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**DHARRIWAA
ELDERS GROUP**

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Speaker's Annual Report to Dharriwaa Elders Group ("DEG") members for 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022.

Prepared by Project Manager Wendy Spencer.

Members News

From 1 July 2021 – 15 December 2021 the following Elders Councillors presided: Speaker: Clem Dodd, Secretary: Virginia Robinson, Treasurer: Duncan Ward. Elders Councillors: Violet Morgan, Lewis Beale, Richard Lake. At the 15 December 2021 AGM the following were elected: Speaker: Clem Dodd, Secretary: Virginia Robinson, Treasurer: Vacant. Elders Councillors: Violet Morgan, Lewis Beale. During the period DEG's Elders Council secretariat held 6 meetings. The expected number of meetings didn't transpire due to illness, Sorry Business or Covid19. The DEG contributed food vouchers to 16 families for Walgett funerals during the period. During the year we mourned the passing of Shirley Weatherall, Doug Darwin, Thomas Morgan, Phillip Kennedy and too many younger people.

Representation

Narran Lakes Co-Management Committee. Virginia Robinson represented the Dharriwaa Elders Group on this committee, which was managed by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage. Her reports were made as regular agenda items of DEG meetings and correspondence and business arising were addressed when DEG delegates were made aware of the Committee's business. This is a work-around the NSW Government policy that excludes ex-officio members of Co-Management Committees.

ACHAA. Clem Dodd represented DEG in its role as a director of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Arts Association of NSW (ACHAA), attending meetings by video from Walgett. Clem attended the ACHAA gathering at Merimbula in April 2022 with Violet Morgan, Kim Sullivan, Barry Simpson and Wendy Spencer.

Lightning Ridge Area Opal Reserve Manager. Wendy Spencer is the gazetted ex-officio representative of the DEG for this committee which worked to prepare with consultants the Reserve's Plan of Management. The other members of this committee represent opal mining, opal tourism, opal retail and Lightning Ridge heritage interests and concerns. During the period management activities were conducted to reduce risk and enable the public to enjoy the reserve. The need for surveys of the Reserve's environmental assets and planning for their management is often raised by DEG's representative, as is the long-term aim for the Reserve to provide access to Country for Aboriginal communities of Walgett and Lightning Ridge.

Project Manager's Report

The Objects of Dharriwaa Elders Group continue to be implemented by the organisation. The Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership between DEG and UNSW is the main mechanism DEG uses to pursue its Objects. Increased investment responses allowed DEG's staff and activities to expand this year and we are learning how to operate holistically and free of constraints of starvation funding and fears of retribution from government agencies. The

Department of Health's CHSP program supports the provision of Elders Social Support and associated Transport activities. Soon it will be changed by the Commonwealth Government and the DEG is actively advocating that its model of holistic social support for the aged is recognised and resourced appropriately. The Commonwealth Government offered a contract to the DEG in February 2022 for a Walgett River Ranger Program that DEG designed with YN's Charlee Sue Frail in the previous year.

DEG's role in managing and growing Aboriginal cultural values and knowledge remains under-recognised but continues. Increasingly DEG recognises its responsibility to support its members to continue this work that was championed by Founding Members and cultural custodians now passed. DEG continues to network with similar Aboriginal cultural organisations in its NSW peak body ACHAA (Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Arts Association NSW) to grow in this undervalued domain. ACHAA was accepted into the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations of NSW this year.

DEG's work this year also included advocating for more supportive and responsive government agency roles and approaches, particularly in response to the high number of Walgett's children and young people interacting with police and the criminal justice system, food and water security crises, housing shortages, Covid19 responses, and water management. The voice of DEG grew its influence, which is being measured by our Yuwaya Ngarrali (YN) evaluation processes. Notable research projects DEG proposed and undertook with YN partners include understanding government procurement of Walgett services, understanding the impacts on DEG from proposed changes to the Commonwealth's CHSP program, analysing BOCSAR data re Walgett children, designing appropriate supportive housing for Elders, children and young people and for emergencies, analysing learnings from two years of operating our Youth Program. Our YN Food and Water for Life Program with Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service expanded Walgett's community garden, implemented supermarket food choices promotions and undertook a community food and water security survey.

DEG's experiences with the implementation of the NSW Government policy for Aboriginal Affairs Ochre including Local Decision-making and Connected Community Schools continued to challenge us. DEG has an ex-officio role on the School Reference Group and in that role continues to advocate for better responses to disability and wellbeing and to reduce the use of police in behaviour management.

DEG's leadership faced another difficult year as it sought to bring benefits to the Walgett community with its influential partners despite regular traumatic events, Elders' illnesses and the impacts of the Covid19 pandemic on our work.

We share highlights of our work during 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022 in the following pages of this report.

In Memorium



Thank you "Smokey Joe" Thomas Morgan for joining our Covid19 immunisation campaign and for delivering food and water for DEG. You had great love and knowledge of the rivers and our community and will be missed.



Right: Labor's Parkes candidate Jack Ayoub visited DEG in May 2022. He talked about his vision for a better future in this region & asked about the concerns of DEG. Conversation ranged from climate action, water trading, pollution of the rivers, a community battery, more social housing, controlling land clearing & restoring confidence in government, the AAT & other public institutions.



