the total workers in the trial of the survey

→ 35 of the total 48 clients had Aboriginal workers (N = 48)

79.2% of Clients surveyed were **aware that Elders worked in the service** and could describe the work undertaken by Elders.

CLIENT DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ELDER'S WORK...

“...help young Aboriginal people with things they need to know and knowledge them for the future; Help the workers to help the community; Mentor, work at [service location], show culture and yarn with residents; They prepare the workers for different situations...”

Client comments about the role of Elders in the service...

They prepare the workers for different situations

They help the workers to help the community

They show culture and yarn with residents

different
community
aboriginal
yarning
across
path
culture
service
younger
working
try

instigate
look
yarnings
helping
workers
bring
talk
advice

refer
knowledge
prepare
life
guide
young
Elders
work
change
aunties
future
uncles
message
situation
mentor
help
need
people
things
generation
sense

yarn
local
together
lunches
residents
situations
cultural
show



SOME SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS...

When these two survey questions were combined to test the alignment between workers and their clients...

"the worker understood that being Aboriginal means I sometimes have a different way of looking at the world" AND
"I have gained a lot from working together with the worker"

...we saw **evidence of a very strong relationship** between the worker understanding that Aboriginal worldviews impact on how the client sees the world, and the client feeling like they have gained a lot from working together.

DESCRIPTIONS OF WHAT WORKERS DID TO MAKE THE CLIENT FEEL SAFE...

"...always respected me as a client and my family situation; never judged me; continues to support me throughout my journey even when I was struggling with accommodation..."



SOME SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS...

When these two survey questions were combined to test the alignment between workers and their clients...

"the worker took responsibility to make me feel safe in the service" AND
"I have gained a lot from working together with the worker"

...we saw evidence of a **very strong relationship** between the worker making the client feel safe and the client feeling like they have gained a lot from working together.

DESCRIPTIONS OF WHAT WORKERS DID TO MAKE THE CLIENT FEEL SAFE...

"... always made me feel comfortable to be able to open up and talk; the worker listened and understood where I was coming from; not looking straight into my eyes, side-on eye contact; always showed understanding and empathy..."



COMPARING ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL WORKERS...

When analysing the survey results, there was **no significant difference** in how much clients felt they gained from working with their worker, based on the worker's Aboriginality.

This gives us great confidence that when non-Aboriginal workers are well supported, they too can respond competently and ensure Aboriginal clients feel culturally safe.

NOTE: this is a small sample. Aboriginal staff have varied roles within organisations and provide lots of additional support to non-Aboriginal workers that may account for the lack of statistical difference here.



KEY LEARNINGS: SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION

Executive buy-in increases staff confidence and momentum

CEO and executive staff buy-in provides momentum and confidence for staff and the activity is given high priority
→ Direct correlation between high CEO and executive engagement and number of completed surveys across the trial organisations

Aboriginal workers key to initial client engagement

Aboriginal workers are key to first engaging clients (and family and supporters) based on existing levels of trust
→ Non-Aboriginal workers were able to build on this

Multiple orientation and training sessions across sites

Multiple orientation/training opportunities at each trial organisation (i.e. multiple trial sites, virtual and face-to-face sessions, phone follow-up)
→ Team follow up with staff was critical to sustaining momentum

TAKE HOME MESSAGES: SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION



The early survey results have demonstrated that the work the CEO and executive staff have done with Elders is received positively.

→ This engagement has promoted organisational change (e.g. staff PD and recruitment, new roles, Board representation, etc).



These data and the way in which they have been collected has not been done before. We aim to validate the survey for wider use elsewhere.



The results show the client and worker relationship to be critical to client outcomes and for them and their supporters to build confidence in the service provided.

→ Data correlated with the level of staff confidence and the quality of service they were providing to clients.

2022 NEXT STEPS



The project team are collaborating with the Mental Health Commission on their internal impact evaluation of their Elders-in-Residence program. This will conclude end of May 2022.



The team has engaged in a number of University-based translation activities, including staff development projects to enhance cultural safety for Aboriginal students, researchers and other University staff. See page 21 for more on these projects.



Proposed implementation projects with service partners are being discussed. There is great scope for ongoing engagement between Elders and services.



