



Marrin Weejali
Aboriginal Corporation
Substance Misuse – Social Emotional Wellbeing Healing Centre



2020 – 2021 Annual Report

What We Do

Since 1996, the Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation has been providing culturally safe counselling and referral services primarily for, but not limited to, members of Western Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community affected by drug and alcohol abuse, and non-acute mental health issues. Through our holistic approach to counselling, our continuing mission is to help heal the shattered spirits of individuals, families, and communities.



Counselling

Our highly trained counselling staff provide individual counselling to those affected by non-acute mental health concerns as well as those affected by alcohol and other drug (AoD) related issues. Marrin Weejali's holistic approach to counselling and mental health support means that clients can see counsellors as individuals, couples, or families.



Group Therapy

One of our most successful intervention methods has been group therapy and forms a major part of our holistic approach to mental health support. Guided by our team of trained counsellors and mental health specialists, clients can take advantage of our group therapy sessions as a maintenance or relapse prevention program, building on the strength and resilience of each other to fight against alcohol or narcotics addiction.



Referrals and Transition Assistance

As part of our mission to help and heal others, and as a community-based centre for support, Marrin Weejali provides referrals and assistance with transitioning to residential rehabilitation clinics, acute mental health services, and other sources of treatment.



Health Support

Marrin Weejali provides various health programs and services within the community, including preventative and educational programs, linking members of the community with other health care providers to access funding, treatment, and support.



Case Management

At Marrin Weejali, we know that healing does not happen overnight. We offer a range of case management services to support clients on their road to recovery. As part of case management, our staff work with clients to develop a care plan based on their goals, strengths, and needs. Further, staff can connect clients with external organisations and health care providers to ensure that clients get the help they need in the short and long term.



Community Work

As part of our holistic, two-pronged approach to healing and rehabilitation, we recognise the important role communities play in preventing AoD abuse and creating a supportive environment. As a community-oriented organisation, Marrin Weejali works with like-minded groups and organisations within the Western Sydney and ATSI communities to create a better and safer environment.



Brokerage Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Cultures

Marrin Weejali plays a vital role in the health care system by offering a safe and supportive, community-focused point through which members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can access the care they need.

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CEO's Message

Firstly, I would like to thank the Board of Management and staff members for your support during this challenging year.

Agencies / Partnerships / Support

The corporation has been operating for 26 years now, providing services to our community of western Sydney, we continue to develop and maintain partnerships with many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Health and Allied Health services of Western Sydney, including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residential rehabilitation centres in rural areas of NSW.

Forming alliances with like-minded agencies are vital; they allow the corporation to accomplish so much more for our clients and community, we appreciate their support

Covid Vaccination / Information Program

During early June 2021 we were approached by Ms Vicki Mason Aboriginal Cultural Support Worker Wurimbirra Team Western Sydney Local Health District Immunization Program we agreed to establish a Vaccination Hub at Marrin Weejali for the Aboriginal community, elders our staff and clients.

Ms Mason also organised for Dr Stephen Corbett to conduct community information sessions about the importance of the Covid 19 vaccination program, we thank Dr Corbett for breaking down the many barriers, explaining and encouraging our

community of how vital it is to participate in the immunization program, staff, clients, and community members were convinced and participated in the program, approximately 760 community members had their two injections.

We thank Vicki and the immunization team, we also thank the AH&MRC who provided an enormous amount of support, funding, information, PPE resources for staff, clients, and community.

Demand for Services / Programs

The demand for counselling, referral and advocacy services have increased, the corporation receives between 25 to 35 new clients per week requesting our services, programs, and support.

Despite the lockdowns, restrictions and challenges we continued with our services and programs via telephone counselling, zoom meeting etc, I applaud our staff members, they were extremely tenacious in their day-to-day duties providing culturally safe services to our clients and community.

CEO's Message

Web App /Data Base - Investment

During early 2020 at a crucial time the corporation existing Microsoft Access Data Base was replaced by a newly designed Web App Data Base. The data base is subject to the corporation's day to day operations allowing

staff members to work off site or from home, it also collates data for all funding contracts / KPIs etc.

Sincerely,

Tony Hunter, CEO

Mental Health / Challenge

Accessing appropriate acute Mental Health treatment and support services can be devastating, we will continue to meet with the authorities to negotiate change for acute mental health services to be more assessable and appropriate for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.



Chairperson's Message

I would like to thank the corporations' members, Board and staff members, and the many other agencies that are involved with this most needed Aboriginal corporation, in this report I will give a brief overview of Marrin Weejali's governance structure that is of very high standards including the importance of partnerships etc

Marrin Weejali board members have met on six occasions dealing with the organisation's core business with 95% board member participation. Marrin Weejali is classified as a low-risk organisation that routinely meets the government's risk management program standards. The corporation governance structure is of very high standards, meeting agendas are comprehensive and subject to meeting the requirements for an Aboriginal accredited organisation. Furthermore, the corporation is guided by a Strategic Plan, a comprehensive set of Policies, that are reviewed at all management and staff meeting.

An accredited Corporation

The Quality Assurance Program is embedded in Marrin Weejali practice, through weekly contributions from staff at staff meetings and regular evaluations of stakeholder opinion and feedback. Thank you to all the partnering agencies, Marrin Weejali

members, the clients who have provided feedback. I am proud and forever pleased to be associated with the hard-working board and staff.

Risk Management

The corporation's risk management plan is valued and monitored with integrity. Marrin Weejali's board and senior staff members are continuing to establish and maintain professional relationships with funding agencies, project managers. funding acquittals and service reports are submitted in a timely manner as per funding contracts.