Above left: Greens candidate for Parkes Trish Frail visited DEG twice in May before the election. Trish talked about issues she is passionate about & to encourage the community to vote. She talked about the need for more social housing, dental & mental health to be included in Medicare, Treaty, investing in jobs, building communities not jails, equal pay for women, management of the Murray Darling Basin & action on climate change. She said "If we had a healthy river we would have healthy people".

Right: Derek Hardman, Parkes Indigenous Party candidate dropped by with his party's Senate candidate Owen Whyman. Discussion ranged from water management, preferential voting, Aboriginal ranger programs, youth & justice issues.



Left: DEG's Virginia Robinson Welcomed Dugald Saunders to Gamilaraay Country & Walgett beside Namoi River where the community held a funeral for the river back in March 2019. The Minister for Ag. & Western NSW announced a new Aboriginal Ranger program for the NSW Local Land Services. Right: June 2022 designing a Culture and Language Hub for Walgett High School with School Reference Group

Elders' civic participation





Left: After DEG made enquiries with the schools about the need for good ventilation during Covid, Acting Executive Principal Alison Finlayson conducted a tour of the primary school's ventilation modifications in November 2021. Photo shows School Reference Group members in the new yarning circle area of the Primary School.



Above right: DEG's Kim Sullivan and Clem Dodd after the new installation of the DEG solar power station in July 2021. DEG still requires a smart meter and modifications to its current power configuration. These have to be undertaken by appropriately certified electricians from elsewhere.

Elders' civic participation



Left: DEG undertook a governance and strategic planning workshop for its directors in July 2021.

Right: DEG set up video streaming so that Gomeroi claim group members could attend a Tamworth claim group meeting June 2022. Different members joined when they could. DEG's Vanessa Hickey attended in person and raised Walgett concerns in person.



Yuwaya Ngarra-li “vision”



Yuwaya Ngarra-li (YN) is a community-led partnership between the Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG) and the University of NSW.

Professor Eileen Baldry, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, is the Academic Lead of Yuwaya Ngarra-li. The core Yuwaya Ngarra-li (“YN”) team is based in Walgett and UNSW Sydney. At UNSW Sydney, Yuwaya Ngarra-li sits within the Institute of Global Development.

The purpose of Yuwaya Ngarra-li is for the Dharriwaa Elders Group and UNSW to work in partnership to improve the wellbeing, social, built and physical environment and life pathways of Aboriginal people in Walgett through collaborating with government, philanthropy and community organisations on evidence-based initiatives, research and capacity building, and to evaluate this model of CommUNITY-Led Development as a way of working with other Aboriginal communities.

The DEG has identified the following long-term aims for Yuwaya Ngarra-li in Walgett:

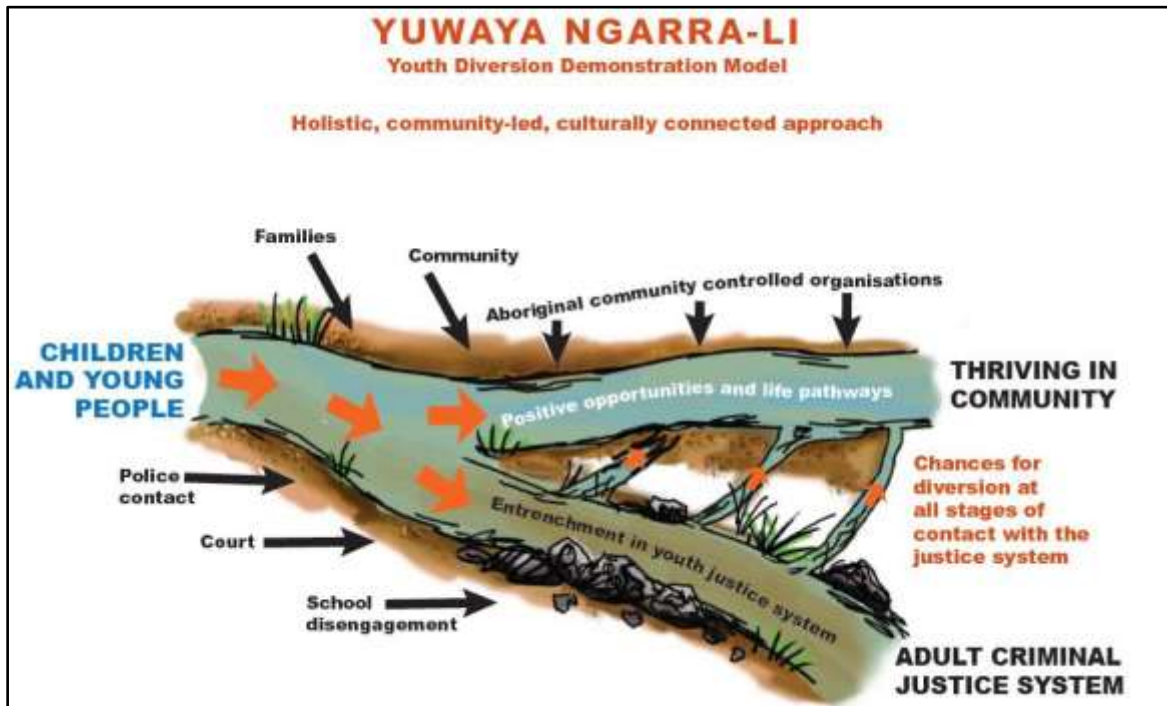
1. Greater Aboriginal community control and capacity
2. Increased numbers of Aboriginal young people in education, training & employment
3. Reduced numbers of Aboriginal people in contact with the criminal justice system
4. Improved social determinants of health and wellbeing amongst Aboriginal people
5. Improved sustainability of energy, water, land and natural resource management
6. Redirection of government funding towards strengths-based, holistic, community-led and sustainable initiatives

The partnership is developing and testing a new model of ‘CommUNITY-Led Development’ which is a place-based approach to breaking the cycle of systemic disadvantage, centring the needs and priorities of Aboriginal people through the leadership of a respected local community-controlled organisation and drawing on the expertise, influence and resources of UNSW. The diagram top right is our approach to this model in Walgett.

