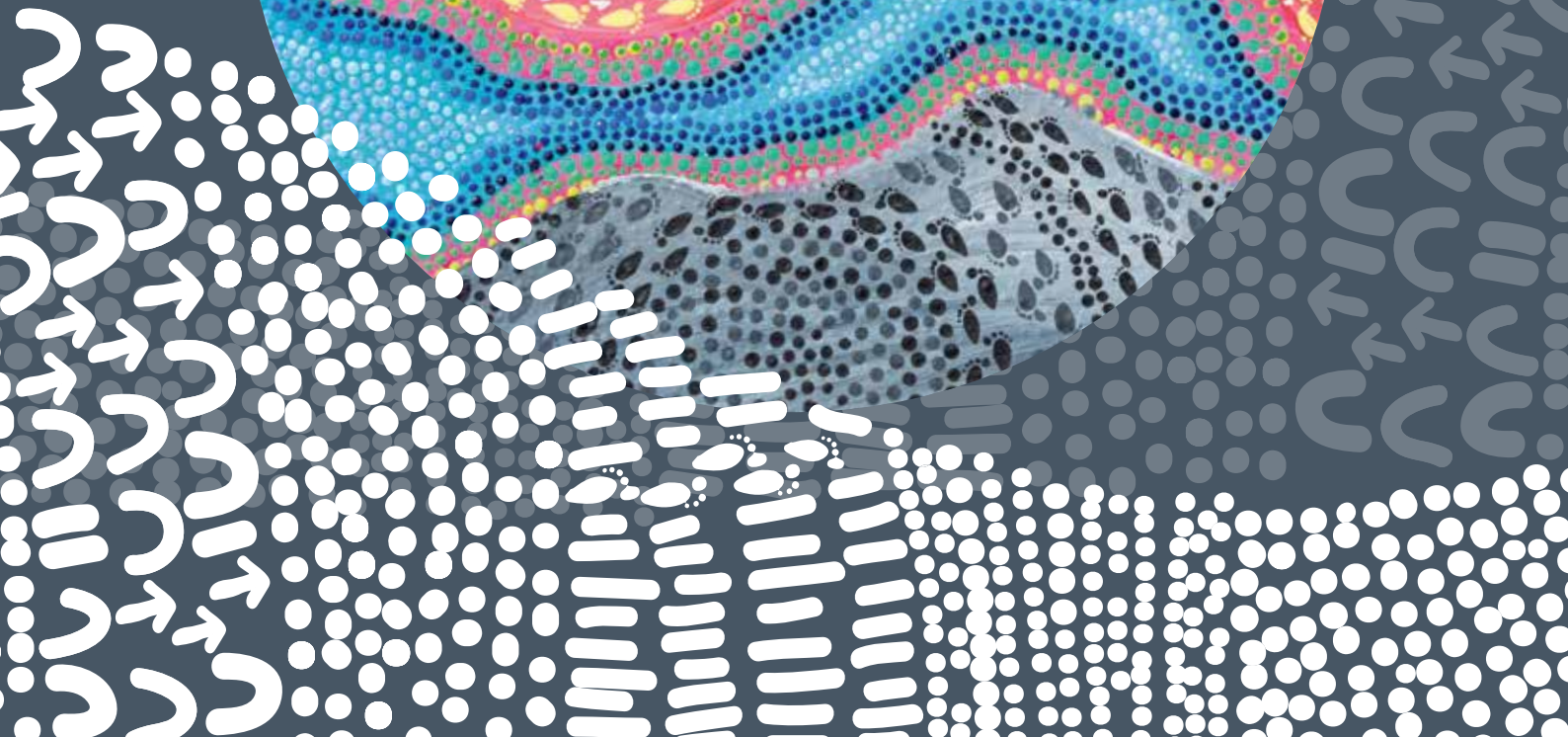
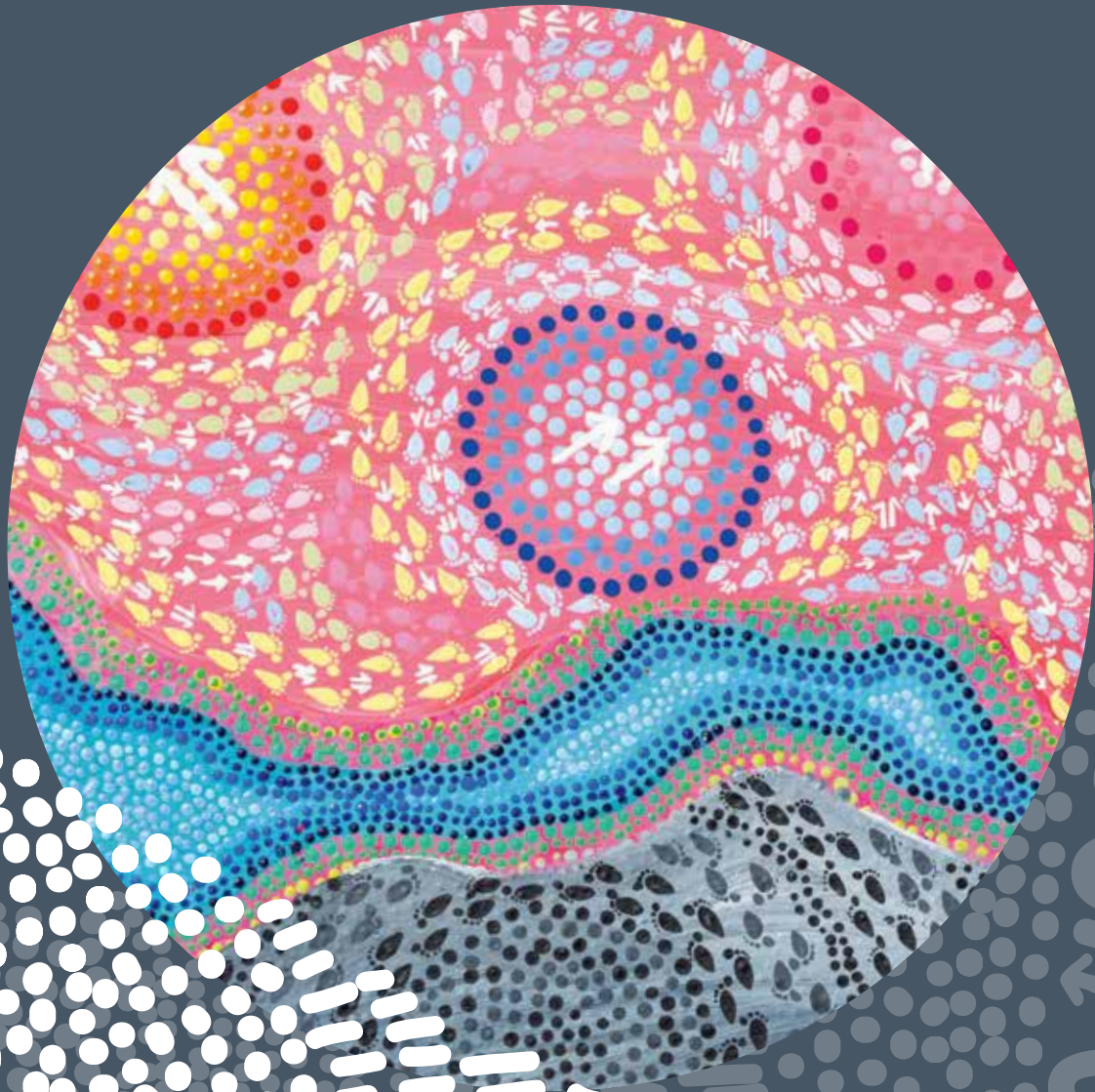




**MDAS**  
MALLEE DISTRICT  
ABORIGINAL SERVICES

# ANNUAL 20 REPORT 21





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**Warning:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned this document may contain images of persons who are now deceased

**Photography in this report courtesy:** NewsAlert PR, AdMedia, Gange Productions, Lisa Milne, Sunraysia Daily, Swan Hill Guardian, Staff MDAS Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang

# About us

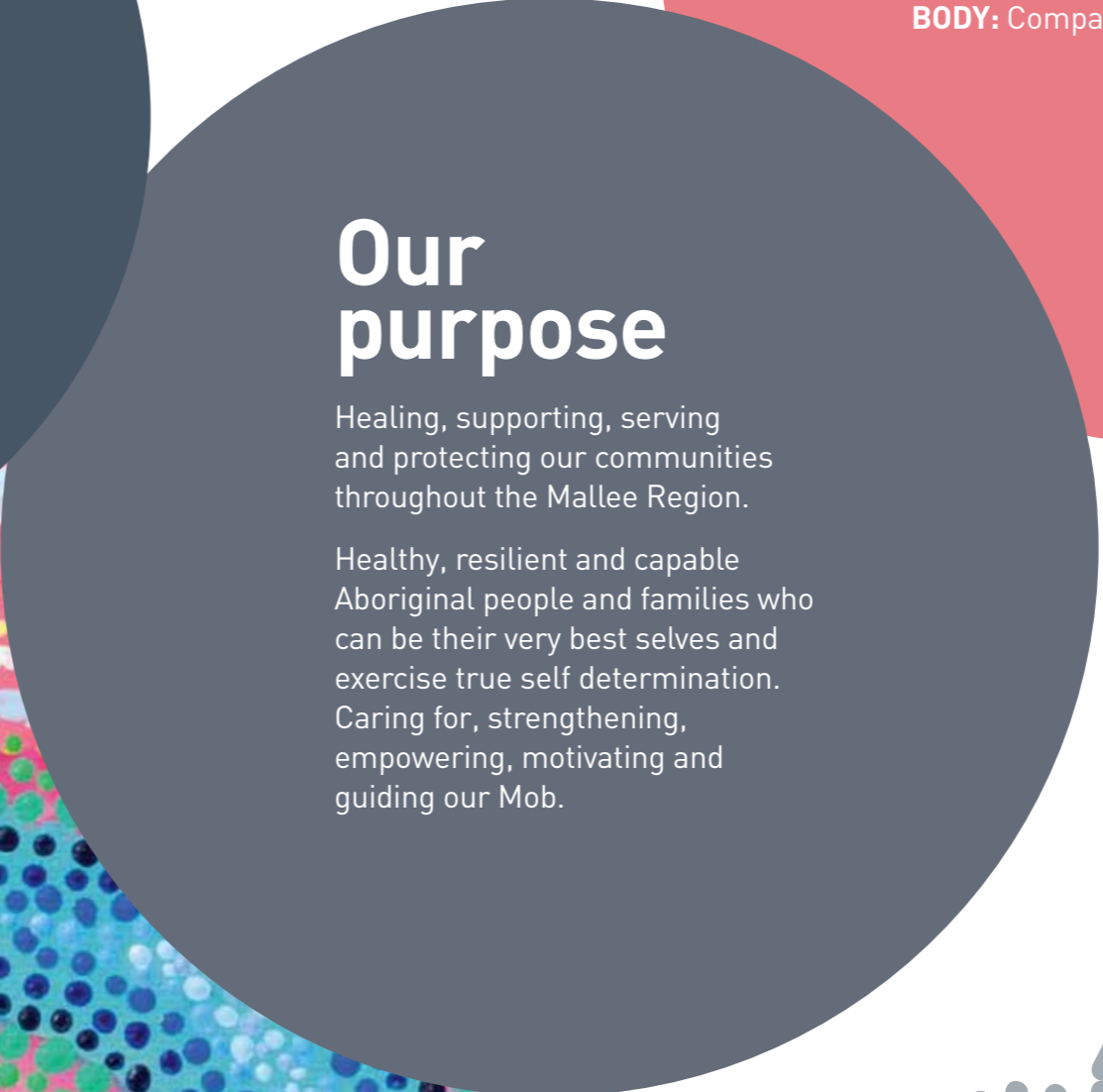
We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we deliver services to our communities across the Mallee Region. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present, and to our emerging leaders, and acknowledge the ancient connection they hold with their Country. We acknowledge that our traditional Aboriginal lands have never been ceded.

We are the proud and strong descendants of the oldest living Culture in the world.



## Our vision

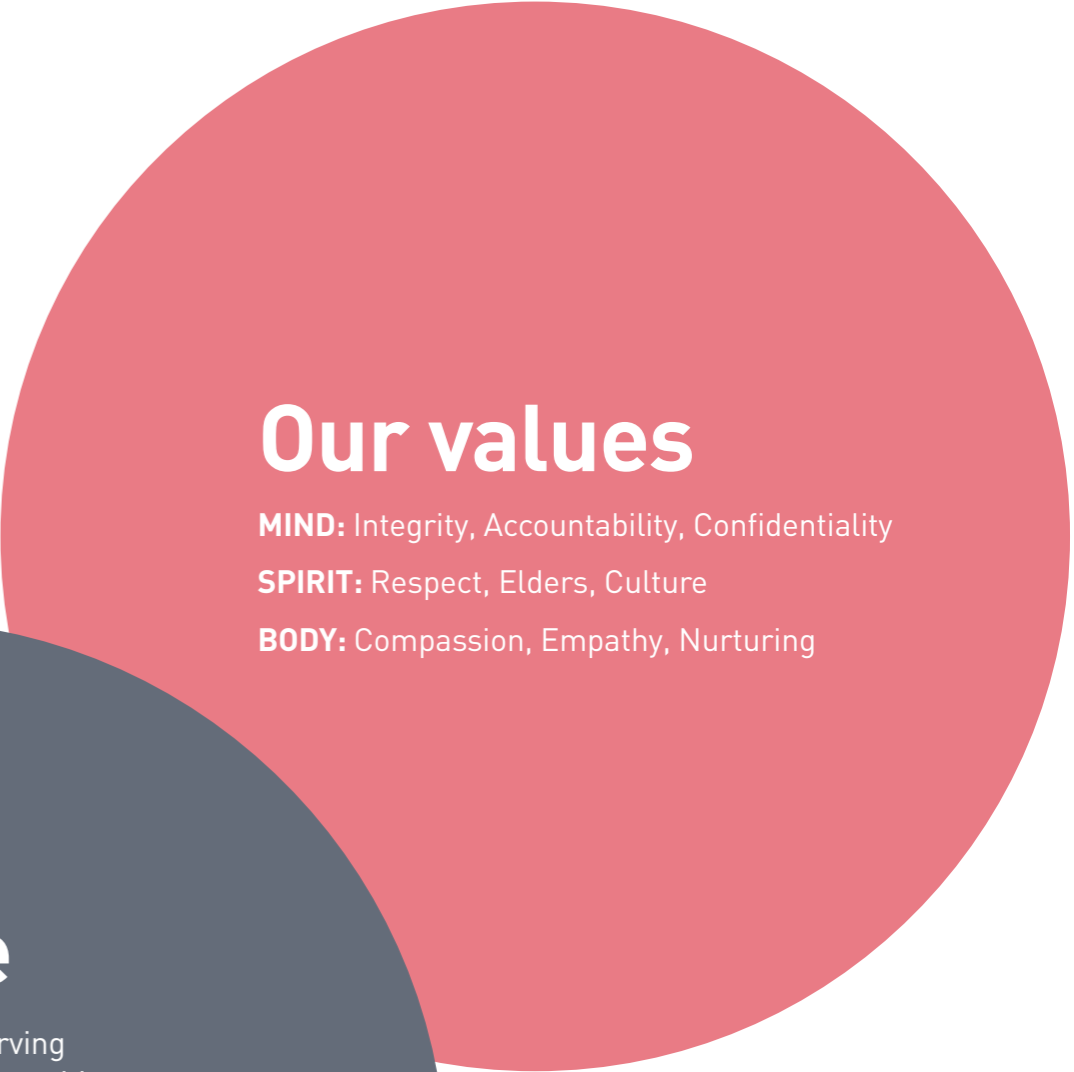
Self-determined, healthy, robust and culturally strong Aboriginal communities across the Mallee Region.



## Our purpose

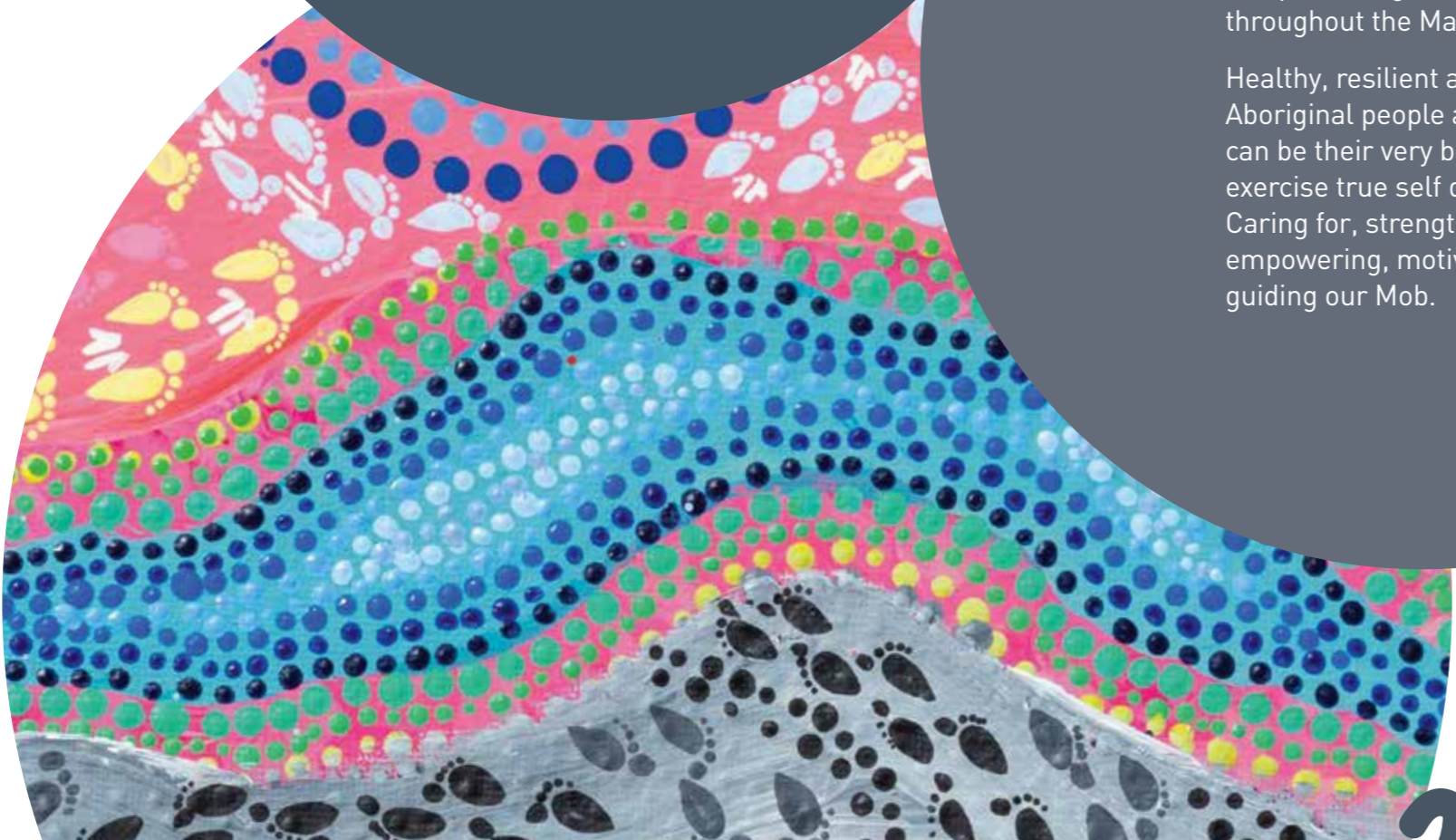
Healing, supporting, serving and protecting our communities throughout the Mallee Region.

Healthy, resilient and capable Aboriginal people and families who can be their very best selves and exercise true self determination. Caring for, strengthening, empowering, motivating and guiding our Mob.



## Our values

**MIND:** Integrity, Accountability, Confidentiality  
**SPIRIT:** Respect, Elders, Culture  
**BODY:** Compassion, Empathy, Nurturing



# About us

## Our offices

Our Mallee communities are serviced by MDAS offices in Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang. (The MDAS Robinvale office closed in 2021)

### Mildura (administration)

120 Madden Avenue, Mildura  
PO Box 5134 Mildura 3502  
Phone (03) 5018 4100

### Swan Hill

70 Nyah Road, Swan Hill  
Phone (03) 5032 5277

### Kerang

9 Nolan Street, Kerang  
Phone (03) 5412 6004

## Cover Artwork

The artwork on the cover of this year's MDAS Annual Report is by Darlene Thomas.

## Symbolism of our logo

Our logo is based on a design by Sharon Kirby.



**MDAS**  
**MALLEE DISTRICT**  
**ABORIGINAL SERVICES**



*setting our  
sights on the future*

Mallee District Aboriginal Services wishes to pay tribute to all community members who have passed away in the Mallee this year, as well as those in other communities with a family connection to MDAS members, staff or community as a whole.

The planning for the new MDAS Strategic Plan (2021-24) commenced in March 2021. It was adopted and approved by the Board in June 2021 and comes into effect on July 1, 2021.

MDAS is a proud Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) that has a 30-year history of delivering sustainable, grassroots services and providing the local community with a vehicle for self-determination. We believe the imposition of structures without community control as a central tenet will fail.

As Aboriginal Australians, we are best-placed to decide and implement the programs and services that work for our communities.

With MDAS and the community working together, we know we can positively enrich the lives of all Aboriginal people living and working along the many river systems across the Mallee District.

# How we work

## The Helping Hand of MDAS

The MDAS Core Business Model has been developed to underpin the key operational functions of MDAS.

At MDAS we have “the person” at the centre of all that we do.

Our business model is depicted as the “Helping Hand of MDAS”, where the person is at the centre of our service delivery, surrounded by the community.

MDAS provides service delivery in a holistic manner to meet all needs including: Person-Centred Ages and Stages; Soul & Culture; Family, Children & Youth; Social and Emotional; Body Health/Housing; Environment/Self-determination.

The MDAS vision is aimed at assisting clients and community to be empowered and achieve the self-determination that can create lasting change.



Person-Centred  
Ages & Stages



Soul/Culture



Family/Children  
/Youth



Social and  
Emotional



Body Health/  
Housing



Environment  
/ Self-determination

# Constitution Preamble

In 2020-21, we made many important reforms including an important new legal document, a new Mallee District Aboriginal Services Constitution.

The new document enshrines the rules of MDAS as a company, and ensures democratic fairness and integrity in MDAS representation and operation.

MDAS is one of very few Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to adopt a Preamble as part of the Constitution.

Our MDAS Preamble outlines the context in which our Constitution operates.

## Constitution Foreword

As an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, we operate under two systems of law.

We abide by and comply with our statutory legal obligations under the Corporations Act [Cth] 2001. We report to and are regulated by both the Australian Securities and Investment Commission and the Australian Charities and Not for Profit and Commission.

In addition to the western legal system that governs our operations we also follow and honour our own cultural obligations under Aboriginal LORE. Our LORE sets the foundation and values by which we operate our business and deliver services to our communities.

Our LORE is the customs and stories of Aboriginal peoples learned from the Dreamtime, passed from generation to generation through our ceremony, songs, stories and dance and requires us to respect Country. Our LORE from time immemorial has governed all aspects of our lives. Our culture is a vibrant evolving expression of who we are.

We acknowledge the four cornerstones to our LORE:

**LAND** – our ancestors birthing Country is our link to our sacred lands where ceremony and healing takes place.

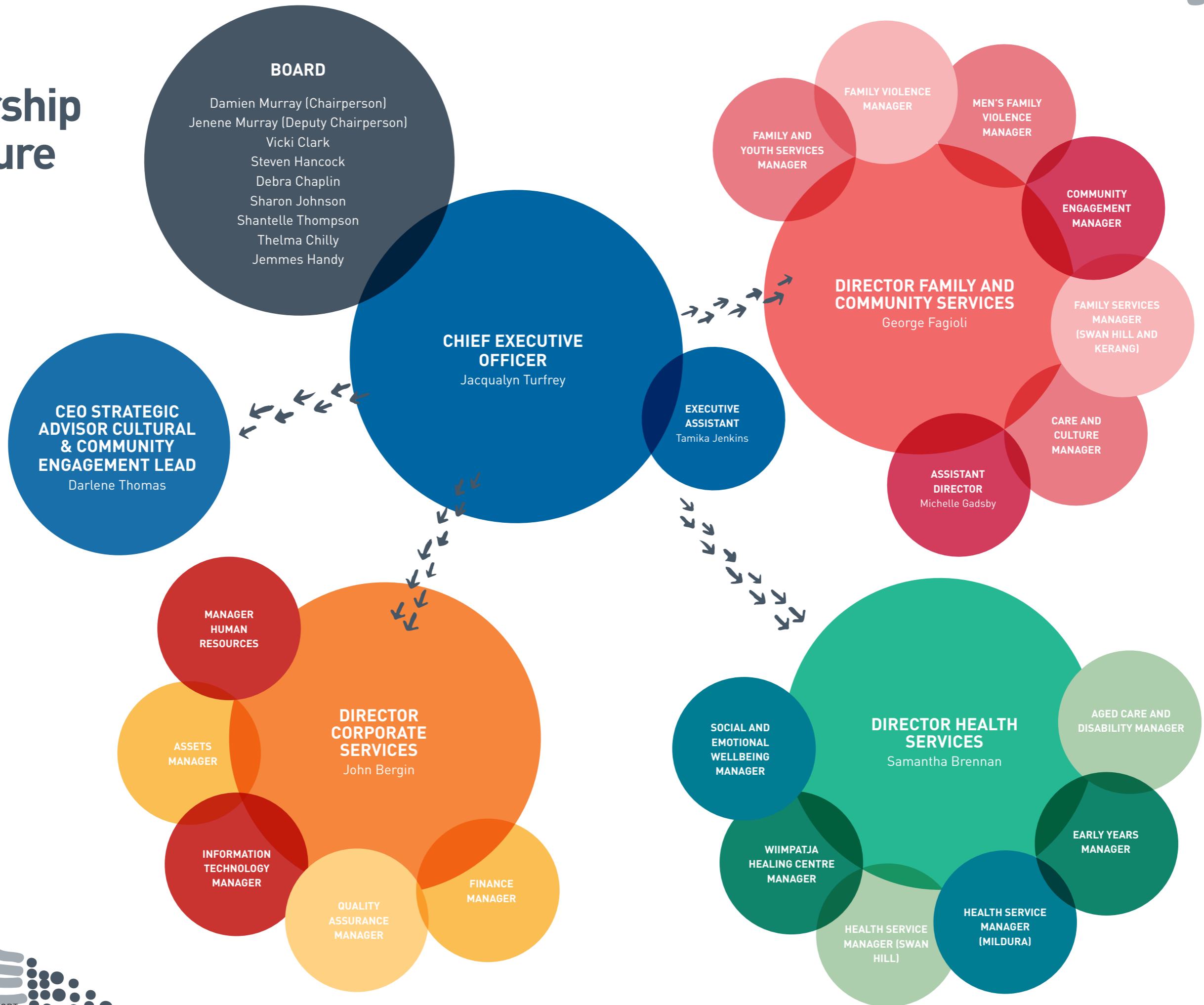
**ORAL** – our history is an oral tradition, we pass on generation to generation our language, customs, song lines and ceremonies through story telling.

**RESPECT** – we show respect for our Origin, our Country, our Elders, our cultural practices and the cultural practices of others, our animals and our Dreamtime.

**ELDERS** – are our wisdom holders, our story tellers, our links to our culture and history. They are our knowledge keepers and spiritual guides for our families and people.

Our constitution has been written to guide the governance of our company under western law, and through the Objects expressed in clause 6, to ensure we honour and acknowledge our obligations under our LORE

# MDAS leadership structure



# Our MDAS Board

Our 2020 MDAS Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November 2020 was a game changer for MDAS as an organisation.

MDAS members put us on a new course and set new challenges for our future.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, we had 137 members take part, in person at Mildura, Robinvale, Swan Hill and Kerang and online on Zoom. It was one of the biggest attendances at a MDAS AGM ever.

Our membership voted for change at the Board table and we were pleased and proud to welcome our new MDAS Board members Damien Murray, Jenene Murray and Vicki Clark for three-year terms each of whom was truly committed to the vision: Generations of vibrant, healthy and strong Aboriginal communities.

Due to changes to our MDAS Constitution at our May 2021 Board meeting, additional Board members were appointed to casual vacancies as Directors until the 2021 AGM in November. They were Sharon Johnson, Steven Hancock (Kerang), and Deb Chaplin (Swan Hill), Thelma Chilly, Shantelle Thompson and Jemmes Handy.

We look forward to working strongly together towards our vision across our Mallee communities over coming months and years.

As at June 30 2021, we have a full complement of Board members as follows:

## Leadership



**Damien Murray**  
(Chairperson) (Kerang)

Damien has lived in Kerang for approximately 43 years and represented Kerang in different pursuits including football, cricket, golf, lawn bowls and basketball. Damien has spent most of his working life serving the Kerang and Swan Hill Communities, but is passionate about the welfare of Aboriginal Communities across the Mallee.



**Jenene Murray**  
(Deputy Chairperson) (Mildura)

Jenene is a proud Wiradjuri woman from central New South Wales who has worked and lived in this community for 26 years. Jenene has an extensive working knowledge of the education sector and has been employed in this field for over 25 years. Jenene is currently employed as the Koorie Education Coordinator for the North Western Victoria Region (NWVR) Mallee area.

# Our MDAS Board



**Vicki Clark, OAM (Swan Hill)** As a professional Aboriginal woman, I believe in self-determination that empowers Aboriginal organisations and communities to strive for a fair and just service into homes for all families. My appointments through my professional career are diverse and ones which have held high responsibility and consideration of many complex needs from a community perspective.



**Steven Hancock (Kerang)** Steven was born in Tamworth, New South Wales, but has lived in Kerang, Victoria, for more than 40 years. He's passionate about the local community and is a keen lawn bowls competitor, having held numerous leadership positions within the sport. He is proud to serve on the MDAS Board.



**Debra Chaplin (Swan Hill)** Debra has been an active member of her community for many years, and worked in many areas on different levels. She bases her decisions on past lived experience and mistakes, always for the betterment of her culture and community. Debra regards her greatest achievement as her children and grandchildren, and walks in her mother's footsteps as a proud Aboriginal woman.



**Sharon Johnson (Mildura)** Sharon is a Senior Aboriginal Health Practitioner (AHW/AHP) of 26 years. She grew up at Melton until she was 15 when her parents moved back to Charleville, Queensland. Sharon lived and worked in the Northern Territory for 20 years before moving to Mildura 2019. Sharon is on the Mildura Council Aboriginal Action Committee (AAC), the Mallee Regional Partnership Group, and is on the Mildura Base Public Hospital Board



**Shantelle Thompson, OAM (Mildura)** Shantelle Thompson is a proud Barkindji and Ngyampaa woman, three-time jiu-jitsu world champion, and mother of five, who was recently awarded a Medal in the Order of Australia for services to the Indigenous community of Victoria. Shantelle is strongly connected and committed to her community, and is proud to join the MDAS Board. Shantelle combines and brings her lived, learned and earned experiences to everything she does. She is speaker, mentor and the founder of Kiilalaana.



**Thelma Chilly (Robinvale)** Born in Robinvale, Thelma has ties to the Wiradjuri, Muthi Muthi, Wemba Wemba and Yorta Yorta nations. She has been a strong advocate for the Koorie community for more than 30 years. Thelma was placed Women's Honour Roll in 2010 and a finalist in the Dreamtime Awards in 2018. Thelma qualified in Community Development and Planning at Swinburn University and has strong knowledge in family violence prevention. She has worked for State Government for the past 14 years and responsible for the Local Aboriginal Networks in the Mallee.



**Jemmes Handy (Mildura)** Jemmes Handy is well known for her work in health and justice services in the Mildura region over the past 30 years, where she has helped to develop culturally appropriate policing and health services. Jemmes has worked in the education sector on both sides of the river and has also been a volunteer on the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel. She has received numerous high-profile awards for her contribution to Indigenous communities in Victoria, including a Public Service Medal.

## ABOUT MDAS

# Our milestones in 2020/21



### July 2020



- MDAS Reform Project is established in response to community concerns about governance and operational issues at MDAS.
- On-the-spot COVID-19 testing commenced at the Mildura MDAS clinic. Understood to be the first of its kind in Mildura, the test made a positive or negative result available in 45 minutes.
- The MDAS Family Wellbeing Program was expanded across the Mallee. This successful program has been in place for several years at MDAS, with this year's focus on gambling harm in Aboriginal communities. The program encourages honest and open discussion of gambling issues in a non-threatening, informal environment.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under two became eligible for free "catch up" vaccinations for Meningococcal B. MDAS health clinics contacted families to make sure they were aware of the program, provide information, and to assist with booking appointments.

### August 2020



- Aunty Deb Chaplin appointed Chair of MDAS Board.
- The Our Mob Speaks initiative kicked off as part of MDAS's commitment to having deep conversations with our communities across Mildura, Swan Hill, Robinvale and Kerang. The initiative was aimed at having meaningful conversations with community members young and old about the things that matter to them.

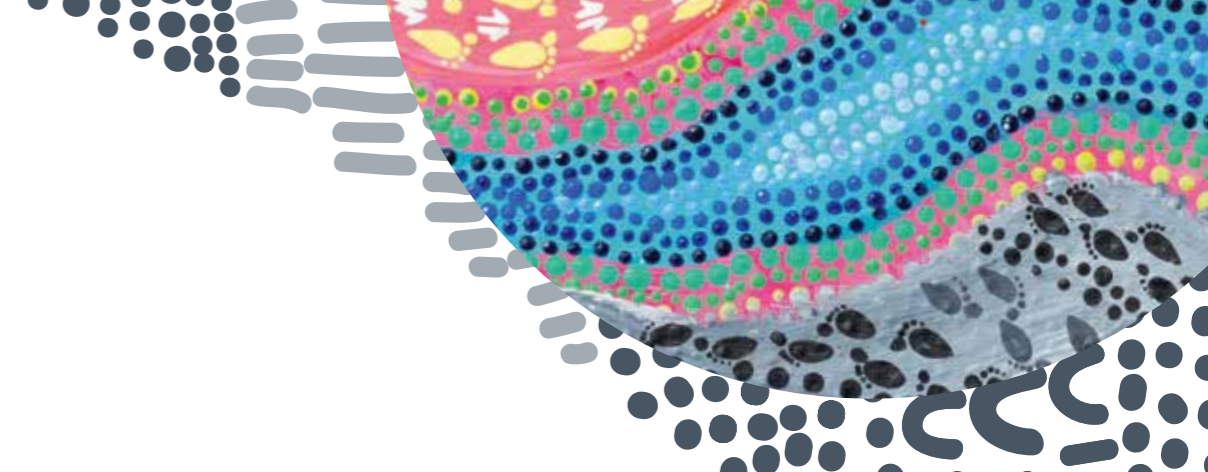
### September 2020



- Jill Gallagher appointed Executive Director of MDAS to oversee the MDAS Reform Project, and a Mallee Community Leadership is established to give a community voice to the process.
- MDAS collaborated with Mildura-based social enterprise Out of the Box to support healthy eating habits among local Aboriginal families. The initiative saw locally grown fruit and veggies distributed among MDAS Early Years families along with healthy eating recipes and ideas.



# Our milestones in 2020/21



## October 2020

- Mildura based barrister and Palawa woman Jacquelyn (Jacki) Turfrey steps into the role of acting CEO for MDAS. A membership drive is undertaken, encouraging Aboriginal community members to join in and have their say.
- Winner of the inaugural MDAS NAIDOC art competition is announced. Kedeasha Jackson's designs were featured on specially designed garments released for Mallee NAIDOC celebrations.



## November 2020

- MDAS Annual General Meeting is held, with one of the biggest attendance records set. Membership had increased from less than 40 to almost 300. 13 candidates were nominated for Board election, ultimately with Vicki Clark, Derik Jones, Jenene Murray, Damien Murray and Mark Bland joining existing Board members Pam McCormack, Uncle Josh Kirby, Melanie Lane and Cara-Lee Brown.
- NAIDOC celebrations (delayed from July by COVID-19) were held across the Mallee region and nationally.



## January 2021

- A national recruitment campaign begins for the permanent CEO position.
- MDAS kicked off 2021 with a series of community consultation meetings across the Mallee aimed at setting priorities for reforming to the organisation's foundation document, the MDAS Constitution.



## February 2021

- Aboriginal communities in Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang got their first look at a proposed MDAS Constitution, which addressed community concerns around key structural and governance issues.
- The MDAS Reform Project is extended.
- An independent competitive recruitment process is completed with the appointment of Jacki Turfrey as permanent CEO.



## March 2021

- Mildura started the AstraZeneca vaccine rollout.



## April 2021

- Community yarning sessions across the Mallee to discuss the MDAS three year Strategic Plan.



## May 2021

- Members of MDAS approved a new Constitution, a key step forward in our structural reform.
- Thelma Chilly, Shantelle Thompson and Jemmes Handy approved to join the MDAS Board as directors until the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November 2021.



## June 2021

- Pfizer vaccine rollout begins.
- Mallee Aboriginal communities resumed control of their own Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.

## Strength and resilience



**Jacki Turfrey**  
CEO

*journey*

If ever our strength and resilience as an organisation and a community has been tested, it has been in this past year.

But as difficult and as challenging as this year has been, I am confident we will look back on 2020-21 as a game changer for MDAS and the start of the journey to self-determination for our Mallee Mobs.

As the new CEO of MDAS, I am proud to have been given the opportunity to play a role in finding a way forward through the immediate, critical operational and governance challenges which threatened the future of MDAS.

As you will read elsewhere in this report, through the MDAS Reform Project and by working together, we have not only been able to overcome those risks but make some enormous progress towards navigating a better way forward. We are on a path to a more positive and sustainable organisation and a better future

for the first time and to true self-determination for our mallee Mobs.

I began my tenure as MDAS Acting CEO in November 2020, at a time when MDAS was at a crossroads. In partnership with VACCHO, and the MDAS Acting Executive Director Jill Gallagher, the MDAS Reform Project was undertaken to get MDAS back on track, and to earn back the confidence of our stakeholders, our staff and our Mobs.

I was appointed to the CEO role permanently in February 2021 with a mission to strengthen MDAS as a Culturally robust and respected organisation. I am committed at the highest level to integrity, transparency and accountability and have brought this into the day-to-day operations and behaviours at MDAS.

Together we have focussed on building MDAS into an organisation that draws its strength from Mobs across the Mallee and achieves its best outcomes by working with our people and supporting our staff to thrive.

Throughout this year, we have completed the MDAS Reform Project, we have achieved urgent and essential constitutional reform, we have developed a new strategic plan, and are progressing the corporate transformation of MDAS.

We are working on a structure that will be a foundation to continue the terrific progress that's been made so far, and I'm confident that MDAS will continue to go from strength to strength.

All of this has been achieved while managing, every day, the very real and immediate impacts of COVID-19. The pandemic has continued to influence everything we do as a health service, a family and community service and at a corporate level. I continue to be proud

and surprised every day by the passion and commitment of our MDAS teams.

It can be unsettling to have change at the top, but together we have persisted and prevailed through some enormously challenging times this year and I am confident we are now on a strong and focused path forward.

I am grateful and indebted to the resilience and support of our Mallee Mobs – you are determined and strong in your resolve to have accountability from your organisation, and I am proud to be working alongside you all.

I am also thankful for the generosity of MDAS staff who have been positive and committed to a vision of a better future for our organisation, our clients and our community throughout this year and beyond.

# Our own path



**Damien Murray**  
Chairman

As we end an important year in our MDAS journey, we can be proud of the steps we have taken together to reset our own future and determine our own path.

Last year, the community clearly signalled that it wanted change within our own Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, and the community wanted to be involved in driving that new direction.

In response to those community demands and the concerns of stakeholders, the former MDAS Board established the MDAS Reform Project in June 2020.

I wish to thank those community members who showed such courage in raising their concerns and speaking up and who which helped to set in place the momentum to establish this important reform process. Aunty Deb Chaplin was appointed Interim Board Chair in August 2020 to oversee the Reform Agenda. I wish to offer my thanks and the gratitude to aunty Deb for her willingness to step up at

this difficult time. Thanks also to Jill Gallagher, from VACCHO, who stepped in as Executive Director to guide our organisation through the reform process.

But the most important thanks goes to our Mallee Mobs. The many hundreds of people who also played their part by responding to the MDAS membership drive during 2020. Our membership numbers increased from less than 30 to upwards of 300 and this was an important reflection of the willingness and determination of our people to drive our own organisation.

Our Annual General Meeting in November also had a record turnout, despite the difficulties of COVID. Members came in person, got online and navigated technology many were unfamiliar with to have their voice heard at this important moment – the community clearly wanted change and wanted to be involved.

I am proud to have led a new board, this year that has shown commitment to the ongoing process of community engagement.

In January and February, we undertook a process of reforming our Constitution to protect the rights of members and to ensure fair and just process and representation for all. In these consultations sessions throughout the Mallee, we didn't agree on everything, but everyone had a say, and there was opportunity to ask questions and have input into MDAS' future direction. The board endorsed the new Constitution (and its Preamble, which is one of the first to be implemented by an ACCO) at the extraordinary general meeting.

In February the board also took the key step of appointing our Acting CEO Jacki Turfrey to the role permanently. Jacki has shown drive, determination, insight and a commitment to doing what is right. The board is confident Jacki is the right person to place us on

a strong footing for a successful future.

Due to the Constitutional changes, a number of board members stepped down from their positions.

Following this Steven Hancock, Debra Chaplin, Sharon Johnson, Thelma Chilly, Shantelle Thompson and Jemmes Handy were appointed by the board to fill casual vacancies as directors until the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November 2021.

Another important item on our agenda this year was to set our medium-term strategic plan for MDAS. My thanks to everyone who turned out to be part of the community yarning sessions to discuss out three-year Strategic Plan. It was really impressive to see community members keen to participate and provide their feedback.

There has been a lot of change in a short period of time, but we are steadfast in our goal of bringing a community voice to our board and organisation and having a stable and talented leadership team at the helm. We are continuing to work to earn the confidence of all of our Mallee communities.

History will show this year as a turning point for our Mallee mobs. Self-determination is what ACCOs stand for – that is what our community members demanded from the MDAS reform process and what new MDAS members signed up for and voted for at the Annual General Meeting. It is what this board is committed to implementing, now and into the future.

# MDAS Reform Project

In 2019, community members began raising concerns and questions about governance and operations at Mallee District Aboriginal Services. The community's concerns were heard.

In July 2020, the MDAS Board took the courageous step of establishing the MDAS Reform Project to reset the Mallee's community-controlled organisation, and place it back into the hands of Mallee Mobs.

The MDAS Reform Project continued throughout 2020-21. Here are the significant milestones.

## Stepping stones to renewal

### EARLY 2019

Aunties and community members raise concerns with VACCHO and Government about how MDAS is operating

### DECEMBER 2019

IBAC executes search warrants in relation to an ongoing investigation

### MARCH 2020

The former CEO of MDAS steps down for personal reasons

Victoria enters Stage 3 COVID-19 restrictions

### JULY 2020

The Board agrees to establish the MDAS Reform Project

### AUGUST 2020

Aunty Deb Chaplin becomes Chair of the Board

Melbourne enters Stage 4 COVID-19 restrictions

### SEPTEMBER 2020

Jill Gallagher is appointed Executive Director of MDAS and is supported by a small VACCHO team. The team must work remotely because of COVID-19 restrictions

The Mallee Community Leadership Group is established by State Government to provide independent advice on the progress of MDAS reforms

Jill and the project team meet with the Mallee Community Leadership Group for the first time

A MDAS Membership Drive in the lead up to the 2020 AGM increases membership from around 40 to almost 300

### OCTOBER 2020

COVID-19 restrictions ease and the project team visits MDAS in person for the first time

Jacquelyn (Jacki) Turfrey starts as Acting CEO and there is turnover in other senior executive positions

### NOVEMBER 2020

137 Members attend the AGM in person and online in light of COVID-19 restrictions; Members accept the audited financial statements and the Annual Report; elect a new Board; and request changes to the MDAS constitution

### DECEMBER 2020

MDAS continues to proactively engage with State and Commonwealth governments about financial management and with IBAC

### JANUARY 2021

Recruitment of an ongoing CEO starts with VACCHO independently managing the national search to ensure transparency

Community consultations on a new constitution and corporate structure commence

### FEBRUARY 2021

Jacki Turfrey is appointed CEO

The State Government agrees to extend the MDAS Reform Project to embed reforms

### APRIL 2021

Members approve the new constitution at a Special General Meeting; work starts to restructure MDAS to match the new constitution

The Commonwealth Grants Administrator report is provided to the Board; MDAS has already implemented most of the recommendations and is working on those remaining

### MAY 2021

Community consultation starts on the next MDAS Strategic Plan and MDAS' Cultural Lore; the Strategic Plan will embed the reform directions including stronger governance, tighter financial and asset management, improved service delivery, and a safe and supportive workplace for staff

Corporate Restructure Project Plan developed

### JUNE 2021

The MDAS Reform Project concludes

VACCHO will continue to support MDAS as one of its member organisations

# Reform Project Statement

Statement from  
Jill Gallagher AO

CEO of VACCHO and Executive  
Director of MDAS overseeing the  
MDAS Reform Project 2020-21

In 2020, the MDAS Board, with support from the State Government, asked VACCHO for help with a significant reform agenda.

I commenced as Executive Director of MDAS in September 2020, with the help of a small team from VACCHO, including Jim O'Shea, Collette O'Neill, Peter Mitchell and Letitia Robinson.

I am proud to provide this report about the work of the project to MDAS Members and the broader Mallee Communities. In six months, we have delivered important and lasting reforms, including a Membership drive, a successful AGM with a competitive election for the Board, recruitment of a new CEO, a new constitution that is based on best practice governance and reflects the aspirations of Communities, and significantly strengthened controls for finances, assets and operations. These achievements are even more remarkable considering the project started during Stage 4 COVID-19 restrictions.

**None of this would have been possible without the courage and persistence of Elders who demanded change to return MDAS to community-control.**

I pay my respects to them, acknowledge their strength and commitment, and thank them for not giving up. I would also like to thank the Board for their support, particularly the two Chairs we have been fortunate to work with – Aunty Deb Chaplin and Damien Murray. You are to be commended for starting this process and seeing it through.

I acknowledge the MDAS staff, led by Jacki Turfrey, who over the last six months have stayed focussed on providing the best services and supports to Aboriginal Communities in the Mallee and have worked to implement the changes we have made. Thank you for your hard work and loyalty.

Finally, I acknowledge you – MDAS Members and the broader Mallee Communities.

Aboriginal organisations get our strength from our Culture, our


community-control and our self-determination. The changes outlined in this report are critical first steps. They lay the foundations for MDAS to build on. However, there is much more to do, and the staff and Board cannot do it alone.

**MDAS Members got us to this point. Now is the time to stay engaged and help MDAS grow even stronger.**

The reform project is over, however VACCHO will still be there to support MDAS. Government has also committed to continuing to work in partnership with MDAS to make it even stronger.

**I look forward to MDAS' continued reform. There is nothing we can't do when we are driven by our Communities and based in our Culture.**

Jill Gallagher AO



MDAS  
at work

Mallee District Aboriginal Services has a proud tradition of challenging, questioning and innovating to bring about results and change within our communities.

We are noted and respected as an organisation that does not accept the status quo, but works proactively to find new ways to break cycles of behaviour, to support our people,

families and communities and to bring the wider community along with us on our journey.

The following pages show MDAS at work – stories and case studies\*\* that demonstrate the effectiveness of our programs and our willingness to lead.

\*\* Names have been changed

# Here for our Mobs in the Mallee during COVID-19

COVID-19 impacted, and continues to impact, every corner of our community.

It has challenged all of us, in so many ways, and for a complex organisation such as MDAS, the scope of the challenge and the change has been significant.

During 2020-21, all of the work MDAS has done has been through the lens of this overarching outside force that is COVID-19.

It has impacted every aspect of our work.

But underpinning our challenge has been a simple obligation that is always at the centre of all we do at MDAS - to continue meeting the needs of our communities.

This has meant we've had to find new ways to reach and stay connected with clients and each other during COVID-19.

Keeping families and Mob safe and MDAS teams working cohesively has required huge commitment, effort and vision from every individual and every team.

As an organisation we are at the forefront of so many initiatives aimed at continuing and improving service delivery during this difficult time.

The way our teams are continuing to meet the challenge, innovate and to go beyond their comfort zone is something we are enormously proud of.



# MDAS Health leading the way during COVID-19

## Health Services



As the COVID-19 pandemic continued into 2020, MDAS Health took on a lead role in the community response across the Mallee.

In July, MDAS became the first site in the Mallee to provide on-the-spot COVID-19 testing.

The tests offered results within 45 minutes, rather than up to four days wait time as seen with laboratory testing.

The fast-tracked results meant we could offer reassurance to many of our mob who were concerned about their increased risk due to pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes, asthma, heart and lung conditions, or immune disorders.

Throughout the year, MDAS worked hard to keep our mob front and centre during our response to the COVID-19 situation, working in close partnership with other health organisations in the community.

These relationships, particularly with Sunraysia Community Health Services (SCHS) allowed us to support as many people in our community as possible throughout the pandemic.

Early on, we were providing support,

education and our usual services in new ways as we adapted to the evolving situation. As vaccine supplies became available in 2021, we quickly became a lead organisation in administering the COVID-19 vaccine to our mob.

We initially began offering Pfizer vaccinations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 16 years and over. Despite demand for the Pfizer vaccine across the state, we were successful in securing a steady supply of vaccines which meant we could expand our response to provide access to Pfizer for non-Aboriginal people.

We soon became one of the only local clinics administering the Pfizer vaccine, and vaccination rates skyrocketed from around 200 per week to a peak of more than 1000 per week.

With the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, MDAS remains prepared and committed to protecting the health and wellbeing of our community.

# Sometimes, it's the little things...

## Family Services



Supporting our clients in Family Services as they strive to achieve their own goals in life can mean so many things.

Every day we work on supporting clients with urgent needs such as housing, social support, food security and lifestyle supports.

But often the needs of clients are complex – and one issue or problem might be underpinned by other needs that contribute to the problem. Safe and secure housing, for example, is not necessarily the only problem we need to work with a client on. Other issues might impact on the ability to access secure housing.

Our Family and Community Services teams work from the Best Case Practice Model. This means we don't view practical problems and issues in isolation and we strive to help our clients maintain their connections to their community, their families and, importantly, their Culture.

Jenny\*\*

MDAS supported Jenny to finally register her car. Transport has been an issue for Jenny and her family for the past three years. It caused Jenny and her children to miss doctor's appointments, for example, as well as school and family gatherings. It was a three-month process by Jenny and her caseworker to achieve this little victory, but Jenny could not be happier. She is now driving herself and her children around and Jenny's been able to accept part time work at a local shop. Jenny is loving the extra money, the independence and being able to meet her family's needs better, as well as make a contribution to the Mildura community.

David\*\*

David is a young man who's been in contact with the justice system for the past five years. David was struggling to find positive motivation, was in trouble with his life choices and had not been attending school. David's caseworker knew that David liked martial arts and invited him to the MDAS Deadly Leaders Workshop in Mildura, where sessions of martial arts were scheduled. It proved a turning point. The martial arts was our way of engaging with David more effectively, and has had a noticeable effect on his sense of self-worth. David himself has discovered being active in martial arts is an effective way of regulating his emotions, being less impulsive and making better decisions.

# Changing lives, one family at a time

## Early Years



The Circle of Security (COS) program works in small groups with young women, new parents and carers to better understand the needs and behaviours of their children.

Keeping the circle to only five or six participants at a time means very strong relationships are built within the group in their time together.

COS groups meet weekly, and participants have a meal together as they study and talk. As well as learning to better understand the behaviors, ages and stages and needs of their children, the interactions build a network of peer support and opportunities to make positive social connections with other parents.

The concept allows parents the time to reflect with their peers in a supportive and safe environment on their parenting styles and identify growth areas.

At the end of the course parents

have a celebration lunch as they are presented with their certificates and photos to commemorate the event.

The reflections of the latest group of program participants underscores the significance of making the families feel important and valued.

### Participant feedback:

“COS helped me to understand my child’s needs more. It makes a big difference when you understand about how they go out to explore and come back in for a hug to fill up their emotional cup again. Knowing that really helped me.”

“COS made me understand more why the kids keep coming back in all the time and ask for so many things, it’s because they need love to feel safe and when they feel safe, they play and behave better.”

“COS showed me that children feel secure when we follow their cues and pay attention to them when they show a need. I found out about recognising my ‘shark music’ and not letting my fears stop me from

meeting my child’s needs.”

“I have grown within myself and have come to a place where I can be a better safe haven for my child. I have learnt to hold out my hands to my child even when I don’t feel like it, I step back and look at myself and then self-regulate.”

“I’ve found a new way of being with my kids and I’m not so stressed. I’m more aware of my ‘not good’ reactions to my kids and I do it better.”

90% of parents complete the Circle of Security Program reporting to feel more confident about controlling their own emotions so that they can help their children organise their feelings

# Men’s Group: Stronger together

## Men’s case management

Client Steve\*\* was referred to Men’s Case Management through The Orange Door.

Steve was observed to have serious behavioural issues and Steve’s family had been removed from the home. Upon receiving this referral, the Men’s Case Management team contacted Steve, who agreed to be a part of the Men’s Case Management program at MDAS.

Steve was open and honest about his behavior and acknowledged he needed someone to talk to about his issues. Men’s Case Management staff talked about the flexibility of the program delivery and made him aware that the program is specifically for Aboriginal males only.

Steve attended his first men’s group in late 2020. At first, he was very quiet and simply sat back listening and observing. But approximately three weeks into the program, Steve started to engage more and actively participated in the group.

Steve continued to open about his life as a child, especially how his father would constantly hit him and his mother. Steve was adamant he didn’t want to be like his father who would drink, take drugs, swear and be physically violent towards the family.

With the support of the program and group, Steve found new skills for managing when he is upset, including learning to walk away and taking time to cool down. Steve found cultural outings with Elders and other clients taught him a lot and that he was always learning things from staff and others.

Steve’s lifestyle and self-esteem has lifted and he was able to make

significant changes in his life. He has told case workers that he has been drug-free for three months. Importantly, Steve has successfully gained his driver’s license and, as a result, is now employed.

Steve has been able to reunite his family, through the changes he has made. He still attends the Men’s Behavioral Change Group and is now considered to be a good role model for others who have faced or are facing similar situations. Steve is engaged with his family, and because of his own cultural learning, now takes his own family out to help them connect with their Culture.



# Art: a healing journey

Community and Culture



In March 2021, entries were invited from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from or connected to Mallee communities for the first ever MDAS NAIDOC week art competition.

The work was to reflect the NAIDOC theme Heal Country and carried a \$2000 prize. The work was to feature on the Mallee NAIDOC Week official merchandise.

Novice artist Kedeasha Jackson was named the winner, much to her surprise and delight, with her piece titled "Past-Present-Future."

Runner-up was Robinvale artist and MDAS Alcohol and Other Drugs worker, Matthew Chilly with an oil painting representing his connections to his tribal heritage.

Kedeasha Jackson

"This piece represents me going through life as a woman, being a mother and becoming the person who I want to be. The left represents my past and how much I've changed since going through life while losing friends and family. All the pain, tears and memories that are engraved in my heart made me who I am today as a woman and a mother.

The right represents that I have goals to achieve and a life to conquer for me and my daughter, and that no matter where I go or what I'm going through, I will always have my family."

Matthew Chilly

"This is an artwork piece which shows the connection to bloodline, my tribal heritage and ties to the land. I am a young Multi-Clan Nations descendant of the Wamba-Wamba, Wiradjuri, Madi-Madi, Yorta-Yorta, Wadi-Wadi and Barapa-Barapa tribes on my mother's side. I am also a South Sea's descendant of Vanuatu, the Gabbi-Gabbi tribe from Queensland on my father's side.

This artwork piece also depicts the 'Dreaming' and the 'Creation', the time before our Ancestors and what they did for us, and how they paved the way so that we can live the life we have and be who we are today. It's thanks to my Ancestors that I am a proud Aboriginal, Multi-Clans Nations man, who is proud of who he is and where he comes from.

I hope this artwork piece resonates with others and relates to them in their own way."

# Time and space for healing journey

Social and emotional wellbeing



Never has the need for Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) support been more important, and more challenging to deliver, than it has been during COVID-19.

Our SEWB team has found new ways to engage with clients over the phone, via social media channels, zoom and safely face-to-face to continue offering the respectful support our clients and their families need.

Our goal is to engage, support and strengthen Aboriginal people affected by social and emotional wellbeing issues, in order to improve their health, wellbeing and participation in the community.

Our social and emotional wellbeing programs are culturally centred, and support clients to move through their challenges at their pace.

Jack's story

Jack\*\* is a teenager living with a family member after his mum's death. Jack's school referred him to the MDAS SEWB team due to concerns around his grief and to support him with techniques to help him regulate his emotions. Jack was described by his school as a "sad young boy". In the first session, Jack would give only one-word answers, did not maintain eye contact, kept his head down and appeared to be sad. Games and art therapy encouraged Jack to engage and were focussed on identifying a protective support network around him, and building his self-esteem. Gradually Jack started to open up and express more about his family, support, strengths, likes and dislikes. For the second session, Jack walked into the meeting room sad and anxious but, left the room with a smile. Now Jack arrives for the sessions with a smile and maintains good eye contact. He hasn't commented about the

sessions, but the smile on his face speaks volumes. The school has also noted that Jack appears energised after the sessions and has received feedback that Jack looks forward to them. Since the client is seen at school, sessions are more structured and consistent. Although Jack is not yet ready to speak about his mum's death, his current treatment plan focuses on building self-esteem and supporting him to express his emotions when he is ready. Jack's caseworker is still building rapport with Jack, and as he is reserved and shy, the process to addressing Jack's grief will be slow and gradual. However, follow up will be continual, and measures are being put in place for ongoing support, including a need Jack has identified himself for support in anger management. Jack's plan also identifies the need for grief and loss counselling when he is ready and will address the risk of substance abuse.



# Growing our own success

## Human resources



Recruitment is an ongoing challenge across the Mallee, in the human services sector and within Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. MDAS is no different – but our response to the challenge has been creative, innovative and highly successful.

As a result of external recruitment and staff advancement over the past 12 months, five of the six most senior staff at MDAS are now Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Our approach to growing our own success reaches to the highest levels of the organisation, and provides not only strong leadership, but a mentoring opportunity, role models and succession planning for our organisation's future.

As part of the exciting changes across MDAS our Human Resources (HR) team has had to find new ways to ensure staffing needs were met, with the goal of finding the

best possible candidates and to support the career aspirations of our workforce and community.

The recruitment process during numerous COVID-19 lockdowns has challenged the team, but MDAS HR adapted by doing interviews and meetings via Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

During lockdown periods, HR also assisted employees with everything they needed to be able to continue their roles efficiently both from home and onsite. This included assistance with border permits for our cross-border employees and those working across multiple sites.

Our organisation-wide approach to growing our own success is bearing fruit. It means supporting our staff, emerging leaders and community to reach for personal goals, and in the process, achieve shared community aspirations. Good staff aren't always easy to find, so when we find people committed and passionate about supporting mob, we invest in them through further training,

work experience and opportunities to upskill. It supports their future opportunities – but it also is an investment in our shared future.

MDAS currently has staff studying nationally-accredited training at all levels, from Certificate level to master's degree, and our HR team continues to encourage any of our staff to take up the opportunity to do so. We also support traineeships across MDAS, which are a great point of entry for young people starting their career.

More than half of the MDAS workforce (51%) is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees

36% of our workforce is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

15% of our workforce is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men



### Mildura

Stevie Bowden is our newest Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) Registered Aboriginal Health Practitioner. He's now at our Mildura clinic, after receiving his registration on completion of his certificate studies in Aboriginal Health Practice. There's no doubting Stevie's motivation, of course. He spent time at the Australian Institute of Sport and has travelled the country playing basketball, most recently with our own Mildura Heat men. His new qualification provides more hands-on resources in the clinic and says the Aboriginal Healthcare qualification opens countless doors and opportunities.

### Swan Hill

A partnership with a local college at Swan Hill saw the recruitment of three young Aboriginal students to MDAS Health, upon completion of their VCE studies. The students commenced traineeships as Aboriginal Health Workers, working

within their own community to help mob. Several existing staff members at MDAS also took the opportunity this year to upskill and undertake the necessary training to become Aboriginal Health Workers. MDAS collaborated with VACCHO to ensure training could be delivered locally, to ensure lack of ability to travel would not be a barrier for any of our staff. One of those involved was Georgina Johnson. Georgie joined MDAS as a part-time receptionist in 2017, but never imagined a career as a Health Worker. Georgie was last year offered a role as a Chronic Care Outreach Worker and to consider Aboriginal Health Worker training. She has now completed her training and excelling in the role of Aboriginal Health Worker. Georgie's experience is a good example of how MDAS and VACCHO's training team have worked together to create new employment opportunities for local young people. Georgie loves her position, and it shows – she's passionate about giving back to the community where she grew up.

Five out of the six MDAS Executive Team Members are Indigenous – compared to two in 2019-20

# Finding strength inside

## Wiimpatja Healing Centre



Wiimpatja Healing Centre is an alcohol and drug rehabilitation program for men based at the remote Warrakoo Station, 100 kilometres west of Mildura. The program offers a wraparound residential program in the fields of health, Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) counselling, well-being, living skills, short courses and farm activities with referrals into the program from corrections, court, justice and self-referral.

There were big changes for the Wiimpatja Healing Centre in 2021, with new manager Mark Bland beginning in January, and new program co-ordinator, Nathan Kelly in May. Nathan was previously managing MDAS Men's Behavioral Change Program and brings important counselling and men's support skills to the team.

### Michael's story

Michael\*\* is in his 30s, single with no partner or kids and his life was spiraling out of control. Michael

was in trouble with police and was suffering with AOD issues. As a direct result of his behaviour, relationships with his immediate family were strained. Michael had only one Aunty remaining who refused to give up on him, and continued to encourage him to change his ways.

Through the court, Michael was referred to complete a three-month program at Wiimpatja.

In the beginning, Michael was quiet, withdrawn, extremely anxious in group settings and reluctant to participate in activities, especially those involving other participants.

Over time, Michael began opening up about his issues and the team started to see changes in him.

At the end of the three-month period, Michael expressed his desire to stay in the program. He said it was making such a positive difference to his life and he wanted to continue learning and bettering himself.

He was tired of "being broke, looking over his shoulder, doing the wrong thing and mixing with the wrong crowd".

Michael was ready to make a change and willing to dedicate more of his time to the program in order to make that happen.

He self-referred for another three-month stint, and at the completion of that, another one.

Michael is now a different person, both in his manner and his approach to life. He has become engaged with the group, contributes, participates and helps out in any way he can. He participates in the work group from 7am to 1pm, and after that he can be found in the gym, mixing with other participants and helping where he can.

He has maintained a healthy relationship with his aunt, who is thrilled with his progress and will continue to provide support for him once he finishes the program.

Michael has obtained his chainsaw user certificate, a chemical user certificate and is currently in the process of obtaining a white card. He has secured part-time employment at a local company, set to begin once he finishes the program.

# MDAS no longer at Menera station

## Farewell to Menera



Menera is a 1455-hectare freehold station on Wamba Wamba country on the New South Wales (NSW) side of the Murray River. The property is operated as a sustainable farming enterprise and is used for community activities.

There is a 200-hectare Community Hub set aside as the Menera Community River Precinct which is maintained by MDAS staff and the participants of the Local Justice Worker Program. The Community Hub area was for Indigenous community members to conduct indoor and outdoor cultural programs.

Unfortunately, community events during 2020/21 have been restricted due to COVID-19 restrictions. In particular travel from Victoria into NSW and the restrictions on the number of people able to gather together.

In August 2020, eight youth and six staff attended Menera for the

purpose of making a video of the boys performing Traditional Dances for the opening of the Aboriginal Children's Forum hosted by MDAS.

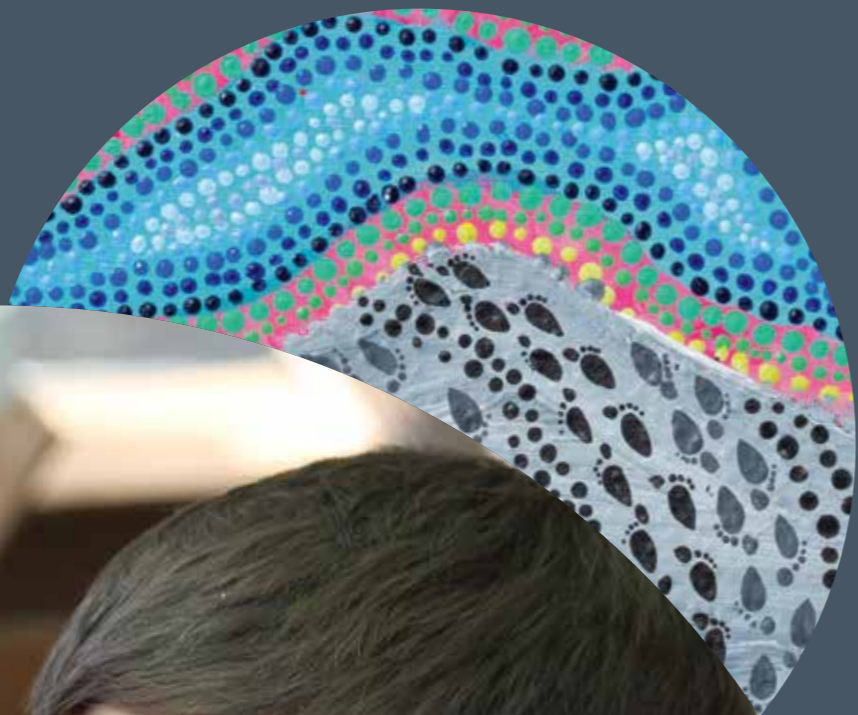
More than 1000 hectares of Menera is under irrigation and the property is currently producing irrigated and dryland crops, and running sheep under a share farming agreement.

Farm training programs were being developed in conjunction with TAFE to meet the needs of the local community and specifically to cover the range of work tasks that were required for Menera farm and environmental assets.

During the year re-establishment of the Menera cropping infrastructure, preparation of soils and improvement of fencing has provided an opportunity for irrigated production and livestock programs to be established and viable. These enterprises could have provided an opportunity for future training and employment of local Aboriginal Community members, however, regrettably in April 2021, the

Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) chose not to renew its lease of the land to MDAS.





*health  
services*  
a healthier mob

# Health Services Report



**Samantha Brennan**  
Director of Health Services

## PROGRAM OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Taking up the role of MDAS Director of Health Services earlier this year is an honor and an opportunity I am energised by.

My commitment during the early part of my journey here has been a steadfast commitment to bringing MDAS Health together as a service delivery agency for Mob. That means removing silos in our organisation and across our sites, and truly working together as one organisation focused on meeting the needs of our clients and our Mob.

We have continued to be represented at all key regional COVID Risk, Response and Readiness networks including cross-border committees to ensure we are up to date with the current situation and working collaboratively with external agencies to keep our communities safe.

Mildura has run immunization clinics up to four times a week and Swan Hill and Kerang have utilized four nurse immunisers and GP services to ensure maximum reach for the vaccination program.

### Allied Health

Our focus continues to be on growing the number of visiting allied health professionals at all sites. Credentialed Diabetes Educator Jade Kelly has resumed the Diabetes clinic in Mildura, and the service is expected to be expanded across MDAS sites in 2021-22.

### Response to Syphilis Outbreak in Victoria

MDAS now have two representatives on the Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH) Syphilis Working Group working group. The role of working group is to collaboratively plan, implement and evaluate strategies to reduce the incidence of syphilis in Sunraysia.

### Wiimpatja Healing Centre

The Wiimpatja Healing Centre Manager is currently working on a project to enhance the existing program at Warrakoo. This includes but is not limited to reviewing and assessing the current practice. Partnering with services such as TAFE and Agriculture Victoria and adding additional cultural and works program activities to the client's daily routines.

MDAS health and wellbeing programs continue to deliver weekly sessions onsite at Wiimpatja and we aim to add Quit smoking, Healthy Eating and Gym program in future. Elders groups are now visiting fortnightly allowing the opportunity for them to share

their wisdom and knowledge with the clients but also giving them our elders the opportunity to enjoy being out on country.

COVID has created a significant delay in Detox bed availability, this creating a waitlist for men to access the Wiimpatja Healing Centre program.

### Diversion programs

Due to the state-wide success of the Koori Women's Diversion program which commenced as a pilot in 2015. MDAS had been approached to deliver the Koori Men's Diversion pilot. This is the first of its kind for the state and will wrap around well needed supports for Men, Women and families who have unfortunately had contact with the justice system. We hope that having this service to our Community men will support family units as a whole to reduce and even eliminate contact for that family with the justice system. These programs offer intensive case management to clients and families building stronger happier families and Communities.

### Health Promotions

Although we continue to be limited in the types of community events and community engagement we can schedule, in line with COVID restrictions, the year has been a busy one for the Health Promotions Teams across all sites.

The team has started the FOODPATH research project in conjunction with VACCHO/Deakin University. This will focus on upskilling Aboriginal Health Workers and Aboriginal Health Practitioners in nutrition.

Health Promotions is also in the process of developing a partnership

with Mallee Pride. MDAS is commencing the Rainbow Tick accreditation program to ensure our practices and behaviors reflect MDAS as a safe, inclusive organization for LGTQBIA + community members.

A new social media promotion called "Meet MDAS", profiling MDAS staff, what they do at MDAS and what they love about working here and for our community" has been developed and the Everyday Hero program continues each month celebrates community members that are making positive lifestyle changes and role modelling these to their community.

A campaign to encourage mums and mums-to-be to quit smoking has been developed. We have also engaged the services of a local up and coming Aboriginal photographer who will conduct a photoshoot for this campaign which is scheduled in late June with three local mums (one pregnant, two with bubs).

The MDAS 'Healthy Mobs' program is currently being developed to be rolled out to local schools (to replace Deadly Choices). We are partnering with VACCHO on the Healthy Communities research project. As part of this process we are developing a new healthy lifestyle challenge, that applies a holistic approach to healthy lifestyle, rather than simply being about weight loss.

### Community Kitchen

The Community Kitchen was established in Mildura to provide healthy catering for programs and meals, healthy snacks and coffees to community and staff. Throughout lockdown this service continued for our essential workers, with healthy

soups, fruits, lunches, and coffee available. We have appointed an Indigenous chef who will be a brilliant addition to our team.

### Second Bite

Our Second Bite program has seen an increase in food hamper requests and referrals with the lockdown period, which has been the case with all lockdowns. The demand for this service remains consistent with approximately 20 food boxes per week, a mix of Second Bite fruits, vegetables and bread and Foodbank non-perishable items delivered on a weekly basis to community experiencing food insecurity.

\* Permission was obtained to take and use all photos included in this report.



# Swan Hill-Kerang Health Report



**Zah Thebe**  
Senior Manager,  
Health Services Swan  
Hill & Kerang

The challenges of COVID-19 have continued to test our systems and practices throughout 2020-21, but I am proud of the resolve and the determination of our health teams in Swan Hill and Kerang.

It is no small achievement to have been able to maintain our vital and much-valued health services to all of our Swan Hill and Kerang Mobs during this pandemic. Our teams have continued to provide critical services, both in response to COVID-19 (AstraZeneca clinics began in April 2021 and Pfizer in July 2021) and maintaining critical outreach and allied health service delivery to our most high risk and vulnerable community members.

## Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Our SEWB team in Swan Hill have experienced unprecedented demand during COVID-19, and continue to

deliver a professional and reliable service for community when at times they were limited only to Telehealth to do so. Where face-to-face engagement has been possible, this has been done safely and effectively. Communication with community has been maintained and extremely important not only with SEWB clients, but also our Elders who have had moments of uncertainty.

## Building our workforce

Our challenges this year have been exacerbated by the departure of our permanent and well-respected GP Dr Islam. We continue to pursue options for a permanent replacement, but, in the meantime, we are maintaining continuity of GP services through the ongoing use of locums.

Elsewhere, we continue to recruit, implement partnerships (e.g. a new NDIS Linkage worker through VACCHO) and, most importantly, look to grow the skills and qualifications of our own team and community to build a self-sustaining health practice model.

This year our clinical staff have been trained in retinal photography and are now conducting Diabetic retinal imaging – more than 50 retinal images have been performed for review by our visiting optometrist. The success of this program formed part of a presentation by our Allied Health team to a group of ACCHOs at the State Conference.

Two of our nurses are now qualified nurse immunisers, bringing to five the number of nurse immunisers we have on-site. This has held us in good stead for the demands of COVID-19 vaccination, but has also allowed us to administer 200 influenza vaccinations.

As part of our growing focus on women's health, our practice nurse is now qualified in cervical screening, and implant insertion and removal. This is proving extremely important in allowing women to have procedures and services in a setting in which they feel safe and understood. A Koori Maternity Service midwife has been recruited, resulting in a substantial increase in attendance rates for appointments, scans and checks.

In 2020-21, we recruited three Aboriginal Health Worker trainees and we are extremely proud of the aptitude and the progress they are making. The total number of Aboriginal Health Workers in training currently stands at seven.

Skills training for health staff has continued, including Anaphylaxis training; COVID vaccination; AOD Skills set; Mental health first aid; and food handling.

## Allied Health

Allied health visits including podiatry, optometry, dietetics, audiology, have been ongoing with great attendance. The visiting paediatrician attended MDAS until October 2020 and on each occasion appointments were fully booked.

## Health Promotions

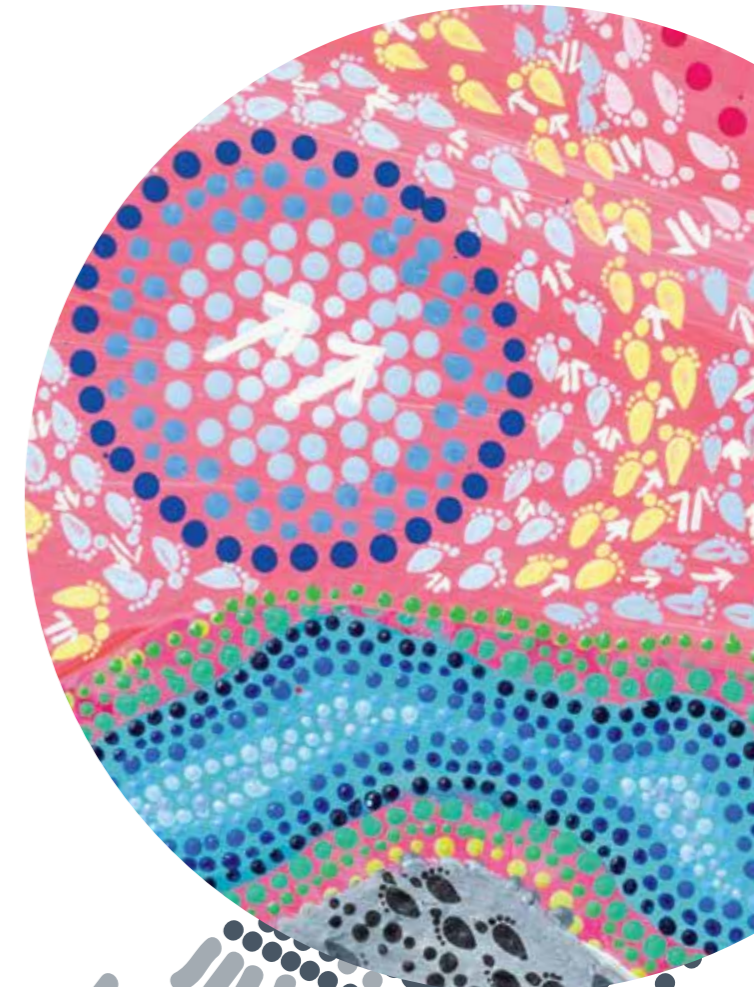
Active Mob initiative was launched in March 2021 with MDAS and the Swan Hill Leisure Centre partnering to provide free fitness classes to community when these can be safely offered. Our Biggest Morning Tea was a great success, with an attendance of 35 community members. This year our Health Promotions Officer and Youth Worker began sexual health sessions with the girls in Youth Hub

learning about STIs, contraception and safe sex, with great attendance rates.

Our work during the COVID period has been both a challenge and an opportunity. Although this has been a period of intensive demand, it has provided our teams with an opportunity to engage with Mob who might not previously have been accessing MDAS services, or who have become disengaged. The COVID period has allowed us to make important progress with re-engaging on a number of fronts with community members who have required our services.

Our clinical staff have been trained in Diabetic retinal imaging – 50 images were sent for review

We recruited three Aboriginal Health Worker trainees – and the total number of AHWs in training is seven



# Kerang Health Report



During the challenging year 2020/2021 we ended up having, our Kerang team showed a very positive approach to the commitment of service delivery to our Kerang community.

During the COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns put in place we had to adapt our services delivery.

MDAS implemented health direct services for almost all appointments to ensure that community still felt able to attend appointments with no risk of leaving their home.

iPads and telephone become an integral part of our clinical services to community to enable them to engage in safe consulting practices where they were still able to be a part of our telehealth and health direct consults with practitioners.

Many health promotion events in the last 12 months had to be adapted and delivered via social media platforms due to having minimal contact with community because of COVID-19.

Some of the social media content from the Kerang team included videos, such as Coronavirus awareness, Women's health, Eye health and Men's Health.

Other ways to increase community control and assist them in improving their health was to provide information and awareness packs for different annual health calendar events ie:

- Men's health and hygiene, Women's health and hygiene, Heart health, Sexual health and Quit smoking.

## Innovations

During lockdowns, outreach to Elders and community was achieved through our team making up food hampers and big pots of nourishing soups from the partnerships we have with Foodbank and Second Bite.

These were taken around to community members where staff were able to check first hand on their wellbeing, particularly those feeling isolated and vulnerable.

Regular phone calls were made in addition to this, enabling us to stay connected with Mob and more importantly for them to feel safe and valued in their community, this has continued as an ongoing service of MDAS.

**"Without MDAS's support during the year I would have been lost - they help me with everything, from helping me with paperwork, organising my Dr's appointments and taking me to them, even a shoulder to lean on and a cup of tea when I need it. MDAS are the best." Kerang Elder, Uncle Barry Atkinson.**

Kerang MDAS have two staff members committed to strengthening our workforce by upskilling for the benefit of the organisation and our community.

We have one training to become an Aboriginal Health Worker who has a passion to assist our communities and another training in Community Services to provide health promotion services and help improve the lives of the clients we see every day.

## Community engagement

The easing of COVID-19 restrictions brought good news for staff and community. We were finally able to re-engage through community events.

From these events, we saw an increase in clients attending and utilising our services both Kerang and Swan Hill.

A Community Christmas party – was our first community engagement event for many months and was well attended and welcomed by all.

In between restrictions and lockdowns we were able to organise more events that included:

National Close The Gap – MDAS shared a BBQ with information stalls for the community around the Close the Gap Campaign that aims to close the health and life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation.

Biggest Morning Tea – MDAS held a successful BMT event that raised valuable funds for people impacted by cancer. Community and Stakeholders attended in support for Cancer Research.

Pink Ribbon Day – Another well attended morning tea held with Community for Breast Cancer Awareness.

Men's business – Luncheon for Men's Health week saw more than a dozen men and Elders share camp ovens, soups and yarns.

Women's business – Morning tea was supplied for Women's health week with a focus on Preventative health

and screenings. This resulted in an uptake in our women booking in and having a breast screening.

## Highlights

Uptakes for Flu and Covid-19 Vaccinations

## New Developments:

2 more Nurse Immunisers

1 more Cervical screening Nurse

## Going Forward:

Two Aboriginal health workers returning from Maternity leave – will see an uptake of 715's

**\*Continue striving to be the preferred service provider for our Aboriginal people**



# Social and Emotional Wellbeing Report

This year the SEWB team have undergone major reform within both the staff and service delivery space, but in an everchanging environment the team have managed to use their exceptional skills and resilience to exceed key performance indicators and meet significant milestones within their programs.

Our organisational leaders facilitated feedback sessions with community and staff to gather information on how we could improve services from within SEWB by providing connection to Culture, family, community, and country across the promotion, early prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery continuum. Such consultations have been key to the redesign of the SEWB Framework.

To embed this wisdom, MDAS has developed a wrap-around service delivery model which unifies skills and resources around clients and creates communities of support which best meet unique needs and healing opportunities. The MDAS model is called the POD system, and like the containers of life which hold seeds and potential for growth safely until healthy changes are made, the PODS hold Community members safely in small transdisciplinary teams until they no longer require formal supports to live vibrant healthy lives.

PODS focus on the right level of support for the unique level of need. Made up of the most necessary support needs: Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Supports,

Housing, Diversion from criminal patterns and assistance reducing violence for family-living, the PODS are culturally safe all inclusive teams which come together to support clients along their healing journeys. Along the way, there might be a need for increased specialty support, so a river of additional specialty services runs alongside each POD to offer extra levels of assistance and healing opportunity. River supports include Trackers who guide the process as clients find their way to health, gambling support, Bringing Them Home assistance, psychology, specialty counselling and dual diagnosis interventions.

Following the Royal Commission into Mental Health, SEWB is positioning itself to be more flexible, culturally safe and integrated around the healing needs of Community. This will position MDAS as a leader going forward.

Possibilities for the year ahead include an application to DHHS funding to enhance our holistic SEWB approach with the aim to put in place the Mental Health Royal Commission. We are currently awaiting the outcome of this application.

SEWB is going to be a leader in advance of government requirements, and to achieve this, SEWB will need a rich, vibrant, well-staffed multi-disciplinary team that feels supported and resourced to provide high quality wellbeing services for Community. The recruitment of local Aboriginal man Andrew Arden to the Manager role in SEWB will ensure this is achievable.

**Number of AOD services:**  
517 AOD clients

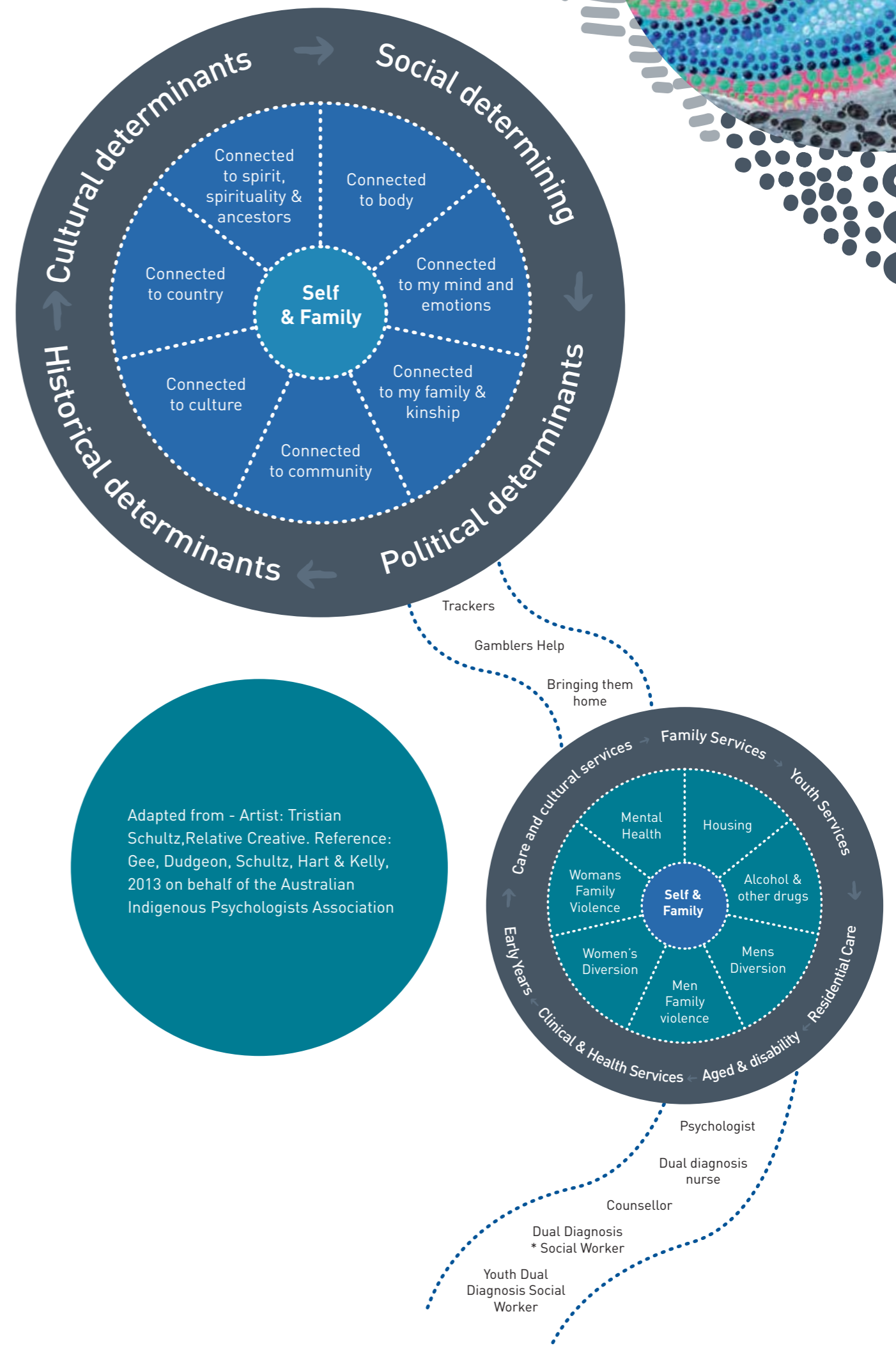
**Mental Health Demonstration Project:**  
200 referrals 60 active clients.

**Koori Women's Diversion Project:**  
Number of clients supported- 25  
Number of active clients -12.

**Bringing Them Home:**  
Clients 57  
2 community events and 14 group activities.

The Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) management team are currently holding weekly workshops with staff, to prepare for a change in the service delivery model. This process has been completed in conjunction with the community forums that have allowed us to gather information on how to improve our services within SEWB and adapt a model that works for all.

In addition to the service delivery consultations, group sessions have also been conducted with Aboriginal men in community to discuss the new Koori Men's Diversion program and how we can best support this.



# Aged Care and Disability Report



## Highlights:

The Aged and Disability services programs at MDAS have also undergone significant change throughout the course of the year but consultations with our community elders have enabled MDAS to review and revitalise a somewhat stagnant service. With VACCHOs support, a desktop audit and a client walkthrough review was completed and recommendations were applied to an action plan that the team have worked hard to implement.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the everchanging restrictions applied constantly tested the programs but even during these trying times our staff have put in a tremendous amount of effort to ensure our Elders' needs are met. We kept communication lines with Elders open through telephone welfare checks, video calls and home visits. The staff also continued to provide the essential services such as yard maintenance, personal care,

transport to appointments and home deliveries of food packs as needed.

The aged and disability social support groups started to gather momentum until the COVID-19 Circuit Breaker kicked off in mid-February. We managed to be innovative and introduce new and improved modified group activities to ensure they could still operate within the constraints of the restrictions regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic.

This year has seen many Elders return to access our services and get involved in the weekly social support groups increasing in size each week, so much so, that we have had to double our weekly activities on offer.

Whilst we highlight our achievements, I think we must also take the time to acknowledge that we have also suffered significant losses throughout the year with the passing of many of our beloved Elders. We as an organisation must commit to

supporting our Elders to live longer and stronger in community and that is exactly what we aim to do moving forward.

## New Developments and Innovations:

A key aspect of improving our available services for our Elders includes creating and strengthening partnerships with external agencies to deliver things such as the "Move It Program". This program is funded through the Mildura Rural City Council, Macedon Ranges Shire Council and Sports Aus.

In partnership with the Mallee Catchment Water Management Team activities such as fishing, reed growing to make baskets, outdoor gatherings with a yarnning circle and campfires have commenced.

The Elders now visit Wiimpatja Healing Centre regularly to share their wisdom and knowledge with the clients onsite. This exercise is

providing the cultural connection and guidance the program requires but it also is also a great thing for our Elders as it provides a connection to land.

We have successfully recruited new trainees in the Aged and Disability Service space. Our new junior trainee in Mildura has had a positive response with the Elders in the community and is transitioning well in their new role. Our mature aged trainee in Swan Hill has been an active participant in the social support groups for many years so we are pleased to now have aunt working for us to deliver the program.

## Plans for Future:

All staff are enrolled in future education that will provide them with the resources and knowledge they require to support our Elders in a culturally safe manner.

We aim to grow the Aged and Disability programs, providing more services in the Swan Hill and Kerang locations and enhancing our NDIS services to all eligible Aboriginal Elders. We also aim to give our Elders a place to call theirs, to create a sense of belonging where they can hold their group activities, create everlasting memories and share their life stories with our youth and other community members.

## Good news stories:

Through a partnership formed with the Mallee Catchment Management Authority, the Elders attended afternoon/evening out at Hattah National Park. Although a cold day, our Elders were happy to go along and were treated to a camp oven

dinner and a smoking ceremony all whilst connecting with country. All who attended said that they enjoyed themselves and look forward to the next one.

## Good news story:

The Golf activity at Riverside Golf Course is very popular.

"One male Elder told staff he had not played golf since he was a kid and thoroughly enjoyed himself."

The golf is a popular activity with both the ladies and the men. The Elders love driving the buggies and it's great for them to be out in the fresh air and enjoy their lunch outside.

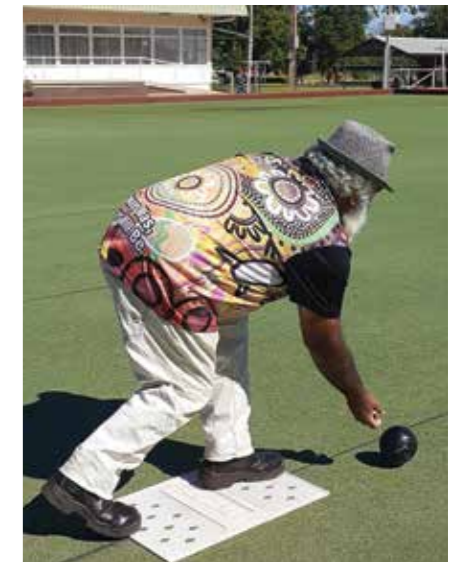
## Department Positive Story:

Two of our Elders involved in the gold days were in the running for free golf club membership at Riverside GC.

Both Uncles Maurice Smith and Garry Swallow are looking forward to hearing if 18-month opportunity becomes a reality in the next couple of weeks. Both Elders have been out secondhand shopping with Support Worker, Russell Taylor and have

picked up some pre-loved golf clubs and Uncle Garry is looking forward to being able to buy himself a new set in the future.

The best part of this story is that both Elders are being more active than they would be normally creating their own connections and widening their own support networks which proves the program's success.





# Family Services Report



**Michelle Gadsby**  
Acting Director of Family and Community Services

COVID lockdowns and restrictions have impacted on Family and Community services program delivery, however staff are continuing to be innovative in meeting program delivery needs and to ensure that the services continue where they are most needed.

For the group sessions it is a matter of efficient planning and being ready to go immediately as restrictions lift, and sessions can be delivered.

During the COVID lockdowns, staff are having to rotate working from home and in the office.

Planning is underway to develop and implement a therapeutic model that works for youth in Out of Home Care. The therapeutic model will include greater Cultural connections and learnings as we know Culture is therapy. Part of this new model will include extending inclusion of Elders.

Recruitment for new roles and existing roles are an exciting time and whilst we acknowledge previous staff, we look forward to working with some great new staff!

We also look forward to introducing community to our new staff.

MDAS really needs foster carers to ensure our children and young people remain on Country and within their familiar support systems and environment.

To align program delivery for families, Early Years now sits under the Family and Community Services umbrella.

This will assist with smoother transitioning between program area.

There have been statewide changes with Stronger Families, Family Preservation, and 200 Hours transitioning into the Family Preservation Reunification Response and Kinship Reunification and Cradle2Kinder transitioning into Intensive Family Services. Staff are working towards transitioning families into these programs and learning the new program guidelines.

Mildura Youth Programs are now being delivered from the old CFA building in Orange Ave and Swan Hill Youth Programs are now being delivered from the MDAS Community Hall.

Koori Night Patrol in Mildura has extended the hours of operation and now operates from 6pm – 11pm Thursday nights and 6pm-12pm Friday and Saturday nights.

Quality Innovative Performance (QIP) three-year Audit is coming up in February 2022. This is where the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing funded programs are audited against the Health and Human Standards with independent auditors conducting the assessment.



*family services*  
a stronger mob

# Swan Hill-Kerang Family Services Report



Swan Hill Family Services staff have been working exceptionally hard over the last year and have been faced with many challenges.

With COVID-19 sending us into lockdown several times, it surprisingly became an opportunity for staff to focus what matters most, not the little things in life that no longer seemed to be a priority when we were faced with a worldwide pandemic.

We were able to educate ourselves to provide a better holistic approach to how we deliver our services and programs to our local communities.

When COVID first hit, our staff spent many productive hours personally cutting out and sewing reusable masks for our local community.

Due to us all spending more time at home than before and with new, never seen before pandemic restrictions, Second Bite and Food Bank was picked up, divided up and delivered to community members on a rotating basis for those that requested it.

Communicating with our community became our number one priority, doing daily or weekly check ins, referrals and having a yarn about our mental health.

These conversations were paramount in ensuring that our community was well taken care of, not only physical but mentally as well.

We had a strong focus on reassuring families that their mental health was a priority, to not just themselves, but to us also.

Being shut inside, unable to venture out except for a hand full of reasons was new and put a strain of all of us. Amazingly we have all adapted and it now seems to be a new way of life for a lot of our community.

MDAS staff have continued to work on a rotating roster to align with these restrictions whilst still delivering the same high-quality programs to community.

One of the bonus' that we were presented was that training became more accessible due to being online.

All our staff at some point underwent further online training and personal development, which enabled them to further their education and knowledge.

This has allowed us to build on and continue delivering a high-quality service.

Those completing their TAFE studies were still able to continue via online training.



# Early Years Report

This year the Early Years Team has been extremely busy keeping programs operational and beneficial to the community during these trying times. Like the whole of the MDAS teams, they have had to be extremely resilient and flexible with their approach to work, to ensure that they are still servicing as many clients as possible, in a COVID Safe manner.

The Early Years team is still a high-performing area within MDAS that continue to be exceed their KPIs in every area. We continue to upskill staff by promoting training; all Early Years staff have all now completed their Infant Mental Health Training, along with several other core training modules.

COVID-19 has had a major impact on operating playgroup and parent capacity building groups, however, where and when it was possible to hold group activities, we continued to see a great number of parents/ carers and their children attending each session. We utilised our social media platforms to deliver essential services online like music programs, story time and other creative activities.

Our HIPPY tutors made the most of their time in the office during the COVID-19 pandemic by creating a Learn From Home activity pack. They used a contact-free delivery method and managed to get these packs out to a significant number of families.

The Early Years team have developed greater partnerships with the Mildura Rural City Council: Central Enrolments and Best Start programs, to encourage a greater number of ATSI enrolments into three- and four-year-old kindergartens, including the Early Start Kindergarten Program. We aim to foster these relationships moving forward to give our Aboriginal children the best head-start possible when transitioning into primary school.

Both Mildura and Swan Hill Early Years departments lost their Maternal and Child Health Nurses this year, however, with the assistance of an external recruitment agency, we managed to secure long-term placements of employment throughout the year. We have also successfully created new MOUs with local councils to provide essential services to our 0-4 year old children.

Moving forward, Early Years Mildura and Swan Hill are encouraged to continue striving to provide the best possible service to clients that we can

within the confines of the COVID-19 pandemic. We aim to find a new norm for both staff and clients, and to continue to grow the Early Years programs and staffing numbers.

The remodel of MDAS services may see a shift in how we do business and deliver services through the Early Years program but it will be guided by community for community.

We continue to seek a facility to run our Early Years programs in Swan Hill, following the lease on the Youth Hub expiring. We are concerned about the risk of families disengaging if we are unable to supply a safe, welcoming space for them to come together to play and learn.

Despite an ongoing recruitment drive we have still been unable to recruit to the MCH nurse positions. Partnership agreements with council have allowed services to continue but are not enough to meet the needs of community. Casual MCH staff will provide additional services in 2021-22 to complete health checks and key age and stage visits until such time as the vacant positions are filled.

# Family Violence Report

During the COVID lockdowns all the family violence teams which include Meminar refuge and outreach services, Meminar Therapeutic services, Men's Family Violence, Adolescent Family Violence and The Orange Door, have been operational and attending to their client's needs while adhering to the COVID safety measures in place.

The Family Violence Team still visited clients at their homes and supported with case management, food, and accommodation right through the COVID-19 lockdown periods.

Meminar refuge continued to accommodate clients throughout the lockdown and provide case management and therapeutic services to the residences in the facility. Internet was installed to all units at the refuge to support clients to home school their children.

The Men's Family Violence team and Adolescent Family Violence team, have coordinated one on one case management with clients, facilitated

group work and organised cultural healing activities and camps. Due to the impact of the COVID restrictions, many of the activities and camps were held at Warrakoo.

The Family Violence 'Free from Violence' campaign was completed in June 2021 with the final advert being filmed and screened on television. The campaign also included a Mildura bus that is currently circulating around Mildura with "Working towards Happy and Healthy Lives, through the Prevention of Family Violence" which is our team goal.

The Family Violence team this year included the addition of a new service to support clients and families of victims who have experience or at risk of Family Violence.

The Meminar Therapeutic team which consist of a Team Leader and two case workers support the clients with therapeutic cultural healing through one-on-one counselling and group activities.

The team was established through a successful submission in 2020 and has achieved positive outcomes to obtained ongoing funding from Family Safety Victoria. The Meminar

Therapeutic team is based at the Meminar refuge and outreaches to client's homes.

Early in 2021, the Family Violence Team welcomed The MDAS Orange Door team to their department. This has allowed a more successful transition for clients to shift between intake and case management with the teams working more holistically together. With all staff now located in the Mildura Orange Door offices, staff will commence outreach to the Swan Hill Orange Door, two days per week, in July 2021.

Meminar completed the final 'Nhuunghu and Kirra cultural healing camp' that was funded through a submission to Dhelk Dja in 2018. The final camp was delayed due to Covid. Meminar Family Violence and Therapeutic staff along with two Elders and 10 clients attended Roses Gap recreational facility. The clients enjoyed the camp immensely.

More funding will be sourced to organise Meminar cultural healing camps for the future.

# Family & Youth Services

This financial year has been a great year for youth services.

We have been able to increase the number of Aboriginal staff in our program area, while being able to go above and beyond our KPIs, servicing more than 124 youth this financial year.

This past year, Youth Services were called upon more than any other year to support youth to deal with the pressures of the COVID lockdowns.

MDAS youth services stepped up by providing online wellbeing programs and activity packs to youth.

Having constant communication with youth and schools also provided another layer of support to ensure youth stayed consistent with education.

## Jai's story

Jai\*\* has a long history of police involvement and was released on parole to Swan Hill to live with his Nan.

Since his release, MDAS Youth Services have linked Jai in with Men's Case Management in Swan Hill, Murray Ace (General Education Foundations program), NDIS providers, and headspace.

Jai keeps his regular appointments with Youth Justice and is continuing to engage with our services.

He also successfully applied for his Tax File Number and sorted out his Centrelink payments.

Jai also completed the MDAS Too Deadly leaders program.

Many of these positive goals have been supported by MDAS Youth Services, but some have also been completed independently, which is a great sign.

Although Jai has not yet agreed to return to school, we are proud to say that he has continued to engage with the martial arts and other MDAS youth programs, and has not had any other police contact since engaging with the Too Deadly program.



## CORPORATE SERVICES REPORTS

# Corporate services report



**John Bergin**  
Director Corporate Services

2020/21 was a year of considerable change and improvement for Corporate Services, in line with organisation wide change. The year commenced with the organisation under the control of Administrators and in considerable financial stress.

Pleasingly within 12 months we achieved significant financial reform, regained the confidence of regulators and funders and had full control over MDAS operational functions once again.

The comprehensive program of works during the year included:

**Improved financial transparency and accountability through:**

Establishment of the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee (FAR) as a sub-committee of the MDAS Board. The FAR Committee meets monthly and membership consists of independent community representative, MDAS Board representatives and management representatives.

Review of the Conflict-of-Interest policy and establishment of a Conflict-of-Interest Registry for Board Directors, Management, and employees

Establishment of a schedule of independent audits for finance and corporate functions

Significant financial reform and improvement through:

The establishment and enforcement of a new Delegation of Authority policy

Complete overhaul of corporate credit card procurement processes

Development of shared service budget model for more accurate assessment of corporate overheads

The establishment of comprehensive and timely annual budget development and period review for Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang services.

Review and enforcement of the MDAS Procurement policy

**Workforce development progress through:**

Skills audit of all MDAS leaders

Commencement of a training schedule to address identified skill gaps in leaders

Successful application to the Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions for a Workforce Development grant of \$600k. A comprehensive workforce development program will commence in 2021/22.

A comprehensive review of MDAS assets has commenced and will be finalized in 2021/22 to ensure optimized care of and use of all assets.

“2020-21 has been a watershed year for MDAS in reforming the organisation’s structures and processes. Almost every operational area has been reviewed and reformed, and the lion’s share of this hard slog has been led by the MDAS Corporate Services Team. The outcome has been an organisation that is professional, purposeful and ready to take MDAS and our Mobs forward.”

# Human Resources report

The past 12 months has thrown up many challenges with extended lockdowns and the requirements to work from home where possible.

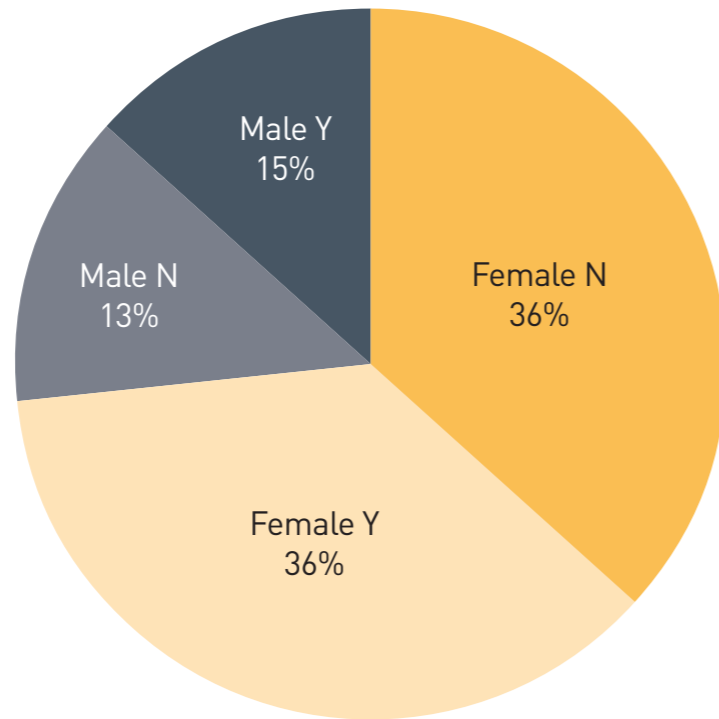
HR has met these challenges and our work continues to focus not only on increasing the numbers of Indigenous employees at work within MDAS, but also in development and learning opportunities required for existing staff to grow and lead.

Current staffing numbers sit at 246, with 146 Indigenous employees and 100 non-indigenous employees.

Right, pie chart indicates the number of Male and Female ATSI and Non ATSI staff

- 36% of female staff are non ATSI
- 36% of female staff are ATSI
- 13% of Male staff are non ATSI
- 15% of Male staff are ATSI

**MDAS GENDER AND ATSI PROFILE**  
75% Female Workforce



MDAS currently has 20 Indigenous Trainees studying nationally-accredited training who are currently studying across all program areas in the organisation. The commitment to their studies is not only an asset to their own drive to succeed but to external mentors, teachers and in-house support. We have some real talent among our trainees and the goal for us is that they stay at MDAS and strive to become future leaders.

Ikeya Edge (Keya) is just one of our success stories among the many across the organisation.

Keya completed a Certificate III in Business in July 2020 and following a succession plan working towards a career in Human Resources, Keya has recently been appointed HR Officer for Corporate Services & Community Engagement departments where she will continue to learn all facets of generalist Human Resource Management and be actively involved in all HR initiatives.

I would like to congratulate and acknowledge Keya's achievements over the past 2 years and her support and commitment to the HR Team does not go unnoticed.

## Mallee Aboriginal Employment Program

The new MAEP grant application and all necessary support documents have been submitted and received by NIAA – Kosha followed up application status via email on 04/08

MAEP Joined the Youth Services Team for a school holiday 'Job Session' at the Youth Hub, Senior School Students were given the opportunity to design a deadly resume, talk about the recruitment and application process, what to expect at an interview, how to create and access your own important info – such as tax File Number, CRN, bank details, Fair work standards and more – as a result 3 of the kids who have attended have been back in contact with MAEP and 2 have submitted applications at Kmart for part time jobs.

MAEP are working with the Culture Team to host a Community Career Expo on the 29th of July at MDAS which had to be cancelled due to LOCKDOWN 6.0 – proposed reschedule date 9 Sep – pending restrictions

We have invited Jobseekers, Community and potential employers to come together and promote job opportunities in the Mallee

MAEP Facebook has shared the details of 4 ATSI Identified Traineeship roles since 01/08

MDAS is currently hosting 4 Tertiary Placement students 3x Mildura and 1 x Swan Hill as well as a VCAL student once a week in Mildura family Services.

MDAS have signed the MDAS / La Trobe placement agreement - a mutually beneficial partnership.

## FINANCIALS

*financials*

### Mallee District Aboriginal Services Limited

#### Consolidated Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income For the year ended 30 June 2021

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
<b>Revenue</b>			
Revenue from operating activities	6	29,138,582	24,805,458
Other income	7	3,213,861	2,998,177
		<b>32,352,443</b>	<b>27,803,635</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Employee benefits expense		(18,382,489)	(19,481,563)
Client costs and program development/delivery		(4,215,650)	(5,140,975)
Depreciation and amortisation		(1,168,688)	(1,202,219)
Interest expense		(14,580)	(23,770)
Motor vehicle expense		(319,274)	(466,157)
Occupancy expense		(1,161,485)	(1,608,108)
IT expenses		(649,374)	(602,691)
Travel expense		(161,909)	(503,013)
Grant returns		(71,567)	(5,968)
Repairs and equipment replacement		(416,587)	(680,203)
Other expenses		(1,026,198)	(916,712)
		<b>(27,587,801)</b>	<b>(30,631,379)</b>
<b>Profit/(Loss) for the year</b>			
		<b>4,764,642</b>	<b>(2,827,744)</b>
Other comprehensive income		2,060,377	80,290
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>		<b>6,825,019</b>	<b>(2,747,454)</b>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

## Mallee District Aboriginal Services Limited

## Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2021

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
<b>Assets</b>			
<b>Current assets</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	8	10,883,752	3,780,521
Trade and other receivables	9	88,302	1,357,057
Financial assets	10	1,005,501	794,195
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>11,977,555</b>	<b>5,931,773</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	11	28,285,579	26,820,077
Right-of-use assets	12	324,680	575,471
Intangible assets	13	1,215,820	1,099,700
<b>Total non-current assets</b>		<b>29,826,079</b>	<b>28,495,248</b>
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>41,803,634</b>	<b>34,427,021</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>			
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	14	2,219,735	1,264,568
Lease liabilities	15	188,883	444,406
Employee benefits	16	1,490,528	1,680,819
<b>Total current liabilities</b>		<b>3,899,146</b>	<b>3,389,793</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>			
Lease liabilities	15	138,011	134,925
Employee benefits	16	296,520	257,365
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>		<b>434,531</b>	<b>392,290</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>		<b>4,333,677</b>	<b>3,782,083</b>
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>37,469,957</b>	<b>30,644,938</b>
<b>Equity</b>			
Retained earnings		31,261,762	26,497,120
Reserves		6,208,195	4,147,818
<b>Total equity</b>		<b>37,469,957</b>	<b>30,644,938</b>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

## Mallee District Aboriginal Services Limited

## Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended 30 June 2021

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>			
Grants receipts		28,643,050	24,434,209
Other receipts		4,669,273	2,598,106
Payments to suppliers and employee		(25,461,952)	(29,901,282)
Interest received		14,171	102,590
Interest paid		(14,580)	(23,770)
<b>Net cash flows from/(used in) operating activities</b>	19 (b)	<b>7,849,962</b>	<b>(2,790,147)</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>			
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment		141,048	25,907
Proceeds from sale of investments		-	56,980
Proceeds from disposal of intangibles		143,832	-
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(509,589)	(2,473,682)
Purchase of investments		(16,139)	(48,763)
<b>Net cash flows used in investing activities</b>		<b>(240,848)</b>	<b>(2,439,558)</b>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>			
Repayment of lease liabilities		(505,883)	(510,466)
<b>Net cash flows used in financing activities</b>		<b>(505,883)</b>	<b>(510,466)</b>
<b>Net increase/(decrease) in cash held</b>		<b>7,103,231</b>	<b>(5,740,171)</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year		3,780,521	9,520,692
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year</b>	8	<b>10,883,752</b>	<b>3,780,521</b>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements



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## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF MALLEE DISTRICT ABORIGINAL SERVICES LIMITED

### Opinion

We have audited the consolidated financial report of Mallee District Aboriginal Services Limited, which comprises the consolidated statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021, the consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, consolidated statement of changes in equity and consolidated statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the directors declaration.

In our opinion, the accompanying consolidated financial report of Mallee District Aboriginal Services Limited, is in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Non-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the company's financial position as at 30 June 2021 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- (ii) Complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Reduced Disclosure Requirements (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the *Australian Charities and Non-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Company in accordance with the accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and, the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110: *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### Responsibilities of the Directors for the Financial Report

The directors of the Company are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the *Australian Charities and Non-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the directors are responsible for assessing the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the directors either intend to liquidate the Company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

### Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

Richmond Sinnott & Delahunty, trading as RSD Audit  
ABN 60 616 244 309  
Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation



As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the association's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the board of director's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the association's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the association to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the board of directors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

### Information Other than the Financial Report and Auditor's Report Thereon

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Company's annual report for the year ended 30 June 2021, but does not include the financial report and our auditor's report thereon.

Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

RSD Audit

Kathie Teasdale  
Partner  
Dated: 8 November 2021



We are proud and strong descendants of the oldest living culture in the world.



## Our partners and supporters

Thank you to our supporters and partners:

Department of Health

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Haven Homesafe

Mildura Base Public Hospital

Sunraysia Community Health Services

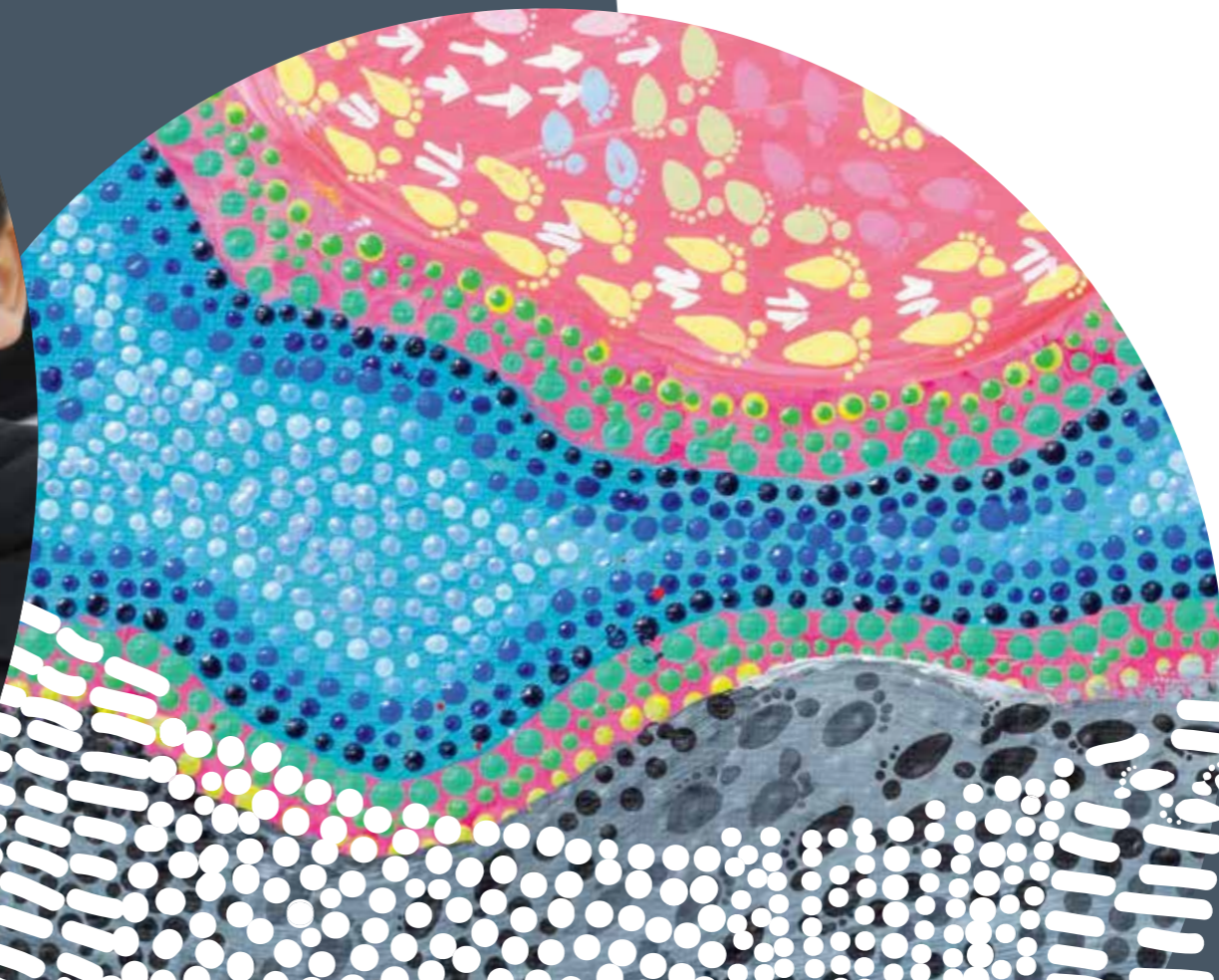
Mildura Rural City Council

First Bite

Coles

Koori Justice Unit

Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation



# Thank you Team!

And well done to our entire team (as of 30/06/2020) for another year of hard work and progress...

Indyca Adams  
Janet Allen  
Chantelle Appoo  
Andrew Arden  
Luke Arden  
Joseph Azzarelli  
Kimberley Bacon  
Ryan Bailey  
Taylah Baird  
Yvonne Barnes  
Tiarni Baskin  
Gemma Bates  
Peter Beggs  
Deborah Berg  
John Bergin  
Glenn Bertalli  
Aaron Best  
Winona Bhatia  
Hine Billing  
Jennifer Blake  
Mark Bland  
Justine Bowden  
Rianne Bowden  
Steven Bowden  
Samantha Brennan  
Terrance Brennan  
Bradley Britten  
Elvie-Marie Britten  
Allison Buchanan  
Shayne Carter  
Jacinta Chaplin  
Joanne Chaplin  
Latiesha Chaplin  
Damien Charles  
Kieaminda Charles  
Madina Charles  
Ethan Chilly  
Thelma Chilly  
Robert Chinnian  
Loretta Circosta  
Quentin Clark  
Ree Clark  
Tessa Clark  
Vicki Clark  
Sid Clarke  
Wayne Coe

Katherine Crouch  
Lorraine Cruse  
Chantelle Curnuck  
Rebecca Curphey  
Carolyn de Jong  
Salvatore Deluca  
Jody Dermody  
Robert Dini  
Monica Doherty  
Pearl Dunn  
Kehan Dyce  
Keya Edge  
Leilani Eggmolesse  
Leroy Eggmolesse  
Rinwalla Eggmolesse  
Roslyn Evans  
George Fagioli  
Belinda Fanshaw  
Rebecca Ferry  
Angelika Fevaleaki  
Belinda Fidura  
Bec Fitzgerald  
Genevieve Fitzgerald  
Brody Flowers  
Lynette Francis  
Matthew Fulton  
Krystal Gadsby  
Michelle Gadsby  
Bethany Garoni  
Noel Giddings  
Marissa Gilbert  
Sam Gledhill  
John Goddard  
Amanda Goodall  
Julia Goodes  
Norma Gowers  
Tiffany Griffin  
Lowanna Gwilliam  
Kelly Haley  
Brady Hall  
Tamara Hamence  
Steven Hancock  
Maresha Handy  
Margie Handy  
Tamara Handy  
Rohan Hansen

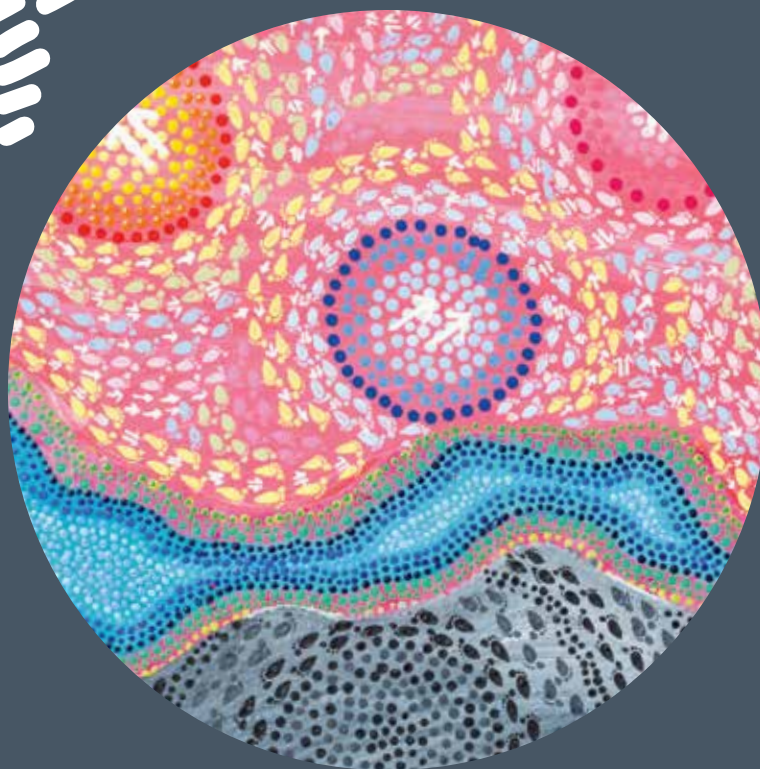
Stephanie Harradine  
Vera Harris  
Jay Havea  
Rachel Hay  
Briana Hayden  
Skye Hayden  
Margaret Hayes-Hampton  
Calvin Henry  
Noah Hills  
Dana Hollis  
Amy Hunt  
Nathan Hura  
Lee Hynes  
Anna Irons  
Atiq Islam  
Shania Jenkins  
Tamika Jenkins  
Dewella Johnson  
Georgina Johnson  
Joanna Johnson  
Kearla Johnson  
Sharon Johnson  
Ami Johnston  
Derik Jones  
Diane Jones  
Kienan Jones  
Lisa Kalemkeridis  
Sharni Karpany  
Erin Kelly  
Kaneesha Kelly  
Karen Kelly  
Nathan Kelly  
Pettina Kelly  
Zoe Kelly  
Jimmy Kennedy  
Crystal Kirby  
Delureen Kirby  
Elsa Kirby  
Ian Kirby  
Toby Kirby  
Lalueni Kolofale  
Jan Koopmans  
Terrence Kuchel  
Melanie Lane  
Jennifer Laurie  
Reeanne Laurie

Russell Lawson  
Kira Leksas  
Garry Leo  
Sue Leonard  
Malinda Loats  
Kelsey Looney  
Rachel Lovski  
Lucyna MacDermott  
Eric Magoga  
Marie Mah  
Jerome Makalio Jackson  
Tamara Marshall  
Jayde Masasso  
Lola Masasso  
Amanda McCole  
Pamela McCormack  
Toni McCormack  
Leanne McDermott  
Rachael McGann  
Rhiannon McInnes  
Rhonda McInnes  
Allison McTaggart  
Alex McWilliam  
Lilly Mende  
Kara Merritt  
Caitlin Mitchell  
Harmony Mitchell  
Joanne Mitchell  
Kylie Mitchell  
Malika Mitchell  
Jacinta Molloy  
Nalin Moore  
Julia Morgan  
Travis Morvell  
Nakita Muggeridge  
Teonie Muggeridge  
Damien Murray  
Jenene Murray  
Sarah Nalder  
Maralea Nau  
Laetitia Nelson  
Tahlia Newman  
Glenda Nicholls  
John Nicholls  
Kristie Nixon  
Edgar Nnajide

Carly Noll  
Tariq Odegaard  
Phoebe Parker  
Anand Patel  
Manu Paul  
Ada Peterson  
James Peterson  
Cathy Pickup  
Melissa Pippin  
Frank Piscioneri  
Jackson Pollard  
Jai Portelli  
Hayden Price  
Neive Price  
Mou Rashid Bose  
Jane Reid  
Paul Roberts  
Kerry Russell  
Darlene Sanders  
Janie Schliefert  
Sarah Schurr  
Doreen Scott  
Karen Scott  
Kosha Shanahan  
Leah Shanaughan  
Ruchika Sharma  
Margaret Sharman  
Simone Shiner  
Tegan Shiner  
Chloe Sloan  
Kylia Sloan  
Lisa Sloan  
Rocky Sloan  
Paul Sloane  
Chereeta Smith  
Derek Smith  
Kane Smith  
Rexy Smith  
Robyn Smythe  
Gloria Spencer  
Jude Stafford  
Paula Stevens  
Tanisha Stevens  
Andrea Stewart  
Kate Stockman  
Aroha Sykes

Kelly Taliloa  
Ah Tay  
Katina Taylor  
Larrissa Taylor  
Leanne Taylor  
Lois Taylor  
Russell Taylor  
Zah Thebe  
Darlene Thomas  
Kelly Thomas  
Remya Thomas  
Terry Thomas  
Bianca Thorpe  
Lori Tickell  
Isaiah-Levi Togo  
Crystal Toogood  
Jonathan Toscano  
Sharlee Towle  
Alesha Tucker  
Jacki Turfrey  
Mincy Varghese  
Jessica Versteeg  
Milka Waitthaka  
Aimee Waters  
Susan Watkins  
Patricia Watson  
Susan Watson  
Harold Webster  
Toni Webster  
Ian Wescombe  
Craig Westhead  
Cody Whelan  
Amanda Whitton  
Zachary Wilksch  
Ashton Williams  
Rebecca Wilson  
Cazna Winters  
Kara Winters  
Angela Yates  
Nathan Yates





## OUR SERVICES

### FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

#### CARE AND CULTURE

Aboriginal Children Specialist Advice Support Service (ACSASS)

Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making (AFLDM)

Cultural Support Planning (CSP)

Kinship Care

Home Based Care (Foster Care)

Therapeutic Residential Care

Therapeutic Residential Case Management

First Supports

Kinship Reunification

#### FAMILY AND YOUTH

Family Services

Integrated family services

Stronger Families

Family Preservation

#### YOUTH SERVICES

Early School Leavers

Youth Support Program

Youth Justice

Koori Connect

Koori Night Patrol

Youth Justice Robinvale

#### HOUSING SUPPORT

Crisis Support

Aboriginal tenants at risk of eviction

Transitional support

AOD Robinvale

#### FAMILY VIOLENCE

Meminar Ngangg Gimba – Refuge

Meminar Ngangg Gimba – Outreach (Mildura/ Robinvale/ Swan Hill/ Kerang)

Meminar Ngangg Gimba – Cultural Healing Group Work

Men’s Family Violence Case Management

Men’s Family Violence Cultural Behaviour Change Group Work

Men’s Family Violence Cultural Healing Group Work

Adolescent Family Violence Case Management

Adolescent Family Violence Culture Healing Group Work

#### SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Koori Women’s Diversion (Mildura)

Mental Health Demonstration Project (Mildura)

Alcohol and other Drugs Treatment Service

(Mildura Swan Hill/ Kerang Robinvale)

Bringing them Home

(Mildura Swan Hill/ Kerang Robinvale)

Aboriginal Communities Gambling Awareness program (Mildura)

Family Wellbeing program

(Mildura Swan Hill/ Kerang Robinvale)

Local Justice Worker program

(Mildura) (Swan Hill Under Family services)

Dual Diagnosis Model of Care

(Mildura Youth 12 - 25) (Swan Hill Adult 16 - 65)

SEWB Mental Health Access (Swan Hill)

Clinical & Therapeutic Mental Health (Swan Hill)

Mental Health Community Support Service (Swan Hill & Mildura)

#### HEALTH

GP

Nurse

Aboriginal Health Workers

Outreach Workers

Chronic Disease Management

Maternal Child Health

Nurse Health Checks

Transport

#### SPECIALIST SERVICES

Drug And Alcohol Worker

Psychologist

Maternal And Child Health Nurse

Podiatrist

Cardiologist

Urologist

Paediatrician

Optometrist

Cardiologist

Audiologist

Physiotherapist

Personal Trainers

Road to deadly Health

Deadly choices (school programs)

MDAS Health program

Nutrition & Public Health Advisor

#### AGED AND DISABILITY

Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP)

Home and Community Care Program for Younger People (HACC-PYP)

#### CLINICS

Well Women’s Clinic

Immunisation Clinic

#### TACKLING SMOKING AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES SERVICES

Quit Smoking Support

#### EARLY YEARS

Maternity Services (Swan Hill & Mildura)

Maternal and Child Health (Swan Hill & Mildura)

In Home Support program (Swan Hill & Mildura)

Cradle to Kinder (Swan Hill & Mildura)

Koori Supported playgroups (Swan Hill & Mildura)

Koori Preschool Assistant program (Mildura)

HIPPY (Home Interactive Program for Parents and Youngsters)(Mildura)

Connected Beginnings (Mildura)



**MDAS**  
MALLEE DISTRICT  
ABORIGINAL SERVICES

[www.mdas.org.au](http://www.mdas.org.au)