We thank the Australian government - The National Australian Indigenous Agency (NIAA). the Department of Health, the Local Health District - Wentwest Primary Health Network. The Department of Community Justice (DCJs). The relationship our CEO maintains with these departments ensures good clear communication and accountability.

Chairperson's Message

Promotion highlights / feedback

The corporation's promotion strategies are about engaging with our community, and likeminded services. Some of the programs held during the year was our annual morning tea, drug and alcohol awareness day, overdose awareness day, health screening hubs, diabetes education programs, these are some of the events that gives the corporation the opportunity to receive feedback and complete surveys, the information from these events is collated and presented at management and staff planning days, to improve service provision and outcomes

Pandemic – Importance of Partnerships

Considering the insidious variant of Covid 19, the corporation continued to manage and find a way to help our community, negotiating and providing a community vaccination hub was extraordinary, this is one life saving result of how important it is to develop and maintain partnerships with likeminded agencies.



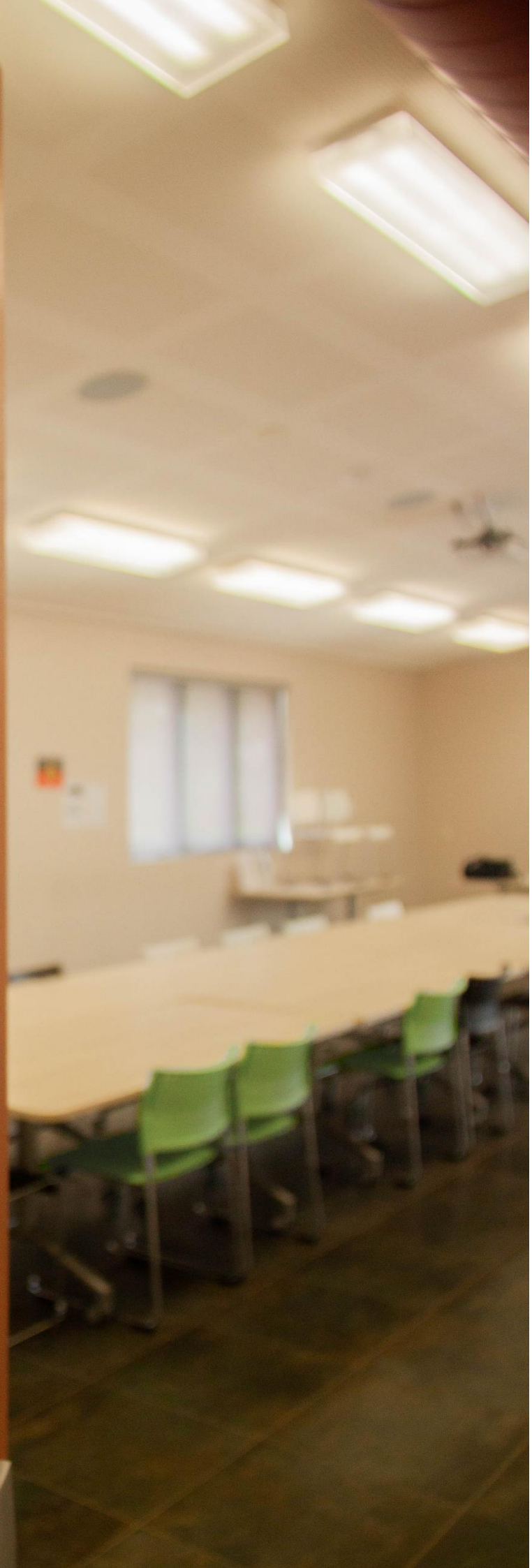
Nicole Donovan, Chairperson

Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation Board Members:

Chairperson	Ms. Nicole Donovan
Treasurer	Mr. Joe Haroa
Secretary	Ms. Karen McNulty
Board Member	Ms. Kristy Kendrigan
Board member	Ms. Rachael German

Meeting
Room

Vacant



About Us

Our Vision

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Western Sydney to live their lives free from addiction and emotional distress.

Our Mission

To help families heal their spirits that have been shattered by drugs and alcohol

Who We Are

The Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation is a community-controlled healing centre for members of Western Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, as well as Sydney's only Aboriginal-run alcohol and drug centre. Founded in 1996 by Tony Hunter, who was inspired by his own struggle with alcoholism, Marrin helps clients reconnect with the parts of their lives lost to alcohol and substance abuse: their friends, their families, and their spirits. This has become our core mission. Today, our team of highly trained counsellors and staff continue that core mission by offering a wide range of evidence-based, therapeutic programs in a culturally safe setting.

What We Do

Since 1996, the Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation has been providing culturally safe counselling and referral services primarily for, but not limited to, members of Western Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community affected by drug and alcohol abuse, and non-acute mental health issues. In addition to alcohol and other drug (AOD) related issues, Marrin provides group therapy and specialists for issues related to gambling, grief and loss, trauma, relationship, chronic health, and emotional and social wellbeing.

As Sydney's only Aboriginal-run alcohol and drug centre, as well as a community-controlled organisation, Marrin's approach to help is tailored to suit our clients' and community's needs. Recognising the importance of community and family in the healing process, our team of highly trained counsellors use a two-pronged approach: reducing risk taking behaviours through a primary prevention effort involving holistic personal and community development; and providing culturally safe, in-house secondary and tertiary treatment.

Marrin's role as a community-based hub for support and a brokerage between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal points of contact means that we strive to go above and beyond when it comes to helping others in need. Working together with like-minded local organisations and members of the local community, we also provide advocacy services, referrals and transition assistance to other health care providers, and legal aid. Our broad approach to support means that we can go above and beyond the typical drug and alcohol service, and truly make a positive difference for our clients, and our community.