The team are exploring translation activities with the peak agencies partners to engage their members across the mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and community service sectors.

2022 FINAL MILESTONES



MARCH

- Service staff feedback forum
- Complete analysis
- Co-design Translation Strategy

JUNE

- Project completion reporting
- Translation Strategy commences
- Implementation activities commence

Recording impact stories

Elders Community Conference (30th/31st)

MAY

Project acquittals

NOVEMBER

Growing
the
impact

GROWING THE IMPACT



LOOKING FORWARD
MOVING FORWARD
2017- 2022

BUILDING
BRIDGES
2018- 2020

OUR JOURNEY
OUR STORY
2019- 2024

ETHICAL DECISION
MAKING
2021- 2022

DEBAKARN KOORLINY
WANGKINY
Curtin School of Allied
Health
2021- 2023

CURTIN INDIGENOUS
RESEARCH STRATEGY
2021 - 2023



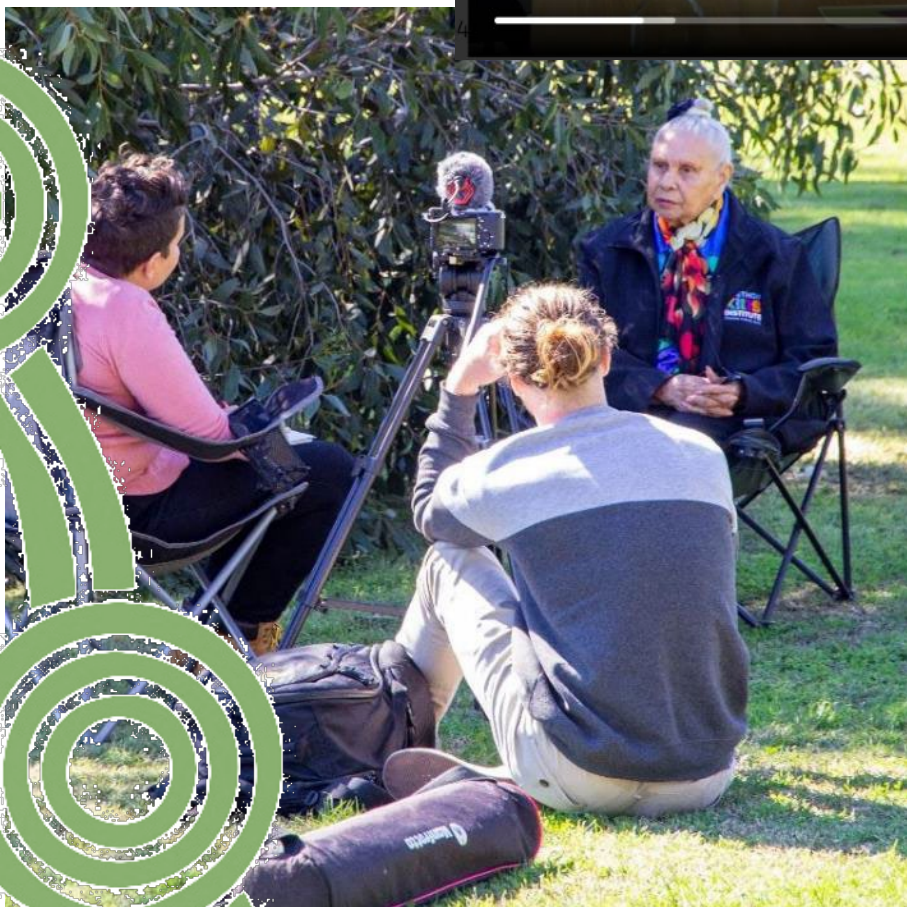
Visit the website
for more information
www.debakarn.com

DEVELOPING IMPACT STORIES



Video stories with Elders

Size	26 MB
Type	video/mp4
Dimensions	1280 x 720
Frame Rate	30 fps
Bit Rate	2300059 bps



Elders Uncle Albert McNamara (top), Uncle Charlie Kickett, Aunty Doris Getta (centre) and Aunty Oriel Green (left), along with other Elders have begun recording their experiences with service partners.

