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**DHARRIWAA
ELDERS GROUP**

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Speaker's Annual Report to Dharriwaa Elders Group ("DEG") members for 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023.

Prepared by General Manager Wendy Spencer.

Members News

From 1 July 2022 – 16 December 2022 the following Elders Councillors presided: Speaker: Clem Dodd, Secretary: Virginia Robinson, Treasurer: Vacant. Elders Councillors: Violet Morgan, Lewis Beale. At the Elders Council meeting of 25 November 2022 Ricky Townsend was invited to join the Elders Council. At the 16 December 2022 AGM the following were elected: Speaker: Clem Dodd, Secretary: Virginia Robinson, Treasurer: Ricky Townsend. Elders Councillors: Violet Morgan. During the period DEG's Elders Council secretariat held 9 meetings. The expected number of meetings didn't transpire due to illness, Sorry Business or Covid19. The DEG contributed food vouchers to 19 families for Walgett funerals during the period and mourned the loss of these people, loved of the community.

Representation

Narran Lakes Co-Management Committee. The Dharriwaa Elders Group new delegate Ernie Sands was rejected as the committee no longer accepts a past "work-around" of the NSW Government policy that excludes ex-officio members from Co-Management Committees.

NSW Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Arts Association "ACHAA". Clem Dodd represented DEG as a director of ACHAA attending meetings by video from Walgett. Clem also attended the September 2022 ACHAA gathering at Wiradjuri Study Centre Condobolin with Kim Sullivan, Vanessa Hickey, Bow Simpson and Wendy Spencer and the May 2023 ACHAA gathering at Yarrawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre with Barry Simpson, Rick Townsend, Vanessa Hickey and Wendy Spencer. Clem was honoured in his absence with an Imagine Award for Lifetime Achievement in December 2022.

Lightning Ridge Area Opal Reserve Manager. Wendy Spencer is the gazetted ex-officio representative of the DEG for this committee. 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 and ACH assets in order to better manage them 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. During this reporting period the members of the committee changed. Elder Brenda McBride joined the committee – boosting the voices of local Aboriginal communities within the committee.

Project Manager's Report

The Objects of Dharriwaa Elders Group continue to be implemented. Increased investment into Yuwaya Ngarrali allowed DEG's staff and activities to expand this year in order to better respond to our community's needs. DEG is continuing to learn how to operate holistically and free of the constraints of starvation funding and fears of retribution from the government agencies that have consistently blocked the growth of DEG since the demise of ATSIC. The Department of Health's CHSP program supports the provision of Elders Social Support and associated Transport activities. The DEG is actively advocating that its model of holistic social support for the aged is recognised and resourced appropriately. The National Indigenous Australians Agency extended the successful Walgett River Ranger Program until 30 June 2024. Other Murray Darling Indigenous River Ranger programs were extended for 3 years so we are investigating why Walgett was different.

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 to grow in this undervalued domain. ACHAA is a member of the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations of NSW and works with other ACCOs to Close the Gap.

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 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, analysing publicly available data re Walgett, designing appropriate supportive housing for Elders, children and young people and for emergencies, and reaching out to Walgett AMS and Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT to collaborate in designing and establishing of a new wellbeing service for children and young people. Our YN Food and Water for Life Program with Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service implemented supermarket food choices promotions and released and promoted in national media and by attending influential conferences, a community food and water security survey – evidence to support our advocacy. The report from our study that described DEG's Elders Support program *"Elders' perspectives and priorities for ageing well in a remote Aboriginal community"* was published in May 2023 in the influential Ageing and Society journal.

Significantly our long-term work in YN with others, against the discriminatory police Suspect Target Management policy bore fruit in June 2023 when NSW Police dropped the policy after a NSW LECC inquiry, as did our advocacy regarding homelessness when new evidence showed Walgett had the highest rate of homelessness in NSW. DEG was invited to speak to a NSW parliamentary inquiry into Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2022, and made submissions on this and most water management concerns – thereby growing greater influence with decision-makers in order to bring about lasting positive change for Walgett.

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. We share highlights of our work during 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 in the following pages of this report.



Above: Occasionally Elders and staff picnic and fish down on the rivers. It is always a good opportunity to wind down and detach ourselves from the many stressors in town.