Our Values

Respect for Our Community

Respect for the Dignity of Our Clients and their Families

Observance of Aboriginal Spiritual and Cultural Ways of Knowing

Total Commitment to the Wellbeing of Our Clients

Recognition for the Efforts of Colleagues

Compassion for Suffering and Loss

Leadership and Innovation in the Delivery of Culturally Safe Services

Our History

pre 1996

Born out of Tony's experiences with drug and alcohol abuse, Marrin Weejali begins providing counseling, advocacy and support to individuals and families through weekly AoD group meetings at the Holy Family Church in Emerton.

1996

The NSW Department of Housing recognises the value of Marrin and provides a three-bedroom house in Emerton as a base. **Marrin Weejali is formally established.**

1999

Recognising the importance of Marrin's role as a provider of culturally-safe substance misuse services in Western Sydney, a **Regional Plan is commissioned** by the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, **formally highlighting Marrin's value.**

2002

Based on the 1999 Regional Plan, a **Memorandum of Understanding** is signed by Marrin and five other Western Sydney health care providers to ensure that culturally-sensitive AOD services are accessible by Aboriginal people. **Marrin's status as a leader is cemented.**

2009

Recognising Marrin's value and success as a culturally-safe AoD service provider, as well as a trusted hub of support within the community, the federal government provided Marrin with a larger centre in Blackett.

Today

Though much has changed since 1996, including a new centre and a growing team of dedicated staff, the Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation continues to deliver outstanding, culturally-safe AoD services to Western Sydney's Aboriginal community.

Our History

Having personally witnessed the devastating effects of drug and alcohol misuse on his family and friends, Tony Hunter started the Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation. Its core mission – to help families heal their spirits that have been shattered by drugs and alcohol – was influenced, not only out of a concern about the increasing impact of alcohol and drug misuse on individuals, but how it impacted families and the broader community as well.

“Marrin comes from a place of understanding”

- Indy

Tony was inspired by traditional ways of healing, dissatisfied with the western model of health care that prioritised individualism, biomedicine, and new managerialism. Instead, Marrin Weejali’s core philosophy focuses on healing the spirit and all aspects of the family, recognising the importance of community in the healing process.

After completing diplomas in drug and alcohol counselling, Tony began Marrin Weejali as a group therapy service at the Holy Family Church in Emerton. Soon, word of the organisation spread and recognising the importance of a culturally safe AoD service in Western Sydney, a three-bedroom property was provided by the NSW Department of Housing in 1996. The Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation was formally established and now had a place to call home.

During this time, Marrin quickly grew in popularity given its ability to meet the demand for an Aboriginal-specific AoD and social welfare service in Western Sydney.

“When clients come here, their life becomes better”

- The Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal

Its open-door policy cultivated a community of long-term as well as drop-in clients who looked to the centre as a hub of support and even a brokerage between the Aboriginal community and the often-inaccessible non-Aboriginal systems. Marrin was seen as a safe space to seek help for anything ranging from accessing financial assistance to finding out where to desex a cat. Marrin’s team also grew, with several

Our History

new counsellors and staff members being hired during this period to help tackle the plague of alcohol and drug misuse in Western Sydney.

Just three years later in 1999, another major milestone for Marrin arrived. The then Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services provided funding for a Western Sydney Aboriginal Substance Misuse Regional Plan, due to the “overwhelming of Marrin] with clients outlined a need for substance misuse services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in greater Western Sydney and called for a more holistic response to tackle drug and alcohol misuse.

As such, several the recommendations related to and enabled the future development of programs, services, and facilities at Marrin, as well as a set of long-term goals to work towards. In the years that followed, Marrin has made significant progress towards those goals including securing a larger premise for treatment, family support services, and accreditation.

Alongside recommendations for Marrin, the Regional Plan called for a coordinated response to drug and alcohol misuse amongst Western Sydney’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. As such, in 2002, six leading organisations and not-for-profit Aboriginal health care providers based in Western Sydney were called upon to sign a Memoranda of Understanding. This document outlined the coordinated effort and in doing so, further cemented, and recognised Marrin’s status as a leader in the provision of culturally safe AoD services.

**“I’ve been here for 50 years
and survived”**

Tony Hunter

Our History



In 2009, a grant from the Federal Government provided Marrin with a new centre to accommodate the organisation's rapid growth in size and services. With a growing team of counsellors, specialists, and social workers, as well as new and improved programs, Marrin continues to fulfil its core mission of healing the shattered spirits of families affected by drug and alcohol misuse.

Year in Review

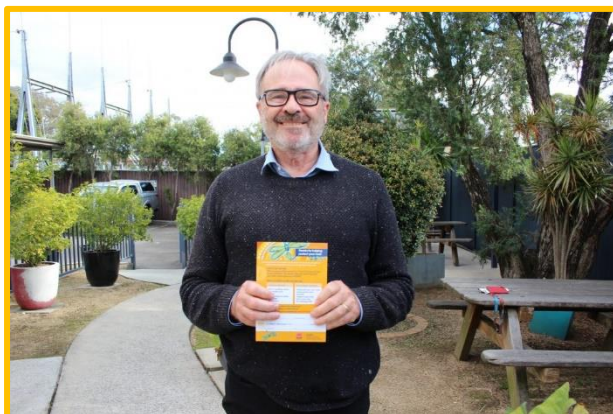
Article in the Guardian

An article, titled “‘Healing can begin with a handshake’: inside Sydney’s only Aboriginal-run drug and alcohol counselling centre” was published in the Guardian on the 14th of December 2021. Written by James Button, an award-winning journalist and former speech writer to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, the article tells the story of Marrin and Tony to a national audience. The article was adapted from a chapter in the 2021 Scanlon Foundation Research Institute book on Blacktown, also by Button, titled “Blacktown – An Australian Frontier”.

