



SNAICC
National Voice for our Children



waterways

Waterways Project Report

Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Training Initiative

Acknowledgements

We collectively acknowledge the Elders, past and present, who remain with us in the Dreaming, and those who walk alongside us each day.

We also honour the continued resistance and strength of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, whose knowledge systems and ways of being have guided this work from across the country.

The SNAICC team would like to thank the many people who shared their knowledge, experiences and stories throughout this project. Your generosity has been instrumental in deepening our understanding of cultural responsiveness and trauma informed practice, and in shaping approaches that centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.

We also acknowledge the wisdom and leadership of our governance members and stakeholders, whose guidance has been critical.

We respectfully acknowledge Belle Budden and Tovani Cox for the Project Waterways artwork and designs, which reflect the spirit, story and purpose of this work.

The Project team would like to acknowledge Country and the waterways that connect us as contributors to Project Waterways. Project Waterways flowed right across Country; our work was held and shaped by the enduring strength and safety provided by Country.

The Waterways Project Report was written on Bundjalung Country, and we pay deep respect and show gratitude to Country for holding us through this work.

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Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------|----|
| Executive Summary | 07 |
| Foreword | 11 |
| Policy Context | 13 |
| Introduction | 14 |
| Project Scope | 16 |
| Framing Cultural Responsiveness | 18 |
| Framing the Trauma Work | 20 |
| Project Waterways Project Methodology | 26 |
| Objectives of Learning and Development Strategy | 28 |
| The Co-Design Process | 30 |
| Process of Waterways Partnership Development | 32 |
| Intersection with the National Agreement | 34 |
| Overview of Learning Curriculum | 38 |
| Data and Findings: National and Jurisdictional | 42 |
| SNAICC Data | 46 |
| National Partnership Data | 54 |
| Partnership Jurisdictional Data | 60 |
| Independent Evaluation | 73 |
| Case Studies | 79 |
| Waterway Reflections | 89 |
| Recommendations | 90 |
| References | 92 |



Acknowledgement to Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.

We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders both past and present. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the struggles, resistance and survival of First Nations people worldwide.

We acknowledge the lived experiences of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities impacted by violence and enduring trauma of the processes, policies and practices of colonisation. Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander peoples also bring immense strength and resilience through their connection to culture, community, ancestry and land. We acknowledge the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as leaders in working to combat the disproportionate levels of violence directed against them, their children and their communities.

We also wish to acknowledge the work of countless individuals, groups and organisations who work tirelessly to end violence and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people impacted by colonisation.





'Country holds us, Country also holds our trauma. Our healing as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be in the context of healing Country, in community and through culture.'





About the Artworks

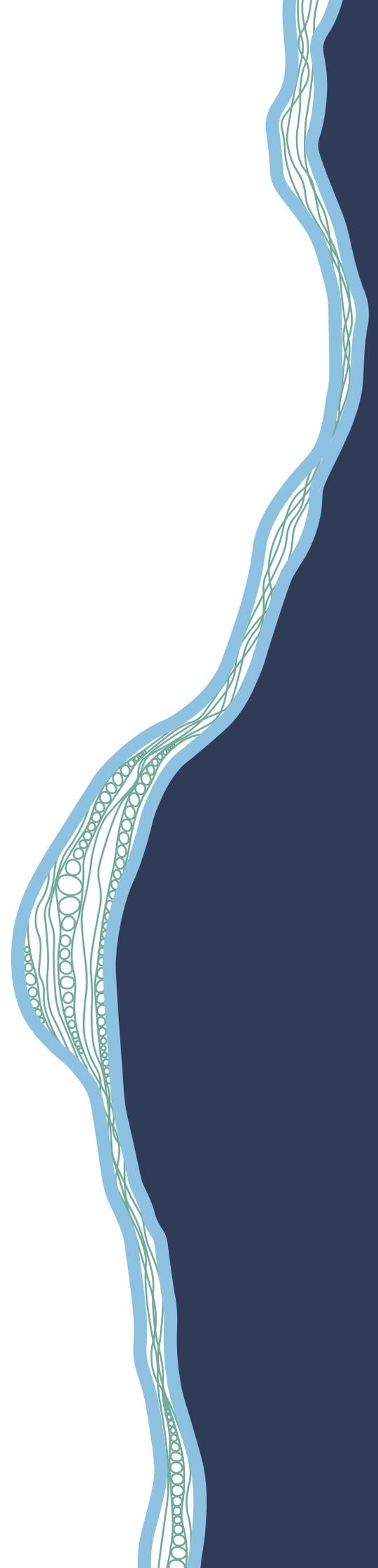
Belle Budden is a Wakka Wakka woman who grew up on Turrbal, Jaggera and Bundjalung Country. Belle is a passionate cultural creative who works across many modalities to celebrate her cultural identity and inspire others to do the same, including dance, botanical pigments, art and weaving.

Throughout the Waterways co-design process, Belle created artworks that reflected the workshop content. There were 14 artwork pieces developed to reflect the content of the in-person co-design workshops. The artwork in the course slides and workbook is based on Belle's response piece "Seen and Unseen".

The artist's understanding is that the Our Waterways partnerships are working collaboratively to design trauma informed training for mainstream services working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors of childhood trauma. Further, the artworks developed during the discussions at the in-person workshops are for alignment with the modules developed for the training.

Water moves, it moves through the sky, under the ground, through soaks, it travels up from the deep places to the surface of Country, water moves, it moves through the creeks and rivers, to the sea. It moves through every leaf on every tree; it moves through us. Water heals; it nourishes and soothes Country as it does us. Water has memory and carries with it the stories of the generations.'

Words from Cultural Artist, Belle Budden



About SNAICC – National Voice for our Children

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (SNAICC) is the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak body organisation representing the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We work for the fulfilment of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, to ensure their safety, development and wellbeing.

SNAICC has a dynamic membership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-based child care agencies, Multi-functional Aboriginal Children's Services, crèches, long day care child care services, pre-schools, early childhood education services, early childhood support organisations, family support services, foster care agencies, family reunification services, family group homes, services for young people at risk, community groups and voluntary associations, government agencies and individual supporters.

Since 1981, SNAICC has been a passionate national voice representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. SNAICC champions the principles of community control and self-determination as the means for sustained improvements for children and families, which have been at the heart of SNAICC's work, whether in child protection and wellbeing or early childhood education and development. Our work comprises policy, advocacy and sector development, and we also work with non-Indigenous services alongside federal, state and territory governments to improve how agencies design and deliver supports and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The SNAICC Programs Unit aims to build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) and mainstream non-government organisations to ensure children have access to high-quality, sustainable, culturally safe and secure services in the early childhood education and care sector. The primary focus is to support the growth and development of the community-controlled early childhood education and care sector across the country. The Programs Unit works to establish partnerships, provide guidance and facilitate collaboration between community-controlled organisations and mainstream non-government organisations, promoting cultural safety and inclusivity in service provision. The Programs Unit strives to enhance the accessibility, quality and sustainability of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, ensuring their holistic development and wellbeing.





Executive Summary

Through our work at SNAICC, we continue to hear the call for the need for culturally responsive trauma informed training that provides tools and frameworks to address the needs of the sector. There is much research indicating the ongoing intergenerational, complex and compounded trauma of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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Project Waterways provided culturally responsive trauma informed training anchored in truth telling around ongoing impacts of colonisation, power and privilege and important skill development around addressing this complex intergenerational trauma. Project Waterways also celebrates the intergenerational knowledge and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including Kin and Kinship Systems, collective child raising practices and the complex ceremonial practices that were sophisticated emotional regulation systems.

The impact of the outcomes of Project Waterways is significant in our work as a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families peak body in progressing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement). The primary objective of the Project Waterways contract was to advance Target 12, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not over-represented in the child protection system; specifically to reduce the rate of over-representation in out-of-home care by 45 per cent by 2031 (Closing the Gap 2025).

Through the careful co-design and co-production of Project Waterways, the work has significantly contributed to the advancement of priority reforms. At the centre of the National Agreement are four Priority Reforms that focus on changing the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Priority Reforms will:

- strengthen and establish formal partnerships and shared decision-making,
- build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector,
- transform government and mainstream organisations so they work better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,
- improve and share access to data and information to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to make informed decisions (National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Australian Government 2025).

Project Waterways strengthened the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector by enabling national collaboration through a partnership model that respected the cultural and intellectual property of the partners. This collaborative approach demonstrates that ACCOs have the capacity and capability to deliver large-scale contracts typically reserved for non-government organisations (NGOs). The partnership model established through Project Waterways also creates a strong foundation for continued growth, with the potential to expand and include ACCOs across additional jurisdictions.

Recommendations

From the training, our project team identified the following recommendations in alignment with the National Agreement Priority Reform areas 2, 3 and 4:

- Priority Reform 2: Building the Community-Controlled Sector
- Priority Reform 3: Transforming Government Organisations
- Priority Reform 4: Shared Access to Data and Information

Priority Reform 2:

Building the Community-Controlled Sector

ACCOs demonstrated strong capability when resourced appropriately. It is recommended that the sector and government work to:

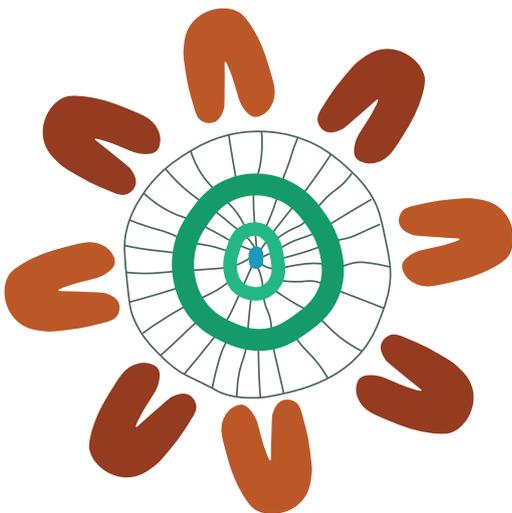
- strengthen and resource ACCOs to lead the design, production and delivery of projects to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families;
 - this includes further resources for Waterways training and train-the-trainer opportunities to embed skills in regional and remote communities,
- support any other culturally responsive trauma informed initiatives led and designed by ACCOs that will embed skills in regional and remote communities to increase community safety and wellbeing,
- resource ACCOs to collaborate, coordinate and consult with communities that enable service models to respond to needs specific to place,
- respond to the complexities in addressing intergenerational trauma and the need for healing through ensuring projects are adequately resourced, including the time for ACCO-led design and delivery,
- reform and review ways of working in responding to the complexities of intergenerational trauma experienced in communities, and
- ensure that projects and initiatives are adequately resourced over time, which acknowledges ACCO-led design, delivery and decision making.

Priority Reform 3:

Transforming Government Organisations

Project Waterways has made a significant impact in progressing the National Agreement. Working in partnership with government, the project has shown that when high-quality and meaningful approaches to cultural safety are embedded into practice, they support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural identity; a critical protective factor for children, families and communities. It is recommended that the sector work to:

- strengthen government partnership and accountability,
- facilitate direct introductions between project teams and decision-makers through government agencies, and
- encourage participation in Aboriginal-led cultural and trauma informed training for relevant program staff through reporting processes tied to program or service funding.



Priority Reform 4:

Shared Access to Data and Information

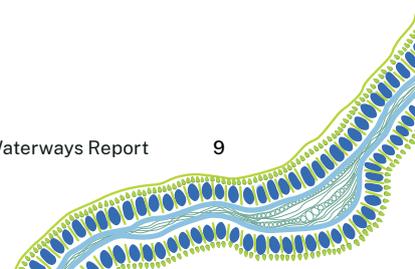
Data systems and processes posed challenges to the project partnership throughout. The data collection process undermined principles of Priority Reform 4 and data sovereignty. It is recommended that the sector work to:

- embed shared decision-making and data sovereignty in project agreements,
- co-design data methodologies and reporting processes with ACCOs to ensure they reflect cultural, contextual and project realities,
- increase flexibility within DSS's Data Exchange (DEX) data collection systems to accommodate trauma informed and culturally responsive reporting practices,
- establish shared decision-making structures around data use, analysis and dissemination to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and priorities are central, and
- continue the collaborative model between government agencies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks, such as SNAICC, as a framework for improving future data partnerships.

Project Waterways shows clear progress in building practitioner capability and confidence in culturally responsive, trauma informed practice. However, systemic barriers continue to limit broader organisational transformation. To achieve the intent of the National Agreement, particularly Priority Reforms 2, 3 and 4, future efforts should prioritise:

- resourcing ACCO leadership,
- embedding government accountability, and
- advancing shared decision-making, ensuring it includes data.

These recommendations will continue sustained progress towards Closing the Gap Target 12; keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children safe, connected and thriving within their families, communities and culture.





Foreword

Understanding social and emotional wellbeing in a cultural context is key to the impact of healing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have had complex practices and ceremonies for social and emotional wellbeing for thousands of years. Our cultures are circular rather than individualised and are thus interconnected and interdependent with the social and emotional wellbeing of our communities.

Central to this project is prioritisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews and ways of knowing, doing and being. Through our connecting to each other and the lands and stories that we all bring to the collective, together with the voice and spirit of Country, we were led to water. The connection to water for us all informed the re-naming of this project.

Processes of colonisation are responsible for enduring experiences of intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The impacts of this trauma are clearly evidenced in the appalling statistics that drive the commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement). Trauma is present across all the target domains of the National Agreement, as both a driver of the complex issues and an outcome of the issues. We continue to witness a cycle of intergenerational trauma, which is currently impacting all our people, including our children, who have had no choice in their circumstances.

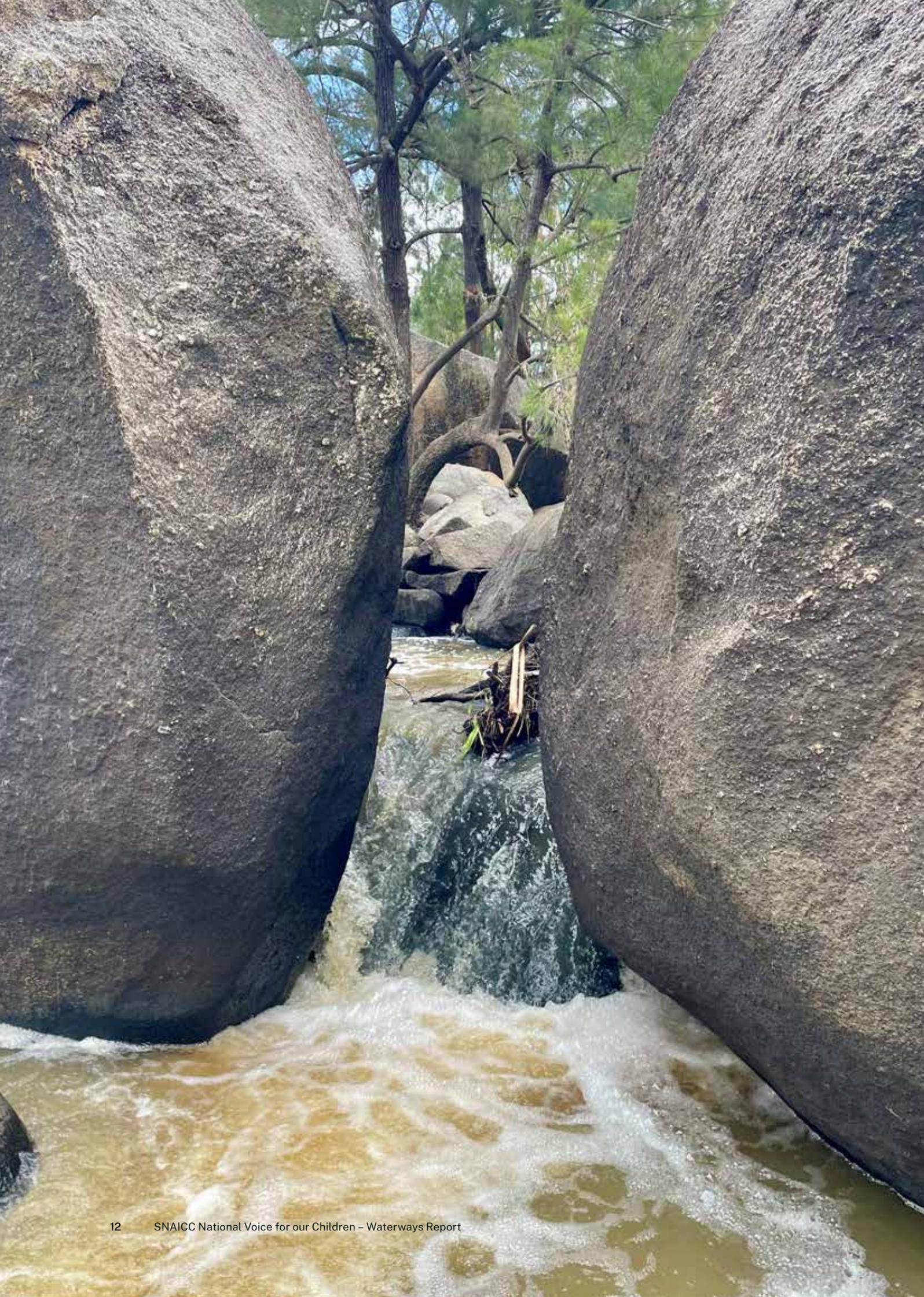
The same colonial systems that have caused the trauma are now producing and directing systemic approaches to healing and social and emotional wellbeing. Attempting to apply mainstream concepts of healing and wellness to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities continues to fail to address the trauma. This is clear by the continuing shortfalls in realising the Targets under the National Agreement and demonstrates the need for a changed approach.

The approach to our work in Project Waterways was to focus on decolonising healing and social and emotional wellbeing. Project Waterways is centred on critical truth telling around the links between colonisation and intergenerational trauma. It sought to build cultural responsiveness across workforces to enable cultural humility required to put Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing at the centre of therapeutic responses for our people.

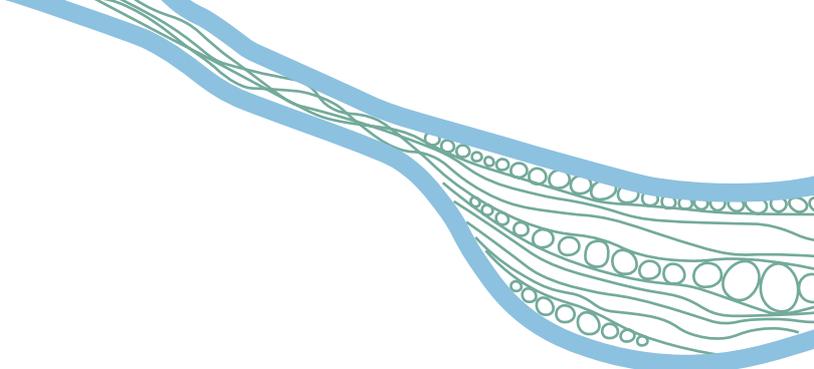
Project Waterways is a collaborative contribution towards creating an evidence base on the collective power of ACCOs working together to deliver large-scale programs addressing the Priority Reforms under the National Agreement. Project Waterways contributed to four Priority Reform Areas of the National Agreement, though our work focused on Priority Reform Two – Building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector.

This report presents how focusing on a formal ACCO partnership changed the way we worked with government to a more self-determined model, based on co-design, co-production and co-delivery. Project Waterways focused on decolonising our data collection, while meeting the data requirements of government, to support telling strength-based stories that provided solutions for change towards healing.





Policy Context



International

The rights of all Indigenous peoples to their cultures and lands were affirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007. This landmark agreement, developed with the involvement of Indigenous peoples, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, establishes global standards for protecting the cultural and land rights of Indigenous peoples worldwide.

A central concept of UNDRIP is a global commitment to self-determination. This principle recognises freedom and equality, and ensures that our people can participate in decisions that affect us and shape our future in ways that reflect our values, cultures and aspirations.

Self-determination is a fundamental right that is intrinsically linked to all other Indigenous rights, and Australia cannot meet the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples without enabling the right to self-determination (Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.).

Both UNDRIP and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirm culture as a fundamental right, including specific protections for Indigenous children. The CRC recognises children's right to an education that honours their culture. As a signatory, Australia has committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can access and attend schools that respect their cultural identities, languages and values (OHCHR, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29).

National

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap is an agreement between the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations and all Australian governments. It provides the framework for governments to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and sets a roadmap for systems transformation.

The National Agreement contains 19 interconnected targets addressing social and economic inequalities across health, education, employment, housing and justice.

Self-determination is central to the National Agreement and underpins the four Priority Reforms:

- formal partnerships and shared decision-making,
- building the community-controlled sector,
- transforming government organisations,
- shared access to data and information at a regional level.

These targets and Priority Reforms recognise that decision-making must be returned to communities, and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the experts in delivering holistic, wraparound services for children and families and in leading the systemic change required.

Project Waterways was funded to address Target 12, which aims to reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent by 2031, from a 2019 baseline of 54.2 per 1,000 children.

Introduction

Project Overview

SNAICC was funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to lead a national initiative to strengthen cultural responsiveness and trauma informed practice across the policies, practices and service models of the child and family sector.

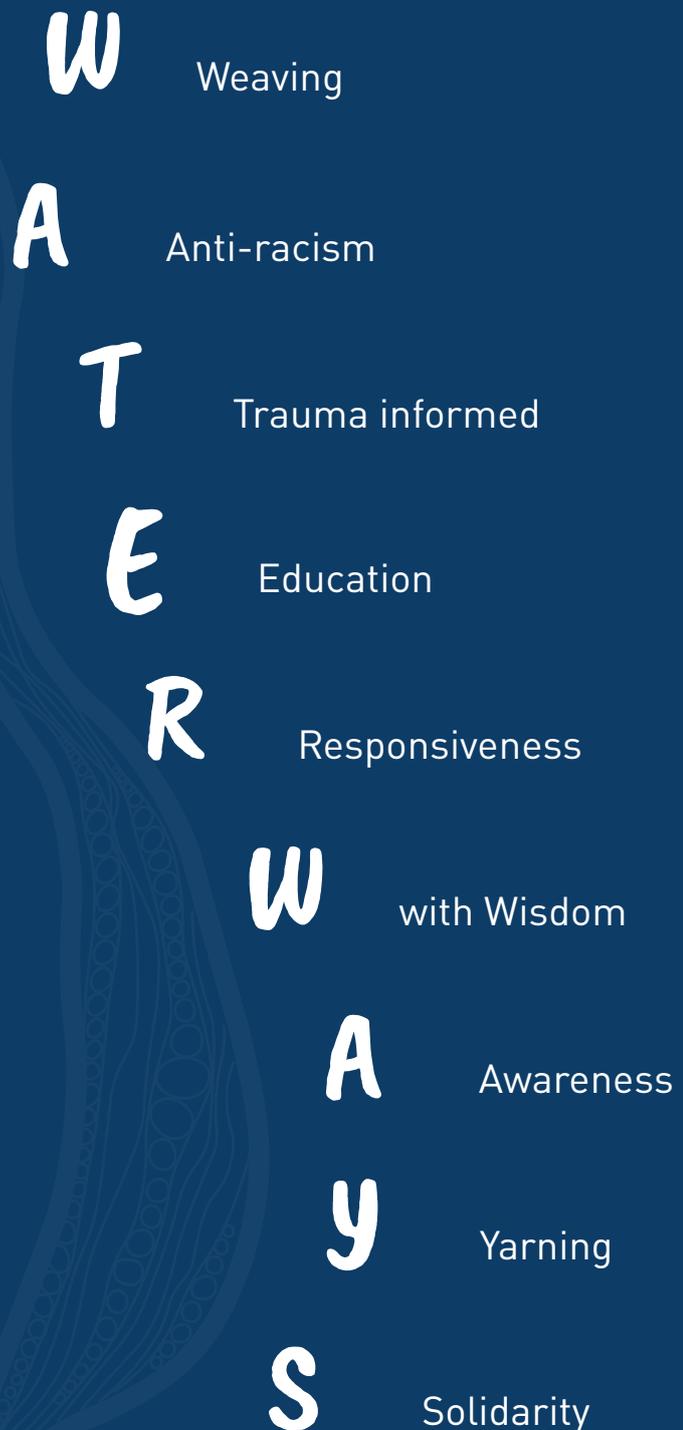
The Cultural Responsiveness and Trauma Informed Practice Training Initiative, renamed as Waterways or Project Waterways, was funded through the Commonwealth Closing the Gap implementation activity.

