

## Abstract (submitted):

The Looking Forward, Moving Forward and Building Bridges projects both focus on the provision of mainstream services to support Aboriginal mental health and wellbeing. The projects bring together local Aboriginal (Nyoongar Elders) with service leaders, and in the case of Building Bridges, also with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. These engagements are based on the Minditj Kaart-Moorditj Kaart ('sick head to good head') Framework that aims to promote organisational change by privileging an Aboriginal worldview. Principles of relationship, reciprocity, inclusiveness, flexibility, and importantly, trust, create a working together space with Elders as cultural guides to ensure service leaders and their organisations can develop ways to better respond to the needs of Aboriginal families. In 2014, the Framework was co-designed with members of the Aboriginal (Nyoongar) community in suburban Perth and supported by a group of Elders. Since then, service leaders and Elders have worked together to develop better ways to respond to the needs of Aboriginal families, investigating and reviewing their strategies and actions related to workforce, governance and their cultural security overall.

# KAYA WAN-JU

Ngulluk kaaditj  
**Nyoongar** moort  
keyen kaadak n idja  
boodja.  
Ngung myal koort  
wirrin djoorapin  
denang.



*Derbarl Yerrigan*



LOOKING  
FORWARD

# Kadadjiny burdiya

## Learning from Elders, 'Burdiya to Burdiya'

The Looking Forward Moving Forward & Building Bridges projects  
in Aboriginal Mental Health and Wellbeing

**Assoc Professor Michael Wright, Aunty Oriel Green, Uncle Charlie  
Kickett**

**Curtin University**

School of Occupational Therapy, Social Work & Speech Pathology

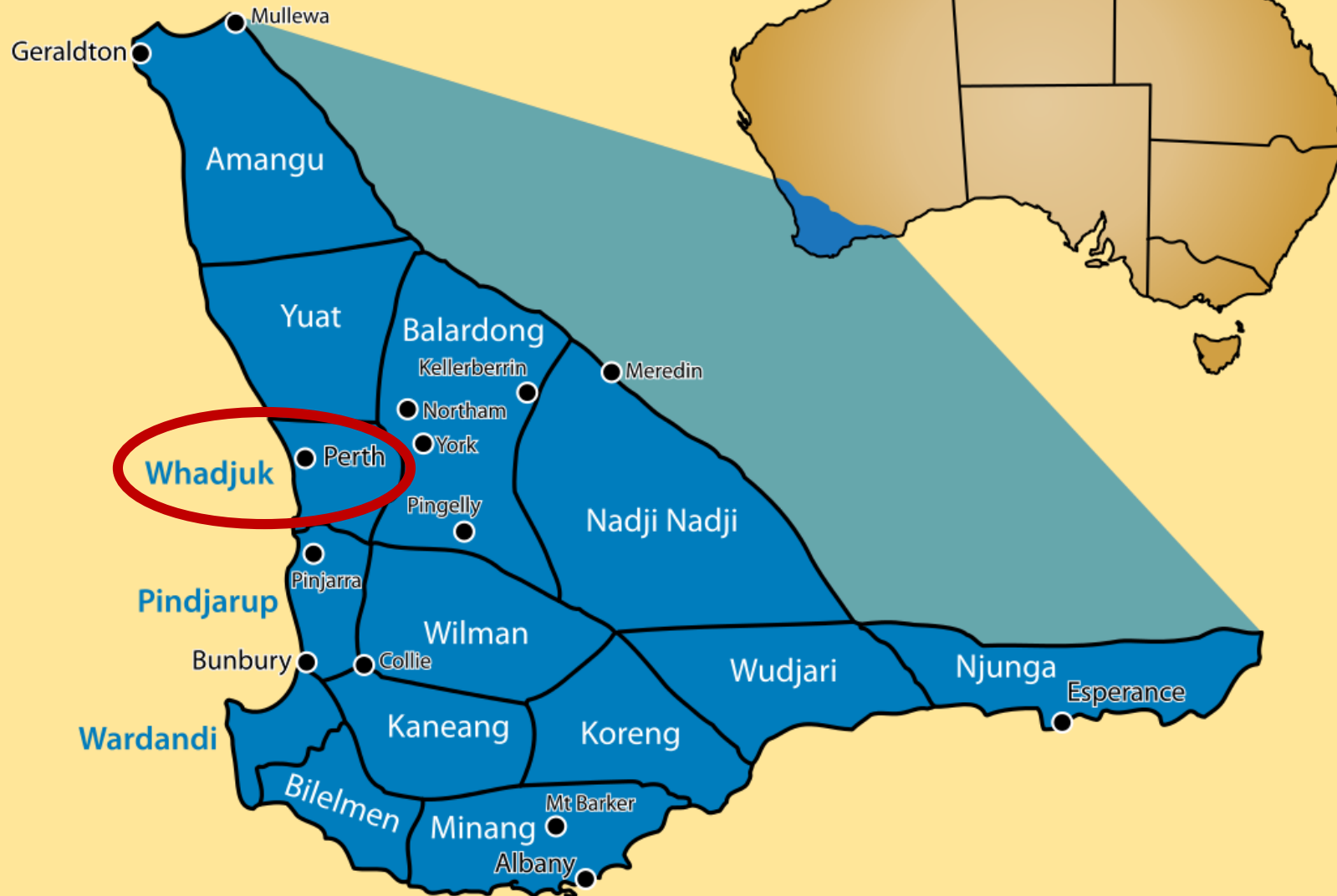
Funded by the National Health & Medical Research Council, WA Mental Health Commission, & nine  
service partners.