Covid-19 Yarn Up and Vaccination Program

In late 2021, NSW was once again placed under lockdown and intense restrictions due to the Delta wave of Covid-19. During this period, Marrin Weejali partnered with the Local Health District and the Centre of Population of Health to provide a culturally safe environment for vaccinations.

Additionally, Marrin Weejali hosted Dr. Stephen Corbert to break down barriers and answer questions related to Covid-19 and vaccinations, leading to 100 attendees getting vaccinated on the day. This vital service to protect our mob and community resulted in the vaccination of 760 individuals during 2020-2021, the majority were members of the Aboriginal community. We thank everyone involved with this program and for protecting themselves, their families, and their community.



Covid-19 Response

Though Covid-19 disrupted Marrin’s ability to deliver services face to face, we are proud to report that a limited number of services were successfully delivered remotely. These include counselling and assessment services, in addition to continued referrals and intakes.

Year in Review

2021 NSW Mental Health Commissioner’s Champion Award

The NSW Mental Health Commissioner’s Champion Awards recognise those individuals who work tirelessly to improve the mental health and wellbeing of their communities. These outstanding individuals are, according to NSW Mental Health Commissioner Catherine Lourey, “pillars of their communities and have shown strong community spirit working ... to improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes”. We are proud to announce that the winner of the 2021 Commissioner’s Award is our very own Tony Hunter for his over 30 years of outstanding service to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of Western Sydney.

“Uncle Tony has shown immense commitment and passion working for over 30 years supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of Western Sydney. In his leadership role, Tony works in ways that are culturally appropriate, respectful, and responsive, setting an example as a valued role model and Elder for many others. I had the opportunity to meet with Tony and his team in June, where his vision and unstinting commitment really shone through,”

– Catherine Lourey, *NSW Mental Health Commissioner*

2020 Industry Partnership Award – TAFE NSW Gili Awards

The TAFE Gili Awards are given to recipients who excel in Aboriginal education and training in TAFE NSW. The Industry Partnership Award was given to Marrin in recognition of our innovative programs, dedication, and empowerment of Aboriginal people.



Events

- Health Outreach Days
- Annual Service Provider Morning Tea
- Services NSW Information Day
- Drug Open Day/ TAFE Day
- Care and Protection Law Workshop
- World Kidney Day



Our Services and Programs

Drug and Alcohol Services

Marrin Weejali provides a range of interventions to help clients with problematic alcohol and other drug (AoD) use and related issues. A holistic approach spanning the following main categories has proven to be highly effective: counselling, group therapy, advocacy, referrals and building bridges with detox, rehabs and other agencies. Foundational to any level of intervention has been Marrin Weejali's commitment to treating clients with courtesy, respect, and dignity and without discrimination, to tailor care plans to the needs of the client and with their involvement and to provide professional and evidence-based service.

Counselling interventions are both educational and therapeutic in character. We see clients as individuals, couples, and families. Our highly trained counselling staff use a wide range of modalities suited to the clients' needs and their circumstances. Apart from our AoD and social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) counsellors we now also have specialists for Gambling, Grief and Loss, Trauma, Relationships, and Chronic Health issues.

Group Therapy allows us to service more clients than we could with one-on-one counselling and has continued to be a major intervention through the following groups:

- **Living with Addictions** - This group is a relapse prevention group about choice and change. It takes a holistic approach and builds on strengths and resilience of group members. It also introduces our clients to how 12 step programs work. Member feedback has shown that the group has given them increased confidence to manage their substance use and pursue goals.
- **Koori NA and AA meetings** - Clients have the privilege to participate in 12 step recovery programs, the programs can be treated as a maintenance or relapse prevention program for extra support to be reminded of the insidious ramifications of addiction. In 2019, our 12-step coverage was expanded and made more accessible through the introduction of a Monday night NA meeting.

Despite major disruptions to our face-to-face counselling services occurred as a result of Covid-19, Marrin successfully transitioned to delivering remote interventions through phone counselling sessions. Though face-to-face services are expected to continue, our phone services have proven highly successful and more accessible to a number of clients.

AT MARRIN WEEJALI IN



204 meetings were held as part of the 12-step self-help program

Our Services and Programs

Drug and Alcohol Services

Client Stories

I have a partner and three beautiful children, but I was struggling with a few addictions in my life. Alcohol, cannabis, and gambling were consuming me. I was gambling every day and it was quite embarrassing that I was blowing my pay cheque and having no money at the end of the week. I felt stupid, embarrassed, and shameful.

Repeatedly making the same mistakes with poor decisions eventually ruined my relationship with my partner. My relationship was going down the drain and I couldn't be trusted. There was constant arguing. I acted over the top with aggression and violence.

I was referred to Marrin Weejali by my parole officer and started phone counselling this year. My counsellor was relatable, and I felt comfortable to talk. I've now learned to approach things differently and to think before I act. I've also learned to slow down and take time, to grow up and not act like a child.

Now I've been able to maintain my gambling abstinence and things are looking up. My relationship with my partner is taking baby steps in a more positive direction.

I didn't believe in mental illness before, but I agreed to see a doctor, along with support from Marrin Weejali, and it has made a big difference. My partner has noticed the change too.