The program was announced as part of the Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan and aligns with Action 3 (workforce capacity and capability) of the Safe and Supported First Action Plan, and contributes to efforts to achieve Target 12 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Background

One of the most consistently identified barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families accessing family support is the fear of an interventionist system that drives towards the removal of children without offering sufficient culturally and trauma informed supports to families, even when families are actively reaching out for help.

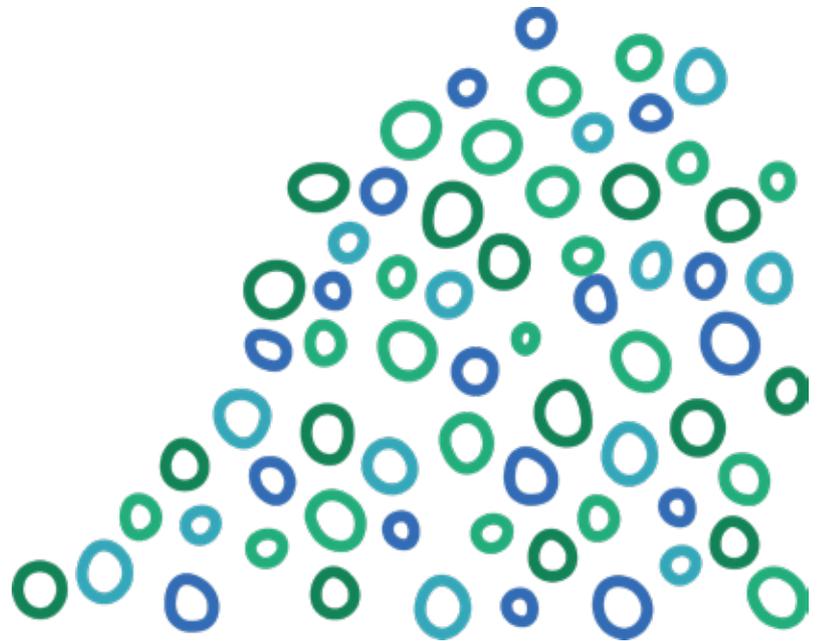
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews and decolonising practice are at the centre of both the design and implementation of the training. The partnership renamed the current title to Project WATERWAYS. Waterways represent all the living water that connects all of us across the continent. It is also an acronym that holds the intent of this work.





**Waterways encompass
the soaks, seas, rivers, rockpools,
and hidden underground streams;
they represent the unity and
interconnectedness of communities
across Country.**

Project Partner, 2024



Project Scope

The SNAICC team are committed to a genuine partnership model with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks and ACCOs with training delivery experience.

The project formed strong, meaningful partnerships with the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP), AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec), Kornar Winmil Yunti Aboriginal Corporation (KWY) and the Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA), and was facilitated by the Yamurrah Collective (Yamurrah), which co-developed, co-produced and co-delivered outcomes for Project Waterways.

This included:

- collaboratively co-designing the initiative and designing, developing and delivering the training nationally in solidarity,
- development of a self-assessment survey to enable child and family sector service providers to assess their organisation's policies, practices, service models and staff capabilities,
- development of a training and development strategy to address needs across service providers that aims to improve practice capabilities through staff training, policy, and practice changes,
- rolling out learning and development workshops across all states and territories in Australia, led by KWY, AbSec, VACCA, QATSICPP and SNAICC, to 500 service providers in the child and family sector, and
- building an evidence base to improve the cultural awareness and trauma responsive capabilities of child and family sector service providers by:

- identifying enablers and barriers to change,
- providing options and recommendations for ongoing work to support organisational change and workforce development, and
- building a strong evidence base for impact and change through an evaluation framework.

Training delivery across Australia was a key component of the project's scope, and it was guided by a specific learning and development strategy. The training and development strategy aimed to address the identified needs in the child and family sector by improving cultural responsiveness and trauma informed capabilities through staff training, policy and practice changes. A national survey assessed the needs of participating government-funded child and family sector service providers. The strategy is based on this evidence as well as the knowledge, wisdom and experience of project partners and independent consultants Yamurrah.

Target Audience

The training targeted 500 service providers funded under DSS child and family sector programs. To drive meaningful, long-term change, the initiative adopted a whole-of-organisation approach that engaged staff at every level. Sessions were delivered face-to-face and online, and were designed for both practitioners and managers. This focus was consistent with, but distinct from, the initiative's additional focus on larger national organisations, including their executive leaders and board members, to facilitate structural organisational shifts.

The Project Partnership

SNAICC, together with project partners QATSICPP, AbSec, KWY and VACCA, and independent consultants Yamurrah, developed the training strategy during a two-day workshop in Narm/Melbourne on 4–5 April. Partners examined survey results and shared their knowledge, experiences and insights from their organisations to reach consensus on the training needs that would be addressed through this initiative. The intention was to establish relationships, dream up a vision for the project, develop a Partnership Care Framework to guide our ways of working together and commit to collective action and solidarity in response to this project.

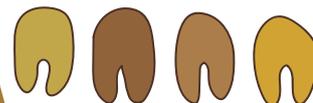
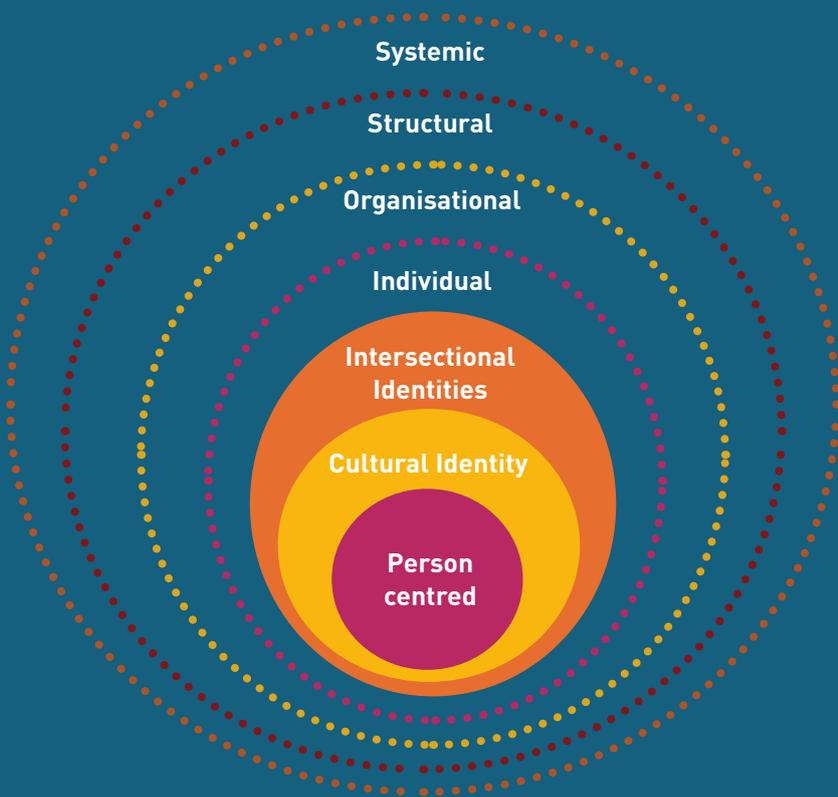


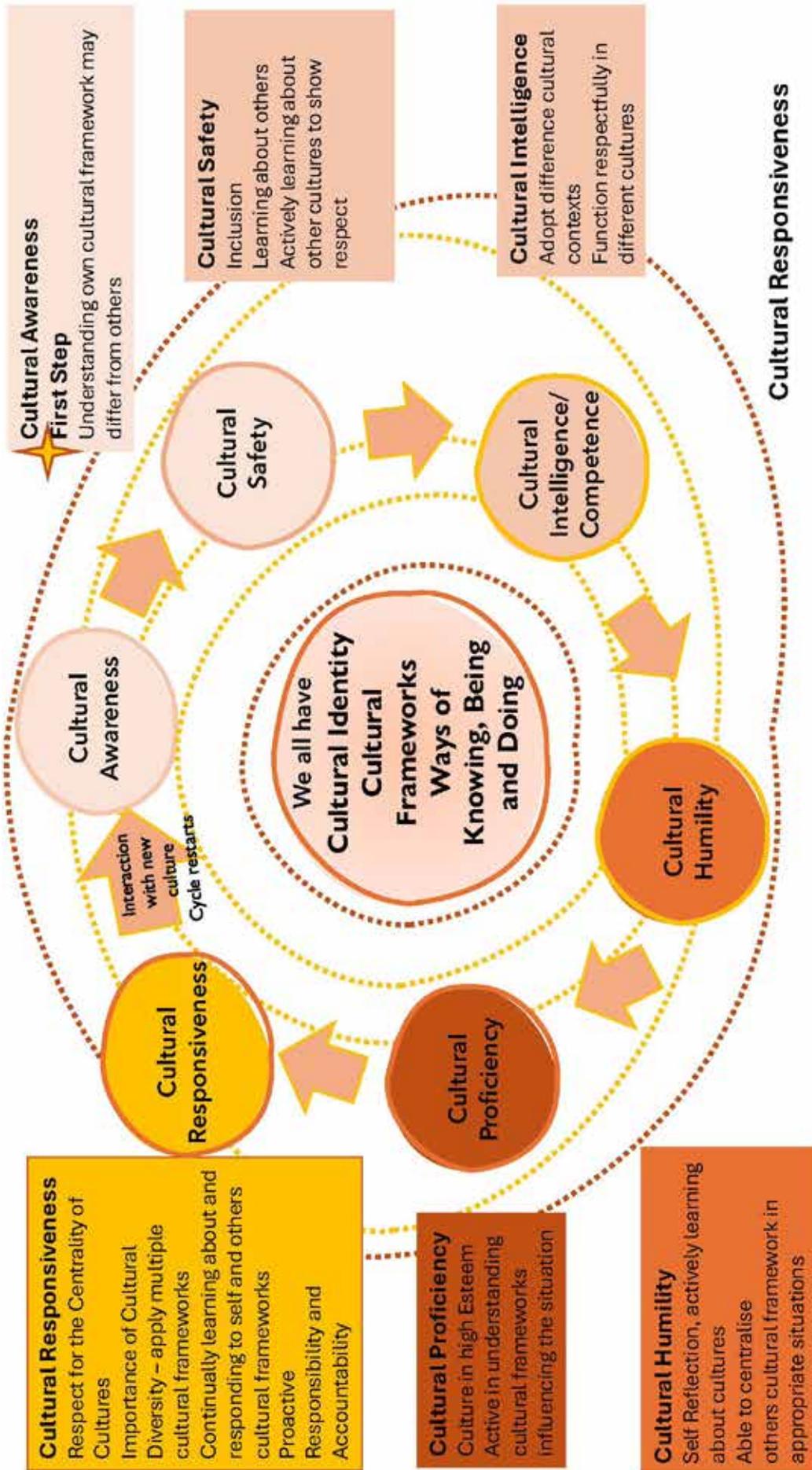
Framing Cultural Responsiveness

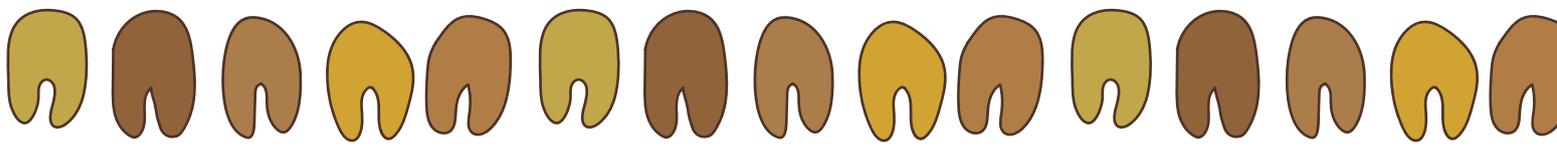
Cultural responsiveness describes the capacity to respond to the social and emotional needs of individuals. It refers to a person-centred approach that considers cultural, intersectional identities, including gender, ability, linguistic, spiritual and socioeconomic background.

It is important to recognise that an individual's experience of cultural responsiveness is impacted at systemic and structural levels.

Responsiveness requires knowledge and capacity at different levels of engagement: systemic, structural, organisational and individual.







Framing the Trauma Work

Defining Trauma

Trauma is an emotional response caused by severe distressing events, such as bodily injury, sexual violence or other threats to the life of the subject or their loved ones. Trauma occurs following exposure to an experience(s) that overwhelm a person's ability to cope.

Traumatic events do not need to be directly experienced to affect people. Indirect exposure, such as watching television news, may be extremely distressing and can produce an involuntary and possibly overwhelming physiological stress response. Trauma can also be passed down through generations or experienced within a community.

Trauma Informed Practice

Trauma informed practice is about how we relate to and care for one another. It involves promoting understanding, empathy and support in ways that reduce the likelihood of interactions becoming stressful or triggering. Being 'trauma informed' does not require you to undertake extensive study or radical steps toward skill-building; it begins with awareness and everyday actions that promote safety and trust. This training has a strong reflective component to look at ourselves, to witness the lens we have and to understand our role in the system and what we can influence and change.

Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Practice

Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Practice requires an understanding of how trauma is impacted by intersectionality and the unconscious bias experienced by peoples from different cultural backgrounds. Project Waterways examined the systemic drivers of

intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, including the ongoing processes of colonisation.

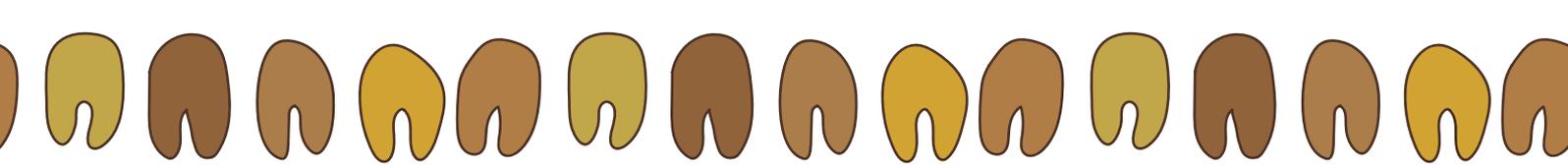
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities hold deep, time-honoured ceremonies and practices for healing, developed and sustained over thousands of years. That work continues through the people who have contributed to our collective organisations for decades. Many of our people have shaped the development of culturally responsive, trauma informed practice; we honour their individual and collective contributions.

'Trauma is familiar to our mob across this country, particularly collective trauma, community trauma. And the most powerful thing that can happen when there's been a collective traumatic event is to bring community together to provide a sense of connection and belonging'. (Atkinson, 2022)

Healing legacy

Project Waterways was influenced by the body of work by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, researchers and community members. Through the development of Project Waterways training materials, the project partners combined our knowledge and experience of working in Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Practice modalities.

Some of the contemporary academic works that have influenced Project Waterways are included below. This is not a comprehensive literature review; it is an acknowledgement of the academic work that contributed to the evidence base of Project Waterways.



We Al-li

Project Waterways was built on the strong foundations of We Al-li's Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing Approach (CITIHA). We Al-li is a family-run Aboriginal organisation that provides culturally informed training to communities, professionals and organisations in trauma integrated practice.

Emeritus Professor Aunty Judy Atkinson AM and the We Al-li project team have been delivering training and facilitation in culturally informed, trauma integrated practice for over 30 years. Their CITIHA framework guides professional and community work by promoting cultural safety, respect and opportunities to heal from intergenerational and personal trauma, embedded within holistic ways of seeing, being and doing (We Al-li and Griffith University, 2023, p. 7).

While traditional healing practices, including connection to Country, cultural ceremony, lore, touch, medicines, food, arts, singing and music, continue to be practiced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families (We Al-li and Griffith University, 2023, p. 8), Aboriginal-led opportunities for such healing remain limited across most health and community services and professions in Australia (We Al-li and Griffith University, 2023, pp. 9–12).

We Al-li – Research and Data

We Al-li's Pathways to Healing project team carried out a creative Indigenist narrative research approach, centred around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and relational ways of working. Similar to Project Waterways' national needs-based survey, We Al-li's research found there is a lack of culturally safe and trauma integrated responses for healing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. It also established that both evaluative research and funding and resourcing for that research that focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing programs are limited (We Al-li and Griffith University, 2023, p. 14).

This work influenced Project Waterways through the reiteration and reinforcement that culturally responsive trauma informed research, funding and training for the sector are limited. We Al-li research has highlighted that such programs benefit all of society in terms of personal practice and systems change to lead to positive outcomes for all families and communities.

Perspectives

In *Trauma informed services and trauma-specific care for Indigenous Australian Children* (Atkinson, 2013), Judy Atkinson details how approaching childhood trauma with a neurodevelopmental lens offers innovative pathways for practitioner assessment and intervention. Atkinson's perspectives on how trauma can be transferred from the first generation of survivors, who have directly experienced or witnessed it, to subsequent generations of their descendants (Atkinson et al., 2010, p. 5) informed Project Waterways training content by emphasising the intergenerational impacts of trauma and the importance of culturally responsive, trauma informed approaches that support healing across families and communities.

Challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities today, such as mental health struggles and substance misuse, stem from the colonial structures upholding oppressive social and political ideologies that dismiss the enduring legacy of unresolved trauma and therefore negate healing. Atkinson (2013) asserts that although the legacy of unresolved trauma contributes to many societal challenges, the strength of culture must be acknowledged. Strong kinship systems and connections to Country, community and traditions have enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to transcend painful histories (Atkinson, 2013).

Atkinson's book *Trauma Trails – Recreating Song Lines: The transgenerational effects of trauma in Indigenous Australia* provides context to the life stories of people who have been moved from their country in a process that has created trauma trails, and the changes that can occur in the lives of people as they make connections with each other and share their stories of healing.



We Al-li – Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing Approach (CITIHA)

CITIHA is a strengths-based service delivery model rooted in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma on culture and community, with a focus on physical, psychological and emotional safety for both clients and staff.

The CITIHA model:

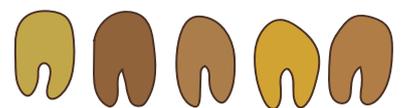
- understands that personal and professional development are interrelated and integral to the successful implementation of the CITIHA Framework,
- understands that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approaches to education place a strong emphasis on enhancing self and community learning; it is the process of becoming aware of self and others, which underpins purposeful personal development and healing as a cornerstone to education, training and skill enhancement,
- creates safe, calm and respectful physical and emotional environments,
- provides culturally safe/fit services, which support positive social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) principles, and recognise the importance of culture and identity as strengths in recovery from trauma,
- understands listening as a key ingredient for developing healing, hopeful, honest and trusting relationships, which are valued within the organisational culture for both clients and staff,
- acknowledges the power of mapping and listening to stories as important in understanding the experiences that may comprise multiple victimisations, while also documenting strengths and resiliency,
- ensures services are culturally respectful as they promote clients' voices, preferences and perspectives as highly valued and integral to both the present and vision for the future,

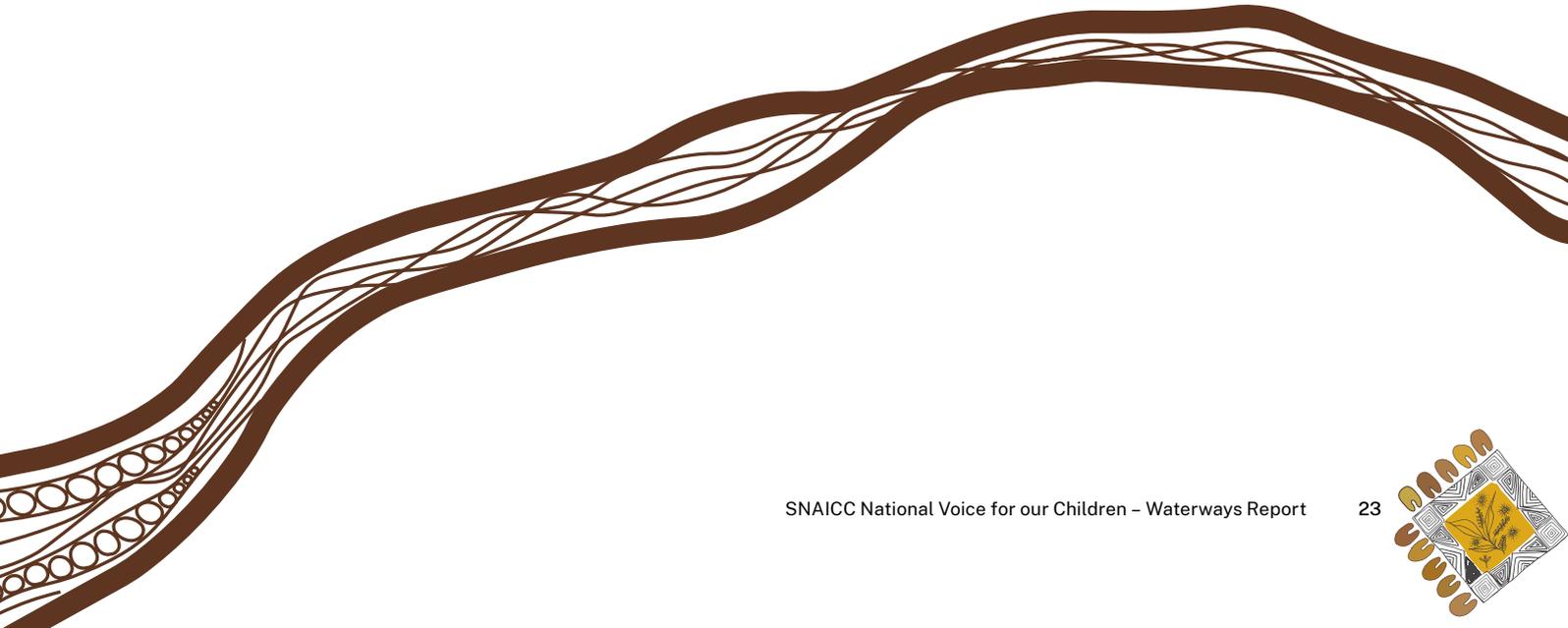
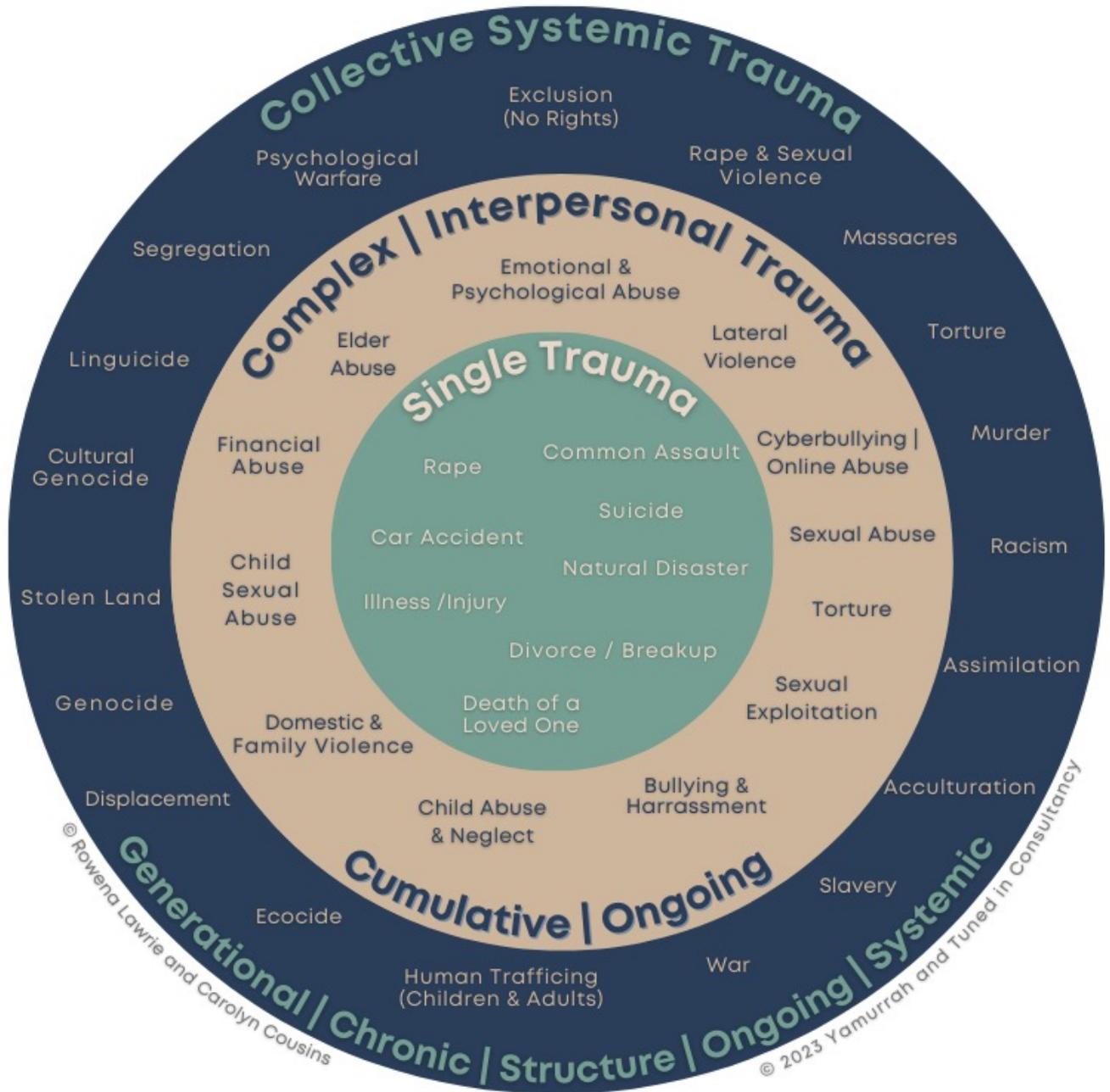
- respects adults' and children's choices and control while minimising re-victimisation,
- delivers trauma specific services through collaborating with non-mainstream and expanded community supports (such as faith communities, friends and families, etc.), and
- builds a workforce and leadership team with knowledge and skills to support the vision and understands the importance of CITIHA as integral to the mission of all services (We Al-li, 2021).