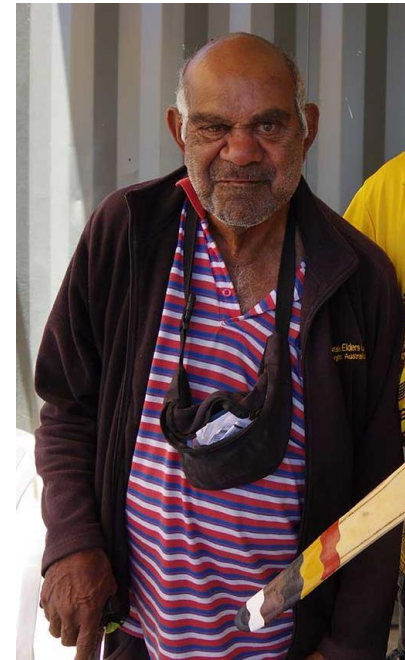
Above right: NTSCorp Native Title Researchers came to DEG in September 2022 to build their knowledge of the Gamilaraay / Wayilwan / Ngayimbaa nations boundaries around Walgett. They are seen here receiving information from DEG's Secretary Virginia Robinson.



Elders' support



Left: Centrelink visited once or twice from August 2022 to troubleshoot Elders' engagement with Dept. Services at a place convenient to Elders. Nicole Power is seen here at left with DEG's Elders Support officer Peter Wright, and DEG's Community Troubleshooter Vanessa Hickey.



Left: In December 2022 Clem Dodd and Dharriwaa Elders Group was award a Lifetime Achievement Award by ACHAA's Imagine Award. Clem was unable to travel to Sydney to attend, so DEG's Stephen Dennis inscribed a boomerang made by the Dealing with Fines team, with his name, and presented it to him at a DEG ceremony to honour the award.



Elders' civic participation

Above left: DEG's Virginia Robinson thanks Gemma McKinnon for travelling to Walgett with YN's Peta MacGillivray to provide DEG members and staff with a workshop on the Voice Referendum. Centre: DEG's Clem Dodd and Virginia Robinson were honoured to accept a role in WAMS ceremony to launch the Walgett Freedom Ride Park. Above right: DEG met with Council's interim General Manager Hugh Percy in June '23.



Left: DEG's relationship to the NSW State Government changed for the better after the March 23 election.

Right: Elders Councillors finalised DEG's submission to the Inquiry into Fred Nile's Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill, and Virginia Robinson was invited to speak at the hearings in September 2022. There were still problems with the Bill in DEG's view, as it preferred LALCs over TCs.





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

Associate Professor Ruth McCausland, is the Academic Lead of Yuwaya Ngarra-li. The core Yuwaya Ngarra-li (“YN”) team is based in Walgett and UNSW Sydney.

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:

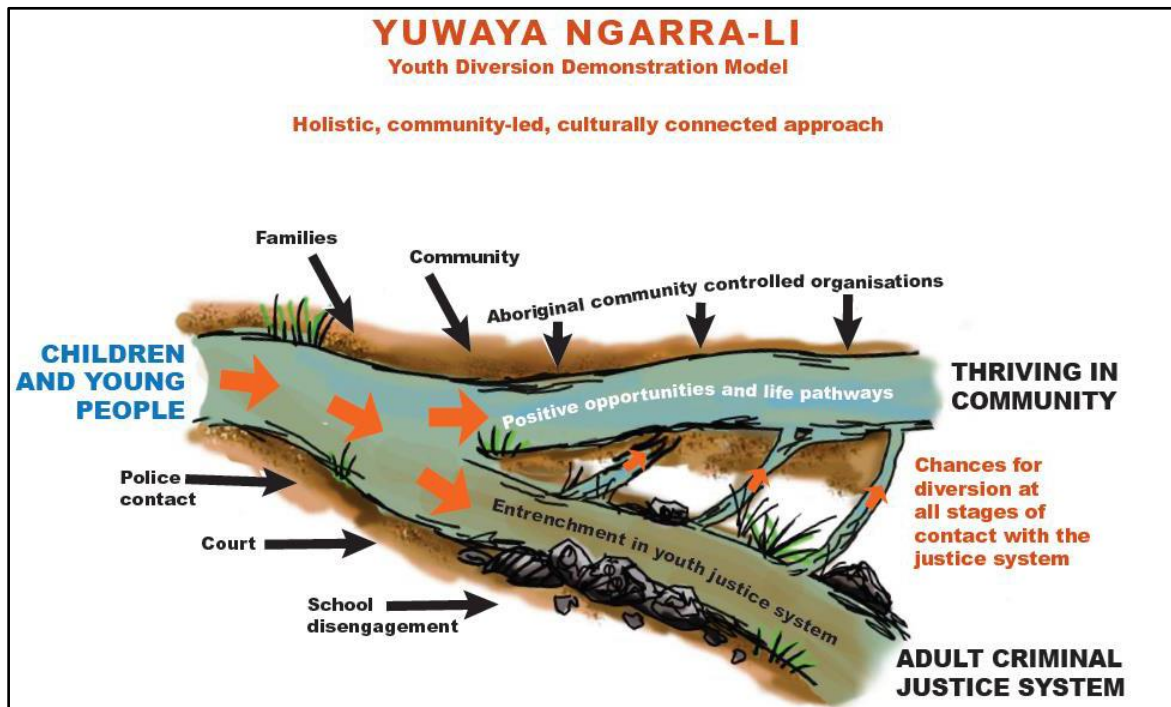
1. Greater Aboriginal community control and capacity
2. Increased numbers of Aboriginal young people in education, training & employment
3. Reduced numbers of Aboriginal people in contact with the criminal justice system
4. Improved social determinants of health and wellbeing amongst Aboriginal people
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:

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





Youth Justice

This year we refined 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

To better operate this model we evaluated DEG's work in this field and reached out to Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT to start work on designing and implementing a Wellbeing service for children and young people.



Above: In February 2023 the DEG and UNSW Yuwaya Ngarrali partners historically brought together DEG, WAMS and the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT to collaborate on the design and implementation of a new Walgett wellbeing service for children and young people. Below: Also in February 2023 Yuwaya Ngarrali hosted new staff of the Paul Ramsay Foundation in Walgett to discuss future work including support for the new Collaboration for Children and Young People's Wellbeing.



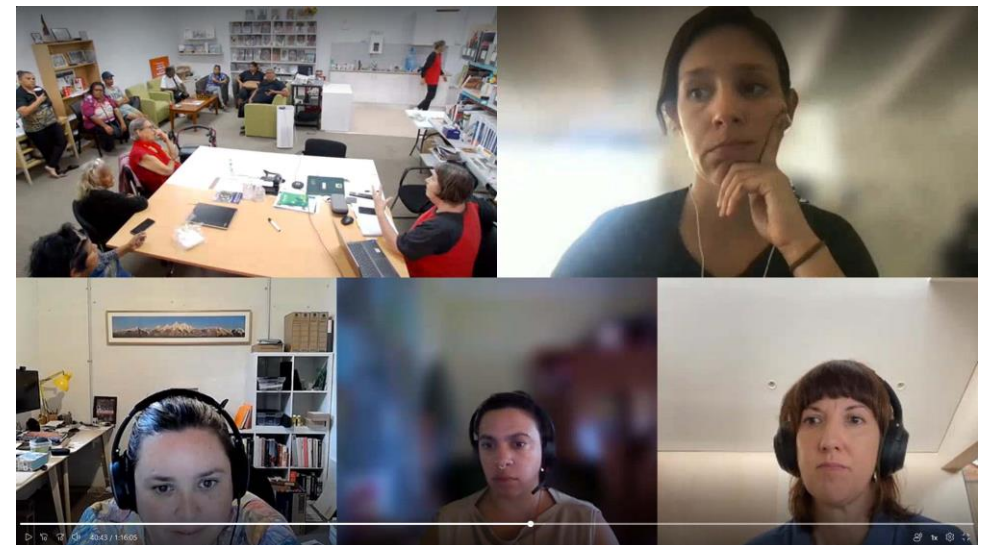


In October, November and December 2022 the Walgett Aboriginal community suffered a flood, requiring boating or Gingie and Namoi Village residents into town by local SES volunteers provided by WAMS. DEG provided Covid / flood kits, transport pickups from the boat into town, and a cool place to wait and gather for information between the twice daily boat delivery times. DEG also took the time with our Yuwaya Ngarrali partners on video, to find out what emergency accommodation should look like if it was provided in the future. The NSW agencies did not call an “emergency” until the power and sewerage broke down at Namoi Village and provided little or no time for community to find out how they were going to be accommodated. We were appalled at the lack of planning and determined with our YN collaborators to ensure emergency accommodation options are provided in Walgett in future.

Community Troubleshooting – Emergency responses



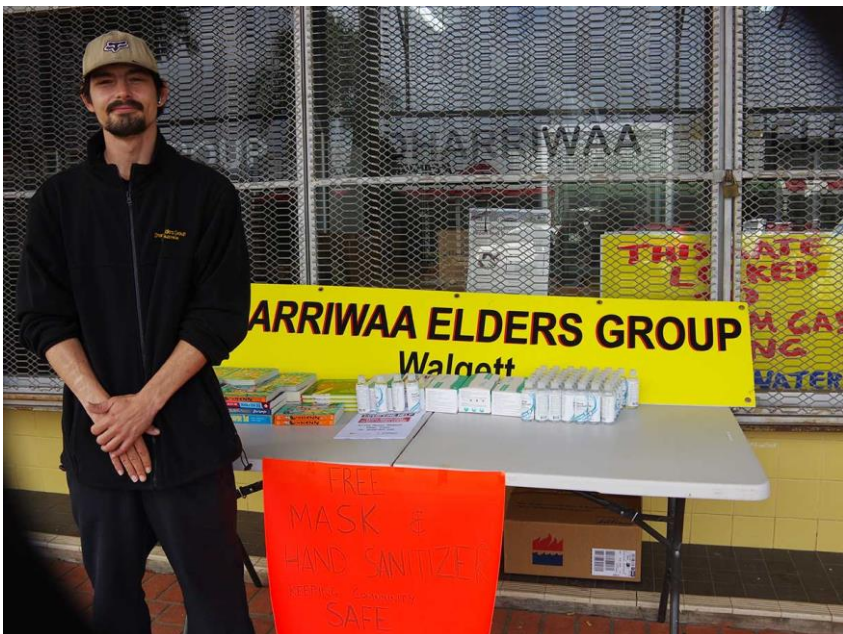
Left: DEG’s car meeting a flood residents’ boat in November 2022. Right: a screenshot of the workshop we held with YN building designer Sam Rich and others to better understand what emergency accommodation in Walgett could look like if we are able to design and implement it.





Left: Covid of course continued throughout the period. During the flood emergency, DEG approached Walgett IGA's manager Paresh Patel to give away sanitiser to supermarket customers in December '22. Right: In November '22 DEG's Food and Water 4 Life Project Officer updated the IGA Order Form used previously during lockdown, to assist Namoi and Gingie Village residents make grocery phone orders.

Community Troubleshooting – Covid19 Emergency responses



Left: During the month of July '22 DEG's Jack Mayes maintained a giveaway table on Walgett's main street of Covid prevention items and left-over children's books donated during lockdown.

DHARRIWAA ELDERS GROUP

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

This form is to help you make an order via email or over the phone with IGA staff. They will then place items into bags call or text you when your order is ready to be picked up and meet you at side carpark with a portable EFTPOS machine. 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 Orders: walggettiga@gmail.com or Phone: 6828 1555 talk to Paresh to arrange pick-up

IGA Order Form

<p><input type="checkbox"/> Apples Average 80c each or \$4-\$5 per kg Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Oranges Average 75c each or \$4-\$5 per kg Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bananas Average 90c each or \$3-\$4 per kg Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lemons Average \$1 each Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Strawberries \$2-\$4 per punnet Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lettuce \$3-\$4 each Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Truss Tomatoes \$1.50 each or \$10-\$11 per kg Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cucumbers 85c each or \$6 to \$7 per kg Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Jarrah Pumpkin pieces Average \$2 to \$3 per kg Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Onions \$2 to \$3 per bag or 75c each Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Carrots \$2.50 per bag Amount: _____</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Potatoes \$4 to \$5 per bag 60c each Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> BBQ Chicken \$10 Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Eggs 800g \$4.50, 15 pack \$5.50, 30 pack \$10 Amount: _____ Size: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bread \$2 to \$5 per loaf Amount: _____ White/Wholemeal/Wholegrain</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Weetbix Small \$2.90 Medium \$3.80 Large \$5.70 Amount: _____ Size: S/M/L</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cornflakes Small \$2.90 Medium \$4.15 Large \$4.50 Amount: _____ Size: S/M/L</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uncle Toby's Oats \$6 1kg pack Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chops Lamb average \$15 per kg Amount: _____ grams/kg</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sausages average \$13 per kg Amount: _____ grams/kg</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mince average \$13 per kg Amount: _____ grams/kg</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cheese Black and Gold \$3.90 Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cheese Black and Gold Shredded 600g \$6 Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Milk 2 ltrs \$3.00 or 3 ltrs \$4.50 Amount: _____ 2/3 ltr</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Meadow Lea Margarine 1kg \$5.00 Amount: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Coffee (Nescafe) 250g \$10.75 Amount: _____</p>
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Dealing with Fines

During the period we built Dharriwaa Elders Group's new Dealing with Fines program, with the help of Yuwaya Ngarrali coach Peta MacGillivray. Vital partners were the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT who collaborated with Dharriwaa Elders Group to provide a fines legal service which DEG team supported clients to benefit from. This achieved many fines write-offs. June Golland from Legal Aid NSW also assisted DEG with its interactions with Revenue NSW by providing DEG staff with training and other supports in the maintenance of DEG's Work Development Order status. DEG's close relationship with WAMS also benefits this program because referrals to WAMS services assist with fine write-offs.



Through the period DEG continued to work with Yuwaya Ngarrali building designer Samantha Rich, to develop plans for emergency housing that could be provided in Walgett for example during floods, and to develop plans for a cluster of Elders accommodation, and supported accommodation for children and young people.

Housing

Yuwaya Ngarrali published a Briefing Paper on Walgett's Housing Need in March 2023 which outlines this work to date:
https://dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/YN_Housing_Briefing_Paper.pdf



Above: Clem Dodd during an ACHAA planning session at Yarrawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre in May 2023.



Above: Vanessa Hickey, Ricky Townsend and Muttley travelling to the ACHAA gathering at Yarrawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre in May 2023. Above: Corindi Beach May 23



Building our Aboriginal Community-Controlled sector



Left and below: scenes from ACHAA's gathering hosted by the Wiradjuri Study Centre Condobolin in September 2022.



Above: Vanessa Hickey, Rick Townsend and Wendy Spencer with Peta McGillivray attended the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations "CAPO" planning workshop in Walgett with other ACCO in May 2023. CAPO were feeding back learnings from their past year, and seeking updates on issues of concern re CTG



Left: Bruce Atkinson from Beca Group provided his pro-bono expertise to design a bespoke reverse osmosis unit and chilled drinking water kiosk for the Walgett community at DEG in May 2023. We are grateful to the Mullane Foundation for providing pro bono plumbing and electrical services for the installation. DEG and WAMS have been advocating for safe drinking water to be provided in high public use places in Walgett since 2018.



Above: WAMS and DEG continued their quarterly directors' lunches. In October 2022, Clem Dodd and Violet Morgan of DEG presented WAMS directors Mary Purse and Doreen Peters with a glass plaque thanking WAMS for keeping the Walgett Aboriginal community safe from Covid19. WAMS Christmas Elves visited DEG in December 22. Above right: WAMS Leanne Beton and CEO Christine Corby AM began working with historian Michael Bennett. Michael is collating timelines and historical materials for WAMS and DEG in our work to produce training resources for our staff and collaborators regarding the proud legacy and distinctive service delivery approaches of Walgett ACCOs.

WAMS and DEG



The Healthy Supermarket program of Food and Water for Life launched its Meal of the Month promotion in September 2022 with the support of IGA manager Paresh Patel. It also launched the Gardener's Network (left). Above right: an audit of IGA in February '23 will inform future work. Below: DEG supported WAMS Health Expo in May 2023. DEG's Peter Wright volunteered in the canteen, while WAMS Healthy Lifestyle worker Annie Deane and dietician Devanshi Patel provided healthy eating.

WAMS and DEG

Food & Water 4 Life



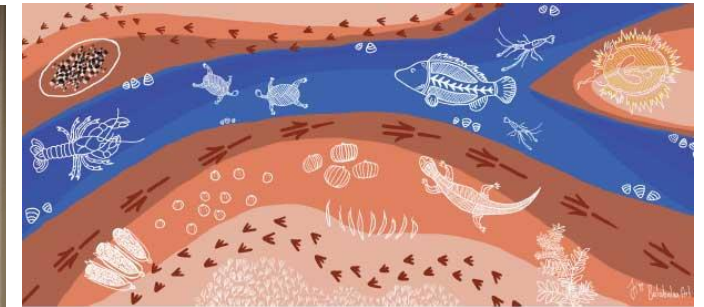
Left: DEG was pleased to contribute to WAMS' continued expansion of the Community Garden in December 2022.



Above: DEG and WAMS staff have been gathering for lunchtime professional development seminars. In October 2022 our YN partners presented on the research they did when we first met them in Walgett understanding Aboriginal Mental Health Cognitive Disability in the criminal justice system. Below left: In our work to improve publicly available data about Walgett's health needs, WAMS and DEG met with the Australian Bureau of Statistics in August 2022 to encourage a new census survey of Walgett. Primarily, WAMS organised to host and facilitate the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey to be undertaken in Walgett. Below right: Bow Simpson trained as an Aboriginal Healthworker with WAMS years ago and is now DEG's Elders Transport officer.

WAMS and DEG





Yuwaya Ngarra-li Community Briefing Report:
Key Findings from the Food and Water Security Surveys in Walgett

February 2023



WAMS and DEG

Food & Water 4 Life

In January 2023, the WAMS/DEG/YN Food and Water for Life project presented the findings of the Food and Water Security surveys to the Walgett community.

After ensuring that community survey participants knew the survey findings first, we then travelled to Sydney and made important presentations to academics and health policy influencers at The George Institute for Global Health, and to drinking water utilities and policy influencers at the Australian Water Association's Next Water 23 Conference. While there we met North Western University's Prof. Sera Young who designed the survey tool we used which allowed us to measure Walgett against other places around the world. Our work using her tool has since been mentioned in the editorial of the prestigious international Nature journal!





Left: Dion Wedd and Sidneigh Skinner from NSW DPI Fisheries visited DEG in February '23 to exchange knowledge and skills with the River Ranger team. They were using electrofishing and eDNA techniques to survey native fish in the rivers throughout NSW. We look forward to obtaining their report when it is completed as it should reveal disturbing data regarding the health of the rivers in DEG's area of interest.



Above: RSPCA ecologists and vets visited again in July 2022 to continue working to reduce the harm to wildlife from feral domestic animals. We assisted the development of a new activity in Walgett for the River ranger team to monitor feral cats leaving town to hunt on the rivers which will begin in 2024.

Cultural values maintenance – the River Ranger Project



Left and bottom right: DEG's River Ranger Team was glad to join rangers from the Tamworth region to undertake an Aboriginal Sites ID training course with RTO (insert name) in Werris Creek, October 2022. Because of our long-term relationship with the North West Local Land Service Aboriginal Liaison officer this joint training opportunity was made possible.





Left: the Walgett River Ranger team met with crown lands rangers working for the North West Local Land Service in May 2023. We confirmed access to 3 x TSRs on the Namoi River with them and realized that we share many values regarding protection of crown lands and river health. Right: Dead Yellowbelly were found by the team floating downstream in the Barwon River in early February '23. They blew the alarm to NSW Fisheries, NSW EPA, NSW and Commonwealth water managers. We are yet to understand the cause and are determined to alert agencies to future fish emergencies and work with them to prevent future fish emergencies.



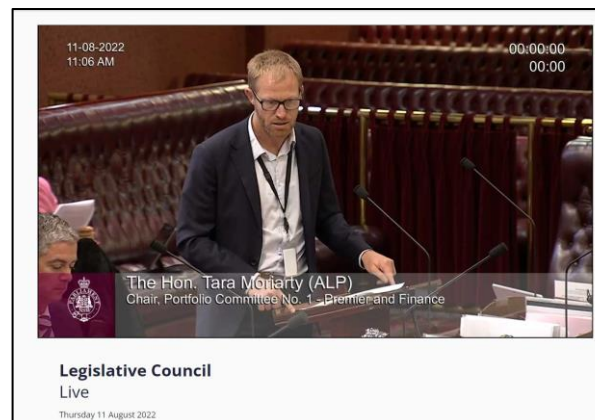
Cultural values maintenance – the River Ranger Project



The Walgett River Ranger team continued their informal training with Dr Martin Andersen – groundwater expert from the UNSW Global Water Institute in May 2023. Above shows them working on water quality observations, because we aim to provide regular water quality data from Walgett on a weekly basis before too long. Above right: The River Ranger team continued developing a project with the Gulbali Institute of Charles Sturt University and Dr Martin Mallen Cooper to improve river ecological health by removing weirs. Above shows Senior Ranger Ernie Sands at the Narran River fishtraps March 2023 near an old weir that was built from fishtrap rocks in the mid to late 1800s. DEG is hoping to obtain relevant permits to remove this weir and other unused weirs along the Narran River – a river that is sacred to the Yuwaalaraav people and that the DEG has long been seeking to revive.

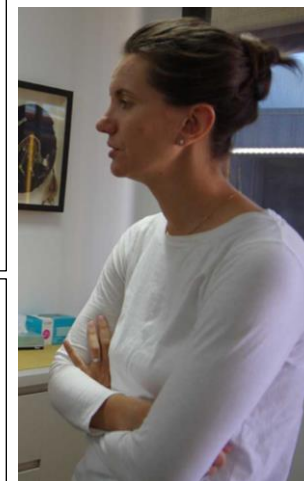


Left: In February 2023 DEG's Food & Water 4 Life Project Officer Trish Tonkin worked with ABC 7.30 reporter Carly Williams who was making a story about Walgett's high sodium drinking water. The story aired in April 2023, alongside a simultaneous story in the SMH. DEG & WAMS published the Yuwaya Ngarrali food and water security survey results to coincide with the story. NSW Water Minister Rose Jackson visited Walgett as a result of our advocacy. Her visit was co-ordinated by Roy Butler MP which meant that DEG was almost excluded until her office realized and quickly rectified this!



Since the minister's visit in April DEG has built a respectful correspondence with her re practical solutions for drinking water & river health.

Above: Disallowance!



Water learning and advocacy

DEG learnt how to be more effective in advocacy leading up to Minister Jackson's visit with the support of Populares. Below: DEG considered "cultural flows" in May 2023 & determined that baseflows, protecting tributaries and connectivity, and saving the rivers are the urgent goal in our water management efforts.





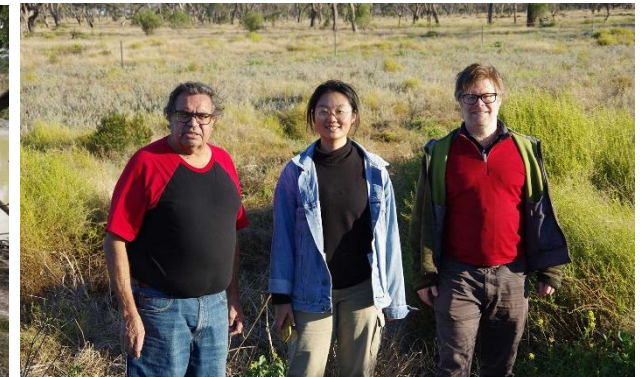
An important part of our work is to keep up to speed with water policy developments and understand them. DEG's Water Co-ordinator Bill Johnson prepares briefs on subjects we want to understand, and we host discussion dinners and lunches to spread the knowledge to workers and others. We know this is an important process for the development of DEG's policy positions. DEG grew in confidence of its knowledge during the period and made many policy statements forwarding water management solutions.

Above left: DEG decided to use the NAIDOC 2022 slogan to highlight water issues that DEG was actively working to improve. It used the slogan in social media images relating to the high sodium of Walgett's drinking water, the need to buy drinking water, and the long fight to regain public access to a public road leading to the Barwon River at Walgett. In December 2022 a breakthrough was achieved whereby Council unlocked the gate on this road – thereby ending a 20 year old battle by DEG.

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 over-extraction of water from the floodplains and rivers upstream of Walgett, when the Climate Change Emergency was busily denied by decision makers.

Water learning and advocacy

Right: Elders at Garrangaraan on the Ngamaay River in July 22 discussing with western scientists a project to bring back the ecological services of that duck-hunting place. Right: Groundwater collaborators Quanyi Ye and Martin Andersen visiting a bore near Walgett in July 22.





In February '23 DEG hosted its Healthy Waters Forum to bring together all its collaborators so we could share and co-ordinate the large research and advocacy agenda DEG has developed to work for Healthy Waters. The three-day Forum was co-ordinated by Bill Johnson with EDO's Emily Long and Nadja Zimmerman. DEG's River Ranger team, staff and Elders Councillors shared about their work.

Water and Country



Yuwaya Ngarrali partners - UNSW Global Water Institute's Greg Leslie and Martin Andersen joined CSU's Martin Mallen Cooper in sharing about their projects with DEG. NSW Fisheries and NSW and Commonwealth environmental water managers attended, as did the very knowledgeable Maryanne Slattery. Colleagues from WAMS also attended and Minister Plibersek's office dropped in to answer questions.



Above left: October 22 – Yuwaya Ngarrali lunchtime seminar series #2 Mental Health Cognitive Disability. Above right: Dinner talk re Water Sharing Plans that affect Walgett - July 22.



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. Yuwaya Ngarrali's UNSW Lead Dr Ruth McCausland and YN's quantitative researcher Dr Rebecca Reeve have been essential in this work.