I am very thankful for Marrin Weejali, and I would encourage others to reach out for help if they are in the same position I was.

- G.

Our Services and Programs

Our Social and Emotional Services

The over-use of alcohol and other drugs affects multiple areas of life for both the user and for family members, friends, and the rest of the community.

Marrin Weejali believes that an effective approach to addressing substance misuse issues needs to include strengthening and/or restoring the resilience of individuals, families, and communities through Social and Emotional Wellbeing interventions. These are linked with mental health but go much further by prioritizing the restoration of a holistic connectedness to spirit, mind, body, kinship, community, culture, and country.

This approach, though rooted in Aboriginal culture, has been used to improve, complement, and build upon western models of rehabilitation and intervention. Our ability to go above and beyond biomedical practices, typical of the AoD services industry, has proven highly successful amongst our clients.

The disruptions caused by COVID-19 prevented Marrin from delivering several programs and services during 2021. Listed below are a number of Marrin's SEWB services which have been offered prior to COVID-19.

SEWB Groups

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Mental Health Skills Group (formerly In the Mood)

Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) skills groups teach people to manage a range of intense emotions, commonly seen in those diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. These skills have proven to also benefit those suffering with depression, anxiety, alcohol or drug addictions, and other mental health disorders. Our DBT skills group help clients to develop change-oriented skills and acceptance-oriented skills, more commonly known as: Mindfulness, Emotion Regulation, & Distress Tolerance skills.

Separate Male and Female Domestic Violence Groups

Marrin Weejali's Domestic Violence Groups build upon the strengths of each group member and allow them to share their stories in a safe and supportive setting. This group allows victims of domestic violence to empower and encourage each other, as well as heal their mind, body, soul, and spirit. These groups and programs also aim to spread awareness and information about domestic violence, and the impacts it can have on the people involved.

Anger Management Group

Marrin Weejali's Anger Management Group is about helping people understand and manage the feeling of anger. Members of this group will be able to challenge beliefs

Our Services and Programs

Our Social and Emotional Services

and thoughts about anger, and how to resolve the issues which trigger feelings of anger.

Better Man Domestic Violence Group Program

Developed by the trained counsellors and staff at Marrin Weejali, Better Man is a 10-week program to help men take responsibility for their actions and change their ways of expressing themselves, forging healthier relationships as a result.

Men's Yarn Up Health Group

The Men's Cultural and Spiritual Healing Group offers Aboriginal men the tools and encouragement to become stronger role models for their children, their families, and their communities. The group is facilitated by several trained staff members and designed with input from Aboriginal Elders. The group covers a wide range of issues, including health, social and emotional issues, and spiritual healing.

AT MARRIN WEEJALI IN 2020-21



219 people participated in a men's social and emotional wellbeing health group



106 people participated in an anger management group



133 people participated in a men's domestic violence perpetrator group



81 people participated in a women's domestic violence awareness group

Our Services and Programs

Our Social and Emotional Services

Client Stories

I have three adult sons whose lives have all been touched by addictions.

Who's there for me when my son has an episode with his addiction? When this happens, I feel abused, disrespected, unworthy, and helpless.

I was needing to get a better understanding of myself and so I reached out to Marrin Weejali. As the sessions went by, I learned how to contain my emotions, how to self-care in a better way, how to have better boundaries, accountability and not to be judgemental.

Now I can say I'm more understanding. I can see things in a different light, and I can persevere to be firmer in my boundaries. I gained the courage to say 'no' and that has made me bigger.

- J.

Before I came to Marrin Weejali, I was stressed, confused, self-blaming, doubting and I bottled everything up and then I would explode.

I soon learned that talking about my problems helps and I learned different ways to tackle things. Being able to talk about my grief and that I can't change the past. Also having my counsellor keep an eye on me and checking if I was drug-free helped.

My attitude has changed and now I can take the time to think about things and the consequences. If I'm not sure about something, I'll ask for someone else's opinion.

I would recommend Marrin to anyone out there in the same or similar situation.

- Anon.



Our Services and Programs

Our Health Program - Waluwin

Marrin Weejali's Health Program – Waluwin – provides a way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a way to manage their chronic illnesses and other health conditions. Waluwin achieves this by making health care more accessible. Staff at Marrin can help with organising health checks, care plans and appointments with health care professionals in a culturally safe and supportive environment.

Quarterly Health Outreach Hub

On the first Monday of every third month, Marrin Weejali holds a Health screening day for clients and community in partnership with Wentwest and supported by: Western Sydney Local Health District; Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District; Aboriginal Health Unit—Mt Druitt; Mt Druitt Community Health; Blacktown Mental Health; Australian Diabetes Council; Western Sydney Sexual Health Centre; Care Connect Partners in Recovery; Australian Asthma Foundation; Guide Dogs Australia. We have also been screening our clients to assess when they had their last full Aboriginal Health Check and connecting them to doctors to get this check completed if they wish.



Too Deadly for Diabetes

Marrin Weejali is partnered with Ray Kelly Fitness to deliver the Too Deadly for Diabetes Program to our Indigenous clients who have diabetes or were at risk of developing diabetes. Emerton Pharmacy also in attended on a weekly basis, measuring blood pressure and blood glucose levels (BGL)

The program helps individuals currently medicated for their diabetes to cut down the strength of medication through diet and exercise. People attending had success dropping BGL readings and weight-loss.

Brokerage

Marrin Weejali helps our community with the Chronic Care Program access funding and brokerage which is challenging and limited. Clients can be disadvantaged and unable to access health services, due to the fact that they cannot afford the consultation fees and there can be limited funding to help pay for them.