Curtin University



**NOONGAR GROUPS (in white/blue)**  
**MAJOR CITIES/TOWNS (in black)**





*Today...*

‘Looking Forward’:  
Learning from the Elders

‘Looking Forward, Moving Forward’ aims  
& preliminary findings

‘Building Bridges’ aims & preliminary findings



LOOKING  
FORWARD





## *Project aims...*

How can mental health and drug and alcohol services be more **accessible** and **responsive** to meet the needs of Aboriginal families?

### **Two key questions:**

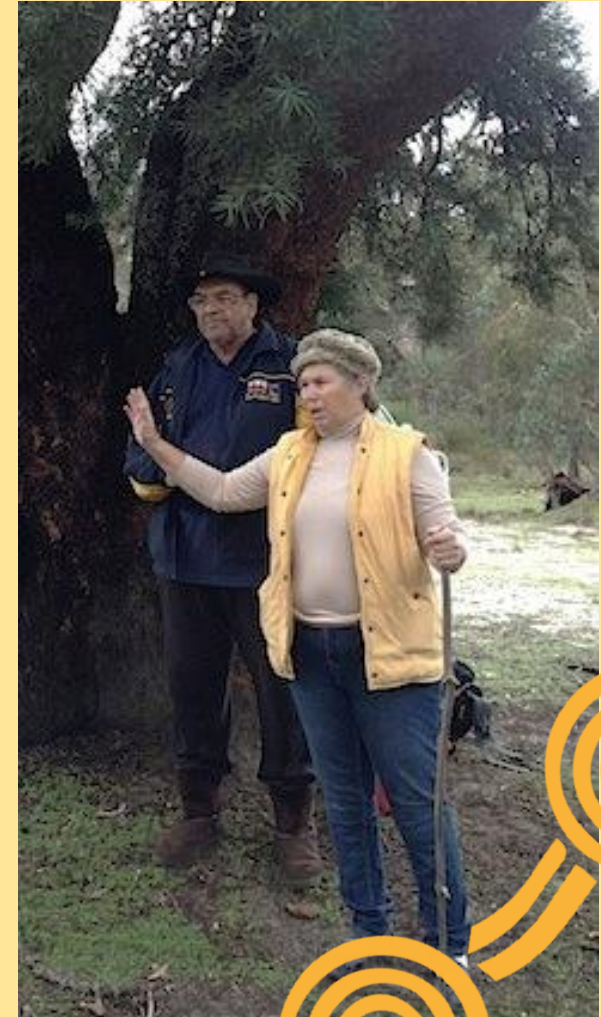
1. **Services:** Why aren't Aboriginal people accessing mental health and drug and alcohol services in a timely manner?
2. **Community:** Are these services 'safe' for them to access as Aboriginal people?





