




GUNAWIRRA
Prevention through Early Intervention



ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Gunawirra, as a community led organisation, recognises and respects all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. We respect their elders both past and present and we acknowledge the rightful place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have in our communities and in Australia's future. Gunawirra acknowledges that these ancient people are the traditional owners and custodians of their own Country and its water and we value and respect their cultural knowledge, values, customs and culture. Gunawirra also recognises and respects that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples still have a strong connection to their Country, their heritage and culture.

This report, the *2022 Annual Report of Gunawirra*, appears on the Gunawirra website
www.gunawirra.org.au

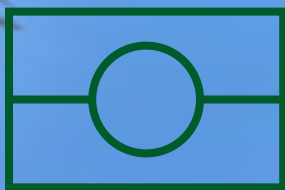
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Achievements



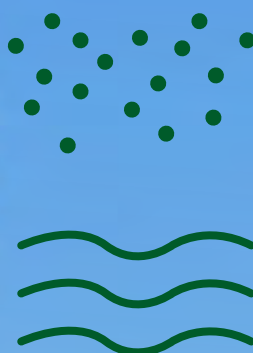
Gunawirra received a
High Commendation
in the University of Newcastle
Employability Excellence Awards



Gunawirra assisted with the **rebuilding**
of **Coraki CWA Preschool** after one of
the worst NSW flood disasters on record.

In addition to our Five Big Ideas carepacks this year (page 28),
we were able to send **244** preschool children items such as:

- Water bottles
- Pencil cases and pencils
- Aboriginal flag inspired shoe laces
- Activity books
- Additional cultural books



Before and after photo's of Coraki CWA Preschool.



Donations for the Coraki community.

"[The photo's] really show what some financial assistance and elbow grease can achieve when there are small people who need us to provide a safe and secure learning environment that they have needed so much."

Suzie, Coraki CWA Preschool Director

Support for flood affected communities

We were extremely saddened as the rapidly rising flood waters inundated Lismore and Coraki (NSW) earlier this year, leaving the entire region stranded on roofs. Hundreds were rescued and thousands evacuated as the town was hit by the worst flooding in history. The preschool families in those communities struggled, with many losing everything.

Gunawirra, our friends, and many supporters came together to assist the Lismore and Coraki communities in a number of ways:

- Donations from the **Inner West Council** and cohorts were gathered, sorted and shipped. Items included much needed food, blankets and useful household items.
- The community initiative **Thread Together** along with **Goods 360** provided 500 sets of clothing for children and adults in the area.
- We raised over **\$20,000** through individual online donations to purchase winter and household items for displaced families.
- With the support of **Northern Rivers Community Foundation**, and **Perpetual** (Frank Leydon Tot-Ed Trust) the restoration of Coraki CWA Preschool was completed, returning it to its former self.

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Chief Executive Officer's Report

After another year of significant challenges for us all at Gunawirra, I welcome this opportunity to publicly thank our board of Directors, employees, volunteers, students, friends and the many supporters at Gunawirra, who fuelled the fire to take Gunawirra to new heights.

Our goal for the year was to not only weather the storm due to Covid19, but to also energise our business and build for the future. It's pleasing to know that at Gunawirra we have achieved this. In working hard to care and support for our many children, families, parents, carers and communities, while keeping our employees and volunteers safe and supported. The bonus is that this has unlocked new opportunities for Gunawirra.



Recognising that our strength lies in our motivated team, we spent a lot of time focused on them. Supporting our team ensured that the work remained at a high standard, while recognising their extraordinary efforts and commitment.

This year Gunawirra achieved tremendous results and faced many challenges while providing treatment, care and support for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Our programs continue to provide unequalled quality of treatment, support and care.

The 2021-2022 Gunawirra annual report truly captures and reflects the incredible work undertaken by Gunawirra. All the while we work in line with our strategic direction, values and vision. With all these affairs in place, I look forward to being inspired by the courage and determination of those we support and care for. I also look forward to hearing inspiring stories of achievements and triumphs while we face challenges in pursuit of a positive future.

Graham Toomey
Chief Executive Officer/ Executive Director

Our Philosophy and Values

OUR VISION

Gunawirra's vision, as a community led organisation, is respecting and valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultures, and improving the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, children, families and their communities.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Gunawirra's strategic direction is grounded in the following principles:

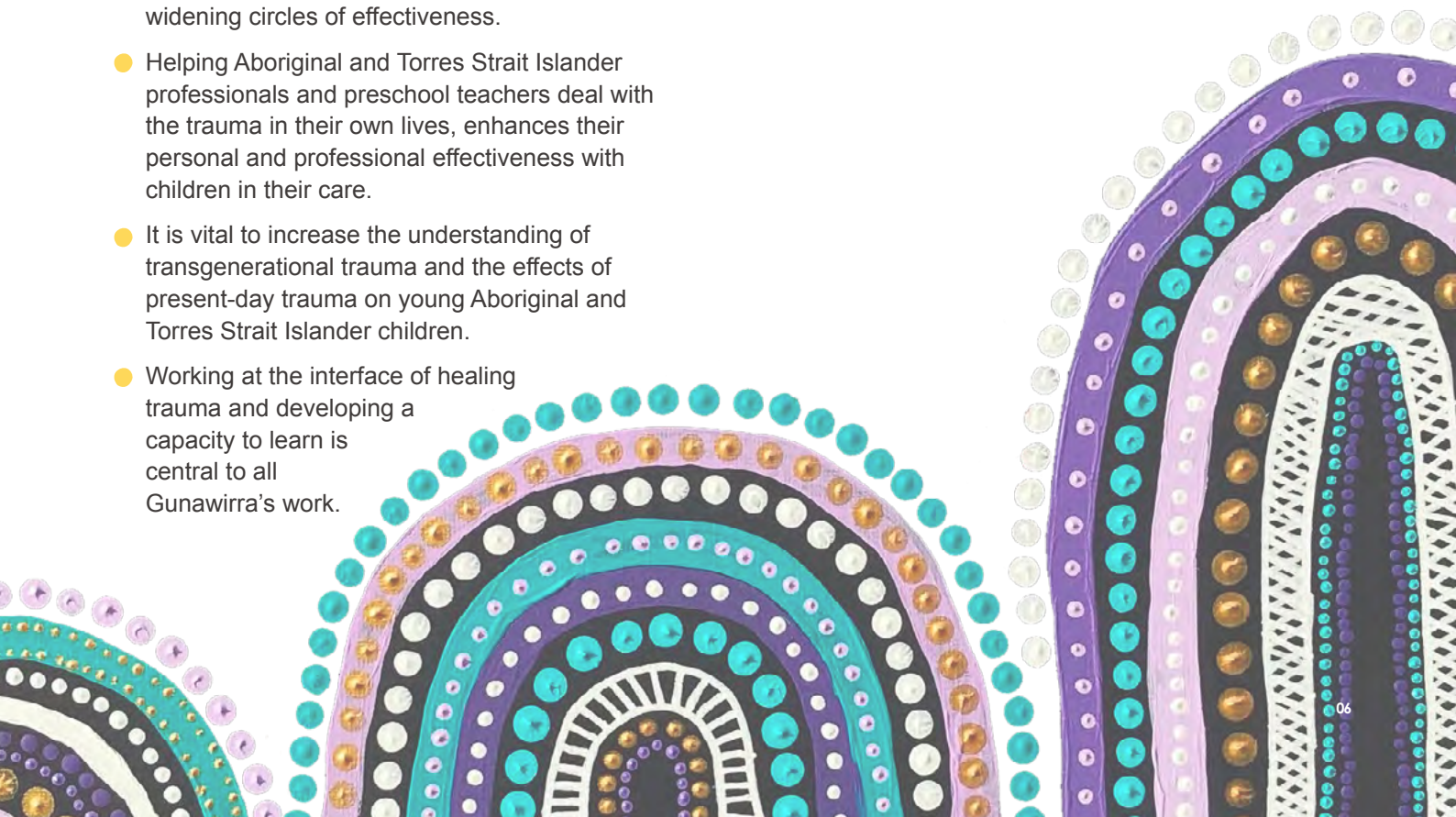
- Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a connection and a belonging to their heritage, Country and culture.
- Support emotional nurturing during pregnancy and early childhood which is critical in preparation for a stable, emotionally connected, resilient and productive adult life.
- Helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers deal with their own trauma is critical for them to develop better parenting skills and to negotiate their lives.
- Designing and implementing professional, unique, innovative and transformational programs — small models of excellence that are fully evaluated to allow Gunawirra's work to be replicated in widening circles of effectiveness.
- Helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals and preschool teachers deal with the trauma in their own lives, enhances their personal and professional effectiveness with children in their care.
- It is vital to increase the understanding of transgenerational trauma and the effects of present-day trauma on young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Working at the interface of healing trauma and developing a capacity to learn is central to all Gunawirra's work.