Our Services and Programs

Our Health Program - Waluwin

AT MARRIN WEEJALI IN 2020-21

74 referrals were made to a specialist or allied health professional



535 Health Screenings were completed at Marrin Weejali on Health Outreach Days



4 clients assisted with medical equipment



135 clients helped with medical advocacy



38 clients with health concerns were referred to a local GP leading to 13 identified cases with multiple and complex needs



25 clients were supported and assisted with medical brokerage funds for specialist treatment



Our Services and Programs

Our Outreach Program

Bringing Services to Our Community

Marrin Weejali’s approach to service delivery is bringing services to where the people are. We invite other agencies to come to Marrin Weejali and we provide our services elsewhere on a regular basis. Awareness and accessibility of services is greatly enhanced this way.

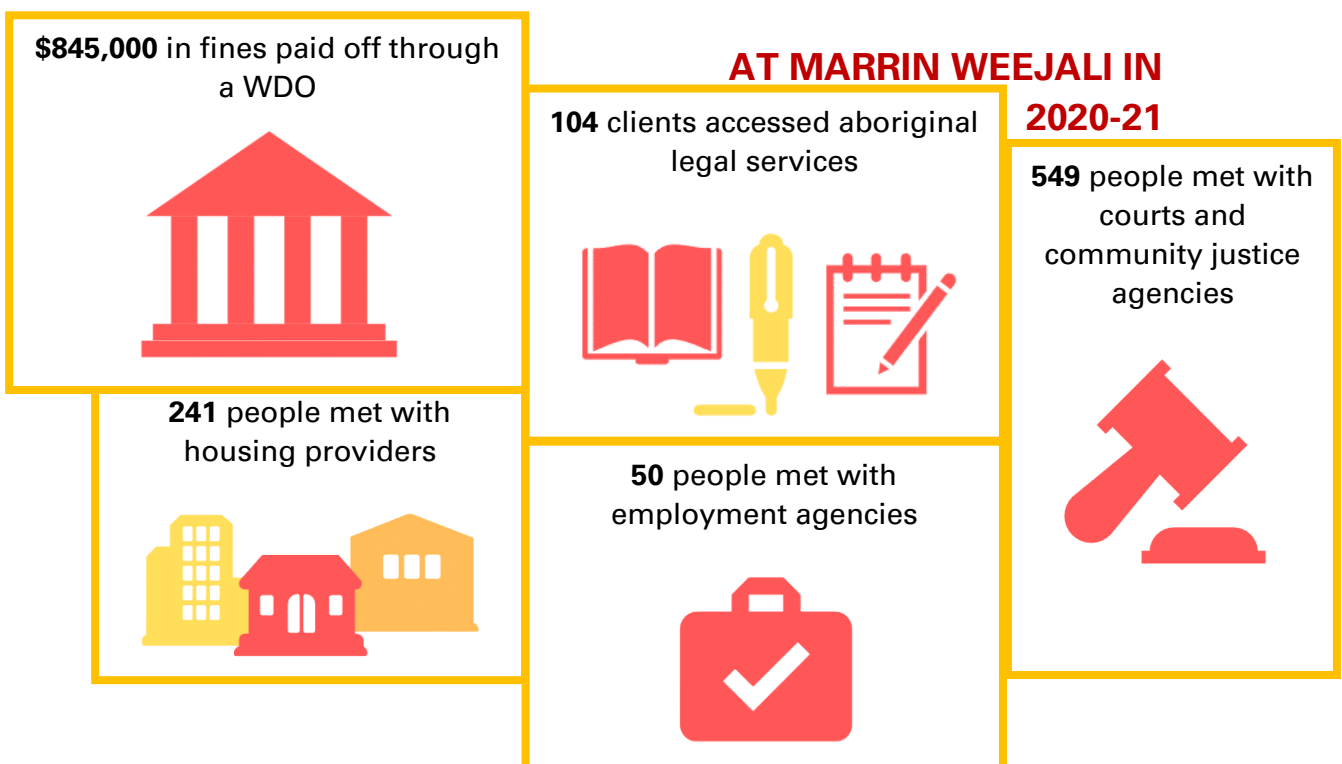
Our clients and those at other services are more open to engaging with a new service if they see we trust the service, and we introduce them to the trusted worker. This feels like a “one stop shop” approach.

In 2020-21, Centrelink, Western Sydney Community Legal Service, and the TAFE Indigenous team joined us to provide services to our clients and others in the community.

TAFE partnerships have seen an increasing number of our clients move towards training and employment as they become more confident in their recovery.

Legal Aid provides fortnightly services at Marrin Weejali for Civil law, and the Women’s Legal Service helps with Family law issues fortnightly.

As a trusted community organisation, clients are allowed to repay their fines through a Work Development Order at Marrin. Clients may attend drug and alcohol groups or counselling as part of this program.



Our Community Engagement and Partnerships

As part of our two-pronged approach to tackling the issue of drug and alcohol misuse in Western Sydney, we believe that primary prevention through the community is vital, and that substance abuse damages more than just the individual. Recognising the importance of community in the healing, rehabilitation, and prevention process, as well as the value of cooperation with like-minded organisations, Marrin has partnered with a number of agencies.