Yamurrah

Yamurrah were the cornerstone of Project Waterways. Yamurrah is a self-determined, independent Collective of experienced and compassionate First Nations professionals committed to social justice, human rights, anti-racism, safety, healing and wellbeing. The Yamurrah Collective, founded and directed by Rowena Lawrie, comprises nurses, social workers, psychologists, lawyers, teachers, trauma specialists and academics, each specialising in unique fields such as professional development, therapy, project management, leadership, research and evaluation. Yamurrah holds the core belief that culture and connection have the power to elevate people culturally, spiritually, physically, psychologically and socially. Yamurrah is committed to social justice, advocating for fairness, inclusivity and equality for all individuals and communities.

Yamurrah partnered with SNAICC to co-facilitate the process of co-design with the Project Waterways partners. Yamurrah's expertise in delivering trauma training informed the project and ensured evidence-based approaches were at the forefront of Project Waterways.





Collective Systemic Trauma

This diagram was developed by Yamurrah and Tuned in Consultancy to demonstrate the impacts of collective systemic trauma. The key message is that single trauma, complex/interpersonal trauma and Collective Systemic Trauma build on each other; you cannot have collective trauma without complex/interpersonal trauma because it is cumulative/ongoing, and you cannot have complex/interpersonal trauma without single event trauma. Practitioners need to understand that the effects on individuals and communities are cumulative and compounding.

Sometimes in the field we often just think of a single event or complex trauma, but it is essential to understand that for Aboriginal people we need to be thinking holistically and acknowledge the continuous transmission of the various forms of trauma and how these are interconnected and inseparable.'

Laurie and Cousins 2023.

'The colonisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land and the (ongoing) oppressive practices that followed have resulted in a legacy of unresolved intergenerational trauma for Indigenous Australians. Not only is the experience of unresolved historical trauma a risk factor impacting Indigenous Australians' social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB), but re-traumatisation and the cumulative effect of trauma-on-trauma can manifest through other risk factors such as family violence, incarceration, substance misuse and self-harm (McCallum 2022). This trauma can be passed between generations both vicariously and through prolonged exposure to stressors, leading to a cycle of trauma that is left unaddressed.'

Laurie and Cousins, 2023.



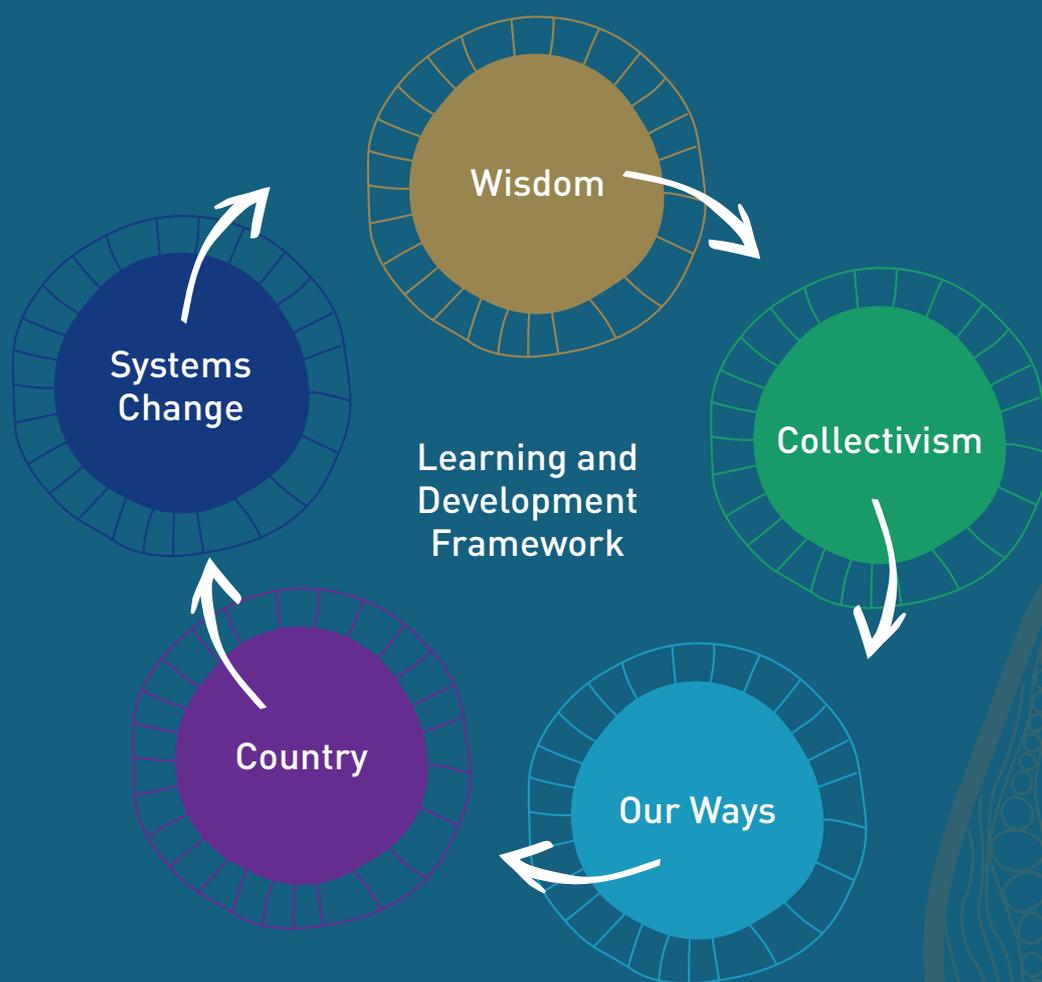
Project Waterways Project Methodology

Learning and Development Framework

The Project Waterways learning and development framework was created to determine the ways of working across the partnership and the development of the training package. The Project Waterways learning and development framework was informed by a significant service sector survey. The survey data is discussed in more detail in the data sections of this report.

The Project Waterways learning and development framework encompasses five interconnected areas that shape the initiative. Together, these elements ensured Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways are central to all stages of planning, development and execution of the training.

These areas are as follows:





Wisdom

Practice wisdom is what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people learn and hold. We know best about what our families need and how to support them. Wisdom is our foundational strength. We have a clear purpose and direction, fuelled by passion and perseverance. We acknowledge all the wisdom and knowledge before us and build on the legacy and survival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ancestors.



Collectivism

We believe in shared power. We recognise the real need for solidarity and shared responsibility between communities and organisations for lasting change. We believe in the power of Blak excellence and believe it should be centred in the work. We know that collaboration cannot happen without cultural humility.



Our Ways

Our vision connects to our ways being centred in practice, policy, legislation and lifestyles. Our kids are taught to care for the land by their families and communities. We want our languages to thrive. We want to see language, art, song, and lore thrive and be adopted into education and services.



Country

Country is alive. Country has a voice. Country teaches us respect and how to communicate. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander determinants of health and wellbeing are connections to land, kin, community, language and spirituality. Non-Indigenous organisations need to understand this and acknowledge and support this connection through their ways of working.



Systems Change

This work requires truth telling and a shift in perspective. We want to see more ACCOs leading the way. We want to see non-Indigenous organisations with a willing commitment and accountability to change. We know that we need meaningful and effective ways to measure this change.



Objectives of Learning and Development Strategy

Training is One Part of a Whole Decolonising Approach

The training focus of the initiative is one part of a much larger, holistic approach, as standalone training does not produce the level of change required across the whole of an organisation. The holistic approach requires a multilayered approach across organisations, depending on the organisation's size, focus, current programmatic engagement and connection with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Organisational Change Focus

This initiative focused on shifting and changing whole organisations. As such, there was a focus on practitioners and management in the training workshops, including additional learning as part of the deep dives and targeted resources. This ensured we were able to explore processes and procedures that sit behind the required practice level change. We supported this work by developing a culturally responsive and trauma informed framework to guide this process.

Cultural Learning Journey Framework

The partnership identified the need for a framework to guide organisations on wise practice in relation to protocols, practices and community partnerships. This framework unpacks the responsibility of organisations to authentically show up to the level of personal, professional and organisational change needed to contribute to systemic change. This forms part of the learner's cultural learning journey, which will be designed to be practical and tangible with a strong focus on practitioner skills, moving people beyond tokenistic allyship approaches.

Strong Reflective Component

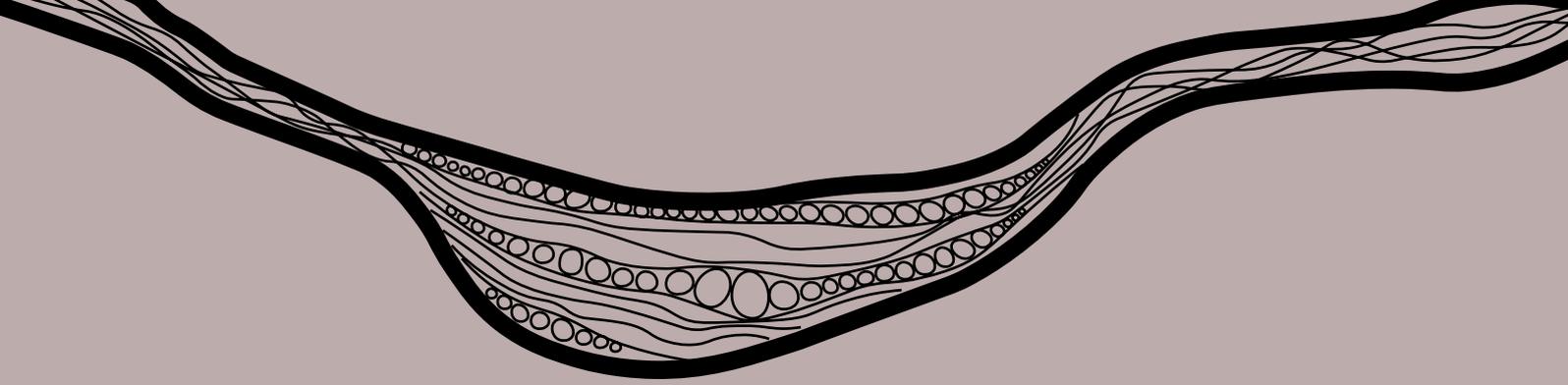
The training focused on reflective practice to shift mindset, perspectives, approaches and practice. Further, the training style included spaciousness and capacity to talk more and dive deeper in workshop settings, as well as encourage workplaces to have 'gentle disruptions'. Part of this reflective practice involved exploring personal responsibility, as well as responsibility within an organisation.

Safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff

The training needs to prioritise the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who are a part of the services, as well as of the facilitators who are rolling out this work. The wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and facilitators was led by the Yamurrah team. Yamurrah is a long-term provider of cultural supervision with over 18 years in the space, including the establishment of the Our Ways: Supervision Alliance, which is a unique First Nations Alliance of supervisors. This focus area also links to the need to support organisations to ensure they have cultural supervision embedded.

Accessible Online

Whilst the core of the training was offered in person across jurisdictions, the survey data was clear that the training needs to be accessible online. SNAICC is exploring options to build a learning management system to host these resources, accessible to all partners and jurisdictions.



Pathway to Accreditation

The training component needs to offer a pathway to accreditation and a clear national benchmark of quality standards.

Partnership Approaches

The survey responses showed overwhelmingly that services needed ways to move beyond 'good intention' to true and reflective partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and services. There was a clear need for support for providers to be able to bridge the gap that exists between theory and practice; for them to walk the talk and understand the fundamental need for codesign with lived experience and communities.

Facilitator Requirements

For the training, it has been identified that the lead facilitator must be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, supported by either an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-facilitator or a non-Indigenous co-facilitator. To ensure consistency in values, story and quality, a facilitator guide will be created, including the suggested curriculum map. Facilitators will be supplied with the content and knowledge to lead training; however, to ensure engagement, facilitators will have the freedom to create the experience in their own authentic way.



The Co-Design Process



The Project Partnership

SNAICC, together with project partners QATSICPP, AbSec, KKY and VACCA, and independent consultants Yamurrah, developed the training strategy during a two-day workshop in Narm/Melbourne on 4–5 April. Partners examined survey results and shared their knowledge, experiences and insights from their organisations to reach consensus on the training needs that would be addressed through this initiative.

The Project Waterways Partnership Group consisted of the four partner organisations working as a collective, together with SNAICC's project management team and independent consultants, Yamurrah, to design and deliver key components of the project.

The intention was to establish relationships, dream up a vision for the project, develop a Partnership Care Framework to guide our ways of working together and commit to collective action and solidarity in response to this project.

Partnership Care Framework

A mutual care agreement was established by partners to create a shared vision for collaboration. The terms of the agreement involved:

- operating with acceptance, respect, care and common ground,
- centring ethics, trauma informed practice, deep listening and inclusivity,
- yarning with intent and honouring others' perspectives,
- allowing time and space for reflection and meetings,
- being power informed and mindful of gender, and
- acknowledging the burden of proof.

The Vision

Collectively, the partnership worked toward creating impactful and lasting change within the child and family sector through:

- a national rollout of learning and development to 500 services funded by DSS,
- piloting a Cultural Security Leadership intensive specific to large nationwide organisations, including their executive leaders and board members, to facilitate structural organisational shifts,
- centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wisdoms, worldviews and ways of knowing, doing and being in the design, development and delivery,
- a focus on shifting and changing whole organisations, with training workshops targeting practitioners and management;
 - additional learning will be provided through deep dives and tailored resources to explore underlying processes, guided by a culturally responsive and trauma informed framework,
- a focus on reflective practice to shift mindset, perspectives, approaches and practice, allowing participants to explore the responsibility of self in the context of an organisation, both internally and externally,
- prioritising the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, led by Yamurrah, who are long-term providers of cultural supervision,
- ensuring training accessibility through potential learning management systems, and
- supporting providers to bridge the gap that exists between theory and practice, for them to walk the talk, and understand the fundamental need for codesign with lived experience and communities.



Process of Waterways Partnership Development

Strengths of the Partnership

The Waterways partnership was formed in the model of genuine partnership and followed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing. The partnership was defined by a deeply collaborative spirit, where mutual respect, shared goals and a diversity of expertise were consistently prioritised. Partners engaged in relational ways of working, embracing difference with grace and openness, which promoted a strong foundation for trust and co-creation.

Along with this, the partners believed that cultural leadership was a cornerstone of the collaboration, that culture was not only respected but actively prioritised throughout the partnership. There was a strong adherence to cultural protocols and Indigenous governance, with storytelling embraced as both a pedagogical tool and a form of healing. This commitment to cultural integrity enriched the work and deepened its impact.

Innovation and flexibility were evident in the partnership's approach to facilitation and content delivery. The team demonstrated agility in responding to diverse jurisdictions and audiences, employing both single and three-person facilitator models to suit varying contexts. This adaptability ensured relevance and inclusivity across all engagements.

Emotional safety was nurtured through intentional practices that included creativity, respect, humour and deep emotional holding. These elements created safe spaces where participants felt supported and empowered to engage meaningfully.

Shared ownership and integrity were hallmarks of the partnership; all collaborators demonstrated a collective commitment to children, families and communities. Efforts were made to avoid ego-driven dynamics and to resist the replication of harmful power structures, ensuring that the work remained grounded in equity and purpose.



The partnership also achieved national reach, forming a network of like-minded practitioners with the potential for broad sector engagement, including legal, education and justice domains. This emerging community of practice reflects a shared vision and values, with capacity for sustained impact.

Confidence in the model, trainers and delivery was consistently high, participants responded positively, and internal evaluations and reflections provided clear evidence of effectiveness and impact. This high level of practice confidence reinforced the credibility and value of the partnership's approach.

The Partnership identified that collective wisdom was a defining strength, blending technical, cultural and clinical expertise. The work was guided by the principle of 'many eyes, many hearts, many spirits, many tongues,' reflecting a holistic and inclusive approach to knowledge-sharing and leadership.

Finally, the Waterways project was identified as having high potential and emerged as a benchmark for cultural training and community collaboration, with the capacity to form the basis of a formal national partnership. This recognition emphasises the transformative power of the partnership and its enduring legacy.



Intersection with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

Project partners identified areas where Project Waterways has worked towards Target 12 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement).

SNAICC

(Western Australia)

Project Waterways was intentionally aligned with the National Agreement, particularly Target 12, by strengthening the capability of practitioners to respond to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in culturally safe and trauma informed ways. Through Waterways training, participants engaged deeply with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews, histories and lived experiences, enabling them to reflect on their own practice and recognise the role they play in shaping systemic outcomes.

Many participants in Western Australia reported shifts in confidence, awareness and skills that will directly influence how they engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. Participants also shared that by deepening their understanding of positionality and intersectionality, they were able to recognise how unconscious biases may influence their decisions. This awareness may encourage more thoughtful reflection before making child protection notifications, ensuring responses are better aligned with the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. By embedding knowledge of cultural identity, intergenerational trauma and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, the training supported practitioners to make decisions that prioritise connection to family, culture and Country.

In this way, the project contributes to reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and supports Target 12 of the National Agreement, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children stay safe and connected within their families, communities and culture.

AbSec

(New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory)

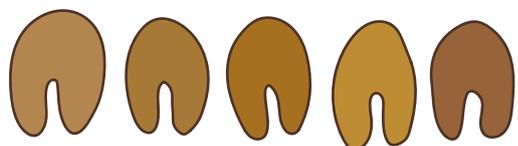
AbSec recognise that the true value of any training program lies not only in the knowledge shared but in the behavioural changes that follow. Training becomes meaningful when participants return to their roles with new insights, skills and commitments that influence both their individual practice and the systems they work within.

Feedback from our participants consistently demonstrated a clear intention to adapt and improve their professional practice as a direct result of completing the Waterways training.

While the long-term sustainability of these changes will only become evident over time, we are confident that the training has had a significant impact on the hearts and minds of those involved. The combination of cultural knowledge, reflective practice and practical tools provided participants with the capacity to embed these shifts in their everyday work.

AbSec believe that when individual practice changes, it lays the foundation for wider systemic transformation. As participants return to their organisations, they bring with them new perspectives grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews. This not only strengthens their personal approach to supporting families and communities but also encourages their organisations to adopt more culturally responsive practices.

AbSec's objective is that these individual and systemic changes contribute to reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, creating stronger pathways for children to remain connected to family, culture and community, and bringing us closer to the achievement of Target 12 of the National Agreement.



KWY

(Northern Territory and South Australia)

At KWY, the Waterways training directly addressed Target 12 of the National Agreement through the ideas of providing early intervention support over the breadth of the child protection system (pre-statutory system and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship systems) before the families touch a statutory child protection system that can lead to out-of-home care.

KWY focused heavily on the understanding of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, focusing particularly on identification and prevention. This is based on the idea that when you have skilled and knowledgeable practitioners who understand both historical and current complexities and vulnerabilities, and the direct correlation between colonisation, subsequent invasion, removals, and loss of identity, culture and language, this leads to culturally responsive and trauma informed systems of care. This provides a measurable framework to continue to implement within their own organisations and practices.

VACCA

(Victoria and Tasmania)

VACCA's Waterways project team supported the non-Indigenous child and family welfare sector to strengthen practice and workforce capabilities. Many participants, across a range of mainstream organisations, demonstrated measurable shifts and improvements regarding their knowledge, awareness and confidence, specific to culturally safe and trauma informed practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

This project supported participants to appreciate the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including impacts of



colonisation and intergenerational trauma, and to consider their own individual role in influencing systemic change. It gave participants the courage to self-reflect and to strengthen their confidence in challenging imbalances of power, racism and injustice at organisational, societal and systemic levels, to ensure all vulnerable people, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, receive the best support they can to thrive.

This project supported mainstream organisations to embed culturally safe and therapeutic frameworks in their current and future practice and policy work. The training introduced participants to culturally informed ways of working with a focus on supporting systems transformation. It focused on the shared goal of Target 12 of the National Agreement, which is to see more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children stay with their families in safe home environments.

QATSICPP

(Queensland)

As the peak body for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection and family support sector in Queensland, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) works with communities, practitioners and policymakers to promote the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. Together with our members, we are committed to ensuring all Queensland children are safe, cared for and able to reach their full potential.

QATSICPP's 'Positive Futures for Our Children' vision is that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are physically, emotionally and spiritually strong, live in safe and nurturing environments within their own families and communities, and have equitable life opportunities. This vision aligns with the intent of Target 12 of the National Agreement by

prioritising supports that keep children safe within family and culture and reduce the need for out-of-home care. We know children thrive when they are cared for by family, grounded in culture and connected to their lands, seas and waterways. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families hold child-rearing practices that span thousands of years. Upholding and strengthening these cultural practices is essential to improving child and family outcomes and achieving the shared national commitment to keeping children safe, strong and connected, as outlined in Target 12.