PURPOSE

Our purpose is to promote the best possible development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-5 and to empower the parents of these children to intervene in their own lives, breaking the cycle of suffering caused by loss of culture, family, community and Country.

PHILOSOPHY AND VALUES

- Hold a deep respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and promote healing by putting culture at the heart of all our services.
- Incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures into our programs which allows healing and a path towards better quality of life.
- Have a strong theoretical base on systems theory and attachment theory, which builds an early capacity for healthy emotional, cognitive and physical development of children.
- Have a commitment to research, evaluation and the measurement of outcomes.



Board of Directors

2021-2022 board members



Miriam Cavanagh

Chairwoman

Miriam is of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, her Mother's family are both Aboriginal - Yirrganydji Cairns/ KuuKu Ya'a Lockhart River and Torres Strait Islander - Meriam Mir (Darnley / Murray) Eastern Islands, and Kala Lagaw (Mabuiag) Western Islands. Her Father's family group are Wonnarua Hunter Valley NSW.

She works as a Cultural Broker in both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and health areas, ensuring peoples education and health is at the core and embedded into different policies.



Graham Toomey

CEO/ Executive Director

Graham belongs to the Wurrumunga clan of the Wiradjuri nation. Graham also belongs to the Wongaibon nation. Graham works at Gunawirra as the CEO and each day he is committed to improving lifestyles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities.



Audrey Walker

Director

Audrey is a proud Gumbaynggirr woman from the mid north coast of NSW.

She works within the justice space in the Kulin Nations (Melbourne) and is passionate about reducing the rates of incarceration in our communities and breaking the cycle of trans-generational trauma in Australia.



Lenny Stanley

Director

Lenny is a proud Aboriginal man from the Wiradjuri Nation of Central Western NSW.

Lenny is a Workplace Trainer and assessor in the heavy machinery industry.

Lenny's aims to empower young mothers and their children to be proud of their cultural identity.



Shannon Hunter

Company Secretary

Shannon has more than 15 years' experience working in education. She has a particular interest in advocacy, mentoring, positive leadership, mental health and childhood wellbeing.

She has a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and an Advanced Diploma of Community Sector Management. Shannon is currently the Managing Director of a large NFP OOSH Service.



Ursula Yovich

Ambassador

Ursula is a proud Burarra and Serbian woman who has become one of Australia's most celebrated performers and has impressed audiences around the world.

Ursula has had an extensive career in TV, Film and Stage, deciding to retire from stage acting to focus on music, writing, her family and giving back to the community. This has led her to become an ambassador for Gunawirra.

Our Ambassador

Chair's Report

As Chairwoman of the Board of Directors for Gunawirra and on behalf of the board, it is my pleasure to present the 2021-2022 Annual Report.

It has been a challenging year, once again, for Gunawirra. However our commitment to those who use our programs is unwavering. We have made it through and are looking forward to the next 12 months. We are proud to have done so well and know that this has been achieved because of the commitment, dedication and support received from our community and funding support no matter how big or small. To those people, we say thank you and we look forward to continuing our relationship.

Gunawirra is now getting stronger, and letting us know what has been a long and proud journey.



With the strong commitment, passion and professionalism of our staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to provide great care facilities and support throughout the programs for our clients and children, we cannot thank them enough for their ongoing support.

I would also like to personally thank my fellow Board Members for continuing to demonstrate commitment, leadership and the continual quality improvement for Gunawirra.

I also wish to thank the CEO for his outstanding leadership and to the senior management, for their tireless efforts and for taking Gunawirra forward in a positive way.

Au Esoau, Koeyma Esso
(Thank you everyone)

Miriam Cavanagh
Chairwoman

Clinical Report

This past year has been a refreshing transition for both Gunawirra's clinicians and clients. After a few more lockdown periods - we were eventually able to offer face to face services once again.

As a result of the pandemic, Gunawirra aimed to keep a consistent hybrid service delivery model, offering both telehealth sessions and face to face sessions to accommodate our clients' needs. Our staff ensured that we consistently provided a high-quality level of service to our clients and the communities we serve. This applies to both our local community here in Rozelle, and over 25 communities across rural New South Wales. I am very proud of the team for being able to adapt and work with the ever changing rules and regulations that surrounded Covid-19.

Gunawirra has created a valuable and unique healing model, combining culture and clinical services together. Working alongside Elders and community members, our team strives to connect children with their Aboriginal cultural heritage and knowledge whilst they provide a therapeutic space at the centre.



The vision for 2023 is to continue to expand on the services we are currently offering, so that we can serve more families on a more regular basis. We would also like to increase the types of therapies and services we offer to ensure that the community is able to access as much help as possible - without any additional barriers. To do this, Gunawirra hopes to further deepen community partnerships with other local organisations. Such organisations have various skills and resources which are valuable in improving the well-being of our clients.

Overall, it has been another amazing year. We have had so many developments in our program's structures and witnessed so many personal achievements from the families we support. I believe Gunawirra can only continue to improve and flourish as we lead into 2023.

Katrina Ikonomou
Clinical Manager

Our Early Intervention Programs

Young Aboriginal Mothers Program (YAMP)



2022 marks the 10th year of Gunawirra's Young Aboriginal Mother's Program (YAMP). Having undergone a major shift in its theoretical foundation and subsequent service provision, YAMP successfully acted on its objectives as positive educational, cultural, social, nutritional and therapeutic outcomes. Gunawirra has delivered YAMP with a focus on situationally-responsive service delivery, within the post-pandemic context, amidst record breaking rains and rapidly increasing costs of living. To this end, the following components were implemented into YAMP in 2021/ 2022:

- Transport to and from YAMP was provided to all participants.
- Group support, therapies and activities were provided online when necessary.
- A rotating roster was developed to facilitate a move indoors during the above average rainfall.
- Respected Elder Aunty Jo joined YAMP to facilitate group requests of enhanced cultural engagement in child friendly ways, cultural and community outings also increased i.e. Inner West Council Gardening Project and a cultural visit to Sydney Aquarium.
- Speech pathology was moved to a one-on-one service.
- An eyes and ears clinic was successfully introduced.

Strengthening the Young Mothers Group

Consisting entirely of new mothers aged under 21, group facilitators have focused on enhancing trust and safety with the mothers and their children. As a result, each family has felt comfortable enough to articulate their needs and access essential items such as parcels from Oz Harvest, baby and women's clothing, sanitary items, toys, bottles, highchairs, cribs and a change table from local charities; Dandelions, Thread it Together and Mummy's Paying it Forward, Share the Dignity.

We are focusing on coming together to form a long term group where we can help support them in reaching their goals and establishing new ones.

A Supported Transition

Gunawirra has been focusing the end of this year on supporting the YAMP group in their transition out of the program, as each child approaches school age and the mothers prepare to re-enter the workforce or further their education. Check-ins throughout the transition have ensured each family has access to or referrals for, necessary education supports, behavioural management, toilet training, culturally responsive therapies and social and cultural connections.



Mother's Group learning at the Sydney Aquarium

Culture

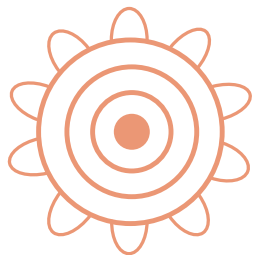
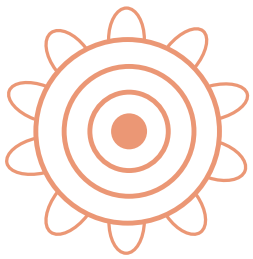
Respected Elder and master weaver Aunty Jo, has provided child-friendly lessons of raffia weaving and Warurabanga (make string), cultural story-telling and deep personal engagement with culturally significant practises.

Teaching the interconnectedness of all living things, Aunty Jo has shared knowledge of ancient philosophical principle of Kanyini, and the practice of Dadirri. In this healing group setting, Aunty Jo has increased the confidence and enjoyment of each mother and child in engaging with their culture, so they are able to maintain and share their knowledge.

Alongside Aunty Jo's lessons, group facilitators have been able to conduct cultural outings again. Group members enjoyed a cultural visit to Ku-ring-gai National Park, a number of Inner West parklands, and a visit to Sydney Aquarium to learn about historic and cultural significance of local marine life, and were luckily involved in the Inner West Council Gardening Project.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live between two worlds. Participation in mainstream structures can come into conflict with our cultural expression. These mums are bringing tradition to the 21st century, the participants have learnt of a number of weaving techniques using modern product to engage with this ancient tradition, the tradition of our ancestors. Baskets, bracelets, earrings and wall hangings have all been made by the mums."

YAMP Cultural Knowledge Holder, Aunty Jo Selfe.



Nutrition

Education on nutrition and healthy eating continues to be provided in the group setting, as well as one on one cooking lessons during YAMP. Mothers can extend the knowledge developed during group and easily apply it in their homes, as all recipes and information on healthy eating and nutrition are now available online. Many of the first time young mothers running single parent households, have displayed a notable interest in Gunawirra's nutrition service. YAMP is therefore able to support the young Mother's as they increase the nutritional value of their diets, and their children's diets, by providing important information, valuable cooking skills, and easy to make recipes alongside access to fresh food via the OzHarvest food parcels.

Art Therapy and Psychotherapy

Art therapy is offered as an individual service to YAMP families, women and children every week at Gunawirra's Rozelle location and sessions are also offered online.

Operating as a clinically informed practise, art therapy supports participants as they engage with their emotions and past experiences/ traumas in healthy, constructive ways.

Psychotherapy operates as a one on one service for the mothers of YAMP on site or online each week, using person-centred engagement to guide the women as they heal from, and constructively engage with past traumas and experiences.

The strength of this service is its provision alongside the culturally informed practises of YAMP, a unique and important attribute of Gunawirra's service model.

Looking to the future

Overall, YAMP has provided many positive outcomes in 2022/ 2023. The long-term engagement of each child has resulted in improved speech and communication and enhanced functioning in social scenarios. The bond between each mother and child has been improved. There has been a noticeable increase in cultural understanding and knowledge with all participants in each group. Engaging in cultural practises they previously did not know about and new cultural experiences such as the boys of the group playing the yidaki for the first time. As one group completes their transition, they leave YAMP with a wealth of cultural knowledge and experience, increased emotional bonds, and as member of an integrated community, with lasting friendships and supports outside of Gunawirra.

In the year ahead YAMP will work towards the following potential changes:

- As the new group continues to build their confidence and engagement, more cultural outings and community engagement will be coordinated.
- The Young Mothers Groups run time to be increased from 2 hours to 3.
- Having received consistent interest from young women in the community, Gunawirra looks to establish a new YAMP group. There will be a focus on a higher intake of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander first time mothers.
- A larger analysis/ assessment of the impact of YAMP on participants may be completed to assess the outcome of long-term group engagement.
- Regular assessments of the Young Mothers Groups will begin, to ensure past lessons are incorporated and new areas in need of development are identified.



YAMP Mothers weaving with Aunty Jo

Journey to Learning and Cultural Work

Gunawirra knows that **culture is the heart** of our organisation and it's pleasing to see the positive changes and outcomes in all our programs that culture provides. Gunawirra feels fortunate that we have deadly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander facilitators and staff who provide valuable cultural knowledge into our programs.

Our mums and bubs program (**YAMP**) with its 'Woman's Business' module, has had enormous benefits for the mums and bubs. Watching our facilitators share their cultural knowledge and activities like weaving, storytelling, dance, song and visiting sacred Aboriginal sites across Sydney has been unforgettable. Culture is healing and provides comfort and happiness. Seeing our mums and bubs shine while connecting has been moving.

The **Journey to Learning** program continues to provide in-depth cultural knowledge for children and educators across Sydney and NSW. Gunawirra's facilitators have made visits to preschools where they have shared cultural knowledge which has connected all children to their identities and to their culture. Gunawirra also continues to create educational videos and webinars to connect children, teachers and families. Importantly, Gunawirra has incorporated more cultural training and initiatives for our staff, contractors, students and volunteers. Gunawirra prides itself on ensuring everyone has a connection and an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and their peoples.

Our workplace continues to provide a culturally appropriate work space, which provides safety and security for those who are part of our programs.

Gunawirra is looking forward to providing more culture for our programs in the coming year. Seeing and listening to children laugh while watching them having fun with their heritage is both unforgettable and inspirational.

Cultural experiences

Gunawirra has always listened to the needs of the people in community. Those needs have led and inspired us to offer Cultural Experiences here at Gunawirra House and outside of Gunawirra. Led by our deadly cultural facilitators, Gunawirra provides experiences that provide knowledge on native plants and foods, weaving, storytelling, Aboriginal art, traditional lifestyles, history and much more. These experiences are opened up for the public, corporates, organisations and for schools to attend, to learn and become connected. These are becoming more popular each day and many who have attended have enjoyed those experiences can't wait to revisit them. Most experiences are simply sitting around our fire pit and listening to old stories and cultural knowledge while connecting strongly to our values and beliefs. Gunawirra will continue to provide more of these cultural experiences well into the future.

Graham Toomey
CEO/ Executive Director



Cultural experience
at Gunawirra House

Caring for Country

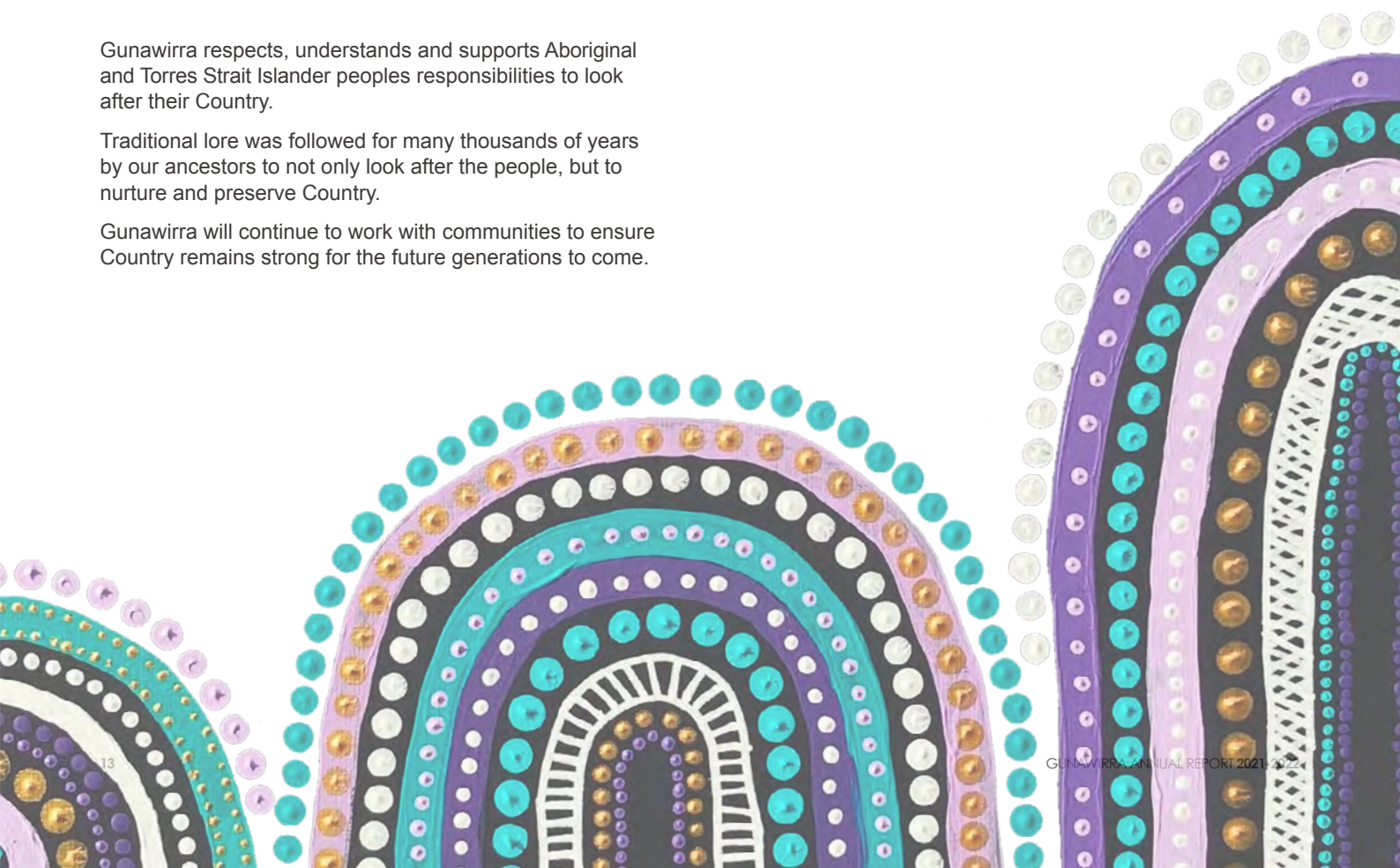


If we care for Country, Country will care for us

Gunawirra respects, understands and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples responsibilities to look after their Country.

Traditional lore was followed for many thousands of years by our ancestors to not only look after the people, but to nurture and preserve Country.

Gunawirra will continue to work with communities to ensure Country remains strong for the future generations to come.



CLINIC ON COUNTRY

Scan here to
link to our
donation page



This financial year saw the successful launch of Gunawirra's latest program **Clinic on Country**, the model extending the support that Gunawirra has provided for over eight years. Collaborating with the focus preschools and listening to community, Gunawirra shaped the program to address needs and deliver the essential services that were otherwise unavailable and or unobtainable.

Clinic on Country consists of a variety of Gunawirra's allied health professionals who are deployed in the remote and rural communities that Gunawirra services.

The current focus of the program is in the locations of Kempsey, Armidale and Lismore as they have been identified as having the least access and in some instances no access to these services.

Expansion of the programs reach is a priority for Gunawirra and essential in the work towards closing the gap. The more recent appointment of Occupational Therapy support in Armidale, is assisting the Jarjums on their journey to school readiness. Early intervention occupational therapists focus on functional participation of tasks not only in the school but at home, and in naturally occurring environments. This valuable work includes and is not limited to; help with attention and concentration, fine and gross motor skills, eating/ drinking and self-care, play and social behaviours.

The **Clinic on Country** program will continue to grow from these roots as more funding and support is sourced. The foundations laid with University partnerships run parallel to the professional services bolstering the preschool support hours.



Together we have sown the seeds of **Clinic on Country** and have a budding new program. Please help it thrive and
DONATE NOW



Around 40% of Aboriginal children begin school with communication difficulties¹. The need for speech pathology is compounded among Aboriginal children due to 'increased rates of early childhood trauma' as well as 'high rates of middle ear disease'².

The first three years of 'new stimulations ... will shape a child's cognitive, social and physical growth'³ and determines developmental delays. Occupational Therapy (OT) delivers proven benefits to 'motor, cognitive, sensory processing, communication and play skills'.

A University of Sydney study⁴ on OT with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in remote NSW found that 22.1% of these children were 'developmentally vulnerable on language and cognitive skills', compared with 5.9% of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The integrated early intervention of the **Clinic on Country** will redress diagnoses, speech impairments, coordination and school readiness. The holistic approach will involve the parents and educators, implementing changes needed to ensure positive growth and development in all aspects of the child's life.

The project will pilot a partnership with University of Newcastle and other research collaborators to train local therapists in the longer term. The outcomes and evaluation will inform a new model that can be scaled and replicated in other indigenous preschools across regional NSW.

1. Closing the Gap report, 2019
2. Gould 2014
3. American OT Association
4. Corey Block, 2015



A few of the silent auction prizes that sold on the night.

L to R: *Murrumbang - Community Care* by Lou Martin. *Footsteps through time* by Ross Tangye. *Red back spider* by Neil Hutton/ Serco

Fundraiser

Due to the many pandemic setbacks, Clinic on Country was long overdue with its community introduction, and in December we finally held the official launch of our Clinic on Country program. Held within The Calyx in Sydney provided the spectacular setting for 'Country' within the city.

The evening including a Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony and cultural performances by Matthew Doyle, Brock Tutt, Tim Bishop and Timothy John Edward Gray.

Shared Knowledge cooked up a storm in the kitchen, and the guest speaker for the evening - Uncle Stan Grant had the room captivated with his every word. We also had a beautiful array of donated gifts in the silent auction, with some very lucky people walking away with one of a kind artworks, experiences and products.

Thank you to Uncle Stan, to the performers and to all our supporters on the night.



Stan Grant speaking at the Clinic on Country launch. Photo by @josephmayersphotography

Our Community



Excited YAMP family after receiving a refurbished laptop

Inner West Council, in partnership with **WorkVentures**, supported our YAMP Mums during lockdown with a generous donation of refurbished computers and data packages. These laptops assisted the children with online learning, the families to connect to essential services, and a safe way to check-in with family and community.

WorkVentures are an IT social enterprise providing sustainable technology solutions, influencing digital inclusion in the community and igniting the potential in young people with meaningful skills, training and jobs. They provide vulnerable communities with access to technology and connectivity to promote social inclusion and diminish the digital divide.

Gunawirra House hosted Year 6 students from the **Emanuel School** in Sydney, who had been inspired to create a Giving Circle with all funds raised going towards an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander project.

Students visited Gunawirra with the desire to learn more about Aboriginal people and the challenges and opportunities communities across NSW and Australia face.

The students who are from the Jewish faith spoke about the deep connections between Jewish and Aboriginal people. It was a privilege to host the school children, and we look forward to seeing the achievements of these bright and inquisitive future community leaders.



Emanuel School students sharing around the healing circle



ACU Students at Bunnings Belrose

Gunawirra is very fortunate to have the support of ACU student groups every year; brainstorming ideas, fundraising and volunteering their time. Students earlier this year raised over \$400 for our Clinic on Country program with a Bunnings sausage sizzle. This shows great community spirit to spend their Sunday cooking up sausages for the hungry people of Belrose, and more importantly for the little jarjums in Northern NSW.

On top of this great work, our student placement Hannah organised a *Go Fund Me* drive before Christmas, raising enough money for an amazing 186 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander books. A huge thankyou to everyone who donated to our callout for help. Your generosity (and Hannah's hard work!) saw us fulfill our goal to double last years target with over 400 Jarjums receiving an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander book in time for Christmas as part of our Five Big Ideas program.

Healing on Country

Thanks to **Urban Ecology** and **Inner West Council** our YAMP Mums, Jarjums and the Aunties enjoyed some native planting outings onto Wangal land.

Caring for Country is deeply significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and highly important to the Inner West community. We should all be helping to protect our Mother Earth, just like these beautiful Jarjums.

Local natives our group planted included:
Murnong (Daisy Yams) - *Microceris lanceolata*
Warrigal Greens - *Tetragonia tetragonioides*
Pig's Ear - *Carpobrotus glaucescens*
Golden Lily - *Bulbine bulbosa*
Vanilla Lily - *Arthropodium milleflorum*
Lomandra - *Lomandra longifolia*
Prickly Wattle - *Acacia ulicifolia*



YAMP families planting Natives in the Inner West



Jarjum caring for her new plant from Bunnings

During the 2021 Covid-19 lockdown, **Bunnings Gladesville** donated and delivered gardening tools, soil, gloves and native plants to our YAMP families stuck at home.

The kids were busy planting all morning, connecting to nature and Country and talking about the native garden back at our Rozelle centre.

We are so lucky and grateful to have such caring supporters always looking after our little family, with as much love and nurturing as these little potted gardens have been receiving.

The Gunawirra team had a heartfelt two days at the Dalaigur and Scribbly Gum Dalai Preschools for a Community Open Day in March.

The preschool families were invited to visit the centres, yarn about therapy services, and generally check-in with the inspirational staff and greater community, including the Guyati, Garraka wa Witing Speech Pathology Project from the University of Newcastle. We feel it's so important to spend quality time with our wider team, setting foundations for stronger future partnerships.

We were also met by the local MP Pat Conaghan to discuss ways to further support the Dalaigur and Scribbly gum preschool communities.



Yarning about Yarning with Uncle John

The Five Big Ideas Program

Gunawirra works closely with preschools across remote and regional areas of NSW. The Five Big Ideas Program is a grass-roots program, designed in consultation with preschool educators, to impart practical strategies and living skills to preschool children and their families.

Aims

- Better equip preschool teachers to address the particular emotional, health and cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Improve understanding of good nutrition for children and families.
- Provide good nutrition.
- Increase awareness of and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- Improve emotional health.
- Support preschools to provide safe, healthy and caring environments.

Preschool teachers across the country access the free activities booklet to support the program covering.



Jarjums receiving *Five Big Ideas* carepacks lovingly donated by Schools, Preschools and organisations within the wider community.

On the horizon

Gunawirra is looking to refresh this amazing project next year and revisit the learnings, support, outcomes and cultural components.



BASIC HYGIENE

Respecting your body, healthy ears, blowing noses, cleaning teeth. All children are provided with a Carepack that contains toothpaste, toothbrush, soap, washer, antiseptic cream, Band-Aids and underwear.



NUTRITION

Teaching good eating habits and reducing the amount of fast food. Practical and financial help with vegetable gardens, bush tucker and cooking and nutrition videos and recipes are shared.



HANDLING PROBLEMS AT HOME

Assists teachers to support children who may be in distress and having difficulties at home. Activities aimed at naming, expressing and soothing emotions, circle of healing, mutual respect and caring, and connecting to culture. (Please see the sections on Professional Development for Teachers for more detail).



IDENTITY

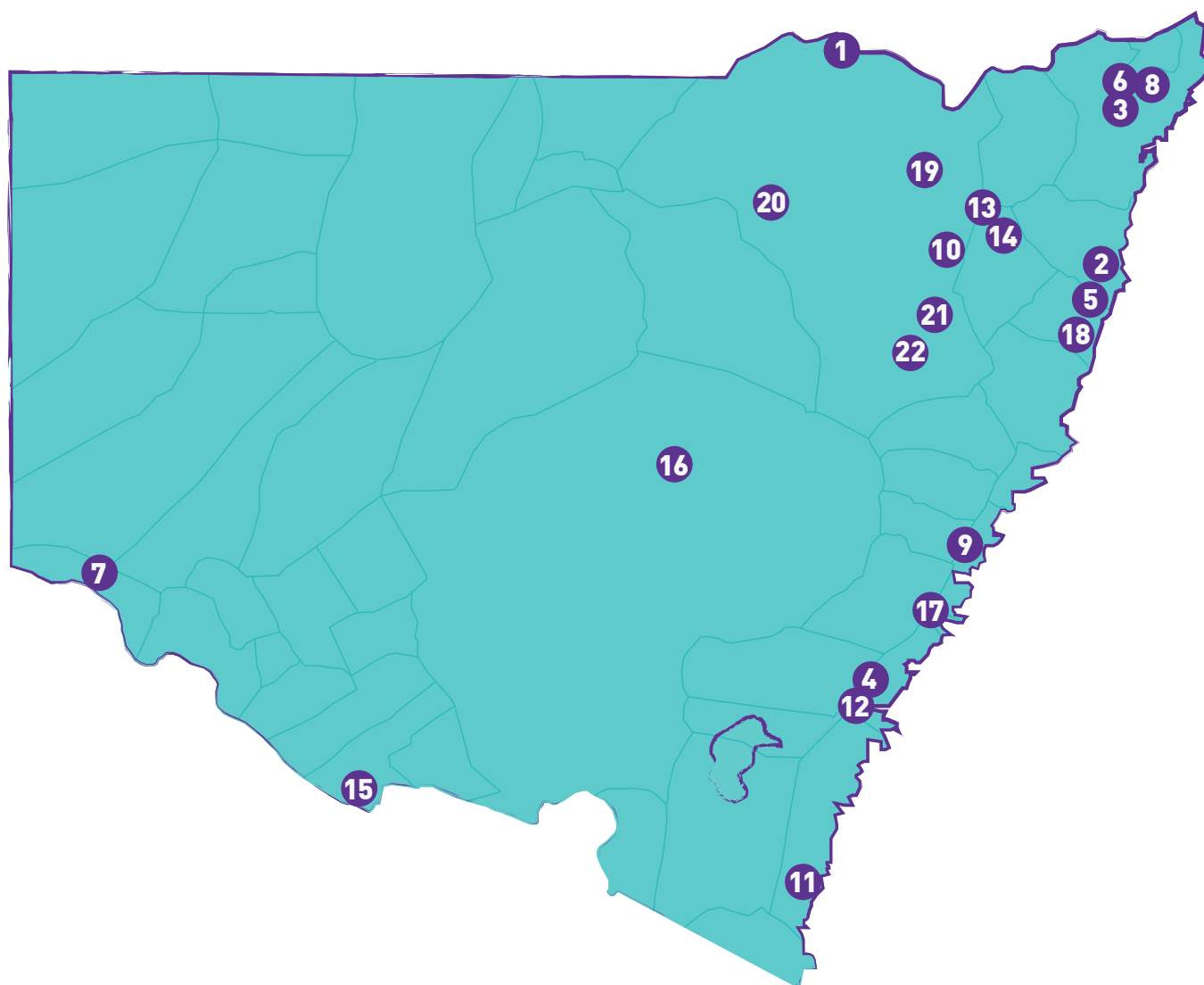
Self-respect, my totem, my mob. Gunawirra's Cultural Advisor plays a significant role in bringing culture to the children, teachers, families and community. Activities include making a family tree with parents, telling stories from the Dreamtime, performing ceremonies and using the items in the Aboriginal Learning Kit for Children (the 'Culture Box').



MY ENVIRONMENT, MY LAND, MYSELF

Based on the important Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander principle that if we look after the land, it will look after us. Activities that increase children's understanding of the natural environment, their place within it and how to care for it.

Gunawirra Supported Preschools



- | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| 1. Boggabilla Preschool | 9. Kooloorra Preschool
(part of Toukley Primary School) | 16. Peak Hill Preschool |
| 2. Bowraville Preschool | 10. Kootingal Preschool | 17. Poet's Corner Preschool |
| 3. Coraki Preschool | 11. Little Yuin Preschool | 18. Scribbly Gum Dalai Preschool |
| 4. Cullunghutti Preschool | 12. Lyrebird Preschool | 19. Tingha Preschool |
| 5. Dalaigur Preschool | 13. Minimbah Preschool | 20. Wee Waa Preschool |
| 6. Goonellabah Preschool | 14. Minimbah Primary School | 21. Werris Creek & District
Preschool |
| 7. Gyndarna Preschool | 15. Moama Public School
Preschool | 22. Upper Macleay Preschool |
| 8. Jarjum Preschool | | |

Professional Development for Teachers

Gunawirra has long recognised the essential need for support and guidance for the clinicians, teachers and support staff. Research clearly indicates that the long-term effects of working in and around trauma can have significant impacts on these professionals, which in turn can result in vicarious trauma and burn out.

The prevalence and severity of disadvantage and trauma suffered by many in the communities that we work in creates a more challenging environment than most. The professional development and support that Gunawirra provides to teachers and therapists is essential to limit both the short and long term impact.

Preschool educators are in a unique position to help resolve conflict, manage behaviour, reduce stress and explore emotions with traumatised children, particularly given the strong attachments the children form with them. This challenging work requires a great deal of professional support to do this. Gunawirra provides much needed teacher support via remote platforms with our professional Art Psychotherapist, separate to the teacher development program. This additional support is added as a means to further help and support teachers Gunawirra works with throughout NSW.

Gunawirra's highly experienced Clinical Therapist's provide a safe and friendly space where teachers can receive professional therapy support, while also supporting each

other. Sharing and talking as a group is a positive way they can work through those difficult challenges they face every day. Our therapist also provides private sessions for teachers who feel they need that extra care and support in a one-on-one session. Gunawirra knows this will assist teachers in feeling more content while teaching, which will ensure the children receive the best educational outcomes possible.

Gunawirra importantly also provides educational videos that share insights and knowledge on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples. These award winning videos have allowed teachers to learn valuable cultural knowledge and share with children in the classroom. Sharing culture provides healing but also allows cultural knowledge to live and endure.

As a part of the partnership between the schools and Gunawirra, regular gatherings are essential to strengthen and enhance not only the program, but also the direction it takes in understanding the needs of the community.

In the latter part of the year, Gunawirra was fortunate enough to host one of these gatherings, where the two teams came together around the healing circle. The safe space this created for the participants allowed them to open up and share their stories and feelings surrounding the often difficult work they undertake. The value of the teacher support and development was reinforced as being crucial in ensuring the well-being of the educators. Moving into 2023 Gunawirra aims to enhance this service and focus on delivering more support to professionals.

Gunawirra and Dalaigur & Scribbly Gum Dalai Preschool staff





"I feel so proud to be a part of this journey that brings together so much support, nurturing, healing and sharing culture... all whilst working to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children reach their full potential"

Preschool Carer

Caring for the Carers

This focuses on the ways in which exposure to trauma in others, particularly children, can impact us professionally and personally. The groups are taken through guided exercises designed to support them during times of high stress.

Understanding trauma

This module covers:

- A theoretical framework for understanding trauma in young children.
- Intergenerational and communal trauma.
- The impacts on the child's learning and play, memory and brain function, emotional development and attachment relationships.

Art Therapy techniques

This session is experiential and involves therapist-led art therapy activity for group members.

- It provides insight into the art therapy process.
- Gives teachers an activity to support their own healing.
- The activity can be adapted for use with the children in the classroom.

How to recognise trauma in young children

- Explores the overt and subtle signs of trauma, with discussion of case examples.
- Presentation and discussion of a long-term art therapy treatment of a preschool child.

Aboriginal identity and working with trauma

- Understanding of intergenerational trauma through the narrative of one family's experience.
- The importance of culture and identity for healing.
- How work in the preschool can be culturally respectful and relevant.
- The Journey to Learning Program.

Policy, Evaluation and Research



Gunawirra has continued to advance the holistic approach to research, policy creation and implementation, and service delivery. Qualitative data has been collected to assess the effectiveness of our rural and metropolitan programs.

- Gunawirra's **Clinic on Country** Program (COC), operating in Kempsey and Armidale, was assessed this year. Art Therapists worked closely with our researcher, reporting on the effectiveness of the program amidst a year of major change in both rural communities. The subsequent data was published in our mid-year Rural Annual Report and will help us maintain the success of the program while also identifying areas in need of further refinement and improvement for 2023.
- Another important component of the **Clinic on Country** Program – the Teacher Support for regional and rural teachers, continued in 2022. Feedback has consistently been positive. A Clinical Psychologist provided support for Art Therapists, Support Workers, Professionals and Teachers, available on a weekly basis. The trauma focused intervention thus ensured regional and rural practitioner had access to necessary support so they may maintain a high standard of service delivery and make meaningful change in rural NSW.
- The **Young Aboriginal Mother's Program** (YAMP) has consistently been assessed through the transitioning of one group into mainstream schooling, enhanced engagement in an existing establishment of a newer group, and looked to commence another in the New Year. As respected Elder, Aunty Jo, joined the women's and children's group, meaningful change has been

created, providing opportunities for unique identity formation and cultural exploration. In 2023, the overall experiences of the mothers and their children who transitioned out of YAMP in 2022 will be collected and assessed alongside existing reports. This process will allow Gunawirra's primary program to continue to improve and grow in the new year and beyond.

- Our **Journey to Learning** component of COC was carried out by Gunawirra CEO, Graham Toomey. Journey to Learning has been facilitated via several in-person visits to Kempsey and Armidale. When in-person visits were not possible, learning videos and cultural boxes were provided to ensure children continued learning in culturally informed ways. Teachers reported that these resources have been a helpful component in the classroom, utilising them often. The impact of relevant webinars on kinship, connection to Country, identity etc. were also identified as major helpers within the rural schooling environment and as a result, Journey to Learning has actively achieved the goals it set out to complete in 2022.

Overall 2022 has been a huge year for Gunawirra. The outcomes of metropolitan and regional/rural programs provide insight into the best ways to continue our service delivery in community informed, culturally focused ways. Further assessments will be conducted in 2023, as we continue to advance our objectives and maximise the outcomes of our engagement.

Our Team

Achievements

Our Clinical manager was chosen to partake in the **2022 NSW Yanalangami: Strong Women, Strong Communities** weekend program.

This Program was an initiative run by *Tranby National Indigenous Adult Education and Training* (Tranby), based on Gadigal Land in Glebe. **Yanalangami: Strong Women, Strong Communities** is a national reaching program led by Aboriginal women and designed to connect, inspire and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female change makers. The 2022 NSW Emerging Change maker program was the first in-person workshop series of Yanalangami.

Gunawirra was awarded the **NSW Volunteer of the Year Award - Mid Western Sydney**, from the Centre for Volunteering.

Our People

Graham Toomey - CEO/ Executive Director

Katrina Ikonmou - Clinical Manager

Sonia White - Administration Manager

Charlotte Owen - Marketing Manager

Aunty Jo Selfe - YAMP Cultural Knowledge Holder

Mary Robson - Occupational Therapist

Danielle Lass - Psychotherapist

Annette Coulter - Art Psychotherapist

Ingo Lambrecht - Psychoanalyst

Emma Gentle - Art Therapist

Loren Weber - Art Therapist

Ingrid Hardtman - Art Therapists

Dani Walsh - Art Therapists

Niva Shrestha - Research

Caity Boyle - Policy and Research

Susan Kath - Nutritionist

Lorain Levy - Volunteer Cook

Donna Ikonmou - Volunteer Cook

Jane Betts - Administration Volunteer

Ainsley Martin - Logistics Volunteer

Melanie Houlahan - Graphic Designer

Greg Sutcliffe - IT Manager

Yael Basserabie - Accounts



Gunawirra team celebrating the Aboriginal flag being freed

Our Funders and Supporters

Grants and Funding



Partnerships and supporters



Individual Donors and Supporters

It is not possible for us to list the hundreds of amazing donors who supported us online from July 2020 to June 2021.

A huge THANKYOU to everyone!!

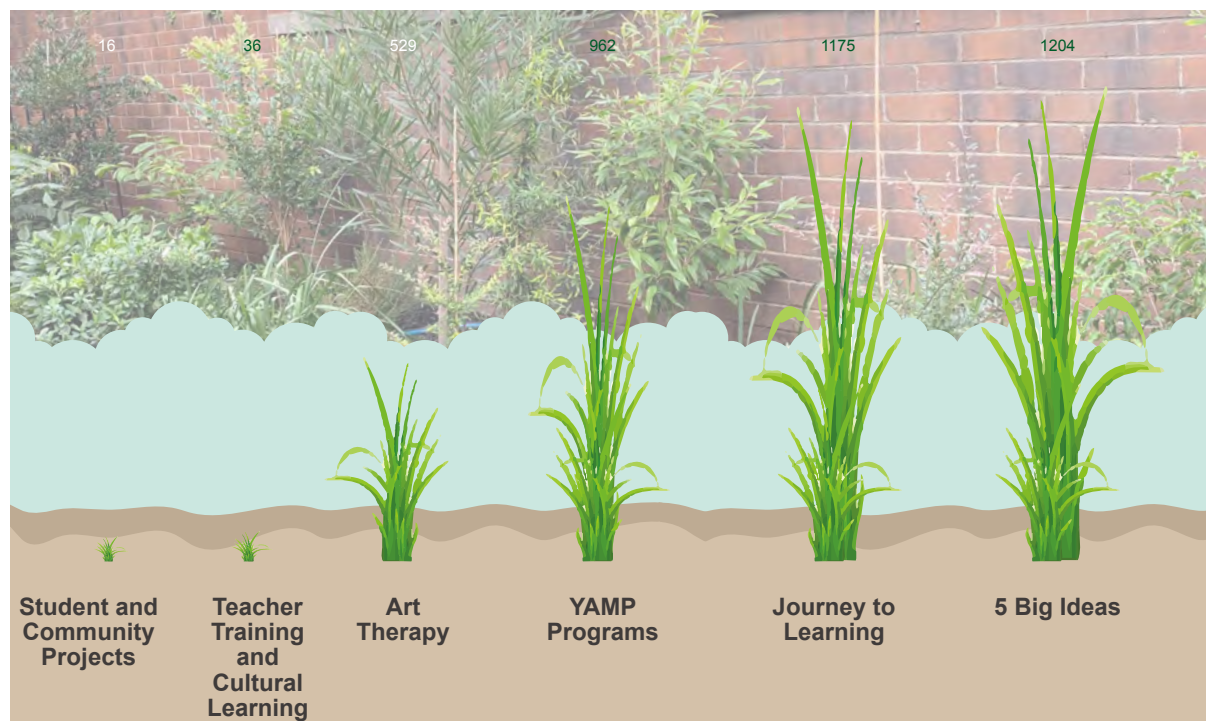
Being able to support the extraordinary work Gunawirra does in their community as been one of the highlights of the year for L'Oréal Australia. Our purpose is to "create the beauty that moves the world" and a key part of this to act to champion the cause of women and to strengthen the communities in which work. Gunawirra is the perfect partner with their support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children through programs that focus on healing intergenerational trauma and the importance of cultural knowledge, creativity and identity.

Meeting Graham and Sonia at Gunawirra House on Wangal Country was a wonderful experience for our team, as we were able to understand and truly appreciate the work the team does for their community. We're grateful to be part of the Gunawirra community and look forward to continuing our partnership.

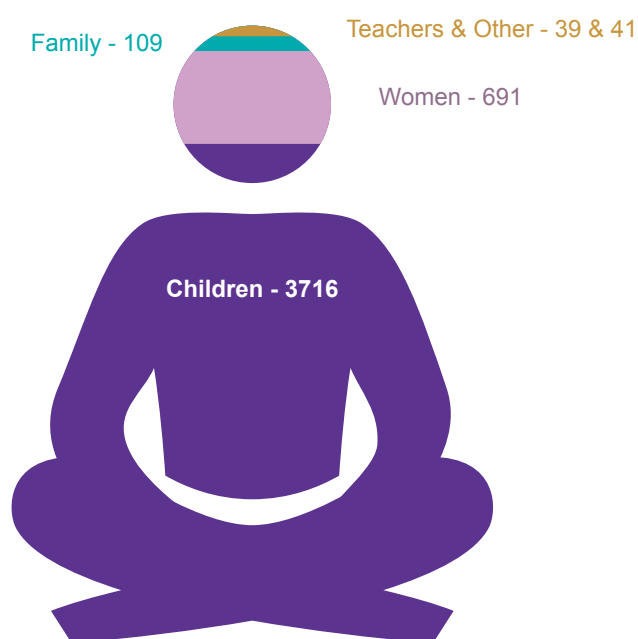
Marnie Carroll, Corporate Affairs & Engagement Director, L'Oréal Australia

Statistics

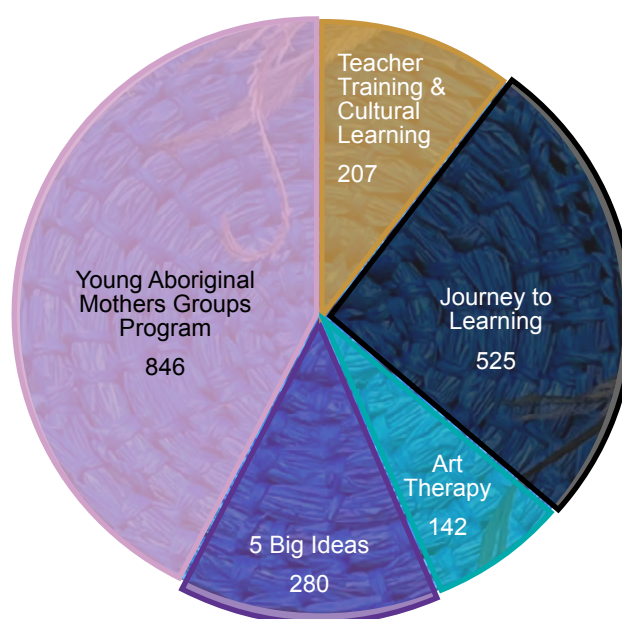
Gunawirra service delivery by program 2021-2022



Gunawirra service delivery by client group 2021-2022



Gunawirra program delivery hours 2021-2022

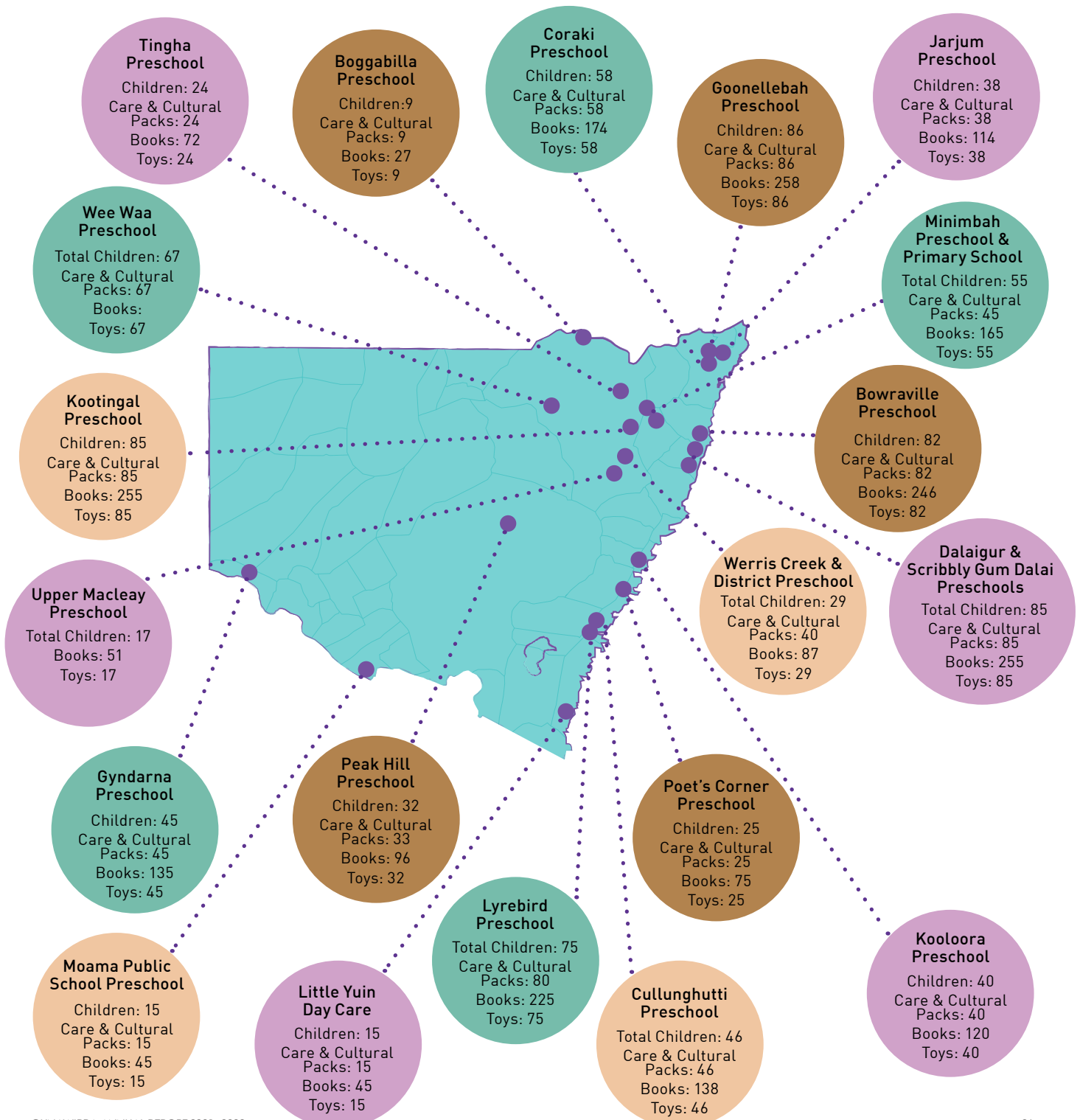


Care Pack, Book and Toy Distribution

Care Packs are used as part of The 5 Big Ideas Program Hygiene Module, and teachers can give them to children any time when teaching about good hygiene and first aid suitable for their young age. Things like washing their hands, cleaning their teeth and putting Band-Aids on cuts. The aim of the

Care Packs is to help children understand they can also take care of themselves. They are made up by generous volunteer in Sydney, many of them schoolchildren, and then boxed at Gunawirra for distribution.

2021 - 2022 Care Packs, Books and Toys distributed



Donating

All donations are welcome. Donations of \$2 or more are tax-deductible*
Your donation will help transform the lives of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers and children.

Ways of donating

Online

Through our website: gunawirra.org.au/donate/

GiveNow direct portal: givenow.com.au/gunawirra

Talk to your company accounts department regarding workplace giving.



Direct transfer

Account name: Gunawirra Business Transaction Account

BSB number: 06 2156

Account number: 10180211

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