Formal Partners

Aboriginal Housing Office
Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation
Centrelink
Community Corrections
DCJ Housing
Dr. Steven Liew (Bidwill Medical Practice)
Emerton Amcal Pharmacy
Hearing Australia
OCTEC
Ray Kelly Too Deadly for Diabetes
Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation
Western Sydney Community Legal Centre
WHOS Rehabilitation Centre

Aboriginal Chronic Care Nurse
Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Network (ADAN)
Aboriginal Employment Strategy
Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW (AHMRC)
Aboriginal Legal Service
Australian Asthma Foundation
Cancer Council
Community Health Centre
Guide Dogs Australia
Health and Nutrition (University of Sydney)
Junaya Family Development Service
Legal Aid NSW
Liver Clinic Outreach
Marist Youth Care
Mission Australia
Muru Mittigar Aboriginal Corporation
National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC)
NSW Corrective Services

Marrin Weejali is also connected to the following peak organisations:

Ability Options
Aboriginal 48 Hour Follow Up Care Worker (WSLHD)

Our Community Engagement and Partnerships

Oral Health

Orana Haven Rehabilitation centre

Providential Homes

TAFE NSW Aboriginal Unit

WDVCAS

Weigeli Residential Rehabilitation Centre

Western Sydney Integrated Team Care

White Lion

WSLHD Aboriginal Cardiac Rehab

WSLHD Public Health Unit

Yenu Allowah Aboriginal Child and Family Centre

Marrin Weejali TAFE Partnership

Marrin's partnership with TAFE has provided a unique opportunity for clients and staff to study Alcohol and Other Drugs, Counselling or Mental Health. Clients who have successfully completed treatment at Marrin are able to undertake a TAFE diploma in these fields with training done on site at Marrin. Starting in January 2020 and finishing in January 2021, all counselling staff and several community members and clients completed the Diploma of AOD. In January of 2021 8 staff members and several community members, including clients, commenced their TAFE Diploma in Mental Health at Marrin.



Feedback and Outcomes

Service User Surveys 2020-21

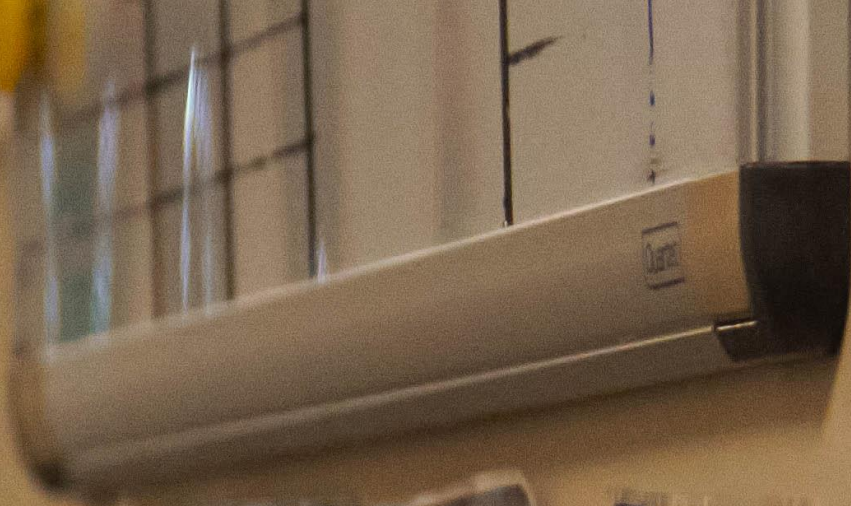
- Marrin Weejali surveys people who use our services at several stages during their engagement with us.
- Surveys are completed with group therapy participants each term.
- Surveys usually completed with partnering agencies at our Service Morning Tea annually.
- Quality Assurance Surveys are completed with 10% of our client load quarterly.
- In response to COVID-19, some surveys were submitted remotely with the consent of the author.



“I’m glad I’ve been able to continue counselling during COVID-19, otherwise my anxiety would have continued, and my recovery would have stopped”

“Continued telephone support and learning tools like H.O.W. has helped keep me on my recovery path”





Our Team

Marrin Weejali's success as an organisation and service provider is thanks to our dedicated and talented team. Listed below are some of our values when it comes to staffing and teamwork:

Staff Development

At Marrin Weejali, we believe in the development of our team's skills in order to further their careers as well as improve our services to our clients. In addition to improving team members' skills, these opportunities, often delivered in partnership with external organisations, allow staff to network with other organisations outside of Marrin.

During 2020-21, Marrin continued our partnership with the local TAFE in order to deliver Diploma level training to existing team members in counselling and AoD services. Over the course of 2021, participating successfully staff members completed this program at Marrin and are now underway in completing their TAFE Diploma in mental health.

Furthermore, the challenges and difficulties brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the need for increased digital literacy in adapting to new and remote modes of working. Over the course of 2020 and 2021, we have continued to explore new ways of delivering services in a COVID-safe manner. In light of this need for upskilling in digital literacy, Marrin has sponsored staff to gain their Statement of Attainment in Digital Literacy during 2021.

Respect and Safety

Like our approach towards our clients, staff members at Marrin cultivate and participate in a culture of mutual respect and safety. This, we believe, is key to good teamwork and the success of our organisation. As a culturally safe workspace, Marrin does not tolerate discrimination and hostility and believes in the resolution of conflicts in a peaceful manner. Furthermore, we welcome diversity amongst our workforces.

To maintain a safe environment and workplace, staff meetings are held weekly, staff members are encouraged to socialise and feel equal. Tony's caring and personal approach to managing Marrin's staff has been integral to the continued fostering of a safe and respectful working environment.

Leadership

Opportunities for leadership within Marrin is a key part of our approach towards staffing as we recognise the importance for staff to exercise their skills and grow as leaders within their community.