## *Key Findings: Looking Forward Project*

- Deep mistrust of mainstream service providers
- Services did not feel 'safe' for Nyoongar (Aboriginal) people
- **Services lack knowledge about Nyoongar (Aboriginal) culture**



Auntie Viv and Uncle Mort Hansen, Christmas Tree Well giving a Welcome to Country to service staff at an On Country Day, 2014



# Elders are key



The Elders **work directly** with the individual Service Partners as **Cultural Consultants**. The project would not exist without the Elders – they are the key to its success. The Elders:

- act as **cultural educators** by assisting staff to develop a greater understanding and awareness of a Nyoongar worldview and the generational impact of colonisation;
- assist to **build staff capacity** and cultural awareness to allow staff to work confidently and competently with Nyoongar families;
- establish steps to increase **service effectiveness to work with the community** through generating ideas and addressing community needs; and
- assist in the engagement of new **Aboriginal staff & clients** and retaining current staff & clients.

# *Journey with the Elders...*



“The first principle of governance is to share power with the Elders – if you don’t do that, it’s just lip service”  
(CEO, 2018)

Elders participating in the inaugural Lindsay Culbong Cup,  
Family and Community Day, Mental Health Week,  
Champion Centre, Armadale 2014

# Storying with the Elders...

“[learning with the Elders] is a **circular** process, not linear. Coming back to the same place in different ways is part of that **understanding**” (CEO, 2018)

“there’s something about that process [of yarning] that **makes the penny drop** for me” (CEO, 2018)



Aunty Louise and Aunty Joanna in a working together meeting with service managers and staff, Subiaco 2014.

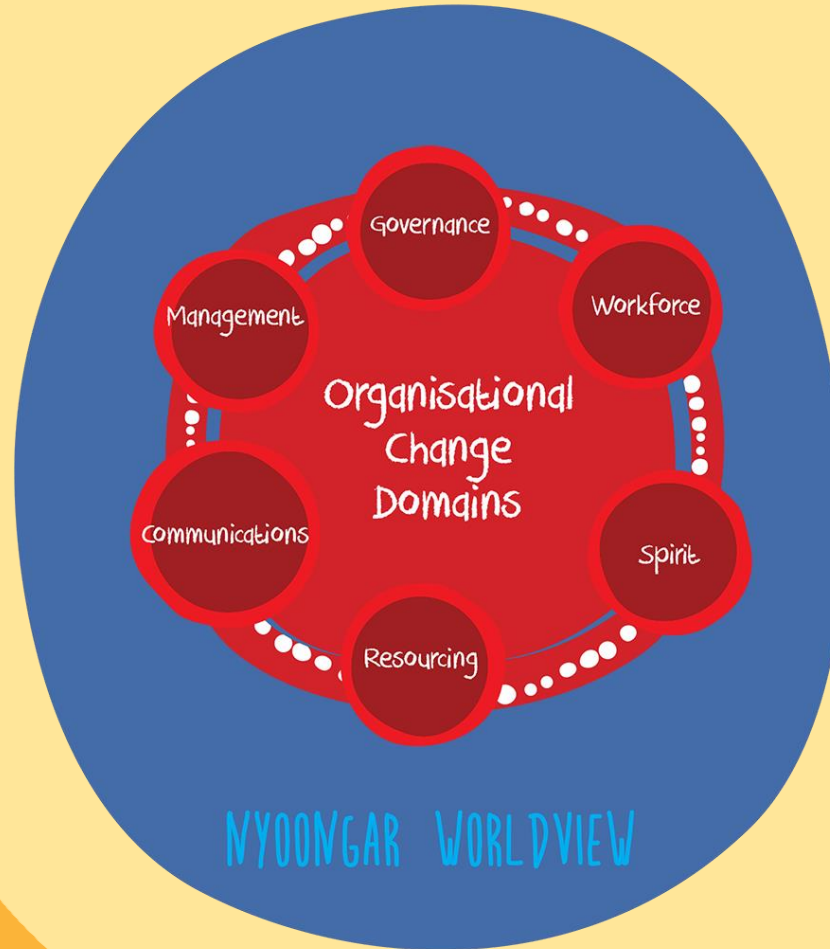


# *Minditj Kaart-Moorditj Kaart*<sup>1</sup>: Framework for systemic change in service delivery

## ACCESS

How are Nyoongar clients **ACCESSING** services?

1. **Implement, measure and validate** the Framework in service agencies.
2. Measure the **collective impact** of the Framework across service agencies



## RESPONSIVE

How are services **RESPONDING** to Nyoongar clients?

3. Design and implement a **translation plan** to maximize the take-up of the Framework across the social services sectors.
4. Assess the **economic implications** of implementing the Framework.



“In meetings I’ve had with the Elders, I  
always have to mentally prepare...

I allow 30 minutes before and 30 minutes  
after, just to **transition those two worlds.**”

(Executive Manager, 2018)





# **Aunty Oriel Green & Uncle Charlie Kickett**

– Elders –





## *Key learnings from our work...*

The Elders are key

Trust is critical

Relationships, relationships, relationships!

Understand your own worldview

Aligning Worldviews on Cultural Security

“the issue for me in the experience of talking to the Elders is cut through, and **talk real**, and **be human**, and have a **personal relationship**”

(CEO, 2018)

# Building

**Bridges**  
Aboriginal Elders and young people working  
with **youth mental health services** towards  
**culturally secure** service delivery

Aboriginal Elders & young people, youth  
mental health services, policy makers



# Take home points

## **Services**

- Culturally Safe Governance
- Dealing with Complexity
- Aligning Worldviews on Cultural Security

## **Elders**

- Open Lines of Communication
- Action Orientated
- Importance of Elders





# Publications

Project contacts: [m.wright@curtin.edu.au](mailto:m.wright@curtin.edu.au)

Bessarab, D and Wright, M. 2019. **The relevance and purpose of social work in Aboriginal Australia – post- or decolonisation**, in Kleibl, T, Lutz, R, Noyoo, N, Dittmann A, Bunk, B, and S, Boitumelo. 2019. *The Routledge Handbook of Postcolonial Social Work*. Routledge.

Wright, M, Culbong, T, Crisp, N, Biedermann, B, & A. Lin. 2019. **'If You Don't Speak from the Heart, the Young Mob Aren't Going to Listen at All': An Invitation for Youth Mental Health Services to Engage in New Ways of Working**. *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*, July. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eip.12844>.

Wright, M, Davison, S & Petch, E, 2017, **Making visible the invisible: Aboriginal forensic mental health**, *Lancet Psychiatry*, September 21, 2017, doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(17\)30234-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(17)30234-1).

Wright M, Lin A, O'Connell M. 2016, **Humility, inquisitiveness, and openness: key attributes for meaningful engagement with Nyoongar people**. *Advances in Mental Health*; 14(2), 82-95.

Wright, M & O'Connell, M, 2015, **Negotiating the right path: effecting change in the provision of healthcare**, *Action Learning, Action Research Journal*, 21(1), 108-123.

Wright, M, 2014, **Reframing Aboriginal care-giving**, in *Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice* (Edn 2), Dudgeon, P, Milroy, H & R. Walker (Eds), Commonwealth of Australia, pp. 243-256.

Wright, M, Culbong, M, O'Connell, M, Jones, T & D. Ford, 2013, **Weaving the narratives of relationship into community-based participatory research**, *New Community Quarterly*, 11(3) Issue 43, 8-14.

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Wright, M, O'Connell, M & Jones, T, 2013, **Open Hearts, Open Hands: A spiritual journey of change**, Handbook produced for service providers participating in the Looking Forward Project.

Wright, M, 2011, **Research as intervention: Engaging silenced voices**, *Action Learning, Action Research Journal*, 17(2), 25-46.



**LOOKING  
FORWARD**



*Derbarl Yerrigan*



# Minditj Kaart-Moorditj Kaart<sup>1</sup>: Framework for systemic change in service delivery