Waterways was a valuable opportunity for QATSICPP to walk alongside the many non-Indigenous NGOs who attended and support them to see how they can join in our shared purpose and vision of reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care. By starting the two-day immersive training with deeply understanding the impacts of colonisation and consequential harmful government policies and acts, the workshop participants were safely supported to see where their role could make a difference to a family, particularly when it comes to the intersection with child protection. Participants were also offered the opportunity to understand and apply what self-determination could look like within their role and workplace when supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. They were also invited to explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews and see how this can shape their current practice. Through strengthening the cultural responsiveness and trauma-informed capabilities of the child and family sector with their practice and policy changes, we envision that collectively we can work to help keep children with their families.

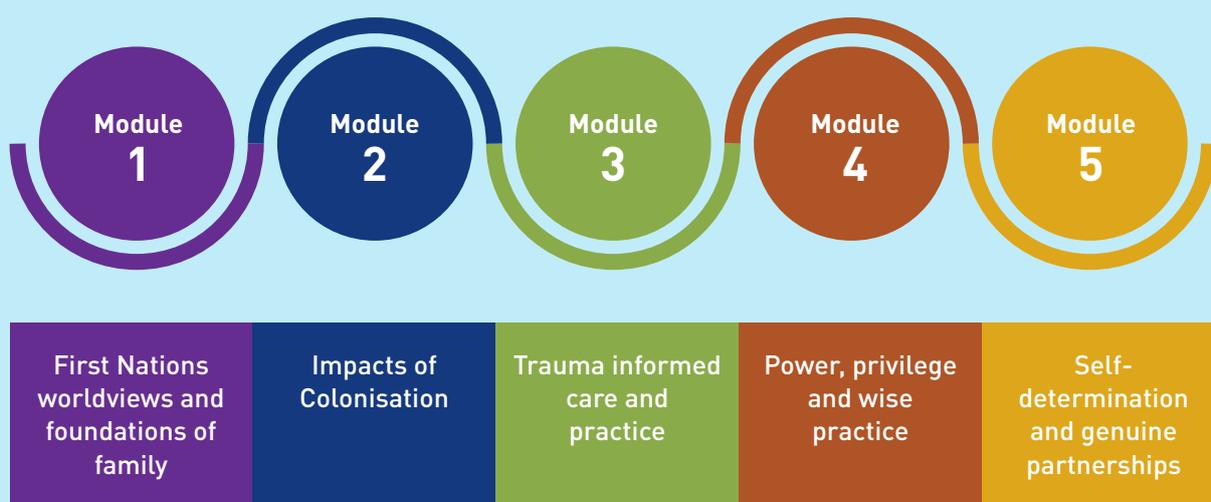


Overview of Learning Curriculum

Modules and Content

The Project Waterways training followed a two-day, five-module curriculum. The graphic below outlines the flow of modules and content:

Waterways training modules journey over 2 days



Each module within the training was mapped to several learning goals and accompanied by practice prompts positioned in the voice of the child. This approach ensured the child was anchored within the learning framework and allowed participants to reflect on their child-centred practice.

Waterways Training, Learning and Practice Goals

The table below provides the details of the learning and practice goals associated with each of the Waterways Training modules.

| Module 1 | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| First Nations Worldview and Foundations of Families | |
| Learning Goals | Practice Goals and Prompts |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and value First Nations Worldview and how to create cultural safety. • Understand the implications of a First Nations Worldview to practice. • Acknowledge diversity in First Nations culture. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are my family values and views? • Do you know about the values of Caring, Sharing and Respect for the land? • How do you ensure my family’s views are held, and how do you talk about parenting? • Do you know who my important/special family members are? • Have you done an eco-map for my family? • Do you know my language group and the community I live in? • Do you know how cultural strengths and practices keep me safe? • Do you know what parts of my culture make me strong? • Do you know what safety looks like for my family? • Do you know what safety looks and feels like when you work with my family? • Do you know my family obligations? |



Module 2

Impacts of Colonisation

Learning Goals

- Identify and understand Australia's and your jurisdiction's historical context of invasion and the systemic oppression experienced by First Nations peoples, reinforced by systemic structures and governmental policy.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the impacts of invasion and colonialism on First Nations families and communities, and how to learn more about place-specific impacts in your local area.
- Describe the socio-political context affecting First Nations people and its links to health determinants.

Practice Goals and Prompts

- Do you know what the impacts of loss have been on my community and my family?
- Can you tell the story in your own words of what happened to my old people?
- Do you know how I feel not knowing my language?
- Do you know what two worlds mean in my family?
- Do you know where you come from?
- Do you know what responsibility to Country is?
- Do you know what cultural protocols to follow in your work?
- Do you know why my family experience the challenges that we do today?

Module 3

Trauma Informed Practice and Care

Learning Goals

- Develop an understanding of what trauma is and the different types of trauma.
- Understand the impact trauma has on a neurobiological level and how this is intrinsically linked with the determinants of health.
- Demonstrate knowledge of trauma informed care principles and approaches, drawing on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Healing principles and practices.
- Practically apply these approaches to demonstrate culturally responsive trauma informed care and practice.

Practice Goals and Prompts

- Do you know how to explain what trauma is and its impacts in your own words?
- Do you know what effects trauma has on our little bodies?
- Do you know what stresses me out? Do you know what stresses you out?
- Do you know how the intergenerational trauma I have inherited impacts me on all levels and how it might present to others?
- I'm 5. How would you describe trauma to me?
- I'm 40. How would you describe trauma to me?
- I'm 80. How would you describe trauma to me?

Module 4

Power, Privilege and Wise Practice

Learning Goals

- Identify the elements and actions of wise practice and understand what this looks like in practice.
- Critically reflect on my own unconscious beliefs, values, attitudes and how these impact my practice.
- Embody my understanding of Wise practice through my professional and personal relationships.
- I want you to stand up against racism personally and professionally.
- I want you to walk alongside me on your lifelong learning journey, leaning into me and lifting my voice up.

Practice Goals and Prompts

- Do you understand why I do what I do, and why I won't do what I won't?
- Do you understand why I do what I do, and how intergenerational trauma affects me holistically?
- Do you know how to support me in my and my family's personal healing journey?
- Do you know what's good and strong about me?
- Can you help me use my strengths to make my life better?

Module 5

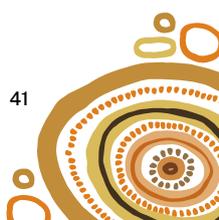
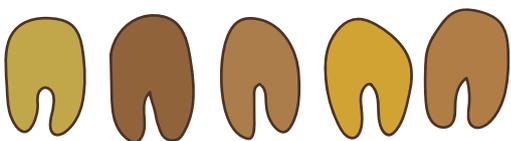
Self-determination and genuine partnerships

Learning Goals

- Understand and apply the principles and practices that are effective in creating and sustaining relationships.
- Identify how you can, through your practice, align with the First Nations self-determination principles.
- Apply my knowledge and commitment to First Nations self-determination principles through my culturally responsive and trauma informed practices.
- I want you to have trustworthy and respectful relationships with my family and community.

Practice Goals and Prompts

- Are you helping or supporting me?
- How are you connecting me to my culture?
- Do you act with respect towards the decisions my people make? How will you demonstrate this?
- Do you understand how important it is for my people to choose the course of our own lives?



Data and Findings: National and Jurisdictional

Decolonial Data Methodology

The decolonisation of data has informed the structures and frameworks guiding this project's data methodology. Historically, data has been used as a tool of control over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Indigenous communities globally. Deficit-based data has driven harmful policies, reinforced discriminatory systems, and shaped false and damaging beliefs.

Where possible, means of data collection have been adjusted to centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, doing and being, and ensure a strengths-based approach. Through rethinking how data is collected and analysed, SNAICC has been able to incorporate the use of symbols, land links, story sharing and learning maps into previously bureaucratic methods.

At the backbone of all data methodology is data sovereignty, where SNAICC is committed to ensuring data is collected, used and managed ethically. Processes of data analysis have been evaluated to ensure the project data tells a truthful and meaningful narrative of processes and findings.

Project Data Streams

Project Waterways contained five key streams of data

1. National Data: Needs Based Surveying
2. SNAICC Data: Thematic Analysis
3. Partnership Data: Data Exchange (DEX)
4. Partnership Jurisdictional Data
5. Murawin External Evaluation

Together, these data sets have worked to build the evidence base to improve the cultural responsiveness and trauma informed capabilities of the child and family sector service providers by:

- identifying enablers and barriers to change,
- providing options and recommendations for ongoing work to support organisational change and workforce development, and
- building a strong evidence base for impact and change through an evaluation framework.

Needs Based Survey of the Child and Family Sector

At the project's commencement, a national survey was released by DSS to identify the sector's needs. The survey comprised 46 questions in multiple-choice and short-answer formats. The survey has received over 640 responses since its release on 11 March 2024.

Locality

The jurisdiction with the highest response rate was Queensland, with 35% of responses, followed by New South Wales at 25% and Victoria at 15%. The jurisdiction with the lowest response rate was the Australian Capital Territory at 2%, although this number is reflective and relative to the number of service providers in each jurisdiction.

Role in the Organisation

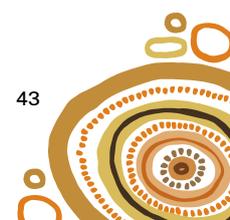
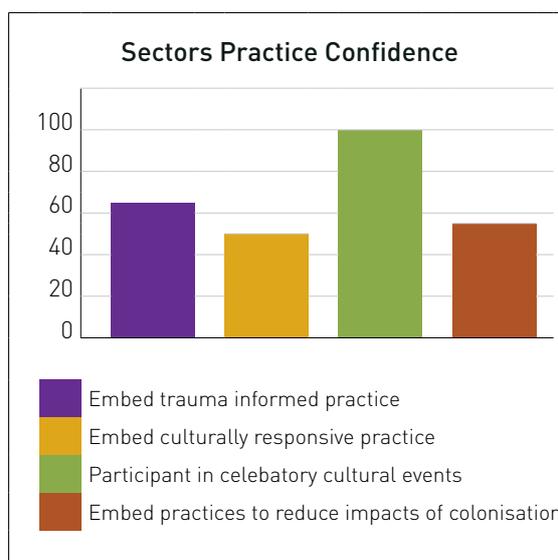
The survey inquired about the position of the respondents within their organisation. The largest response was from executive leadership at 27%, followed by team leaders at 24% and case workers at 24%. The smallest number represented was volunteers at 2%.

The Gaps between Theory and Practice

The survey focused on two key areas: cultural responsiveness and trauma informed practice. Amongst a survey size of 640 responses, it was found that:

Respondents had an average of 66% confidence in their organisation's ability to embed trauma informed practice and 52% confidence in their organisation's commitment and active practice to being culturally responsive.

Respondents showed they had an average of 80.5% confidence in their organisation's ability to participate in practices such as Welcome to Country, Acknowledgement of Country, NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week. However, confidence fell to an average of 57.5% in questions regarding the design of services aimed to reduce the ongoing impacts of colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community partnerships, the value of lived experience and the centring of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.

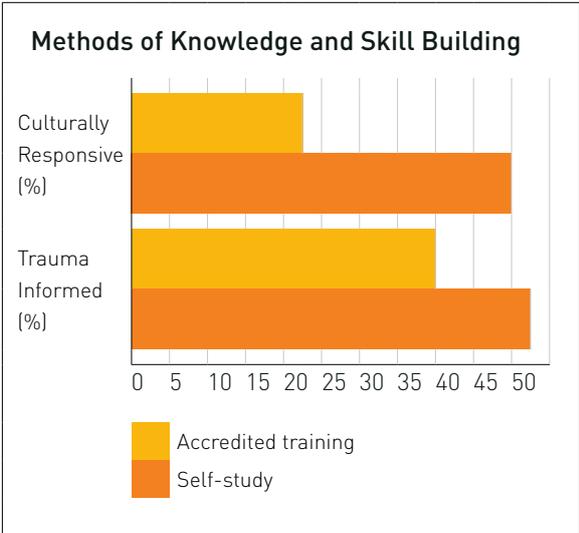


This information helped us understand that the sector holds more confidence in integrating trauma informed practices, yet there is still significant progress to be made.

Alarming, the sector is facing challenges in fully integrating cultural responsiveness, limited to participating in celebratory events such as NAIDOC, without establishing deeper structural processes. This became clear in the surveys' open response section with the repetition of the word 'tokenism' used as a descriptor for the experiences of how cultural responsiveness is approached at an organisational and practice level.

Knowledge and Skills

The survey inquired about respondents' access to knowledge and skill building regarding trauma informed and culturally responsive practice, whether through self-study or accredited training.



Results showed an average of 46% of respondents learned about trauma informed practices through self-study and 35% through accredited training; whereas 45% of respondents had learned about culturally responsive practice through self-study and only 16% through accredited training. These results confirmed the lack of culturally responsive accredited training available to the sector and solidified what Project Waterways has been advocating for.



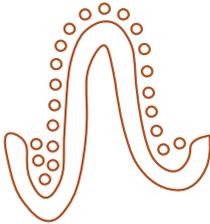
SNAICC Data

Geographic reach

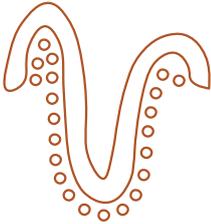
SNAICC delivered Project Waterways training to eight sites across Western Australia. Training began in October of 2024 in the Greater South region of Western Australia, and moved north through the state, completing the last training in the eastern extremity of the Kimberleys in July of 2025.

Throughout this time, SNAICC delivered training to 163 participants across Western Australia, spanning 31 different organisations.

8 training locations



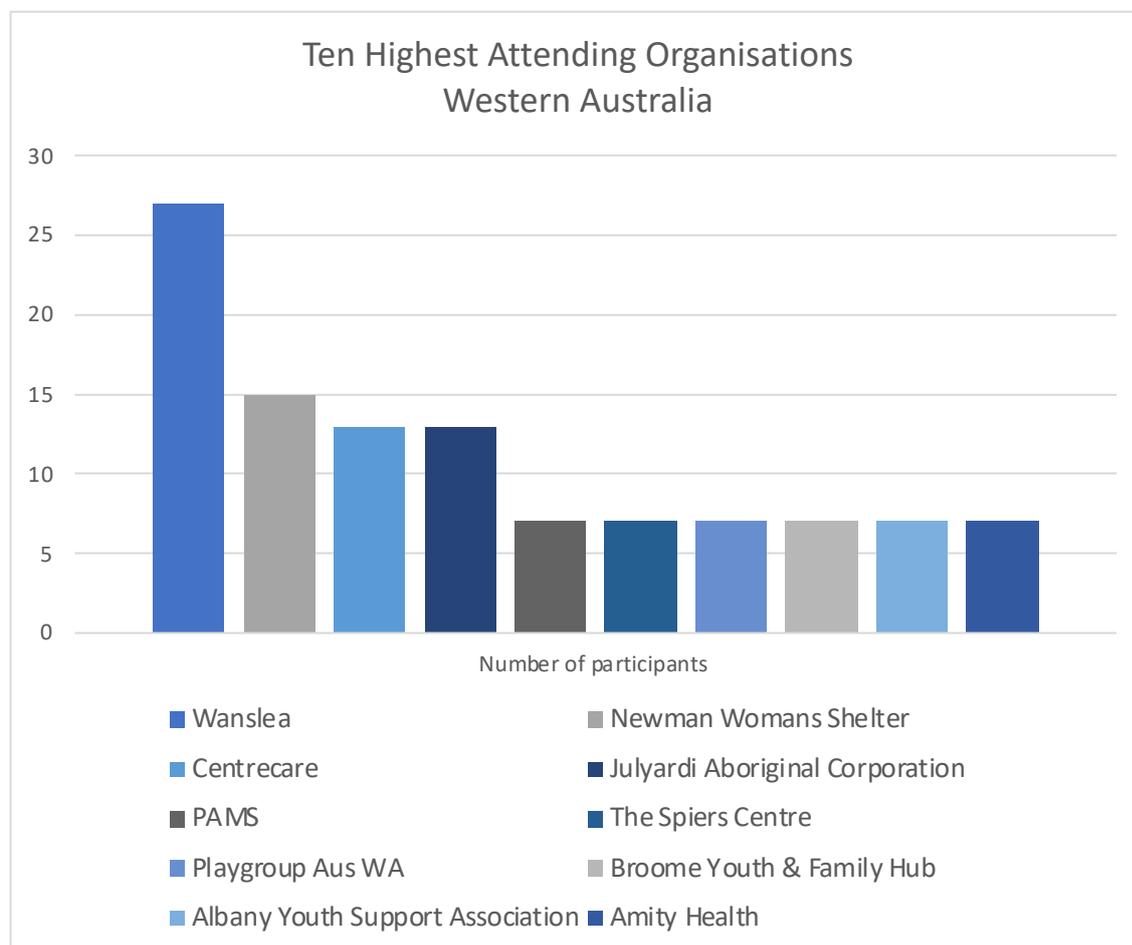
31 organisations



147 participants



The following graph details the organisations that had the highest attendance across all trainings held in Western Australia.



Across Western Australia, Waterways trainings engaged a total of 163 participants from 31 organisational locations. Wanslea recorded the highest attendance, with 27 staff participating across multiple sites. This was followed by Newman Women’s Shelter with 15 participants, and both Centrecare and Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation with 14 participants each. The remaining 27 organisations each had approximately four to six participants attend.

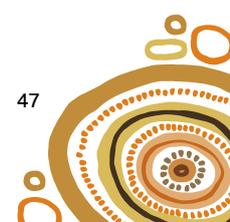
Participant Feedback Analysis

SNAICC collected feedback from participants attending Western Australia trainings in Scarborough, Fremantle, Bunbury, Albany, Kalgoorlie, Newman, Broome, Hedland and Kununurra. Qualitative feedback was collected at two different points in time: immediately after

the training and approximately one month after the training.

Participant feedback was thematically analysed using both deductive and inductive approaches to ensure balanced and unbiased insights. Throughout the process, patterns in feedback were identified, resulting in a set of categories and themes. These outcomes were further analysed to create thematic codes of frequency, while preserving the narrative and integrity of participant feedback.

The thematic analysis studied over 300 feedback comments to understand how the Waterways training impacted participants. Participant feedback was organised into major themes of reflections regarding content, areas of impact and future recommendations. Next, thematic puddles were created where comments were

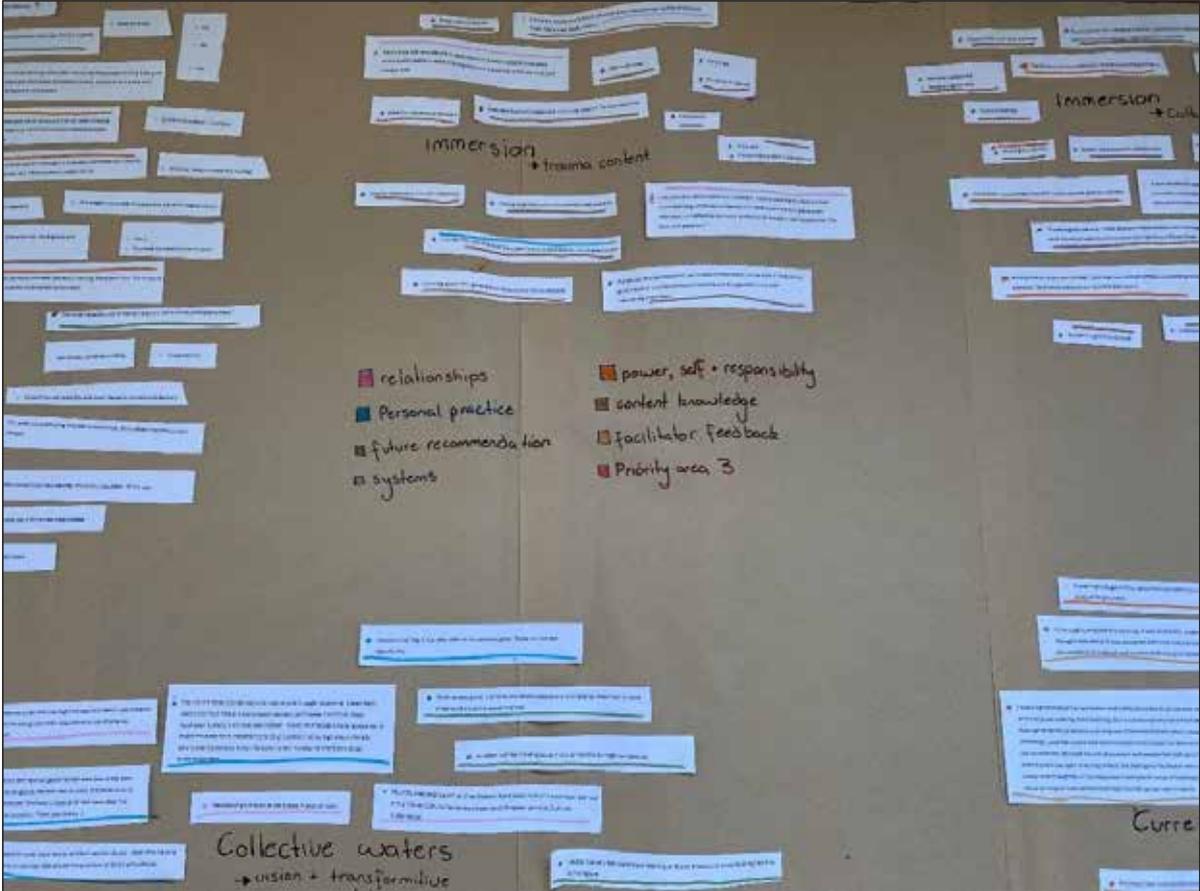


cross-examined to understand how participants felt about these areas. Finally, an overlay of purpose and priorities was performed across all categories to understand how the training has worked towards Target 12 of Closing the Gap, the Priority Reform areas, as well as SNAICC’s strategic priorities.

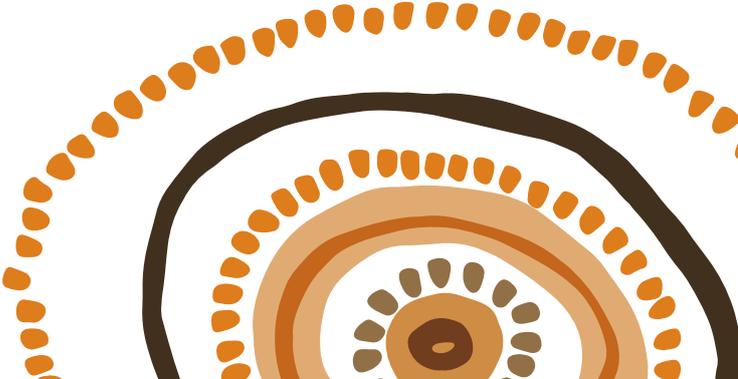
A total of 19 different areas were found during this analysis, titled Thematic River. To maintain both deductive and inductive rigour, the original questions used to collect the raw data were incorporated into the study.

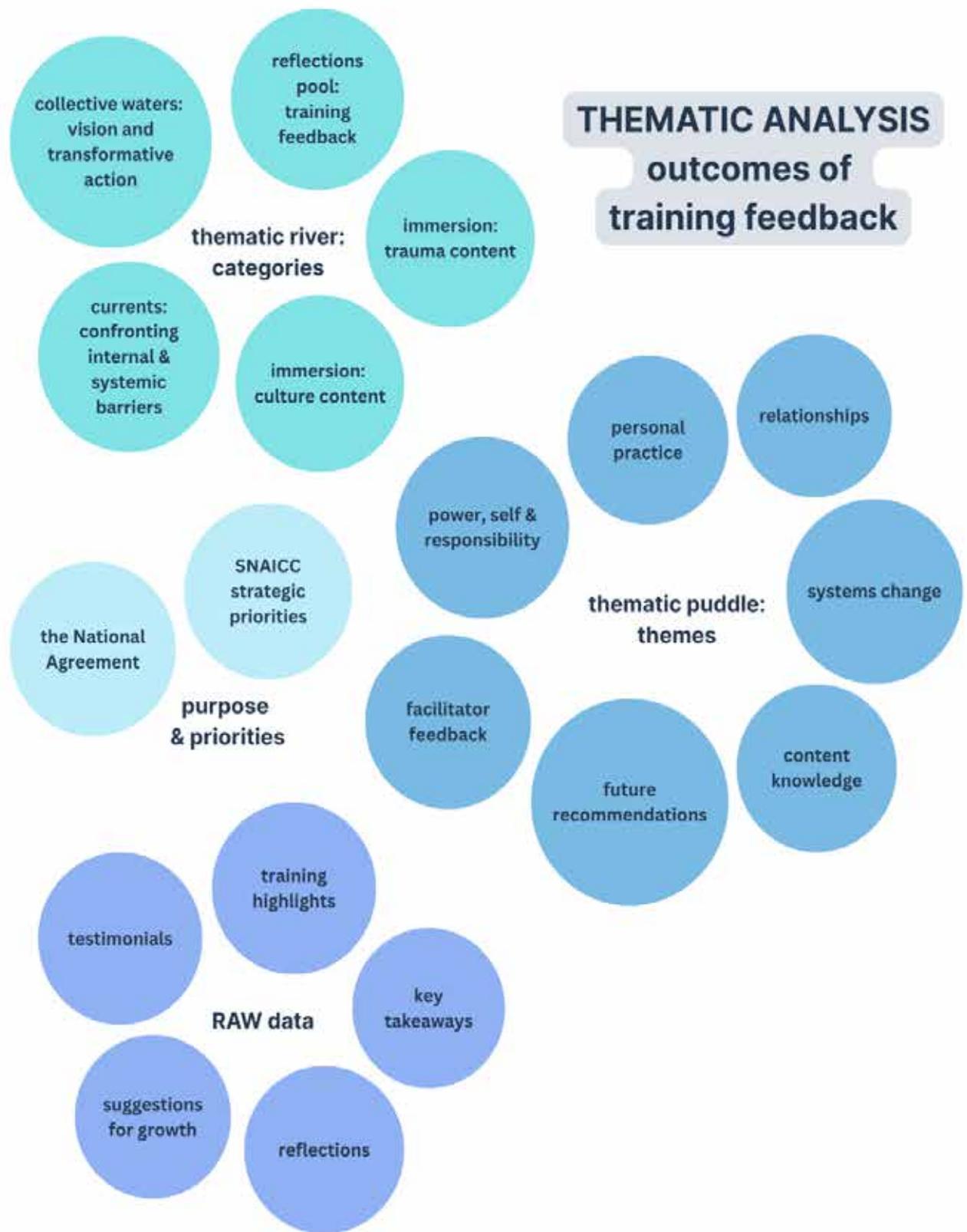
This process located four different areas of trends regarding the Waterways training experience.

- Data set 1: Thematic river
- Data set 2: Thematic puddles
- Data set 3: National Agreement and SNAICC Strategic Priorities
- Data set 4: Raw Data

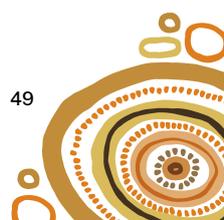


Thematic analysis of participant feedback



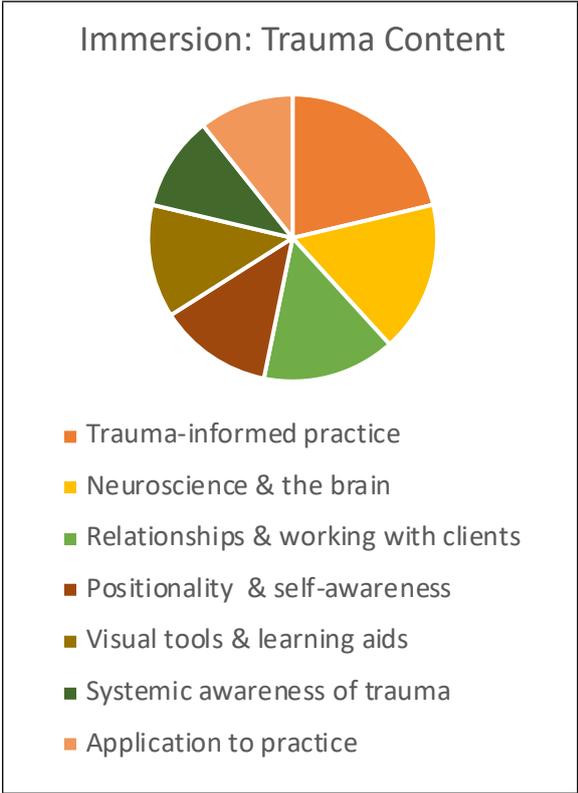


Groupings of thematic analysis outcomes



Participant Feedback: Trauma Content

A thematic analysis has been conducted to identify categories in participant feedback. The following diagram details aspects that make up the category Trauma Content.



The thematic analysis examined participant feedback on trauma informed content. When it came to trauma content, participants mostly reflected on how they could incorporate more trauma informed practice into their practice, as well as the impact of teachings about neuroscience and the brain. Participants described how their newly acquired knowledge will enhance the way they work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities in the future. Trauma informed content assisted participants to safely reflect on their positionality and intersectionality, while also increasing their understanding of the systemic barriers to overcoming intergenerational trauma.

'Beyond the professional knowledge gained, this training also offered a powerful space for personal reflection and growth. It challenged me to examine my own perspectives, biases, and approaches, ultimately strengthening my ability to connect with others on a deeper level. The facilitators created an environment that was engaging, safe, and thought-provoking, making the learning experience both eye-opening and transformative.'

Training participant - 2025

Participant Feedback: Culture Content

The following diagram details aspects that make up the category Culture Content.



Participants frequently regarded storytelling as one of the most impactful parts of training, noting how stories had the ability to enhance cultural knowledge. Participants consistently highlighted the cultural components of the training as powerful and transformative. Key concepts such as cultural humility, self-determination and decolonising language resonated strongly, supported by tools like the Waterways Wise practice guide and positionality reflection exercises. Participants found that yarning, cultural immersion, and practices like Dadirri created space for deep listening and connection, both personally and professionally.

One participant shared:

'I would highly recommend this training to anyone wanting to enhance their understanding of Aboriginal trauma and develop a more compassionate, informed and effective approach.'

Training participant - 2025

Feedback showed these elements led to a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing, and a critical and more deliberate approach to their practice.

Participant Feedback: Confronting Internal and Systemic Barriers

The following diagram details aspects that make up the category Confronting Internal and Systemic Barriers.

Currents: Confronting Internal & Systemic Barriers

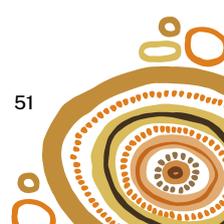


- Systemic awareness & structural bias
- Reflective practice & personal growth
- Cultural safety & trauma-informed care
- Safe & inclusive dialogue spaces
- Wise practice & commitment to change
- Frameworks & tools for practice

Participants described elements of the training as both challenging and transformative, summarising that participating in the training offered them a space to explore personal biases and the broader structural forces that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The training invited deeper consideration of how systems are shaped. As one participant reflected:

'The training was amazing...especially now knowing about the unconscious biases that we have as people, and also how our policies are made. It highlighted a lot of work I can do in myself to improve how I can show up and work with others.'

Training participant – 2025



Training feedback shows that several participants valued learning frameworks for navigating complexity. One shared:

'I have done cultural training in the past. I found the Waterways training took quite a different approach – more participative, reflective, impactful, and applicable to systemic application.'

Training participant – 2025.

Participant Feedback: Vision and Transformative Action

The following diagram details aspects that make up the category Collective Waters: Vision and Transformative Action



Participants described the training as transformative, practical and deeply motivating, with many calling for broader access:

'Waterways training should be rolled out to as many community organisations as possible'. Participant feedback reads that participants were able to take learnings from the training and apply them to their practice, noting:

'Months on from the training, I am still reflecting, implementing, sharing and discussing the content, which demonstrates how powerful the sharing was' and 'I will take what I've learned and apply it to my wise practice.'

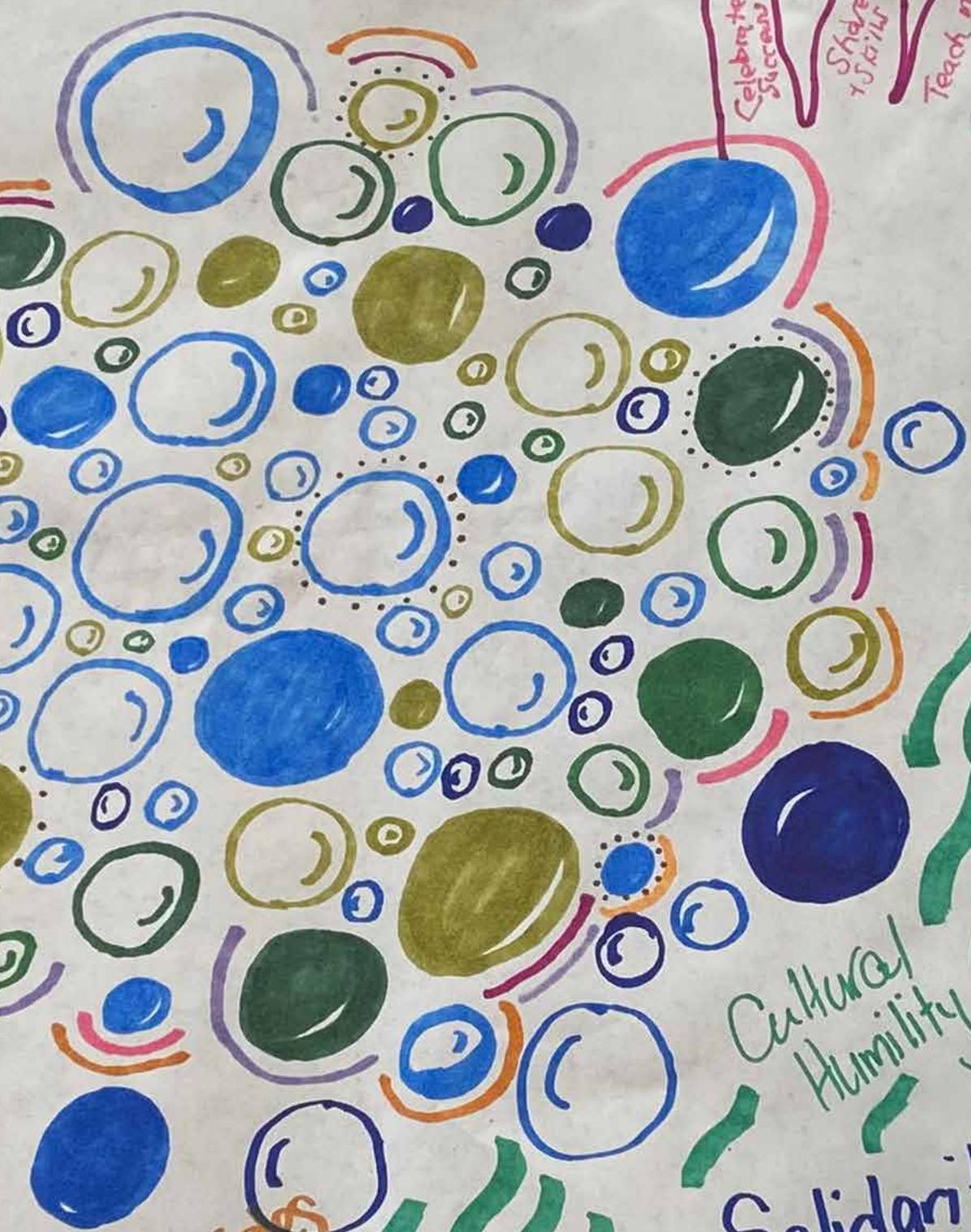
Another noted,

'This training has definitely improved the way I work with youth.'

Training feedback showed that many participants valued training resources and used these to share learnings with colleagues within their organisations. Across the feedback, there was a strong call to 'deliver to as many as you can' and to 'continue to share and grow' the Project Waterways training.

Many participants noted that the training instilled a sense of motivation, stating:

'We as a sector know what we need to do... but we have to be willing to put in the work to implement the changes we want to see.'



Celebrate Successes & Skills

Share Knowledge

Teach my grandkids

Promote other Aboriginal people

Love + Embrace All

5 Key Principles

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Involvement.

Cultural Humility

Uninterrupted Genetic Coding nurtured within natural being

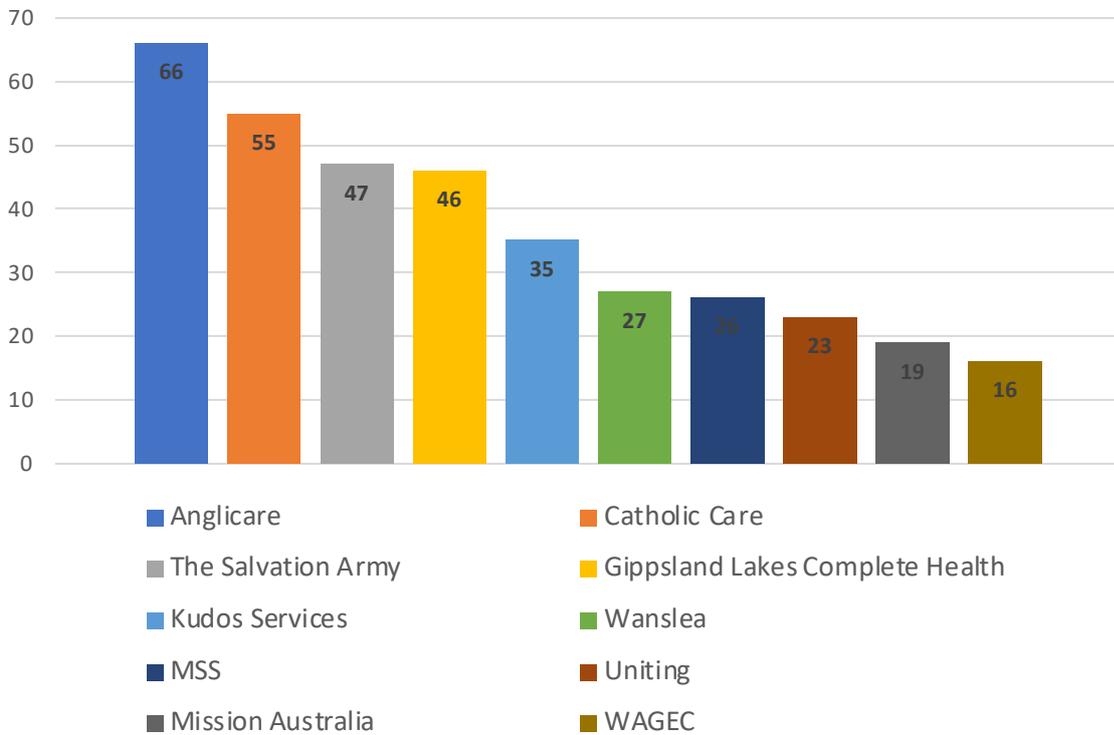
Solidarity

Responsive

providing culturally safe services.

providing services culturally safe

Ten Highest Attending Organisation



Anglicare recorded the highest participation nationally, with 66 participants attending training sessions across multiple jurisdictions. Catholic Care ranked second with 55 participants, followed by The Salvation Army with 47 participants and Gippsland Lakes Complete Health with 46.

Participant Surveying

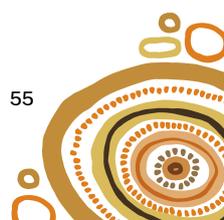
The Data Exchange (DEX) is the Community Grants Hub’s approach to program performance and outcomes reporting. SNAICC and project partners used DEX as a way of reporting on training delivery, including demographic information, pre-training surveys and post-training surveys.

Demographics information

The DEX system requires ten pieces of demographic data. This data is collected in the training room through a QR Code that links to a Microsoft Forms page.

Standard Client/Community Outcome Reporting Pre Survey

Each participant receiving the training completed a Standard Client/Community Outcomes Reporting (SCORE) pre-training survey through a QR Code in the training room that links to Microsoft Forms. The purpose of the pre-survey was to measure participants’ confidence in training-related material prior to receiving the training.



This survey consisted of eight questions, four knowledge-based questions and four skills-based questions. DSS provided SCORE assessment questions to be completed pre- and post-training. Each partner organisation adapted their SCORE survey questions to reflect local contexts while maintaining alignment with DSS's requirements. This resulted in a variance of 24 different questions due to alignment with local contexts and histories.

Each organisation followed a similar pattern of the eight questions shown below.

Knowledge Questions:

1. I feel confident in applying trauma informed practices when working with clients or within my organisation.
2. I know how intergenerational and compounding trauma affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in terms of neurobiology and neuroplasticity, and its relevance to trauma informed care.
3. I understand the value and necessity of self-determination in creating genuine partnerships.
4. I am able to confidently discuss and address issues of personal and institutional racism within my team and workplace.

Skill Questions

1. I feel my organisation has specific policies in place to address the impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
2. I am aware of my personal intersectionality and have defined my approach to cultural humility and accountability at an individual, community and systemic level.
3. I am able to employ cultural responsiveness in my daily workings.
4. I conduct my tasks, assessments and care planning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander frameworks and worldviews at the centre.

SCORE Post Survey

To assess changes in participants' knowledge and skills, a SCORE post-training survey is conducted one to three months after the training. This survey includes the same questions as the pre-training survey, but is collected using a separate Microsoft Form. Pre-survey and post-survey responses are then analysed in Excel to measure progress and evaluate the training impact.

SCORE response rate

The following data presents trends from the SCORE pre- and post-training surveys conducted by six organisations: SNAICC in partnership with AbSec, KKY, QATSICPP, VACCA and Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation (TAC).

Note: Figures may be subject to minor changes as delayed information is received.

| Focus | Number |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Number of participants attending the training | 1,032 participants |
| Number of participants who completed the SCORE pre-survey | 914 participants |
| Number of participants who completed the SCORE post-survey | 252 participants |
| SCORE full data set completion rate | 28% participants |



Trends in SCORE data

The following three SCORE questions demonstrated the greatest participant progress across the partnership over three months:

- I support and encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues in their roles and career progression.
- I feel confident applying trauma informed practices when working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- I know how intergenerational and compounding trauma affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in terms of neurobiology and neuroplasticity, and its relevance to trauma informed care.

The following three questions have shown the least participant progress across the partnership over three months:

- I feel my organisation has specific strategies and policies in place to address the impacts of intergenerational trauma on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- I seek input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and community members when appropriate.
- I am able to confidently discuss and address issues of personal and institutional racism within my team and workplace.

Interpretation

Findings show that knowledge-based questions recorded greater participant progression than skill-based questions, which aligned with the initial purpose of the study. However, a stronger trend also emerged from the data.

When comparing questions with the highest and lowest progression, participants showed greater improvement in their ability to embed trauma informed and culturally responsive practices in their own practice. In contrast, questions relating to organisational change – such as shifts in policies and practices – showed the least progression.

This suggests the following additional trend: Participants have made the most progress in strengthening personal practice, but may be encountering barriers to driving organisational change.

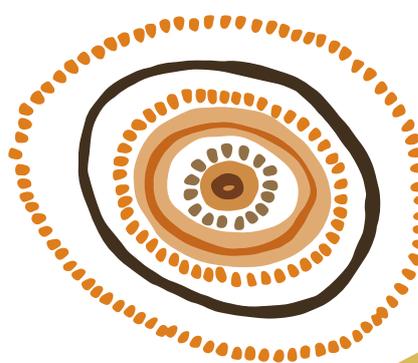
To drive meaningful change, government departments and agencies administering the policies and procedures need to participate in the training.

Considerations

Analysis showed that the questions with the least progression reflected participants moving backwards on the confidence scale. This suggests that some participants began the training believing they were confident in the topic, but upon completion recognised gaps in their knowledge.

It is important to note that these trends are drawn from a sample representing approximately one-quarter of all participants (n=252 participants), due to challenges in obtaining SCORE post-survey data.

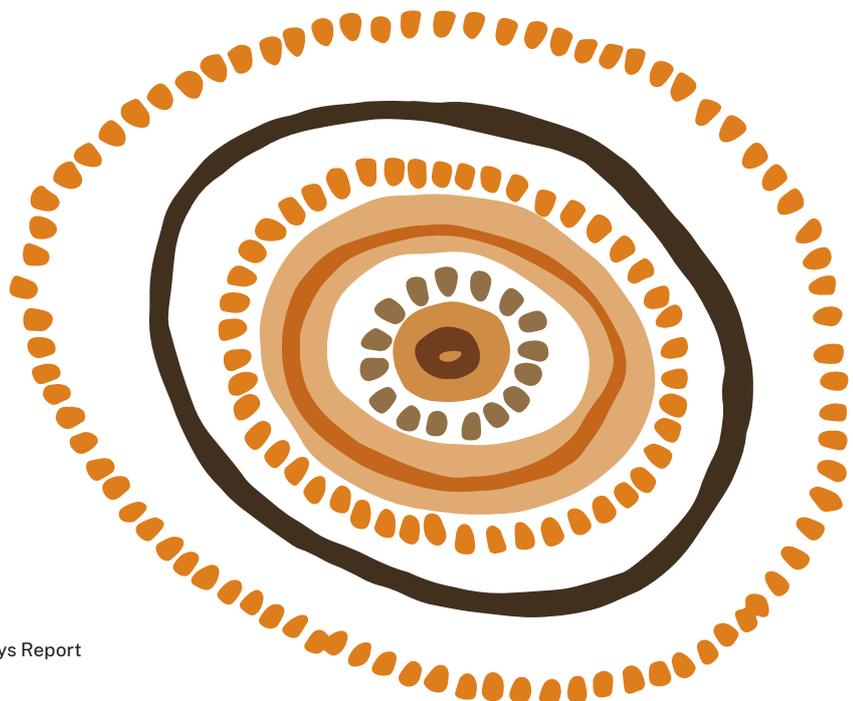
Given the sensitivity of the scale, the low survey return rate and the risks of over-surveying participants, SCORE pre- and post-training surveys are not recommended for future use. Instead, innovative, purpose-built data collection methods are recommended to effectively measure impact. Future projects should prioritise approaches that capture a narrative of change at all levels, including evidence of systems change aligned with the National Agreement.



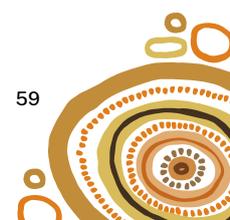
Data Recommendations

Partnership national data recommendations

| National Agreement | Project Deliverable | Actions and Issues in the data | Outcomes |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Priority reform 2: Building the community-controlled sector</p> | <p>Building the mainstream sector to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.</p> | <p>Facilitators were already skilled in cultural content but required further support and training to feel confident in delivering trauma related content. This is something they will now be able to embed in future training sessions and has been reflected on as a huge professional development growth area. The need for trauma informed training seems to be a universal need within the child protection sector. It was difficult at times to explain that Waterways was specifically designed for DSS-funded organisations. It is hoped that much of the learning from delivering trauma informed content will support future learning opportunities for members.</p> | <p>Through the creation of the project partnership, ACCOs and Aboriginal-led organisations have been provided with adequate time and resources to strengthen and build capacity within their organisations, allowing the partnership to showcase their capabilities to achieve high outcomes without the assistance of government organisations.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Partner feedback reflects discomfort around an inability to invite and welcome other ACCOs to attend the training (a contradiction to building the ACCO sector). Recommend re-developing training for the needs of the ACCO sector.</p> |



| National Agreement | Project Deliverable | Actions and Issues in the data | Outcomes |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Priority reform 3: Transforming government organisations | Provide training for up to 500 organisations. | <p>The stakeholder mapping and engagement process was ineffective due to 'info@' or 'admin@' emails being the only accessible contacts in the public domain.</p> <p>ACCOs have no authority to ensure people take up or complete training or data collection.</p> <p>Organisations are not prepared to share contacts with human resources staff or leaders.</p> <p>This became a complex and ineffective process.</p> | <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Government agencies provide direct introductions to appropriate contacts in relevant organisations to ensure engagement is met by the appropriate staff with decision-making delegation for training.</p> <p>Consider tying attendance to funding contracts.</p> <p>Government agencies have a role in promoting opportunities through networks.</p> |
| | DEX data collection. | <p>SNAICC and DSS have worked collaboratively throughout the project to adjust data methodologies to better suit the needs of the project, to apply variations and amendments to requirements where needed and to ensure SNAICC has adequate assistance in troubleshooting DEX errors.</p> <p>The inconsistent communication between DSS and funded organisations and the need for us to 'cold call' the list of services without any connection meant that the initial round of workshops was delayed due to the services not knowing anything about Waterways and the training content.</p> | <p>Governments (for example, DSS) working collaboratively with ACCOs (for example, SNAICC) in hearing our need for assistance with engagement working to adjust data structures to better suit the project issuing variations and amendments where requested and required.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Partner statistics highlight the limitations in the data methodologies prescribed by DSS. Indicating an opportunity for shared decision-making to improve data outcomes aligned with project needs.</p> |



Partnership Jurisdictional Data

New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory

AbSec Learning and Development Centre

AbSec Learning and Development Centre (AbSec LDC) is the training arm of AbSec, the Aboriginal Peak Organisation for Child Protection in NSW. We advocate for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, supporting families, carers and communities to create safe and nurturing environments.

AbSec LDC offers both nationally accredited and non-accredited training to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students across Australia. Our vision is that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child grows up strong in spirit and identity, cared for within thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities, with lifelong opportunities for wellbeing, cultural connection and holistic support.

The AbSec LDC delivery team comprises four full-time staff:

- Dianne Potter – Logistics and Management
- Muneeba Ravat – Administrative Management
- Dane Callaghan – Facilitation and Design
- John Byrne – Facilitation and Design

Based in Redfern, NSW, AbSec LDC delivered the Waterways training across metropolitan, regional and remote communities in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory with a single facilitator supporting each location.

Our Perspective on the Project

The Waterways project presented AbSec LDC with an exciting opportunity to drive meaningful change in the sector and contribute directly to achieving Target 12 of the National Agreement. It also established a pioneering partnership between four state peak bodies: AbSec, KWY, VACCA and QATSICPP; and the national peak body, SNAICC. This collaboration has proven to be highly effective and influential.

By bringing together the expertise and intellectual property of each organisation and drawing on the support and guidance of Yamurrah, the partnership was able to deliver a comprehensive, professional and highly effective training experience. The integration of traditional protocols with contemporary practices ensured the process was carried out with both respect and efficiency, enabling strong collaboration and steady progress.

Perspectives on the Partnership development, co-design experience and strengths

All Waterways training sessions were delivered face-to-face. While one online session was initially scheduled, unforeseen weather events led to a change in plans, and it too was delivered in person.

The program covered the following modules in sequence:

- First Nations worldviews and foundations of family,
- impacts of colonisation,
- trauma informed care and practice,
- power, privilege and wise practice, and
- self-determination and genuine partnerships.

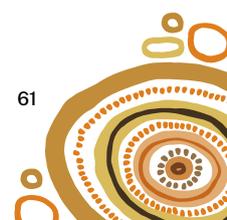
This structure was designed to flow in a logical progression, with each module building on the previous one. In doing so, it reflected the journey of participants moving from knowledge to understanding to meaningful action. The program was interspersed with videos, activities and opportunities for both large and small group discussions. Each program was delivered over two full days.

Overview of the mode of delivery

In localising the Waterways training program, we adapted the structure and content to ensure it was both contextually relevant and developmentally accessible for participants. The modules were re-ordered to follow a loosely chronological and developmental flow, enabling participants to trace the progression of history and its ongoing impacts in a way that was logical and easier to engage with.

Alongside the national overview of colonisation, we incorporated localised case studies that highlighted specific experiences of the Stolen Generations in this region. In particular, we examined the histories of the Cootamundra Girls' Home and the Kinchela Boys' Home, where children endured harsh punishments and systemic abuse. These local examples provided a powerful and tangible connection to the broader story, grounding abstract history in lived experience.

From there, the content was carefully sequenced to explain the mechanisms of intergenerational trauma, including the resulting mistrust of government and authority, and the long-term socioeconomic impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. This localisation allowed participants to connect more personally with the material, promoting both understanding and empathy. By linking national narratives to local histories, the training offered participants a clearer appreciation of the enduring impacts of colonisation and their relevance to current practice.



Queensland

Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Limited

As the peak body representing, advocating for and supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection and family support services sector in Queensland, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) works with communities, practitioners and policymakers to promote and advocate for the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. Together with our members, we are committed to a future where all Queensland children are safe, cared for and able to achieve their full potential.

QATSICPP's positive Futures for Our Children vision is that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are physically, emotionally and spiritually strong, live in safe, caring and nurturing environments within their own families and communities, and are afforded the same life opportunities available to other children and young people to achieve their full potential.

We know that children do better and have a greater chance of achieving good health, employment, education and wellbeing outcomes when they are supported and cared for by their family, in their culture and connected to the lands, seas or waterways of their respective Country. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families hold child-rearing practices that predate the colonisation of Australia. These practices have been handed down from generation to generation over thousands of years.

However, the significant ongoing impacts of colonisation continue to disaffect the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the areas of many social determinants, including the safety and wellbeing of families and children. Child protection interventions continue to embed cultural biases and misconceptions of safe child-rearing practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander children. Child protection assessments and interventions do not align with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of doing, being and knowing what is in the best interest of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

These impacts have resulted in the Queensland child protection system being disproportionately involved with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, with an unreasonably high number of children being removed from their family, community and culture; often to be placed with strangers by a child protection system that is not culturally safe for mob's participation.

Waterways Purpose

One of the most consistently identified barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families accessing family support is the fear of an interventionist system that drives towards the removal of children without offering sufficient, culturally and trauma informed supports to families, even when families are actively reaching out for help.

The purpose of the Waterways project is to build the cultural responsiveness, trauma and healing-informed capabilities of identified non-Indigenous service providers and their workforce (leadership and frontline teams) in the child and family sector in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Waterways aims to ensure non-Indigenous service providers in this sector are better able to deliver tailored prevention and early intervention services that are culturally aware and healing-informed. Waterways will equip non-Indigenous allies with effective and culturally appropriate strategies that will support them when walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who are at-risk and experiencing vulnerability. Aligning with Target 12 of the National Agreement, Waterways aims to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031. Through strengthening the cultural responsiveness and trauma informed capabilities of the child and family sector with their practice and policy changes, we envision this work to help keep children with their families.

Recruitment

Upon receiving the Waterways package from Yumarrah, QATSICPP began the internal and external process of recruitment to find a strong team of Training Officers. Out of all the national peak organisations, QATSICPP is the only peak that does not have a direct 'Training' arm that delivers support to non-members. Although QATSICPP does deliver direct practice support, the organisation mainly only delivers directly for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations (ATSICCOs). QATSICPP was able to recruit three external training officers and an individual who had training experience in trauma informed practice. All four Waterways Training Officers started on 28 October 2024.

Adapting Waterways to suit a Queensland context

Given that the team had extensive training experience across a broad range of contexts, we felt it was important to deeply delve into the content delivered by Yumarrah through the Peaks co-design process and reshape it to suit our context. QATSICPP spent two months deeply digesting the content, allowing the team to inject their cultural perspective and professional knowledge into the package, as well as developing it to suit a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective.

Although there was an option to deliver over three days originally, the QATSICPP Waterways team and our Executive Leaders all felt that two days was more realistic logistically. The team did, however, stay true to the modules and learning goals.

"As a facilitator, the opportunity to apply feedback, verbal and non-verbal from participants, to improve engagement and solidify learning was amazing as it meant that as a facilitator our voices were being heard, and it was a real team effort. Especially around the changing of the order of the modules. This allowed for fluid transition between modules and, in fact, started conversations on concepts that were yet to be introduced but were coming. This really affirmed the modules were in the right order as it was building on the learning, not jumping all over the place."

Feedback from Jo, one of our facilitators

Starting with history

As can be noted in the QATSICPP Waterways program order, the team collectively decided to change the order of the modules, to start the two-day learning with the 'Impacts of Colonisation'. The team also collectively decided to utilise the Crossing Cultures: Hidden History package, as all were trained facilitators. This resource was developed by the Far North Queensland Indigenous School Support Unit Staff, District Community Education Counsellors, Uncle Ernie Grant and Auntie Muriel Eddleston. The Artists are Julie Haysom, Colin Higgins Jnr and Steve Grady.

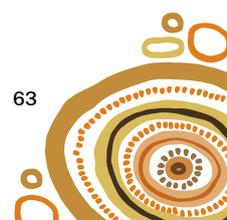
A series of seven posters provides an illustrative guide depicting the impact of some past government policies and practices that affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within Queensland. These posters represent the story of 'The Big Picture – A Hidden History', because many people do not know this part of history.

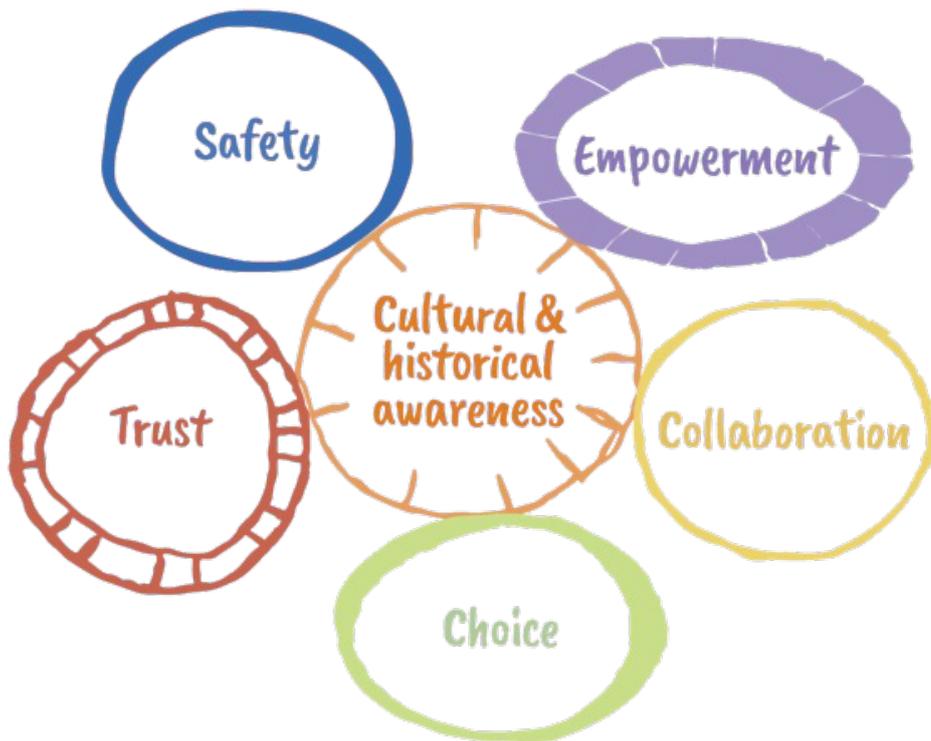
Using the Crossing Culture's Hidden History posters as part of the Waterways package enabled the workshop participants to genuinely be taken through the past government acts and policies, with additional sourced materials and artefacts (with permission) that gave the workshop participants factual evidence of policies that have directly caused intergenerational trauma.

QATSICPP requested workshop feedback from all participants, and many commented on the impact of the Crossing Cultures: Hidden History package. Over 45 workshop participants spoke to the impact that this package had on them directly. Here are some direct quotes from their feedback forms when asked, "What module did you most connect with and why?"

"In all honesty, all modules were eye-opening, empowering and moving. However, I continue to go back to module one 'Impacts of Colonisation'. Even though it was heavy, it was amazing to see everyone's perception when we were going through the posters and how different everyone's perception was, was incredible."

"Having the history explained in that way was priceless, and I feel so privileged to have been part of it. Thank you."





Arnold, one of our QATSICPP Waterways Training Officers, felt the same:

“As facilitators, we observed the Crossing Cultures: Hidden Histories session consistently giving participants a solid basis from which to relate the broader Waterways content. Many participants expressed not being aware of the historical context and the subsequent impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families, and communities.”

Intergenerational Trauma

Although the QATSICPP team did speak to the physical and neurological impacts of trauma, we collectively decided to emphasise the impact of intergenerational trauma, and the specific collective impact it has caused and its continued effects. The brave videos from the Healing Foundation allowed us to share a direct Queensland perspective: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzExWBCuuyg> and then a NSW reference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lu2dhavD6Ok>.

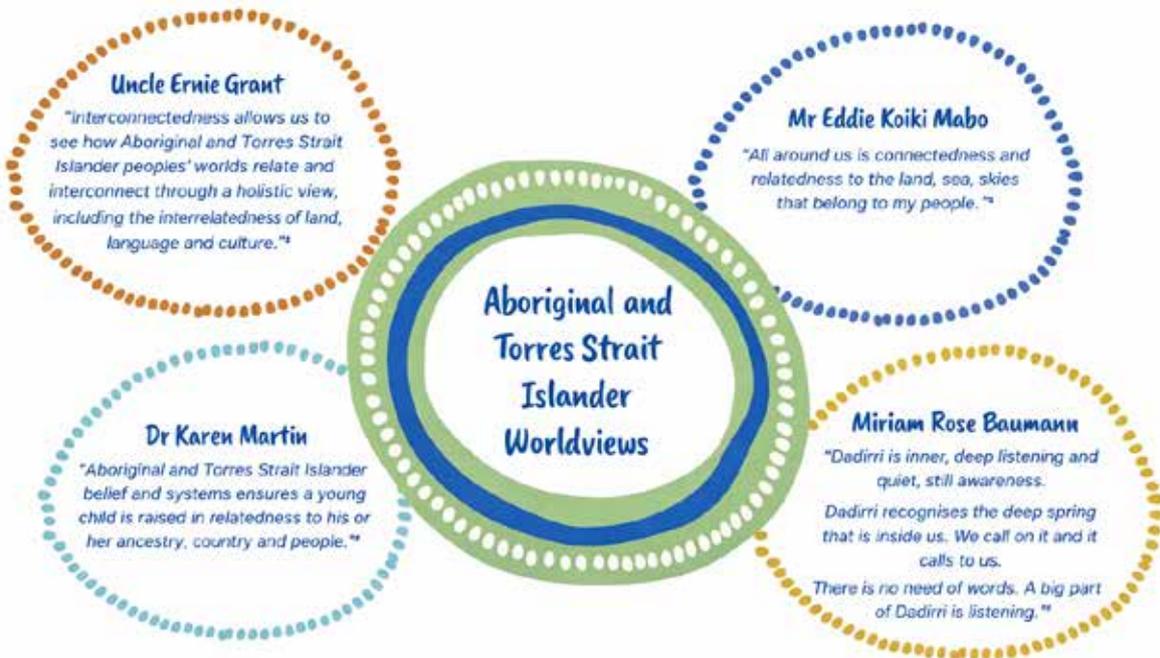
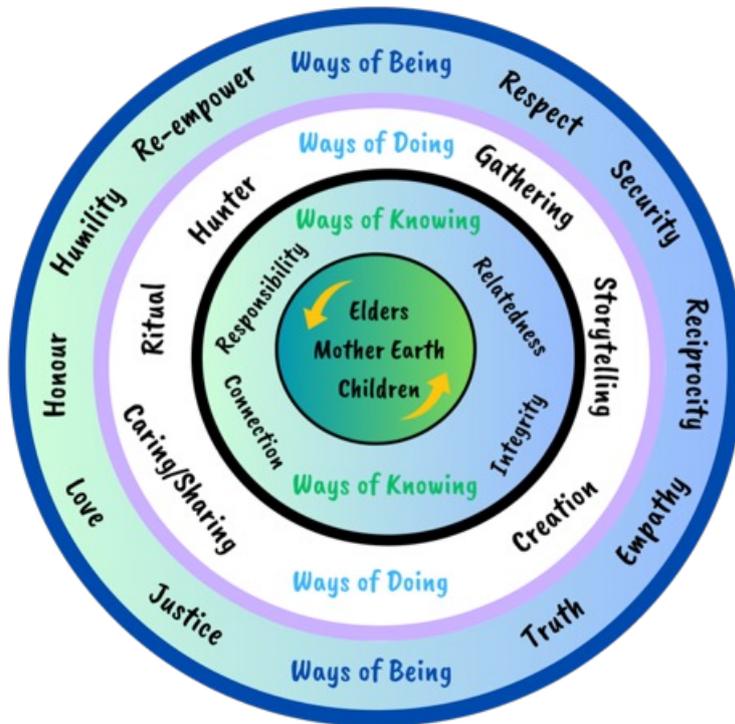
Many of the workshop participants had not seen these clips or heard the stories directly from Elders, so it was important to hold the workshop space safely and respectfully for them.

In addition to this, the QATSICPP team included the six principles of Trauma Informed Care and adapted the principles to suit an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context. Trauma informed Care follows six principles that serve as a framework for how systems of care and service providers work to minimise the likelihood of re-traumatisation.

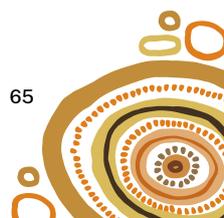
The team strongly connected with Mareese Terare’s (2020) description of the ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. This framework led many of the yarns about how to change practices to reflect these holistic concepts and embed them into their Wise Practice.

We also shared Uncle Ernie Grant’s Holistic Framework, which encouraged workshop participants to hear an Aboriginal point of view with regard to connectedness and understand the world and all its connecting parts. Uncle Ernie is a Djirrabal Elder from Far North Queensland who developed the framework originally to explain a holistic approach to Indigenous studies.

Please note, the QATSICPP Waterways team did seek permission from Uncle Ernie to use this framework for this context.



An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lens helps shape your worldview and allows you to see the world from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective.



Reflection Journal

Given that the team did change the order of the modules and adapted to suit a Queensland context, it was felt that we also needed a new workbook. Fortunately, QATSICPP has a skilled graphic designer who was able to utilise Belle Arnold's artwork (with permission) to adapt to suit our delivery style and context. Having this workbook allowed the participants to write their personal and group responses, with the aim of them taking their learnings back to their workplace. Additionally, we included references for further education and a QR Code to connect with our Queensland community-controlled organisations.

Learnings

Trauma informed training

The need for trauma informed training seems to be a universal need within the child protection sector. It was incredible to connect with workshop participants from DSS-funded organisations and deliver culturally responsive trauma informed training, but it became clear that many of QATSICPP member organisations would also value the opportunity to attend. Although it was difficult at times to explain that Waterways was specifically designed for DSS-funded organisations, it is hoped that much of the learning from delivering trauma informed content will support future learning opportunities for our members.

Sensitive content

The Waterways training was designed to be delivered to a predominantly non-Indigenous audience. The content intends to help share the impacts of intergenerational trauma and understand and apply Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. The QATSICPP Waterways team found that when there was a higher number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workshop participants, it was important to shape and pivot the content so that it was more relevant and respectful for their history, particularly for older First Nations people. Fortunately, the team knew the content well and could think quickly and

respond where needed, so as not to cause any unnecessary emotional or cultural trauma.

Challenges

Communication with DSS-funded organisations

The inconsistent communication between DSS and the funded organisations, and the need for us to 'cold call' the list of services without any connection, meant that the initial round of workshops was delayed due to the services not knowing anything about Waterways and the training content. Although we were given a list of eligible services, including those who had replied to the original survey, it was clear that we did not have a working relationship or connection to the most appropriate person in the organisation to share details about our training. It was a time-consuming and arduous task of trying to establish a connection with the services, and at times not fruitful. Utilising positive feedback and effective word-of-mouth recommendations was how the participant numbers grew. However, the momentum certainly took off once DSS sent out the group communique, even though some of the interested organisations did not sit within the appropriate funding categories.

Data collection

The data requirements from DSS have been a difficult ongoing process, creating unnecessary barriers. In our initial pilot workshop, the QATSICPP Waterways team utilised some of the DSS demographic requirements within the Humanitix link with the hope that this would suit future reporting requirements. Within two hours of sending out the information, the project coordinator received a stern phone call that provided feedback to adapt the form to suit a more flexible audience. The two demographic questions that did cause distress were gender and disability conditions. The QATSICPP Executive Team therefore decided that requesting accessibility requirements was required, but requesting disability conditions was not and could cause offence and reputational damage.

No shows

The QATSICPP Waterways team capped the number of participants to 30, with many asking to be on the waiting list if there were cancellations. However, we did note that we consistently had approximately 30/40% of participants who did not show up to the training without making prior contact. This created logistical challenges for the team.

Firstly, due to no notice, we could not let those on the waiting list know of the vacancy. Secondly, we catered for the larger number, causing higher catering costs and food wastage (we always gave it away to appropriate services that could use the food for clients and families). Finally, our facilitators always planned for the larger numbers and did pack workshop resources in heavy suitcases accordingly, and having to lug resources back did feel disheartening at times.

Joanne, one of our facilitators expressed the following:

“As a facilitator, it was difficult anticipating that 1/3 to half of registered participants would not show up on the day, particularly when the numbers were capped and the thought of people missing out who wanted to attend. Hindsight is always a good thing when thinking about how this could have been remedied. Would it have been better if the training had been made compulsory? It was challenging as you travelled with enough resources for 20,25,30 people, which was heavy in load, and then only half turned up. It was always interesting to hear from participants that they were incredulous that more people were not attending, that people cancel at the last minute, and perhaps others could have come. Whilst this was challenging – that the people anticipated did not turn up – it was always wonderful to have people turn up as willing participants, and knowing in your heart and your mind you were going to make a difference in their lives. Overwhelmingly, this happened every time.”

Venues and workshop needs:

Fortunately, we were able to secure a Training Support Officer early in the delivery to source venues, catering and Traditional Owners for the Welcome to Country. Without this support, it would have been very difficult to manage. A key element of searching for the correct venue was to ensure it created cultural safety. Fortunately, we achieved this in 90% of the spaces. We were able to connect with Traditional Owners and organise Welcome to Country for 95% of our workshops. This really set the tone and grounded the workshops and created a sense of wellbeing for the facilitators and workshop participants.

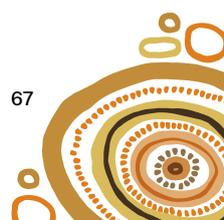
South Australia and the Northern Territory

KWY Aboriginal Corporation

Language Note: The term Aboriginal is used throughout the KWY section and is respectfully inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Project Waterways

The Cultural Responsiveness and Trauma Informed Practice Training Initiative Project Waterways is a two-day nationally aligned training focusing on Target 12 of the National Agreement, which aims to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031. This is achieved through reflective practice to shift mindset, perspectives, approaches and practice. Further, the training utilises a yarning style, creating capacity to talk and dive deeper in workshop settings, as well as encourage workplaces to have gentle disruptions. Part of this reflective practice is to explore responsibility for self and in the context of an organisation, both internally and externally.



Organisational Snapshot

KWY Aboriginal Corporation is a South Australian ACCO established in 2011 after conversations with local Elders around the need for Aboriginal-led responses for families to health, wellbeing and safety. Initially focused on men's behaviour change around domestic and family violence, KWY has since incorporated working holistically with women, children and the wider community. The vision is for Aboriginal peoples to thrive through being culturally strong, empowered and safe, with a current portfolio of programs focusing on:

- Family and Domestic Violence centring place-based safety hub models,
- supporting holistic Children and Youth Work with a strong focus on child development, school retention and positive participation within the community,
- person-centred on mental health and social and emotional wellbeing support,
- Kinship care, Reunification and Finding Families connection services,
- intensive family support services addressing child protection concerns through active case management and whole family support, and
- culturally responsive and trauma informed training to the sector based on Aboriginal wise practice research and evidence base.

KWY seeks to create spaces for change and increased safety and connectivity for our families through not just the delivery of culturally grounded programs, but through advocacy and influence within the sector. The strength of KWY is the breadth of programs that ensure that children, women, men and community are all part of the healing story.

KWY's delivery team consisted of a staffing of two people, and covered South Australia, the Northern Territory and supported in Western Australia. The facilitators were:

- Craig Rigney, a Ngarrindjeri/Kaurna man and the CEO of KWY. Craig's background in facilitation, consultancy and providing complex case management services, coupled with his gift of inclusive storytelling,

ensured he supported the participants in the Northern Territory.

- Sasha Houthuysen, a Yamatji/Noongar woman and Director at KWY. Sasha's background as a Social Worker in Child Protection, Family Services and remote experiences provided a focus on reflective wise practice skills for participants in South Australia and support to Western Australia.

Project Background

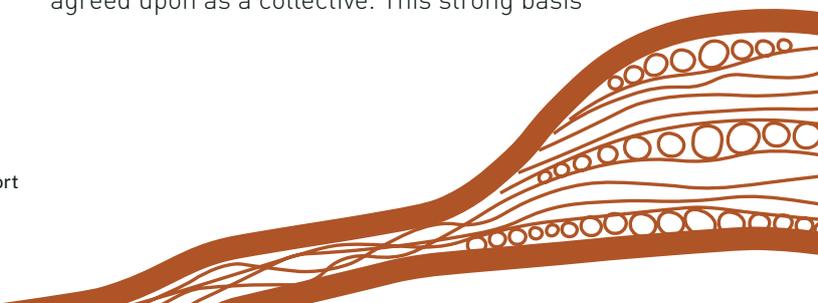
Project Waterways and training is a subject that is at the heart of KWY practice, due to honouring our roots in training, our commitment to Aboriginal-led partnerships and the wide-scale application of early intervention and creating a space for change.

Solidarity

This was developed early in the project and guided how we moved through all phases of co-design, writing, implementing, adapting and evaluation. While all parts were given equal attention and care, the partnership and KWY framed the training and activities around anti-racism and responsiveness. We ensured these were embedded into the process and that the individual methodologies of these core practices were also honoured. For example, anti-racism was addressed with the assumption that racism is maintained in institutions and mainstream systems, so the training ensured this was highlighted in the spirit of truth telling, and participants were given the skills to recognise, understand, unpack and be responsive to anti-racism.

Partnership Development and Co-Design Experience

The partnership development was an integral part of the success of the Waterways project. This started early in the development of the sessions and the planning with relationship-based meetings where roles, responsibilities and agreements of Indigenous data sovereignty and respectful sharing of content and cultural intellectual property were determined and agreed upon as a collective. This strong basis



was carried through in the essential first face-to-face gathering, where cultural safety and our partnership ways of working were cemented.

Another key part of the partnership development was the connecting identities of the Waterways, which would then become the basis of our project. The Waterways analogy also created space for positionality between a strengths-based Country and Kinship lens over a deficit-based mainstream child protection system lens.

The co-design experience then flowed from the partners as a collective with strong adherence to unspoken Aboriginal cultural protocols, especially around following through on mutual respect and an unconditional positive regard from the partners. This was shown through continuous communication, sharing of appropriate stories, bringing ideas to the table, challenging ideologies and ways of doing, centring children, and committing to radical decolonising practices.

Another significant aspect of the national partnership development was the commitment made to attend the offices and countries of the other ACCO and peak organisations. This ensured at a national level that, as a partnership, we understood the context of the other organisation's jurisdictions, ensured a level playing field and that the breadth of the national context and national data around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering out-of-home care was central to the development and implementation.

Modes of delivery and modules

KWY delivered two-day training across three states and territories, including South Australia (eight sessions), the Northern Territory (three sessions) and Western Australia (one session). All sessions were delivered face-to-face, as decisions were made that this delivery style would have the most impact relationally on the hearts and minds of participants.

KWY delivered modules in the order as set out in our co-design process, adapting this to a local context and included additional activities and stories of practice. We found that the pre-set up of the modules, such as setting safety, getting to know each other and getting participants to

understand the National Agreement Targets, specifically Target 12, needed a significant amount of time, and setting this up well ensured that the learning goals and outcomes were understood and connections were easily made later in the training.

Victoria and Tasmania

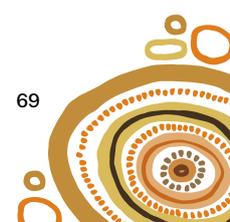
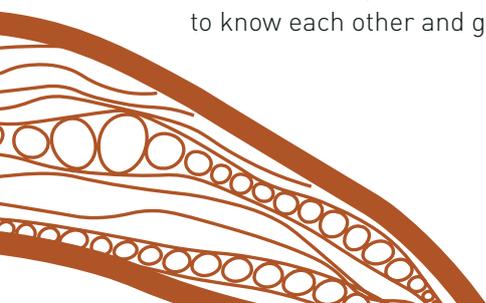
VACCA

VACCA are a leading Victorian-based ACCO that supports and advocates for the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, families, and communities. With over four decades of service, VACCA delivers a wide range of programs grounded in self-determination, cultural strengthening and healing.

VACCA's training team played a huge role in the success of rolling out the Waterways Trauma Informed and Culturally Responsive training package. The team includes four senior facilitators, a facilitator support, an administration/coordinator and management. All our senior facilitators, as well as both senior managers, have co-facilitated our Waterways training.

Our team chose to present Waterways as a one-and-a-half-day cultural training program, designed to build on participants' capacity to work in a more culturally safe and responsive way with Aboriginal children and families. We committed to ensuring that each session delivered, both online and face-to-face, was co-facilitated to ensure the wellbeing of our staff when delivering heavy content and carrying the cultural load. Our approach focused on a mix of regional and metropolitan delivery and provided an online participation option. This approach allowed us to deliver a total of 14 Victorian-based trainings and two Tasmanian-based trainings.

The background papers focused on the National Agreement Target 12, with a trauma informed approach. As we navigated through DSS information, it became clear that the scope and outreach of services were broad. DSS rigidity proved challenging throughout the project, from the information, expectations and requirements of each partner. The SNAICC team facilitated



and managed risk for us and mitigated where possible, and provided intense and additional support with data requirements. The project background did not reflect the immense data requirements. DSS need to do better and not expect unnecessary information.

The highlights and strengths of the project were the establishment and nurturing of foundational connections and relationships, content design which celebrated Aboriginal worldviews and trauma informed care, and implementation planning.

SNAICC and Yamurrah facilitated and nurtured connection from conception, creating safety, sharing about who we are as people, identifying our strengths as Aboriginal people, aligning our values to the project and determining how these factors would be reflected and embedded into our ways of working. Waterways reflects all these elements and how we are connected. This process was fundamental in ensuring we had agreed principles, safety and connections as our foundation, which proved to be sustainable.

Yamurrah shared their experience and expertise with the partnership to enhance our goals and outcomes by designing integrated content from each partner; this method was critical to the success of the project. Co-design was necessary as each partner could adapt to fit their needs as an organisation, allowing each partner choice and decision-making autonomy.

Overall, the structure of having SNAICC as Project Lead and Yamurrah as cultural facilitators and content design developers provided the partners with opportunities to deliver a successful trauma informed training product and develop positive relationships.

Overview of the mode of delivery, including modules

VACCA delivered Waterways training through a combination of face-to-face and online sessions, primarily across Victoria, with two sessions held in Tasmania in Nipaluna/Hobart and Launceston. The training facilitators ensured an interactive and reflective approach was used, incorporating videos, self-reflection activities, breakout discussions, yarning opportunities and engagement tools to build a safe, inclusive space where participants could be open to learning.

Day one introduced participants to the purpose of the national Waterways training, with a focus on Target 12 of the National Agreement. After a few sessions, we worked on a new flow that laid the groundwork for Module One: Trauma Informed Practice and Care, which covered trauma, brain development, Aboriginal Healing and trauma-informed principles. This was followed by Impacts of Colonisation (Module 2), which provided an understanding of the historical and ongoing trauma that Aboriginal peoples and communities face, building on what they already know. Aboriginal Worldviews (Module 3) addressed cultural strengths, Kinship and protective factors. The day closed with a focus on Vicarious Trauma and Self-Care, including the self-care of our participants, acknowledging the heavy content of the day.

Participants returned for another half-day, and we built on this foundation. We began with group reflections and deep listening. Module 4: Power, Privilege and Wise Practice investigated white privilege, racism, cultural humility and solidarity through yarns and reflection. Module 5: Self-Determination and Partnerships focused on respectful relationships, reciprocity and allyship. The program wrapped up with a commitment-making activity, final reflections and a closing yarn.







Independent Evaluation

Murawin

SNAICC contracted Murawin, a national Aboriginal-owned and led consultancy that specialises in social impact and research, to perform an external evaluation on the Waterways partnership model and training effectiveness.

Murawin's evaluation approach was grounded in their Barri Marruma Framework, which provides a culturally appropriate methodology that places Country and Aboriginal ways of knowing at the centre of the research process.

Project Waterways' evaluation methodology was designed to provide a comprehensive assessment of project effectiveness whilst maintaining cultural safety and methodological rigour.

Primary evaluation objectives focused on documenting training effectiveness across different jurisdictions, measuring impact on service delivery practices, and identifying factors that facilitate or constrain successful implementation of cultural responsiveness and trauma informed approaches.

Key evaluation questions were designed by Murawin in consultation with SNAICC to address both process and outcome dimensions of project implementation. Process evaluation examines the effectiveness of partnership arrangements, training quality and cultural appropriateness, and factors influencing successful delivery across different jurisdictional contexts.

Outcome evaluation focuses on changes in participant knowledge, confidence and practice behaviours, as well as organisational-level changes in practice and service delivery approaches.

Geographic scope

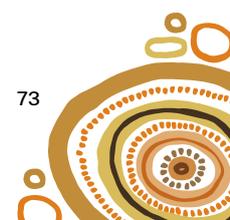
The geographic scope encompasses eight participating states and territories with evaluation activities designed to capture both common themes and state-specific variations in implementation experiences. This comparative approach enables identification of transferable lessons whilst respecting local contexts and adaptations that enhance training relevance and effectiveness.

Evaluation timeline

The evaluation timeline spans from September 2024 to July 2025, allowing for data collection across all phases of project implementation. This includes observation of the co-design, assisting the program partners to produce a theory of change and program logic for the project, observing training delivery and follow-up with a sample of participants. This scope enables assessment of both immediate training effects and early indicators of sustained practice change within participating organisations.

Evaluation Domains

Murawin carried out their evaluation in two main areas: training effectiveness and service delivery impact.



Domain 1: Training Effectiveness

Murawin employed a multi-methodological approach to evaluate training effectiveness across all participating jurisdictions, utilising both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods grounded in the Barri Marruma Framework to ensure cultural safety whilst delivering rigorous evaluation outcomes.

Training Observation Methodology: Direct observation was conducted across the delivery sites of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. Observations planned for Sydney and Western Australia could not be conducted. Observations utilised a structured framework to understand context, content, engagement and modality.

Pre- and Post-Training Assessments: 238 Pre-Post DEX SCOREs were analysed for this evaluation from Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. Pre-training assessments established baseline knowledge levels, whilst post-training assessments attempted to estimate the learning gains for each criterion. Data was not available at the time of report drafting for South Australia and the Northern Territory. Data from Tasmania was excluded due to a very low sample size.

Partnership Surveys and Stakeholder Interviews: 11 partnership surveys captured data regarding coordination effectiveness, communication efficiency between partner organisations and deliverable expectations across all participating jurisdictions. Surveys incorporated jurisdiction-specific elements to identify jurisdictional differences in implementation approaches. Structured interviews with subject matter experts provided deeper insights into partnership dynamics and implementation effectiveness, with protocols customised for each stakeholder group.

Jurisdictional Analysis: Jurisdiction-specific insights were captured through yarning circles in different participating jurisdictions. Site visits enabled direct observation of training content adaptation to local contexts. In each jurisdiction, evaluation activities were undertaken with respect to local cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and completing on-Country activities.

Domain 2: Service Delivery Impact

The evaluation focused on measuring immediate changes and medium-term transformations in organisational practices following training participation.

Follow-up Surveys and Interviews: Follow-up post-DEX surveys distributed several months post-training assessed persistence and application of newly acquired knowledge and practices amongst trained staff and management. Follow-up interviews with 13 previous participants explored specific practice changes, implementation challenges and organisational factors supporting or hindering the integration of culturally responsive and trauma informed approaches that contribute to the objectives of Target 12 of the National Agreement. Follow-up interview recruitment operated through established relationships with jurisdictional peak organisations, who acted as intermediaries to facilitate participant contact and obtain appropriate consent. However, the consent processes proved challenging in Western Australia, Victoria and South Australia, where many participants could not be contacted for follow-up interviews. The evaluation recognised that future iterations should establish explicit provisions for follow-up engagement within the initial consent framework to ensure more comprehensive participant representation across all jurisdictions.

Training Partnership Analysis

The Waterways training is grounded in First Nations worldviews and a shared commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural responsiveness, trauma informed practice and systemic change.

Cultural safety was not a static principle but an embedded practice, shaping everything from design and participant engagement to the structure of materials, imagery, training exercises and workbooks. At each phase, the project partners created spaces for trust building, reflection and mutual respect; especially in contexts where the training touched on histories of trauma or systemic injustice.

Face-to-face relationship building was foundational to partnership success.

The partnership's effectiveness was fundamentally anchored in deliberate, face-to-face relationship building that created deep trust and cultural safety among all stakeholders. Evidence from both jurisdictional peak trainers and program partners emphasised that in-person gatherings were fundamental experiences rather than merely logistical meetings, establishing the foundation for all subsequent collaboration and training delivery success.

This relationship-building approach enabled partners to navigate uncertainty, adapt to changing circumstances and maintain commitment to shared objectives throughout the project lifecycle. The strength of these relationships supported all other partnership activities, creating a resilient foundation that could withstand external pressures and bureaucratic challenges.

'It set a real healing tone; it set a real connection tone... I think seeing the diversity of our country and then being able to experience different countries throughout those processes was... really important, I think for a national project' (State Program Partner).

The cultural safety created within the partnership enabled difficult conversations about historical trauma, racism and systemic challenges to occur in ways that were healing rather than harmful, setting the tone for similar conversations within training sessions.

Co-design process successfully incorporated diverse cultural knowledge and expertise

The partnership successfully incorporated diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge from across different states and communities through a collaborative co-design process that respected both local specificities and national coherence.

Partners brought their specific regional cultural knowledge, organisational expertise and community connections, underpinned by substantial clinical experience and lived expertise that enriched the training content.

The facilitators demonstrated deep commitment to continuous learning, actively engaging with additional research, consulting with cultural experts and incorporating new knowledge into their practice to ensure training remained current and culturally appropriate. This dedication to ongoing skill development was particularly evident in how facilitators adapted their approaches based on local contexts and participant needs, with many describing the training delivery as a significant career highlight that enhanced their own facilitation capabilities.

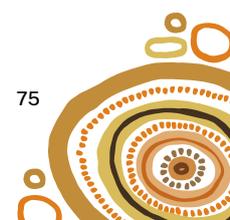
The process was significantly enhanced by Yamurrah's involvement in evidence gathering, cultural validation and the systematic inclusion of local voices in training design and delivery. The co-design approach ensured that training content was not imposed from a central authority but emerged from the collective wisdom and experience of ACCOs across the country, creating authentic and culturally grounded content that resonated with diverse audiences.

Strong informal communication networks

While a SharePoint site was available, email served as the primary mode of communication, which at times meant that some information was more challenging to track.

Jurisdictional partners identified opportunities for improvement in communication infrastructure that could have enhanced efficiency, reduced individual administration and supported more systematic knowledge sharing between states. Despite these challenges, the partnership enabled the successful navigation of complex coordination requirements across multiple jurisdictions with varying regulatory and cultural contexts.

SNAICC's substantial coordination and project management support was fundamental to the success of this multi-jurisdictional initiative.



Their role in maintaining connectivity between multiple ACCOs across jurisdictions formed the essential infrastructure that ensured the project's cohesion and sustainability. This comprehensive back-end support enabled effective collaboration, consistent delivery standards and meaningful partnerships that strengthened the entire program framework.

National Approach and Local Customisation

Each jurisdiction faced unique coordination challenges related to geography, local regulatory environments, organisational structures and cultural contexts, but partners demonstrated flexibility in adapting approaches whilst maintaining national consistency in core principles. This adaptive capacity was particularly evident in Western Australia's vast geographic diversity and Queensland's specific cultural and organisational contexts, where partners successfully pivoted delivery methods, language and storytelling approaches to meet local needs. The partnership's ability to maintain coherence whilst allowing for local adaptation became a significant strength that enhanced both effectiveness and cultural appropriateness across diverse contexts.

Training Effectiveness Evaluation

Impact on Service Delivery: There is sufficient evidence to indicate that the training initiative achieved positive outcomes across all areas in the short term (0–6 months). A longer evaluation period would allow for stronger conclusions about its impact on service delivery. Quantitative data shows that many participants improved their overall competency, with a national average increase of +0.79 points. Participants progressed from developing to applying levels across the cultural responsiveness domains (K1–K4), and many were able to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander frameworks into their practice after completing the training. Early practice changes were evident, particularly in participants' confidence in applying trauma informed approaches. Participants reported progressing from moderate cultural awareness to feeling equipped for daily implementation.

Program partners noted the training's authentic Aboriginal-developed content and respectful delivery methods created conditions for sustained practice transformation, establishing a strong foundation for longer-term organisational and systemic change.

Challenges and Risk Management

Ongoing Risk Areas Requiring Attention: Key ongoing risks include maintaining stakeholder engagement without adequate administrative support systems. Other risks involve addressing trainer capacity constraints. Additionally, there is the challenge of managing the emotional and cultural load placed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainers who repeatedly deliver content about historical trauma. The compressed project timeframe also compounded recruitment challenges, creating a cascading effect of resource constraints that undermined the project's sustainability and effectiveness. Beyond the limited implementation period, the uncertainty surrounding participant recruitment created a cautious approach to trainer procurement, where organisations were reluctant to commit resources to recruiting suitable trainers without confidence in securing adequate participant numbers. This hesitancy meant that potential trainers and facilitators could not be offered guaranteed work hours or employment security, further limiting the pool of available qualified personnel. The combination of tight deadlines and recruitment uncertainty created a self-perpetuating cycle where the lack of trainer capacity constrained program delivery, whilst the uncertainty of program delivery deterred qualified trainers from committing to the initiative.

Lessons Learned

Areas for Improvement Identification: Future iterations of this kind should require longer implementation periods to enable sustainable relationship-building and training delivery. Administrative support gaps need addressing through dedicated project management and logistical coordination to reduce the burden on delivery partners. Centralised communication systems could also be established, including

shared digital platforms for coordination, file storage and continuous partnership communication between jurisdictions.

Scalability Considerations: Sustainable expansion requires more investment in trainer development, support infrastructure and workload management that recognises the particular demands of cultural safety training delivery. Minimum two-trainer teams with dedicated cultural safety and emotional support protocols are important for maintaining quality whilst protecting trainer wellbeing. Whole-of-organisation training approaches would ensure management alignment and sustained implementation support.

Strategic Participant Recruitment: Future program iterations should include the development of a comprehensive joint marketing and participant recruitment strategy that addresses the challenges identified in

gaining access to the right participants. A coordinated approach involving all partners could establish consistent messaging, standardised enrolment processes and shared recruitment responsibilities that would provide greater certainty.

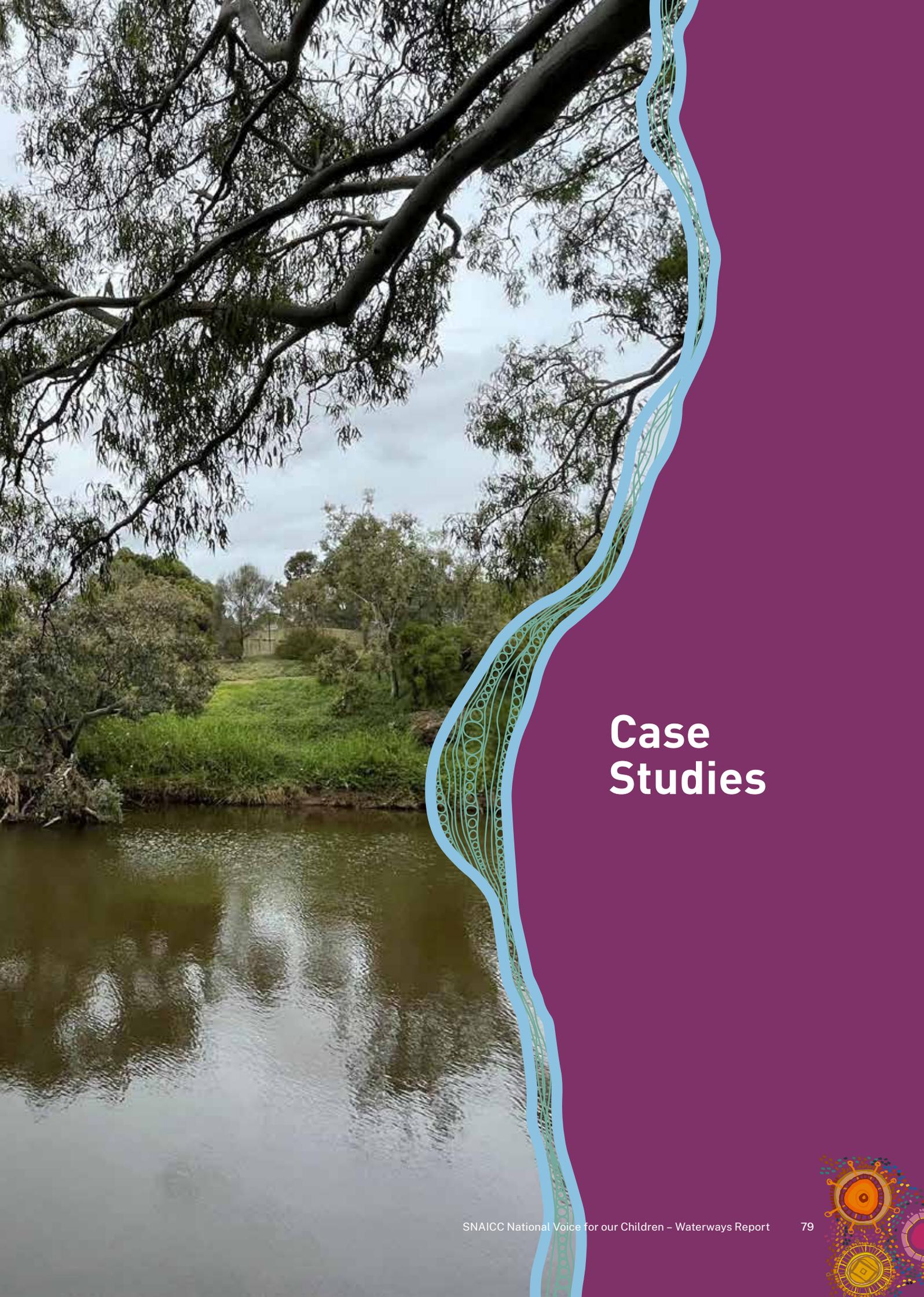
Sustainability Factors: Long-term sustainability requires funding that addresses the critical gap between individual learning and workplace application, extending well beyond initial training delivery to encompass comprehensive implementation support. Sustainable funding structures should support centralised administrative infrastructure, including standardised communication systems, streamlined consent and data collection frameworks and coordinated participant recruitment strategies that harness the established networks and credibility of state peak organisations.

Recommendations

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enhance Training Delivery and Support | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use Two-Trainer Teams: Ensure every session is delivered by two trainers; one focused on content, one on cultural and emotional safety. 2. Build in Follow-Up Support: Offer organisations and participants refresher sessions, peer support and links to ACCOs post-training. 3. Grow the Trainer Workforce: Support pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainers, including mentoring and workload management. 4. Adapt Training Locally: Keep flexibility for cultural and regional tailoring of content. |
| Sustain the Partnership Model | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Agree on Governance: Develop shared protocols for IP, decision-making and cultural content ownership. 10. Improve Communication Tools: Set up a central platform for coordination, file sharing and cross-state learning. 11. Invest in Relationships: Fund regular in-person gatherings and co-design time. 12. Establish Sustained Funding: Additional funding to extend beyond training delivery to include comprehensive implementation support. |
| Improve Evaluation and Tracking | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Standardise Consent and Feedback: Use consistent protocols across states for follow-up and feedback. 14. Track Metro vs Regional Data: Collect and report rural/remote vs urban outcomes. 15. Expand What's Measured: Include practice change, client outcomes and organisational culture metrics. |







Case Studies



New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory

AbSec LDC

Case Study 1 Waterways Training (Taree)

Challenge In my first solo delivery of the Waterways Training in Taree, the session proved challenging due to mixed responses on Day One. A small group of three younger staff members from a large local out-of-home care and disability support service—an organisation with many Aboriginal clients in the Manning and Great Lakes regions—were reluctant to engage.

During the first two modules (First Nations Worldviews and Foundations of Families and Impacts of Colonisation), these participants disengaged from the group discussions and held side conversations. Their contributions were often drawn from online influencers and commentary about the recent ‘Voice’ referendum, lacking historical accuracy or evidence. This behaviour diluted the learning experience and disrupted the broader class discussion.

Response To address this, I initiated an open conversation, inviting participants to share their objections and perspectives honestly. This created space to contrast their views with factual, evidence-based material and lived experiences from Aboriginal communities. Senior staff members also contributed, sharing personal stories about the challenges of building trust and overcoming bias in their professional roles. Their input helped to ground the training in real-world practice and model constructive engagement.

Outcome The senior staff directly challenged the younger participants to listen respectfully and engage with the training material. I then offered the younger staff targeted opportunities during activity sessions to connect their perspectives to practical strategies for working with Aboriginal families and communities.

Outcome This approach proved successful. The younger staff shifted their engagement from resistance to participation, contributing more thoughtfully to discussions and applying a modern lens to their practice. Their contributions were acknowledged by a senior manager in the class, who praised their growth and openness.

The session demonstrated how creating space for honest dialogue—combined with peer influence from senior staff—can transform resistance into constructive engagement, strengthening the impact of Waterways Training.

Case Study 2 Waterways Training (Dubbo)

Challenge During Module 2 (Colonisation) of the Waterways Training in Dubbo, a participant—a middle-aged woman—openly challenged the learning material. She expressed that some slides felt like ‘White Guilting’ and made her feel personally responsible for historical events. As the training continued into Modules 2 and 3, she became increasingly outspoken, creating tension within the group.

Response To address this, the facilitator initiated an open group discussion. The purpose was to clarify that the training draws on historical facts and data, not to assign blame. Participants were reminded that the Waterways Project exists to build understanding of Australia’s history and to strengthen participants’ ability to engage respectfully and effectively with Aboriginal children, families and communities.

Outcome The open discussion proved to be a turning point. The participant shifted from defensive, statement-driven responses to asking genuine, open-ended questions. Her curiosity grew, with a particular focus on how she could apply the learning to her professional role.

Outcome A one-on-one debrief with the participant at the end of Day One reinforced these insights. By Day Two, her approach had noticeably changed—she engaged more openly and constructively. The group demonstrated greater understanding of the historical context and a stronger commitment to building respectful relationships with Aboriginal communities.

The case illustrates how Waterways Training can move participants from defensiveness to openness, enabling both personal and professional growth.



Northern Territory

KWY Aboriginal Corporation

Case Study 1 Darwin

In Darwin, the facilitator observed that many participants were either new social workers or just entering the social sector. As a result, the group reported limited experiences and confidence, leading to a sense of uncertainty about what to expect from the training.

Recognising this, the facilitator dedicated extra time to foundational work, ensuring participants understood the basics of the sector and the systems operating within it. This approach allowed participants to build their knowledge of responsive practices from the ground up, making it easier for them to grasp how sector understanding translates to effective practice.

The feedback highlighted that by going back to basics and being responsive, participants gained a deeper comprehension of the content and felt more equipped to apply what they'd learned to their own practice.

A key takeaway from the training was the creation of a safe space, which proved essential for participants to openly share their experiences and feelings about being new to the sector. The skill and approach of the facilitator ensured that attendees felt secure enough to discuss their uncertainties and challenges, furthering a supportive environment. This sense of safety contributed to a more positive and enriching experience, allowing participants to engage more deeply and confidently with the content.

Case Study 2 Alice Springs

Waterways training in Alice Springs found that most participants were Aboriginal, either from the local community or mob who had moved to Alice Springs.

As a result, the training content was adapted to prioritise a stronger sense of cultural safety, allowing space and time for Aboriginal participants to share their stories if they felt comfortable. Additionally, the facilitator incorporated yarning circles into the content; this approach also ensured that culturally responsive methods validated Aboriginal ways of working for participants, encouraging an environment where the non-Indigenous participants felt secure discussing challenging topics such as whiteness and white guilt among their Aboriginal peers.

There was strong support for promoting cultural safety throughout the group, with many participants expressing their appreciation for the culturally sensitive approach taken during the training. The Aboriginal facilitator played a key role in establishing this environment by clearly setting expectations at the beginning of the day and thoughtfully guiding the group through the planned activities, ensuring everyone felt respected and included.

South Australia

KWY Aboriginal Corporation

Case Study 1

Within the context of South Australia, there has been significant racist rhetoric post-referendum, throughout the establishment of the South Australian Aboriginal Voice to Parliament and the most recent elections. This presented itself as some local organisations and councils (even some of those receiving DSS funding) refusing to do Welcomes to Country and Acknowledgements of Country.

At KWY, we choose to address this in alignment with the WATERWAYS methodology with the principle of anti-racism.

Through the co-design process of the training, we found that with non-Indigenous practitioners, there was a significant fear and apprehension about doing an Acknowledgement of Country and fear of doing the wrong thing was one of the biggest barriers to culturally responsive practices. With this knowledge, we choose to incorporate conversations about Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country, which included on day one a personalised Acknowledgement of Country, discussions about usage, meaning and a video created by local Kurna Elders and community peoples of the Country in which we trained.

On day two, the Acknowledgement was done in a meditative format that incorporated the mindful visualisation of an Acknowledgement focusing on Country and connection, and, when weather permitted, was conducted outside at the local park. This might seem like a small token however the understating and application immediately of being able to step into their solidarity and make small changes that centre children turned out to hold the highest confidence rates from participants as this ice breaker and realisation that small changes can centre children because an essential tool of mindset shifts that meant participants could open up to the idea of responsive change in increments.

Case Study 2

KWY early on decided that we would like representation from as many organisations as possible, so we would put a cap on staff from organisations and encourage the knowledge to be shared back from participants. However, KWY had an NGO that put a case to us about their cultural learning journey and commitment to culturally responsive and trauma informed practices. From these negotiations, it was agreed that they could have a place in every session run over the course of the pilot.

They lived up to their commitment and became one of the highest percentages of participants from an organisation over the national data set. They also committed to having multiple layers of their staffing attend the sessions, including representation from their practitioners, team leaders, managers and even their CEO.

As a result of this commitment, they have taken the partnership with KWY as an ACCO further, and they have committed to continuing to formalise a partnership with KWY and would like to continue the learning journey through the setting up of cultural supervision, communities of practice and additional extensions of their cultural responsive and trauma informed training. They are now also open to initial conversations around transfer of authority and how this process can be supported.



Queensland

QATSICP

Case Study

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| Challenge | <p>Early in the design phase of the Waterways conception, Waterways connected with some of the DSS-funded organisations where pre-existing relationships and connections were already established. This was effective as it helped shape our understanding of the audience and supported the promotion of the workshops.</p> <p>Through conversations, it was clear that this organisation was doing a wonderful job offering universal programs to children and families, but by looking at their Queensland data, they still had very small numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. With over 10,000 members, only 619 identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.</p> |
| Response | <p>Although there was a high number of front-line attendees from the organisation, it was clear that Waterways would also be extremely beneficial for those in decision-making executive positions. These roles have more influence in changing the practices, policies and procedures that impact how the front-line workers can embrace and implement the strategies gained from attending the Waterways training.</p> |
| Outcome | <p>Creating a safe and welcoming environment was pivotal to ensuring that all can experience and unpack a change in perspective.</p> <p><i>“One of my biggest learnings from the Waterways training was a deeper appreciation for the richness, strength, and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures—and how much wisdom they hold in how we relate to each other, to land, and to community.”</i></p> <p><i>“The training challenged me to reflect on how I live and work, and to continue creating spaces where cultural ways of being are honoured, not just included. It reminded me that reconciliation is not just about justice—it’s also about healing, remembering, and reclaiming ways of being that centre people, land, and connection.”</i></p> |



Outcome

When asking how the organisation will interweave their learnings into your current personal and/or professional practice?

"I'm hoping to interweave these learnings into both my personal and professional practice in meaningful and lasting ways. One of the most powerful takeaways for me was the value placed on stillness and deep listening—dadirri—in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. It's a way of being that encourages us to pause, reflect, and truly connect, and it highlighted for me how little space we allow for this in our fast-paced work environments. I believe that when we slow down, we not only build stronger relationships—we also create space to mitigate stress, prevent burnout, and reconnect with what matters.

Professionally, I want to create more space for this kind of cultural practice in our organisation—whether that's through embedding reflective moments into meetings, encouraging respectful silence and presence, or simply making room for heart-led conversations.

I also want to ensure our physical spaces are more inclusive and culturally welcoming, so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel a strong sense of belonging, safety, and visibility. Part of this includes inviting team members to research and share the stories of the Traditional Custodians of the land they work on—at meetings, in our communications, and in our day-to-day awareness. I'm working to embed cultural responsiveness more deeply—such as including questions in our performance development templates about an employee's culture, values, and what's important to them, so managers can build more empathetic, human-centred relationships with their teams.

Ultimately, I want to help our organisation embrace and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, doing, and being—not just to support reconciliation, but to enrich how we work, relate, and care for each other."

Consequently, and to deepen the experience and learning of this organisation, QATSICPP has continued to strengthen the partnerships by offering them to be part of a pilot of a Cultural Parenting Framework, to strengthen their parenting practices. The framework highlights the cultural parenting practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and explores how these practices can be incorporated by services.

QATSICPP is very keen to continue working with the non-Indigenous NGO sector, as a way of broadening our capacity to support the reduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care.



Western Australia

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children

Case Study 1 Newman Women's Shelter

Newman Women's Shelter (NWS) opened in 2020 in Newman in the Pilbara, WA, as a crisis shelter and quickly expanded beyond a 'shelter only' model to include youth, family services, outreach and community programs.

NWS Workforce was actively engaged in the Waterways Training, absorbing learning to bring cultural solidarity into practice. Within the workforce, there is a strong representation of Martu staff, plus staff from Tri Nations backgrounds (Samoa, NZ, Australia) who identify as Blak, and share lived experiences of marginalisation. The Waterways Training was helpful for the workforce with their own histories of intergenerational trauma and colonisation, in addition to supporting their work with Aboriginal children and families.

NWS's CEO Arina Aoina stated, 'training delivered by First Nations women made a strong impact by showing that colonisation and trauma are not distant history but recent and ongoing'. Arina identified that principles of safety, trust, respect and culture are embedded into governance, staff practice, service delivery and partnerships were all impactful elements of the training.

NWS shared their practical application of the Waterways training as impacting:

- client voice and choice in service delivery,
- less invasive documentation practices,
- spaces decorated with original Martu artworks, books and cultural materials—creating genuine, safe and non-tokenistic environments,
- developing a Culturally Responsive Trauma informed Practice Checklist for monitoring across leadership, staff, practice, partnerships and community engagement,
- recognition that cultural responsiveness must be embedded at every layer—not optional or tokenistic,
- learned that healing frameworks must reflect Indigenous worldviews (three-way understanding of sky, earth and middle/top), and
- a reminder that change takes continuous reinforcement until it becomes fully embedded across the organisation.

NWS now operates from a stronger cultural foundation, shaping governance, workforce practice, service delivery and partnerships. Cultural safety and responsiveness are embedded in planning and decision-making. Waterways Training has helped strengthen the ability to challenge funding bodies and insist on approaches guided by community voice and lived experience. NWS is now positioned as a major regional provider not only of shelter but of holistic, culturally responsive services.

Arina Aoina's recommendations for the future of Project Waterways:

'Ensure cultural responsiveness is reinforced continuously so it becomes fully embedded across the sector and expand opportunities for community advisory groups to keep services accountable'.

Case Study 2 Kalgoorlie

The Kalgoorlie Waterways Training was well attended by community service providers across the Goldfields region. There was high attendance from Centrecare and Wanslea staff. The Kalgoorlie training sessions were the most culturally diverse participant group that the SNAICC team trained in Western Australia. The cultural demographics of the group saw most participants identifying as new Australians with under 12 months of residency in Australia.

The Kalgoorlie participant group were deeply respectful of the content and experiences in the Waterways Training. Participants acknowledged their extremely limited understanding of the ongoing history and impacts of colonisation and intergenerational trauma. Many identified this as a barrier in their work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

The Project Waterways team received significant feedback on the importance of opportunities to learn all the modules across the training and the context it was delivered. Participants discussed how the lack of this knowledge had created significant unintended consequences for the families they had worked with and cited the need for further opportunities to develop this knowledge base.



Victoria and Tasmania

VACCA

Case Study 1

A participant working in alcohol and other drugs family reunification attended a face-to-face waterways training session. During our reflections, this participant shared that the Waterways training helped her understand the difference between equity and equality, something she had not fully grasped before. This realisation came at a significant time, during a federal election in Australia, prompting her to critically reflect on her own views, bias, assumptions and the messages she was seeing in the media about equality.

The training challenged her assumptions and highlighted the importance of looking through a cultural lens in her work. She recognised that understanding equity is essential to truly support Aboriginal families, and that culturally safe, trauma informed practice aligned with Target 12 of the National Agreement must be grounded in respect and a better awareness of systemic issues.

Case Study 2

We had three staff members from a large national organisation attend our Waterways training sessions during our rollout. These staff represented different service areas, and all reported positive feedback on the training, including that it was impactful and showed the importance of how culturally safe and trauma informed practice needs to be embedded into the whole of an organisation, and it cannot be an optional addition.

The training highlighted their need to move beyond policy into practice that genuinely supports Aboriginal families and communities. Following the session, we had one of the participants initiate a conversation with their senior leadership group and advocate for a whole-of-organisation rollout. This agency is now working with VACCA to explore how Waterways training can be integrated into their suite of training sessions for all their Victorian-based staff (over 1500 staff). This highlights the recognition that culturally safe and trauma informed practice is essential, not just for compliance, but for meaningful service delivery. It is also a demonstration of how this training is making organisations think about systemic change, directly linking to Target 12 of the National Agreement.



Waterway Reflections

Project Waterways brought significant learnings and reflections, from the development of the partnership to the co-design of the Waterways training package, and across the co-production of the Waterways training.

The development of the Waterways partnership strengthened the capacity of ACCOs to deliver large-scale national projects, while retaining cultural authority and authenticity. The deep respect and commitment to genuine partnerships created opportunities to enhance the reach and impact of the training. This commitment included the acknowledgement of intellectual property rights, which enabled partners to confidently share cultural and intellectual property and ways of knowing, being and doing, to design, produce and deliver the training in collaboration.

Future application for the Waterways partnership builds on the strong foundations established through the co-design and co-delivery model. Continued collaboration between partners will further strengthen sector capacity and ensure that ACCOs remain central in leading, delivering and shaping culturally responsive and trauma informed training across the nation.

Project Waterways training is critical for an under-resourced sector working at the frontline with some of the most traumatised communities nationally. Culturally responsive and trauma informed training is essential to breaking the cycles of intergenerational trauma and to support healing within families and communities. Integrating unconscious bias is critical in understanding systemic, structural and individual roles in perpetuating trauma of ongoing colonisation.

The development of the Waterways training has shown the value of shared resources, collective design and the inclusion of cultural content through lived experience. Its delivery has demonstrated strong sector impact, broad sector and geographic reach, and relevance to contributing to Target 12 of the National Agreement. However, reach remains limited by funding priorities determined by Government Agencies, limiting access for the ACCO sector.



Recommendations

Following the completion of the training, the partners came together to reflect on the data and shared experiences gathered throughout the project. Drawing on insights from the independent evaluation conducted by Murawin, the project team collaboratively identified a series of important resolutions to inform the next phase of the work. These conclusions formed two areas of recommendations:

1. Ongoing Opportunities to provide Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Training
2. Accreditation Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Training



Recommendation One Ongoing Opportunities to provide Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Training

Training is one part of a whole decolonising approach. Standalone training does not produce the level of change required across the whole of an organisation. The holistic approach will require a multilayered approach across organisations, depending on the organisation's size, focus, current programmatic engagement and connection with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Engaging with leadership and boards is critical to shifting policies and practices.

- Offer a calendar of deep dive workshops focusing on specific learning areas that the sector has identified a need for.
- Offer Cultural Security Leadership intensive with executive-level teams of six national organisations to work intensively with their organisational systems, processes and approaches.
- Develop workshops for remote community responsiveness through the trial of audio recordings of community-specific cultural knowledge sharing.
- Facilitate virtual Community of Practice sessions as an additional offering for services that have engaged in the training. The Community of Practice will have a focus on critical reflection and collective learning situated in practice and will be separate for Aboriginal and non-Indigenous participants to ensure cultural safety. All Community of Practice sessions will be structured with specific themes for exploration. We will also offer Reflective Practice sessions for the facilitators of training alongside cultural supervision and support.

Recommendation Two Accreditation Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Training

There is a significant gap around Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Training in formal qualifications. There is also an increasing need for Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed approaches in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities, and communities outside the dominant culture.

The survey inquired about respondents' access to knowledge and skill building regarding trauma informed and culturally responsive practice, whether through self-study or accredited training. Results showed:

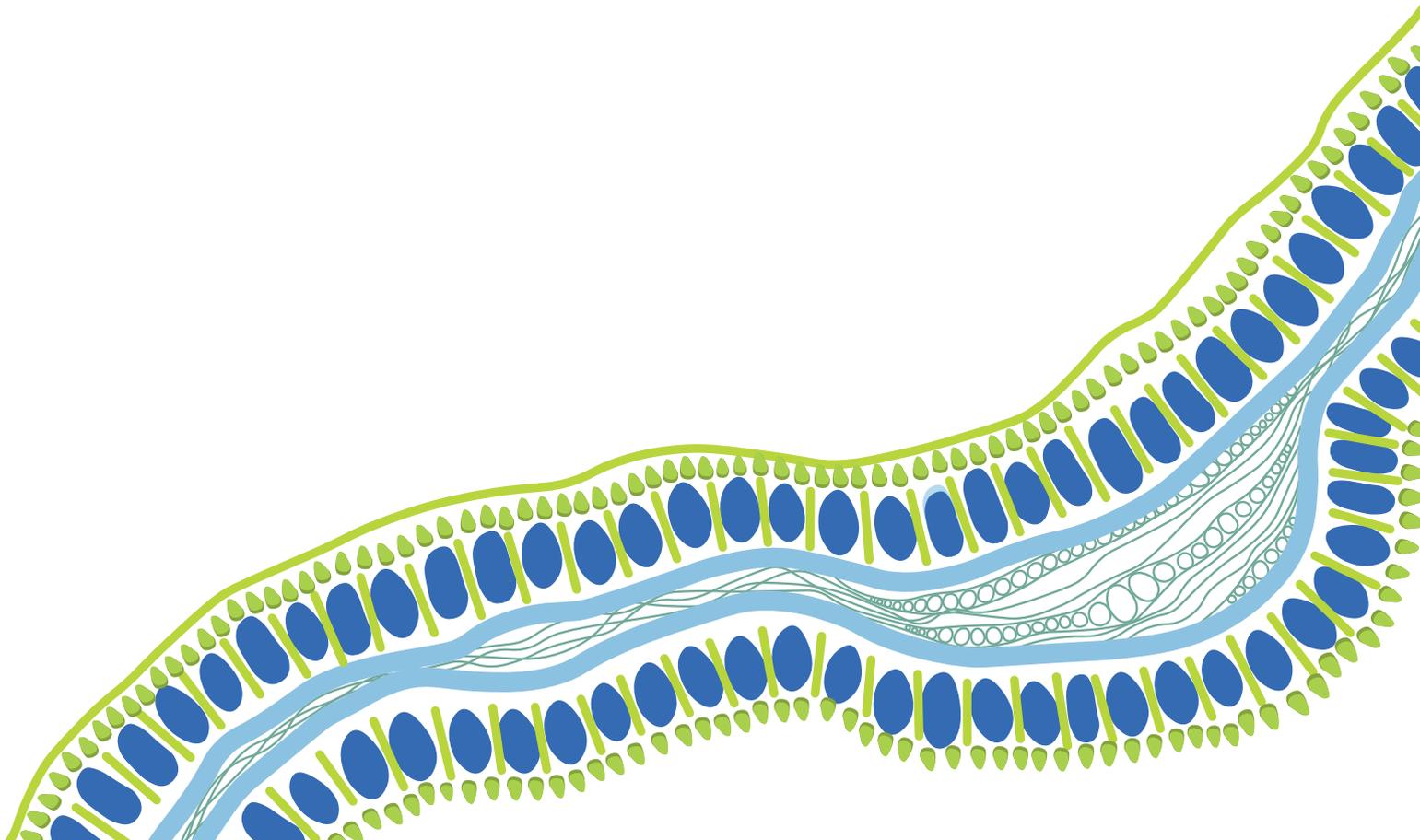
- an average of 46% of respondents learned about trauma informed practices through self-study and 35% through accredited training;
- whereas 45% of respondents had learned about culturally responsive practice through self-study and only 16% through accredited training.

The lack of accredited training in cultural responsiveness across Australia has long been identified. The responses in the survey further confirmed what SNAICC and the project partners have been advocating for.



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