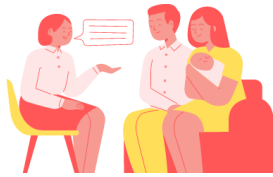
**"At Marrin, you feel like
no one's above you"**

Indy

Our Team

AT MARRIN WEEJALI IN 2020-21

2 staff members completed mental first aid training



16 staff members completed senior first aid training



All staff completed self-care training



5 staff completed domestic and family violence response training (DV alert)



Our Team

Dean's Story

Dean Austen is a full-time counsellor and has been a valued part of the Marrin community since 2017.

It is an honour and privilege to work at the Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation. Uncle Tony and Aunty Mel are thus far, two of the most selflessly dedicated people I think I've ever known. They sacrifice their time and energy day in and day out in helping others. I have no doubt Mt. Druitt is a safer community for having them here fighting the good fight for the last 30 odd years.



I first picked up drugs and alcohol regularly at 14. Before I was 16, I had been hospitalized for excessive drinking. Before I was 18, I was using Amphetamines, Alcohol, Hallucinogens and Cannabis at least weekly. I called my first treatment centre at 21 years old.

I first came to Marrin on a bus from a treatment centre I didn't want to be in, as a rehab requirement that I didn't really want to go to. In hindsight my first exposure of Marrin Weejali was an amazing thing because after that meeting I remember head down walking out of the meeting room out the back patio area and looking up at the wooden tables and there was just a crew of people laughing, talking, and smiling. People united in fellowship and happy in recovery. It was also a real shock to me at the time that centres like Marrin Weejali even existed because the only way out from addition that I was aware were going to jail, going to the psych ward or that you would die.

Although never directly being a client of Marrin Weejali, through attending groups both in treatment, in relapse and again in recovery, I got to know Shannon – a fellow counsellor here at Marrin. I would see him around regularly and I remembered him when I came back to the rooms as one of the few guys that would give you the time of day to have a chat. He was the only man to ring me in relapse and ask me when I was coming back.

Our Team

My grand scheme was to stay clean, stay sober and finish the TAFE Diploma of Alcohol and Other Drugs and apply at the treatment centre I had some success at before. But not too long after starting, the Centre shut and I was pretty disheartened. I figured things out with the help of others and by doing the right thing; I kept running groups through NA in Western Sydney and kept in touch with Shannon.

“I get a real sense of pride wearing the Marrin Weejali uniform”

-Dean

One day, Shannon called me and said straight out: “We’re looking for someone to run groups for Marrin. I see you around the Community doing it well would you mind if I threw your name in the hat?”. Of course, I agreed to it. “You better come down and have a word to Uncle Tony”, he said the next day.

I drove down quite anxiously, thinking I had never met Tony, the CEO of Marrin Weejali, before. Turns out, I had already crossed paths with Tony quite a few times. I even sat in groups with him but never realised he was CEO. He was camouflaged by his humility, I suppose.

So fast forward to today. I am at Marrin Weejali 5 days a week passing on the message of Hope freely, often to people who don’t really want to hear it either. I don’t usually share my story to others – I think the focus should be on our clients instead – but I get a real sense of pride wearing the Marrin Weejali uniform.

The beautiful thing about what we do at Marrin is that recovery is a 2 way street: Whenever someone is supported, its not just them that benefits. We have parents rest easy, kids being fed, and employers with happy workers. The list is nearly endless of those who are affected by a person happy in recovery, life me.

The ripple effect of my sobriety runs further than me. I can’t chalk that up as an accident. From hopeless to hopeful, miserable to happy. Through recovery, my peers, my sponsor, and Marrin Weejali.

Financial Summary

Funding Arrangements

Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation receives its core funding from the National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA), via the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS). Funding falls under the 'Safety and Wellbeing' Program. We continue to work with Federal and State Governments contract managers to bring about improvements in reporting structures. The reporting framework can sometimes be very challenging.

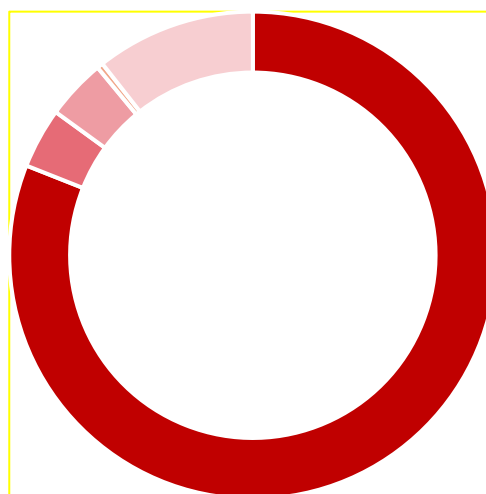
Marrin Weejali also attracts funds from Wentwest PHN for five specialist positions, funding for two mental health workers and three substance misuse / sewb workers.

Marrin Weejali also partners with WHOS (We Help Ourselves) The program is funded by the Nepean Blue Mountain - Primary Health Network (PHN) to staff and run 'The Hub' at Penrith, the program is aimed at addictions interventions.

The NSW Department of Community & Justice has recently funded Marrin Weejali for a second time to support a worker plus admin worker to run the Aboriginal Family Planning Circle model.

The Department of Health – Indigenous Australians Health (IAHP) program funds the Marrin Weejali's Chronic Care Program.

Centre Expenditure



■ Staffing Costs 81% ■ IT and Phones 4% ■ Program Costs 4% ■ Accounting and Audit 0.4% ■ Other 10.6%

Legislative Compliance

Insurances

- All insurance is brokered through Marsh Insurance Pty Ltd, a business insurance broker who has dealt with Marrin Weejali's insurance needs since our inception. They have a thorough understanding of our operations and our risks.
- