

Statement from the Dharriwaa Elders Group ("DEG") Elders Council affirming its commitments to the Yuwaya Ngarrali partnership with UNSW and welcoming new services. 4 October 2024.

DEG's Elders Council (board of directors) has been going through a process of renewal after losing long-term Speaker Clem Dodd and Elders Councillor Violet Morgan earlier in 2024. We will always remember and honour them.

The newly refreshed Elders Council is made up of Speaker Sandra Suey-Thorne, Treasurer Ricky Townsend, Secretary Elizabeth Williams with Margaret Pallister, Norma Kennedy and Victor Beale.

As part of this renewal process the new Elders Council has been learning of the rich and deep partnership that together the DEG and UNSW have carefully cultivated with community, philanthropic and other supporters.

DEG's Elders Council formally requested a partnership with UNSW to collaborate together on the Elders' vision for change in Walgett, in a letter to Prof. Eileen Baldry in March 2015, after Assoc. Professor Ruth McCausland and DEG's founding General Manager Wendy Spencer had begun exploring a working relationship between DEG and UNSW leading from collaboration on a research study that also involved Peta MacGillivray and Dr Elizabeth McEntyre.

The Elders Council's vision for Yuwaya Ngarrali is:

"The Dharriwaa Elders Group will lead a collaboration with UNSW and other supporters to grow our individual and community strengths and assets. We aim to restore a robust belonging to thriving families, community and Country, while making our place in the nation and sharing our learning with other communities. We are working to improve the wellbeing, social, built and physical environment and life pathways of Aboriginal people in Walgett through collaborating on evidence-based initiatives, research and capacity building".

We remain committed to this vision for Yuwaya Ngarrali and to Dharriwaa Elders Group's plans for the evidence-based, culturally-led services and supports we are determined will be provided for the Walgett Aboriginal community. We know that from our work to date this has also brought benefits to all people living in Walgett and to the region. From a recent evaluation:

"The Yuwaya Ngarrali partnership between the Dharriwaa Elders Group and UNSW contributed to more than 460 outcomes from January 2020 to December 2023. For Aboriginal people in Walgett, this included 148 outcomes such as addressing \$233,005 worth of fine debt written or worked off while participating in community and cultural activities and accessing mental health services; 50 drought-proof garden beds in the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service community garden produced fresh fruit and vegetables for people with chronic diseases; and \$121,715 worth of meals, water and grocery vouchers provided to community members under financial stress".*

Yuwaya Ngarrali 2020-2023 Evaluation and Learning Report by A/Prof Ruth McCausland, Dr Rebecca Reeve, Peta MacGillivray & May Miller-Dawkins June 2024. ¹

¹ <https://www.unsw.edu.au/content/dam/pdfs/research/2024-02-yn/2024-06-yuwaya-ngarra-li-evaluation-report-2020-2023.pdf>

The team of local Aboriginal people working for community in Walgett employed by DEG through Yuwaya Ngarra-li and other programs has grown to 14. They are working on locally-led projects that are addressing multiple issues of community priority including social support and transport for Elders, the poor state of local rivers, over policing, the lack of affordable healthy food, and energy poverty.

From DEG's birth as a project of the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service over 25 years ago, we are proud of the growth and influence we are achieving as a local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation and are excited about delivering more outcomes for our community including building connection and belonging for Walgett's children and young people through establishing the new Walgett Youth Wellbeing Service and our new Community Food Program.

This statement was approved by Elders Council resolution on the 4 October 2024.



Sandra Suey-Thorne

for and on behalf of Dharriwaa Elders Group Elders Council.