Our work with the Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership during the period was grouped over these areas:

Community Leadership and Control, Youth Justice, Water and Country, Research and Evaluation, Dealing with Fines, Housing.





Right: Youth Team Project Officer Zoe Sands graduated with a criminology degree at UNSW in May 2022.

Right: Key to the development of the youth diversion model was the ongoing coaching provided by YN's Peta MacGillivray – seen here in Sept. 2021 with Youthworker Trish Sharpley.



Youth Justice

This year we completed the design of the Bulaarr Bagay Warruwi Burranbaligu – Two River Pathway to Change with Peta MacGillivray and YN partners. It has three interlinked strategies:

- Work intensively with Aboriginal young people – non-punitive therapeutic approach
- Support engagement and leadership by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, parents and carers to support better outcomes for children and young people
- Influence the practices and services and improve the accountability of responsible agencies to support better outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people



Above: 15 March 2022 Kobie Dee Quinton & Isaac Kennedy, Mission Gangsta and Young Guns Original was hosted in an open air concert by DEG's Youth Team. Above right: In May 2022 the Youth Team's clients produced an anti bullying campaign with artist Molly Hunt.



As with previous emergencies, DEG used social media and its community knowledge to be one of the first responders, with the Walgett AMS to fighting Covid in Walgett. DEG's 12 August '21 statement <https://www.dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/DEGstatement12August2021.pdf> on news of a local case of COVID-19 brought donations of PPE flooding in to Walgett, enabling DEG to distribute PPE daily to keep Covid from spreading.



Above: DEG's Kim Sullivan and Bow Simpson with the PPE that arrived from generous Twitter supporters 18 August 21. DEG is v. grateful to all who donated PPE in our time of need. We did our best to distribute FAST.

Above: Daily DEG's Kim Sullivan & Bow Simpson unpacked the day's deliveries so the team could distribute PPE to the community. Above is their receipts from donors that arrived 19 August '21. Every day we documented goods donated.

Community Troubleshooting – Early Intervention Covid 19 Emergency Responses



Some of the amazing donors were Mirvac/Dettol courtesy Kylie Kwong, Essential Energy and Magabala Books. The schools helped us distribute books and study / craft materials to school students in lockdown while the WLALC, Walgett AMS and Walgett IGA helped us distribute PPE to community.



Left: Unpacking Harper Collins, Art Gallery NSW, Officeworks, Penguin donations for young readers during Covid19. The many donors of large quantities of PPE included Essential Energy, Redfern AMS, Gilbert and Tobin. Many, many individual donors sent supplies daily, and DEG staff were kept busy in our outdoor ventilated area unpacking and distributing tirelessly. We are proud that we were the first PPE distributors to the community.

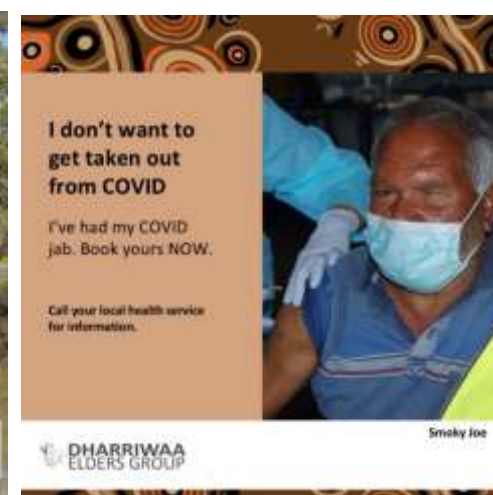
"Can anyone give us clear data for Walgett postcode of #covid cases? Walgett LEMC has decreased frequency of meetings & doesn't appear to be getting this info any more. Does this mean the statutory emergency is over according to NSW Govt?"

DEG tweet 18 February 2022.



Community Troubleshooting – Early Intervention – Covid19 Emergency Responses

DEG's important early responses to the Covid19 emergency includes community messaging. Bow Simpson, Kim Sullivan, Thomas Morgan, Trish Sharpley, Tyrone Lawson and Shirley Weatherall assisted. Thanks to Charlee-Sue Frail for media wrangling and 33Creative for donated services.





The huge donation from Mirvac/Dettol motivated by chef Kylie Kwong made in Sept 2021 meant we had to lean on some relationships for forklifts and trucks. Thanks to Paresch Patel and Walgett IGA, NSW Fire & Rescue and Bi Rite to helped us out! We were able to deliver PPE to most Walgett households pronto as a result! Below: we delivered Dettol products to the Walgett LALC and Walgett AMS – who then distributed to their clients in Walgett, Collarenebri and Goodooga and Brewarinna communities!

Community Troubleshooting – Covid19 Emergency responses



Top: an amazing donation of reconditioned laptops was made for Walgett & Collarenebri students in September.

Above: Primary school personnel on many occasions during August and Sept 2021 helped us sort and distribute reading and craft materials to isolating school students. Thank you to Officeworks, Harper Collins and other companies.





[DEG made a statement when Minister Hazzard & NSW Health officials visited Walgett](#) 8 September 2021. Left: is our photo of the Walgett Local Emergency Management Ctee with the Minister after a meeting at Walgett AMS where we raised that social workers rather than police should be leading our emergency responses.

The Aboriginal community-controlled service sector that we recognise being the first responders to our community when it is in crisis – is not required to join the LEMC, but was invited to join the Walgett LEMC by the LEOCON Trent Swinton. This enabled DEG to raise community concerns and obtain the data we needed to work to keep our community safe. Our work was a combination of community relief and advocacy. DEG's [Statement of 22 October 2021](#) "Today we report the concerns of Walgett parents that schools are not COVID safe" was another attempt to make emergency responses more effective.

Community Troubleshooting – Covid19 Emergency responses



As in past emergencies and with the knowledge and confidence given to us through our work with Yuwaya Ngarrali collaborators, we have learnt to look for signs of food supply disruptions. We know how much our community relies on regular, in-person shopping activities, but this was a risk during Covid19 so we trialled a phone ordering and delivery system with Walgett IGA (*see form at right*). Because Walgett residents mostly buy drinking water, we made water and supermarket voucher donations in Sept. 21 also, in order to reduce the need for supermarket visits.

DHARRIWAA ELDERS GROUP		IGA Order Form		IGA	
Name:		<input type="checkbox"/> Potatoes	\$4 to \$5 per bag 50k each	Amount:	
Phone:		<input type="checkbox"/> BBQ Chicken	\$20	Amount:	
Address:		<input type="checkbox"/> Eggs	600g \$4.36, 10 pack \$5.58, 30 pack \$16	Amount:	
You may be to help you make an order via email or over the phone with IGA staff. They will bring items to a stage and report you when your order is ready to be picked up and items will be left on pick up only. No cash on hand. For those without transport please request home delivery. Service available Monday to Friday 9:00am to 4:00pm only. Preferred payment over the phone as no cash will be accepted for contactless pickup.					
Email Order:	order@dharrivaa.org.au	<input type="checkbox"/> Bread	\$2 to \$5 per loaf	Amount:	
Phone:	0828 1514 talk to Patrick to arrange pickup	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsweetened Quinoa	\$2.80 500g Small \$4.80 1kg Large \$5.70	Amount:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Apples	Average 50c each or \$4.00 per kg	<input type="checkbox"/> Uncle Tobys Oats	\$8 1kg each	Amount:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Oranges	Average 75c each or \$4.50 per kg	<input type="checkbox"/> Chicken Cakes	average 2.15 per kg	Amount:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bananas	Average 90c each or \$5.50 per kg	<input type="checkbox"/> Sausages	average \$12 per kg	Amount:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lemons	Average \$1 each	<input type="checkbox"/> Beefsteaks	average \$12 per kg	Amount:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Strawberries	\$2.50 per punnet	<input type="checkbox"/> Beefsteaks	average \$12 per kg	Amount:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lettuce	\$1.50 each	<input type="checkbox"/> Chicken	Black and Gold \$1.90	Amount:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tripe Tomatoes	\$1.50 each or \$20.00 per kg	<input type="checkbox"/> Chicken Black and Gold Breasted	100g \$5	Amount:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cucumbers	85c each or \$6.50 per kg	<input type="checkbox"/> Mince	2 lbs \$3.80 or 7 lbs \$4.50	Amount:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Jarrah Pumpkin pieces	average \$1.50 per kg	<input type="checkbox"/> Mince Low Fat	1kg \$5.80	Amount:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cheese	\$2 to \$3 per kg or 75c each	<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee (House)	250g \$3.75	Amount:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Carrots	\$2.50 per bag				



Housing

At the beginning of the Covid19 emergency DEG expressed its concerns re the risks of homelessness and overcrowding for the pandemic. DEG's community troubleshooting team undertook a quick community review into Walgett homelessness and overcrowding and presented this information to the LEOCON. Our Yuwaya Ngarrali colleagues prepared a briefing paper for philanthropic supporters, with the assistance of Wiradjuri UNSW scholar Sam Rich. While there was acknowledgement of the urgent need for emergency



and other accommodation in Walgett, it was not seen as something that could be funded and built quickly. However we are now working with Sam on longer-term plans for housing for Elders, young people in contact with the justice system, as well as crisis accommodation. Samantha is pictured at left with DEG's Virginia Robinson in March 2022 and above making a presentation re her draft findings in April 2022.



Dealing with Fines

As a result of investigations undertaken by Redfern Legal Centre and Redfern Aboriginal Legal Service, DEG found out that Walgett had the highest number of covid19 public health order fines issued per head of population in NSW. Despite our representations in LEMC to police. DEG made a detailed statement in May 2022

<https://www.dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/DEGStatement5May2022.pdf> and marshalled its defences for 1) those fined incorrectly under law & 2) those struggling with fine debts. In March 2022 our Yuwaya Ngarrali collaborators brought us together with a lawyer at the Redfern ALS to provide advice as we began to develop a new Dealing with Fines program. With DEG's Yuwaya Ngarrali Youth Team the program kicked off in the first half of 2022 – firstly providing community members with Covid fines legal advice and representation if needed. This effort happened alongside similar but different activities of Legal Aid NSW which were also appreciated.



Above: New staff inductions April 2022.

Right: Vince Kennedy and Lewis Beale attended a native grain workshop in July 2021 held outdoors during Covid19 in the WAMS Community garden. DEG requested this workshop to be organised by the local Landcare group and asked them to invite the Narrabri Sydney Uni native grain research team that has impressed us with their work.



Developing the capabilities of Walgett Aboriginal Community-Controlled organisations

Despite the impositions of Covid19 limiting meetings with other Walgett ACCOs, DEG continued pursuing understanding of the systemic changes and local supports that are required for Walgett Aboriginal community-controlled sector to flourish because we know that so many of the services we need in Walgett to support wellbeing, will have to be delivered by strong ACCOs. During the period we advocated to NSW CAPO for key supports we require, undertook a research project to understand

government procurement of Walgett services, and another project to prepare advocacy to counter damaging proposals for a new model for aged care services.

DEG continued to develop training resources for Walgett ACCO staff re legacy and approaches of Walgett ACCO service-delivery which we have learnt is required alongside a comprehensive in-workplace training effort.

Guwaalay
March 2022 Issue 1 Vol 31 Yandilbee VJ.8

DEG's first large Youth Team event

Dharriwaa Elders Group hopeful for NSW CAPO

Left: Guwaalay continued to be published through the period and distributed by Walgett Newsagents and DEG's Elders Centre to the Walgett community. It provides community news and reports on DEG's work.

We hope that we can keep our community informed of our work and aware of opportunities they can use to get involved.





Above: WAMS's Amy Townsend established a new tradition of Elders drawing the famous WAMS Xmas raffle at DEG in December 2021. Above centre: WAMS and DEG attended the Coalition of Peak Aboriginal Organisations consultation on Closing the Gap in Dubbo March 2022. WAMS and DEG are the two Walgett Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) and work together in that role. Above right: WAMS' Loretta Weatherall conducted DEG's weekly Elders Health program during the period. She is seen here delivering a donation of RATS (rapid antigen tests) in April 2022 which became the main method DEG used to monitor Covid safety after full PCR testing ceased to be offered.

WAMS and DEG



Above: WAMS and DEG staff and directors gathered with Yuwaya Ngarrali collaborators by video to launch the 5 year Food and Water for Life research project in November 2021, as soon as safe to do so after starting the program together months earlier. DEG's Trish Tonkin made the presentation.



Above: WAMS and the Food and Water for Life program invested in a second expansion of the WAMS new water-efficient Community Garden in June 2022. Below: Alinta Trindall, Ty Madden, Niall Earle, Jacqui Webster, Trish Tonkin joined Annie Deane, Loretta Wetherall and Bruce Moore from WAMS to undertake the community food and water security survey in March 2022. They used WAMS' Euragai Goondi as a base for training and collating daily survey results. Right: On completion of the survey, the Yuwaya Ngarrali team briefed the WAMS CEO and later the full WAMS Board on early findings and next steps.



Walgett's Dharriwaa Elders Group with Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service and partners from The George Institute and Global Water Institute for Global Health successfully applied for a NH&MRC grant to "Co-create and evaluate sustainable community-led innovations to strengthen food & water security". This 5 year project began in 2021. Covid19 severely delayed the project however all of the community projects progressed – WAMS Community Garden expansion, progressing the design of a low sodium drinking water kiosk, undertaking a regulatory analysis of impacts to food and water security, establishing supermarket food choices promotions and conducting a baseline Food and Water Security community survey in March 2022.

Food & Water 4 Life

Right: Jacqui Webster returned to provide a briefing to DEG and WAMS in June 2022. Bottom right: DEG conducted a session with George Institute colleagues in October '21 to document the impacts of the IGA fire emergency impact on food and water security.



Above: February 22 DEG's low sodium drinking water kiosk reverse osmosis system arrived. Covid builders' delays stalled installation.





Left: Library NSW Indigenous Unit offered quarterly Family History workshops, Covid19 permitting. This photo is from June 2022. Right: Also in June Australian Film, TV and Radio School conducted a mobile content creation workshop which DEG staff greatly appreciated.



Cultural values maintenance



In November 2021 DEG's Clem Dodd was presented with medals and a commemoration display for his uncle Thomas Dodd who is buried in France after being killed in WW1. Officebearers from Walgett's RSL Sub-branch Robert Ward and Dave Hutchinson joined Joe Flick who organised the presentation in his work for the Australian War Memorial.



Above: In June 2022 DEG caught up with Yuwaalaraay / Gamilaraay language teacher and dictionary-maker John Giacon and invited High School Culture Hub designers to meet, discuss and consider language teaching issues.



Left: In June the ranger team travelled to the peak of Mt Kaputar to obtain the best view of the Namoi River and tributaries and irrigator storages, accompanied by past ranger, water manager ecologist Bill Johnson. Right: The ranger program relies on inductions from Elders about water values and this photo was taken at Galigurrunga in May 2022.



Cultural values maintenance – developing the River Ranger Project



Above left: After negotiations over IP DEG officebearers signed the funding agreement for the River Ranger program March 2022 – historically significant as Founding DEG Elders worked to establish a ranger team from Day One of DEG. Above centre: DEG and its ranger team was invited to a schmozzle online meeting regarding environmental water management in May 2022. It was a useful introduction to the current situation which is unacceptable to DEG. Above right: Rangers' induction at Dungalear May 2022 where they discovered, and DEG subsequently reported, ACH destruction, requesting an investigation. This began a long process in which we are supported by the NSW Environmental Defenders Office.



During the period the Environmental Defenders Office prepared a legal advice regarding two places where access to the Barwon River to the Walgett community is blocked. Left: In July 2021 the advice was first workshopped by DEG directors and staff. Right: in February 2022 this advice was discussed further as progress was made. Both issues are not resolved yet and rely on Council, Water NSW and a private landholder to change.



Water learning and advocacy



Left: As Covid19 permitted, DEG engaged Water Co-ordinator Bill Johnson to identify and document Elders' knowledge of ingredients for healthy waters in DEG's area of interest. This involved many yarns and provides the base knowledge to inform DEG's work to contribute to future healthier waterways.



On 10 March 2022 DEG met with the NSW DPIE Regional Water Strategies team – asking them a series of questions regarding the implementation of the Regional Water Strategy.





An important part of our work is to keep up to speed with water policy developments and understand them. DEG's Water Co-ordinator Bill Johnson prepared briefs on subjects we requested him to help us understand, and we hosted discussion dinners and lunches to spread the knowledge to workers and others at times most likely to fit in with their schedules. Covid19 again put many spanners in our works. Above left: a water talk February 2022 and above right: water talks April 2022.

DEG prepared a submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Floodplain Harvesting, and DEG's Secretary Virginia Robinson was invited to join the Hearings in September 2021 (above right). DEG's understanding of the legal position of the practice of floodplain harvesting solidified and we came to see through the false narratives being spread that benefit powerful irrigators. We now know that the rivers were unprecedentedly dry at Walgett during 2018 and 2019 and for periods in 2016 and earlier, due to extraction of water from the floodplains and rivers upstream of Walgett, when the Climate Change Emergency was busily denied by decision makers. The new blaming of Climate Change for Walgett's dry rivers is no longer acceptable for DEG now that we know that over-extraction is occurring upstream to a huge degree.

Water learning and advocacy

The federal election provided an opportunity for DEG: *"The rivers, wetlands, groundwaters, floodplains & the environment & communities that depend on them are suffering. Government can change this. This statement is made so voters are aware of DEG's policy for water management on Saturday 21 May 2022."*

<https://www.dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/index.php/news/221-statement-water-management>

Throughout the period DEG grew more confident to speak to politicians and voters about what we can see happening to rivers and floodplains around Walgett. DEG's Secretary spoke to NSW politicians before votes and the DEG reported on water protector news regularly on Twitter e.g. 24 February 2022: *"Grateful thanks to the members of NSW Upper House who today supported a Motion to Disallow the Floodplain Harvesting Regulation introduced 14 February 2022. They did the right thing. We will remember their support."* And *"DEG Secretary Virginia Robinson today thanked @NSWLabor for supporting the Disallowance Motion & expressed her disappointment that Mark Banasiak MLC & Shooters Fishers & Farmers no longer represent or honour the Aboriginal vote in #BarwonVotes #WaterIsLife"* and *"The NSW Legislative Council has disallowed floodplain harvesting for the third time. Huge thank you to @justinrfield, NSW Greens Cate Faehrmann MLC, NSW Labor's for voting supporting the disallowance. Shooters Fishers & Farmers abstained."*



DEG continued its collaborations with groundwater expert Dr Martin Andersen and his students as we build our understanding of how groundwaters are managed and interact with surface waters in our area of interests. During the period this involved visiting Gingie Station and above left: Springvale, Narran River at Angledool Weir (below right), and a ring well in Warrena St in December 2021. In October 2021 with the help of landholders, we found a spring on Springvale that had been inactive for 70 yrs (above right). It will be good to understand if the height of the groundwater has dropped due to surrounding extractions, what water it yielded and what interaction it has with nearby Dharriwaa (Narran Lakes) wetlands and the surface floodplains. It would have had high Aboriginal Cultural Heritage significance and water may have been accessed through hollow logs.

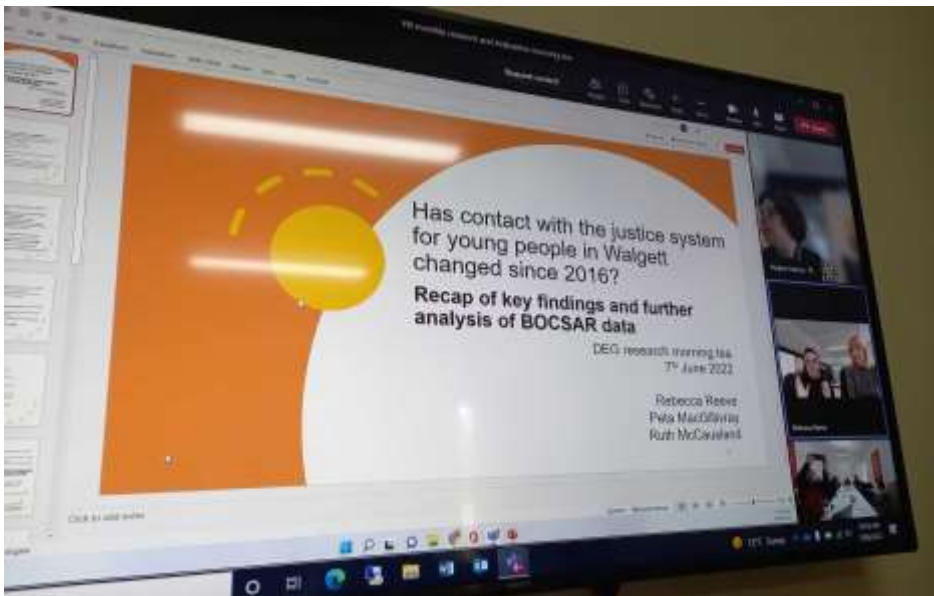
Water and Country



Left: One Basin CRC team met to develop its successful bid for support in March 2022. Above: Virginia Robinson made DEG's World Water Week presentation with Stockholm International Water Institute nighttime August 2021.



Evaluating and understanding our work

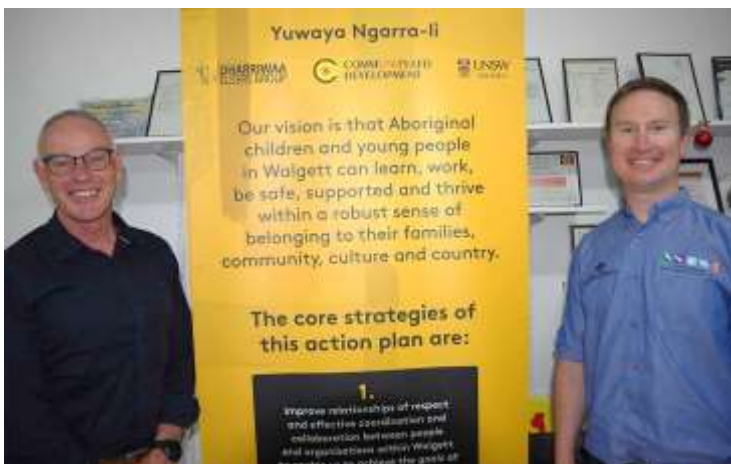


DEG has determined to discover what we can learn about what is happening to our community through a project to link available data about individuals and the Walgett Aboriginal community. First we learnt about and discussed the possibilities, then DEG's Virginia Robinson developed research principles for the project and our YN Research and evaluation team prepared an AH&MRC ethics application during the period. Above left: one of the many workshops to discuss the possibilities in August 2021 pre Covid, and a yarn about data and evaluation with Dr Ruth McCausland and Dr Jacqui Webster in June 2022.

Left: One of the very powerful aspects of our work with our Yuwaya Ngarrali collaborators is when we come together to share knowledge of community and government-collected data about our community. Left: Yuwaya Ngarrali quantitative researcher Dr Rebecca Reeves presented DEG with an analysis of BOCSAR data in June 2022. During workshops such as these – our YN researchers (who are the best of the best) prepare an analysis of what they have found from NSW government data about the contacts of Walgett young people with the criminal justice system. We then discuss these findings and put it together with what we know about the situation on the ground. In this way we are collecting evidence and information that we can rely to form a basis for our future work and measure our progress.



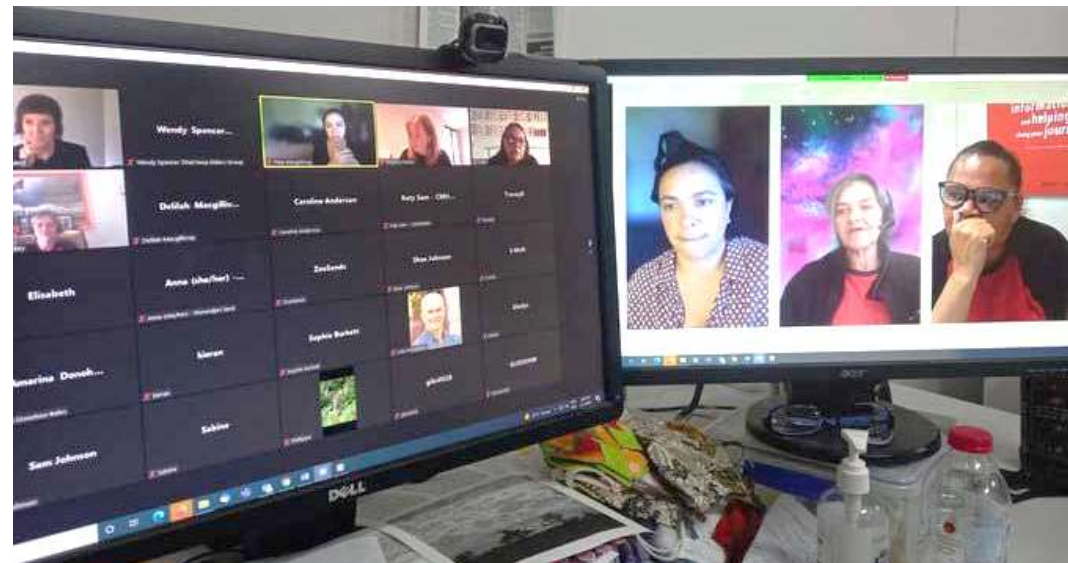
Above: the Chair Jeanette Crew, CEO and collections worker from sister organisation Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre visited DEG in June 2022. YIKC is one of the four Aboriginal organisations (as well as DEG) to be supported by the Commonwealth to startup a River Ranger project. DEG Secretary Virginia Robinson presented Jeanette Crew with a teaching publication produced by DEG about Dharriwaa (Narran Lakes). Mrs Crew presented the Ranger team with a publication produced by YIKC. We discussed ranger work & future plans to meet up to discuss water management.



Left: The newly-appointed Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) Hilton Taylor and colleague Michael Peat visited DEG in November 2021 and answered our questions re their purchases of water from irrigators for the environment, and other matters. We are learning how DEG's aims may be served by the CEWH.

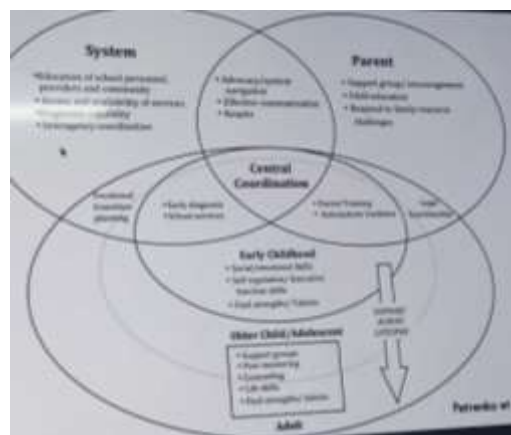
Visitors sharing knowledge

Dharriwaa Elders Group's relationships that we carefully develop, serve many purposes. Our relationships with other members of ACHAA NSW – the peak body of Aboriginal cultural organisations are important so that we can be stronger in advocacy together and understand our place in our world. Our relationship with CEWH will help us know the situation re water management and our place in that.



Above left: Dr Bob Davidson is a more recent Yuwaya Ngarrali collaborator who prepared a briefing paper for us about the proposed Commonwealth changes to the program that funds DEG's Elders program. In June 2022 he was able to present his draft findings to DEG. Above right: Yuwaya Ngarrali's Youth Worker Trish Sharpley and Community Troubleshooter Vanessa Hickey joined Peta MacGillivray and Dr Ruth McCausland to make a presentation to the Australian Social Policy Conference in November 2021 on their work on our Yuwaya Ngarrali projects. We are keen to share about our work when we believe it will assist understanding and support for our work.

Lifelong learning and sharing knowledge



The May 2022 FASD Forum provided very important learning for DEG staff. We highly recommend this Forum in future years.





Memories

Above left: DEG's first gathering of Elders after Covid Emergency in February 2022. Above right: DEG's Elders' XMAS lunch December 2021 during Covid.



Left: Clem Dodd with renovated scooter Feb 2022. Above: Kim Sullivan, Violet Morgan Umbarra Cultural Centre Wallaga Lake April 2022. Right: Barry Simpson, Ozzy Cruze, Clem Dodd Yuin Country, Twofold Bay April 2022.

Dharriwaa Elders Group sustainability and supporters

DEG staff (part-time and casual) during parts or all of this year were Vanessa Hickey, Robyn Morgan, Wendy Spencer, Clem Dodd, Virginia Robinson, Kim Sullivan, Bow Simpson, Zoe Sands, Patricia Sharpley, Jack Mayes, Stephen Dennis, Coral Wright, Patricia Tonkin, Craig Vaughan, Ernie Sands, Meredith Robinson, William Fernando, Jacob Thurston, Latia Sands-Dennis.

Dharriwaa Elders Group (an Aboriginal Walgett community cultural organization of 22 years standing) expanded its staff and capabilities during the period. During the period the DEG became stronger in rejecting advances from entities who want to use DEG's assets but do not serve DEG's priorities or enhance DEG's capabilities. DEG also became stronger in controlling the way research is conducted in Walgett, and continued to assert community sovereignty over community data. The wellbeing of members and safety of staff remains our highest priority. The Employee Assistance Program provided by Elizabeth McEntyre has been essential. The provision of a safe meeting place with harmony amongst Elders and their visitors has become an increasing challenge in our troubled community.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group was supported financially or in kind by:

- a. Leading and providing services to the Yuwaya Ngarrali project – DEG's partnership with University of NSW
- b. The Commonwealth Government through the CHSP program of the Dept. of Health for Social Support and related Transport
- c. The Commonwealth Government through National Indigenous Australians Agency Indigenous Advancement Strategy (River Rangers)
- d. Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers, Environmental Defenders Office, Steven Davies and Indigenous Community Volunteers
- e. The many donors to the Food and Water Appeal, the Organisational Support Appeal, the Covid-19 related Work and Relief Appeal and general donations.
- f. The NSW Social Sector Transformation Fund Open Round Grant of NSW Communities & Justice

DEG directors are determined to develop DEG's fundraising and social enterprises – for example for new social housing and waste processing, and continued to develop relationships with the private sector to continue DEG's valuable culturally-led community development activities.

Staff undertook informal in-house training in a suite of community development theory of change mapping, reflection, analysis and documentation methods and First Aid. Finding training through TAFE continues to be a challenge. May's FASD Forum provided breakthrough professional development.

DEG continued to hold funds for Aboriginal Women of Walgett ("AWOW") during the period.