Evaluating and understanding our work





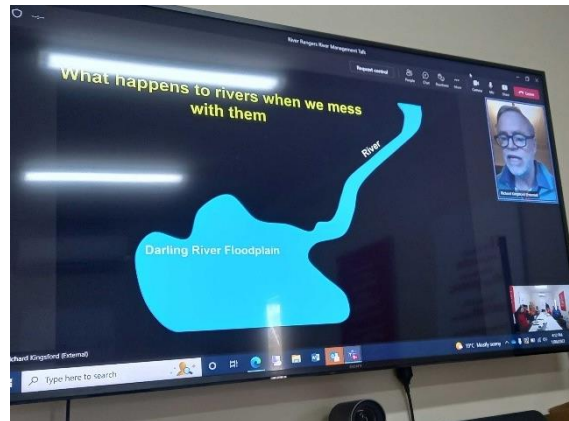
Above left: campaigners fighting to save Northern Territory rivers from the NSW cotton industry visited DEG in September '22 to learn affects on Walgett from cotton, and why they must fight hard to prevent the same thing happening in the NT. Above centre: Gamilaraay songwriter Nardi Simpson brought her Barayagal collective of signers with the Conservatorium Open Academy to Walgett in October 2022 and DEG was priviledged to meet the group and join the singing fun. Above right: Defence visited in August 2022 to promote a new Aboriginal recruitment initiative which Elders believed to be a promising employment and education initiative for the Walgett Aboriginal community.



Visitors' contributions

DEG met with teachers and students from Bellingen High School in August 2022 and hope to visit them in return sometime.





Lifelong learning



At Dharriwaa Elders Group we are always learning and this year was no exception. Historian Michael Bennett visited a few times including in May '23 when he was pictured with DEG's Elizabeth Peters. In his NTSCorp role he helps Aboriginal people do their family trees and learn what native title group/s they are entitled to join. Above centre and right: Richard Kingsford, Kate Brandis and Roxanne Francis from the Centre for Environmental Studies at UNSW provided informal training in water terminology, waterbird and invertibrates monitoring methods in August '22. Below left: Quanyi Ye shared with us a poster presentation about her Walgett work with us regarding groundwater and surfacewater interactions at Walgett that won an award at the National Groundwater Conference. Below centre: a Yuwaya Ngarrali webinar in August '22 led by our YN partner Peta MacGillivray in which we shared how Aboriginal researchers from UNSW are working with DEG. Below right: staff undertook training at TAFE from March '23.





It was a relief to be able to physically work together with our Yuwaya Ngarrali partners in Walgett after the pandemic restrictions were lifted. Left: Bow and Ruth McCausland share a moment. Right: Ruth McCausland and Peta MacGillivray with Clem Dodd in February 2023.



Memories



Left: In March 2023 we had to move from leasing 34 Wee Waa St to leasing 47 Namoi St for the short term use of staff and visiting collaborators. Above: PRF visited in February 2023. Above right: We lost Thomas Morgan "Smokey Joe" in November 2022. Thomas was always available to help out with food and water deliveries in the community, land and water work – even video appearances to promote the urgent need to vaccinate during Covid 19.

Dharriwaa Elders Group sustainability and supporters

DEG staff during parts or all of this financial year were Vanessa Hickey, Peter Wright, Wendy Spencer, Clem Dodd, Virginia Robinson, Rick Townsend, Brenda McBride, Lily Johnson, Kim Sullivan, Bow Simpson, Zoe Sands, Jack Mayes, Stephen Dennis, Patricia Tonkin, Craig Vaughan, Ernest Sands, Meredith Robinson, William Fernando, Jacob Thurston, Latia Sands-Dennis, Aaron Murray and Norma Kennedy. Valued service suppliers included Environmental Defenders Office, Slattery and Johnson, Danett and Associates, Walumarra Studio, Nook Studios, Tech Exe.

Dharriwaa Elders Group (an Aboriginal Walgett community cultural organization of 24 years standing) expanded its staff and capabilities during the period and unsuccessfully sought to lease additional Walgett premises. 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, supported by the Paul Ramsay Foundation
- 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. NSW Dept. Planning and Environment Tea Tree mapping project
- e. Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers, Environmental Defenders Office, Steven Davies and Community First Development, Beca Group, Mullane Foundation
- f. The many donors to the Food and Water Appeal, the Organisational Support Appeal, the Covid-19 related Work and Relief Appeal and general donations.

DEG directors are determined to develop DEG's fundraising and social enterprises for Walgett's economic and social development and wellbeing. To further this aim, DEG continued to build relationships with the philanthropic sector in order to test and model the ways governments can Close the Gap by procuring services and capability of the Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector.

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.

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