2022 ELDERS COMMUNITY CONFERENCE

Location

Point Walter Recreation and
Conference Centre

30 & 31 May

- Co-designed with Elders
- Sharing impact stories
with Community
- A Call to Action based on
key learnings
- Invited community,
officials and guests

**Save
the
Date!**

Contact Marg O'Connell

margaret.oconnell@curtin.edu.au

PUBLICATIONS



We collaborated with our co-researchers to produce two peer-reviewed papers on **co-design**.



International Journal of
Environmental Research
and Public Health



Article

Co-Designing Health Service Evaluation Tools That Foreground First Nation Worldviews for Better Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes

Michael Wright¹, Aunty Doris Getta², Aunty Oriel Green³, Uncle Charles Kickett², Aunty Helen Kickett², Aunty Irene McNamara², Uncle Albert McNamara², Aunty Moya Newman², Aunty Charmaine Pell², Aunty Millie Penny², Uncle Peter Wilkes², Aunty Sandra Wilkes², Tiana Culbong¹, Kathrine Taylor³, Alex Brown⁴, Pat Dudgeon⁵, Glenn Pearson⁶, Steve Allsop⁷, Ashleigh Lin⁶, Geoff Smith⁸, Brad Farrant⁶, Leanne Mirabella⁹ and Margaret O'Connell^{1,*}

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- ⁶ Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia, Nedlands 6009, Australia; glenn.pearson@telethonkids.org.au (G.P.); ashleigh.lin@telethonkids.org.au (A.L.); elenn.pearson@telethonkids.org.au (E.P.)



Citation: Wright, M.; Getta, A.D.; Green, A.O.; Kickett, U.C.; Kickett, A.H.; McNamara, A.I.; McNamara, U.A.; Newman, A.M.; Pell, A.C.; Penny, A.M.; et al. Co-Designing Health Service Evaluation Tools That Foreground First Nation Worldviews for Better Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2021**, *18*, 8555. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18168555>

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Primary Health Care Research & Development

[cambridge.org/phc](https://www.cambridge.org/phc)

Research

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Key words:

aboriginal; culturally secure; mental health and wellbeing; models of care; workforce development; worldviews

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Understanding and working with different worldviews to co-design cultural security in clinical mental health settings to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients

Michael Wright¹, Ashleigh Lin², Margaret O'Connell¹, Jonathan Bullen³ and Helen Flavell¹

¹School of Allied Health, Faculty of Health Sciences, Curtin University, Western Australia; ²Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia, Western Australia and ³School of Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, Curtin University, Western Australia

Abstract

Background: Creating the conditions for meaningful relationships is essential to understanding Aboriginal worldviews and co-designing ways of working to achieve better health outcomes. Non-Aboriginal health professionals struggle to recognise the importance of social relationships to Aboriginal peoples and tensions emerge due to these different worldviews informed by different ontologies and epistemologies. This is more so in clinical settings where training and models of care are often inadequate for working with Aboriginal people. The impact of different understandings of relationships on the provision of health services to Aboriginal peoples remains under-researched. There is a critical need to reassess the way clinicians are supported by their organisations to engage with Aboriginal clients in competent and meaningfully ways. **Methods:** The paper provides key insights into an Aboriginal-led participatory action research project and the work of Aboriginal Elder co-researchers with non-Aboriginal mainstream service staff to better understand the importance of social relationships from an Aboriginal worldview. The paper critically engages literature on clinical service provision for Aboriginal peoples, along with an examination of the Australian Psychological Society Code of Conduct, to explore the tensions between professional training and the need to build relationships with Aboriginal clients. **Findings:** Through the Elders, non-Aboriginal service staff have expanded their understanding of Aboriginal culture, kinship and the importance of country to Aboriginal wellbeing. The Elders mentored staff to unpack the tensions between worldviews in clinical settings. The research resulted in a co-designed culturally safe framework for non-Aboriginal practitioners, which is building confidence, capacity and competence to work in partnership with Aboriginal peoples. The framework emphasises the need for culturally safe models of care. The Elders have supported non-Aboriginal staff to sit between the two worldviews to develop ways to work with Aboriginal clients and shift mainstream models of mental health care to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

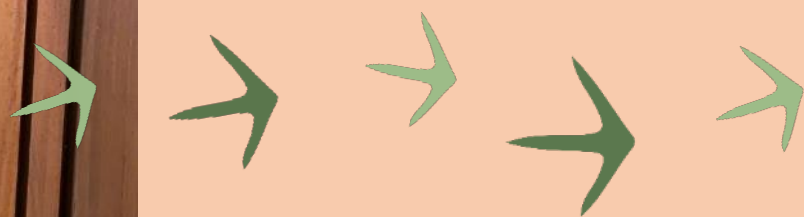
RELATIONAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



As with our co-design approach, our methodology is based on relationships.

Relational	≈	Transactional
Diverse ways of knowing, being and doing		Contractual and 'objective' (in order to be robust and rigorous)
Ethical values mean being accountable to (and for) the Community		Ethical standards and risk management
All voices count (co-design)		Exchange for payment
Everyone is invested and benefits		Clinical with little emotional investment
Process-oriented and often longitudinal		Outcomes focused (ignores the impact of process on participants)
Sovereign data rights		Who owns the data?





CONGRATULATIONS!

Our warmest congratulations to Aunty Oriel Green (below) who was awarded a medal of The Order Of Australia in June for her many years of service to the Aboriginal Community.

Big congratulations also to Aunty Millie Penny (left) for her 2021 NAIDOC Outstanding Achievement Award for her services to the Community.



“...health is the right of everyone, and good health should be the right for everyone. It shouldn't just be a privilege for a few. Everyone should have good health and everyone should have the means to access and enjoy good health.”

Associate Professor Michael Wright



STAFF UPDATES



We farewelled Savannah Travia-Dann who will take up her arts career fulltime from 2022.

Research Associate Tiana Culbong will go part-time in 2022 in order to commence her doctoral studies.

Research Associate Amanda Sibosado supports the translation activities of the team, including the website development.

Tanya Jones rejoins the team as Projects Manager to support the Looking Forward program of research. Tanya was project officer for the original Looking Forward Project (2011 to 2015).

Dr Anne-Marie Eades has provided mentorship and guidance during the qualitative analysis.

Marg O'Connell continues to support the team's research activities in line with the research plan.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Tiana Culbong – Research Associate

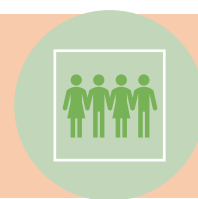
Not in my wildest imagination did I think I would ever end up in research, but here I am. Once I understood how research could be used as a tool for change and real-life impact, I knew this is where I wanted to be, where I could make an impact for my community.

For too long Aboriginal people have been the object of research for external sources. I believe we can now conduct research within our own communities and led by community members, using strengths-based approaches. By conducting our own research, we have ownership of precious data and can use it to create positive change within our community.

I'm lucky to have had the opportunity to learn from senior Aboriginal researchers who have paved the way. I have been inspired by their tireless strength and commitment not only to their work but to the community. So much so, I will begin my own PhD and hope to continue to make positive change within my community.



ELDER CO-RESEARCHERS



Over 20 Elders work with the Investigator team alongside the partner organisations. Most have been working with the partner organisations for at least four 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.

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.*

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 Sandra Wilkes

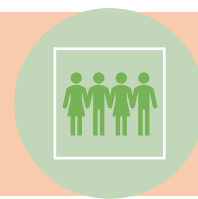
Uncle Peter Wilkes



Elders Aunty Sandra Wilkes, Aunty Margaret Culbong and Uncle Peter Wilkes celebrate the year at the Elders and co-researchers' Christmas Luncheon, 2021.



INVESTIGATORS AND PARTNERS



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

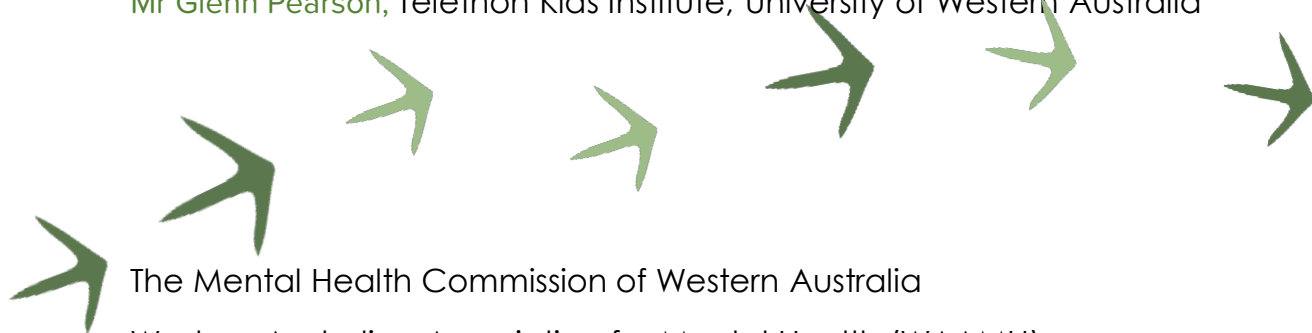
Professor Steve Allsop, Curtin University

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



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



Balga tree,
Kaarta Morda
(Darling Scarp)
Boorloo WA

BOORDAWAN

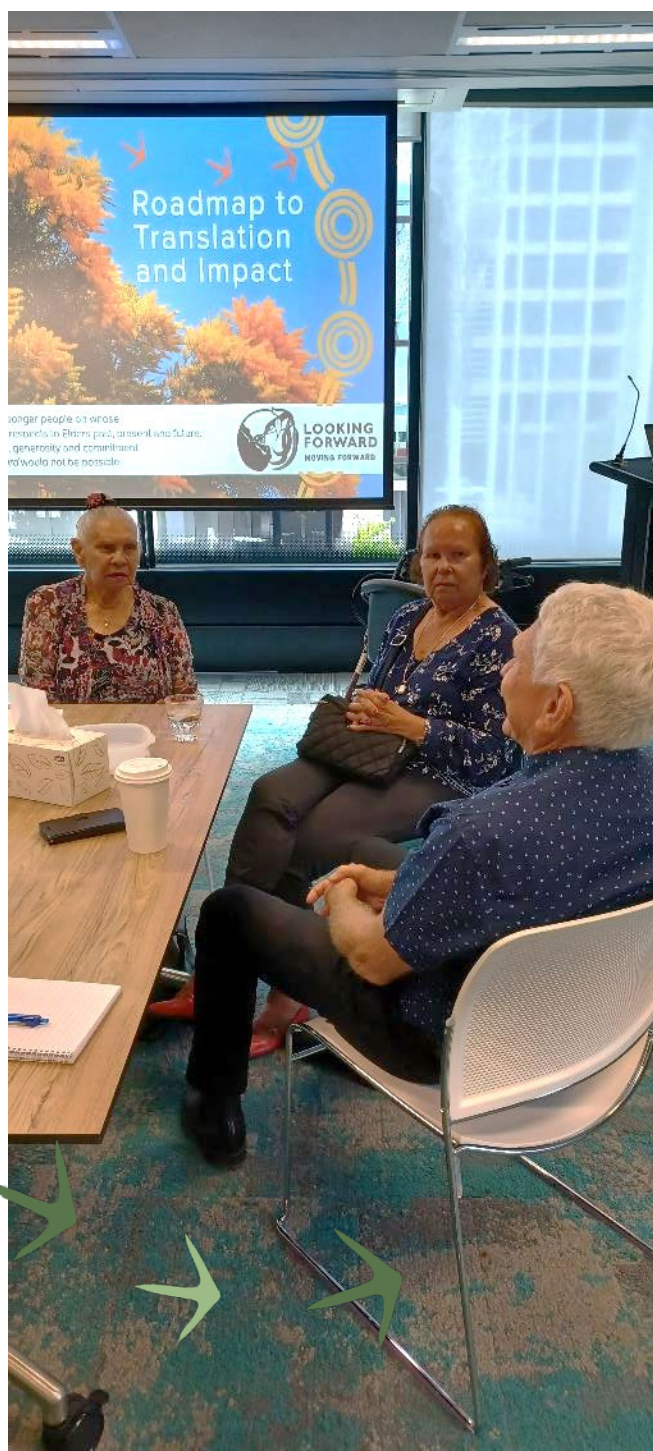
**Thank you for your
continued support!**

**Associate Professor
Michael Wright**
Lead Investigator,
*Looking Forward
Moving Forward*
Project

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0404 055 435

Michael meets with the
peak partners with Elders
Aunty Oriel Green (L) and
Aunty Moya Newman (R).



Michael shares his reflections about the project logo...

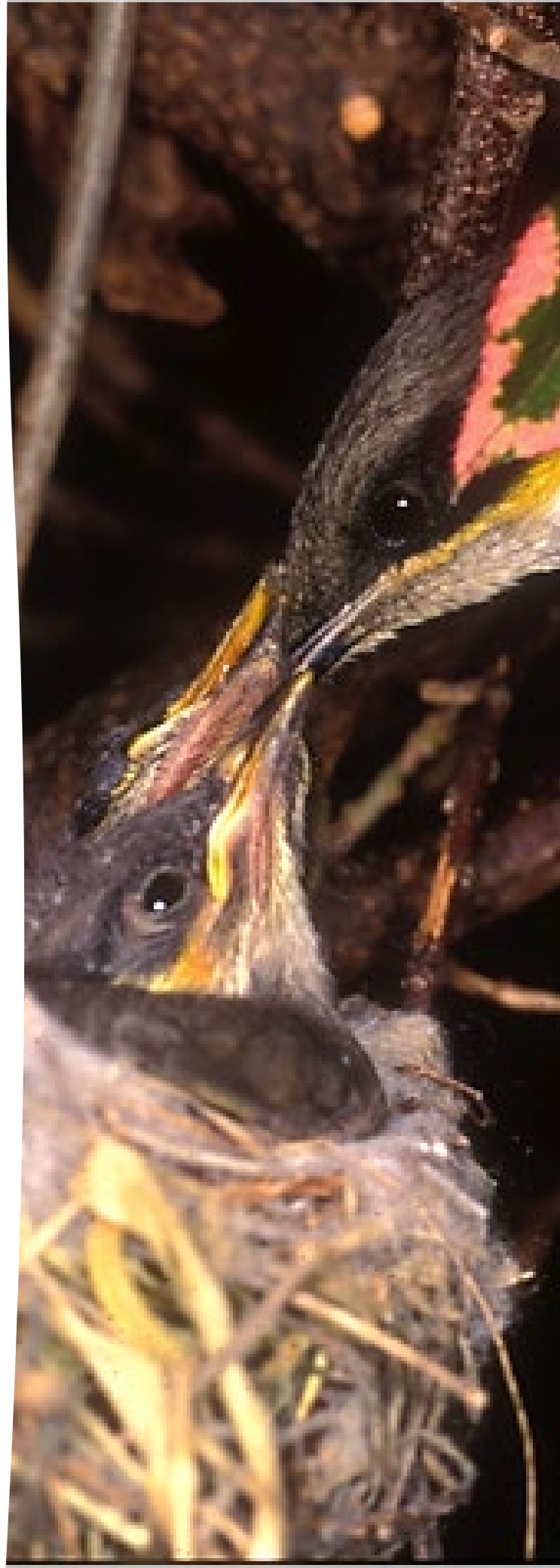
“The logo for the Looking Forward Project was based on a photograph of a nest outside my loungeroom window. The image is of New Holland Honeyeater feeding its young. We engaged a graphic designer to turn the photo into what is now the project logo. The title for the project, Looking Forward, is about hope. The young birds in the nest being cared for by the parents is a continual reminder that they are the future and what we do today can and does impact future generations.” As the work has progressed the logo has become even more relevant and fitting. An Aboriginal context, place-based approach means positioning yourself within your country and with your people. Watching, observing and being present is critical in our work. This includes being aware of nature - plants, animals and even the weather - during our check-ins. Check-ins are a standing agenda item on our team and partner meetings. They allow us to reconnect with each other by sharing what has occurred since we last met.”



**LOOKING
FORWARD**
MOVING FORWARD

Visit the project website for more
www.debakarn.com

Photo (left): Mr Peter Choo
Back cover photo: *Maarli* (black swans) at
Herdsman Lake, *Boorloo*. Photo by TJ.





**LOOKING
FORWARD**
MOVING FORWARD



Curtin University

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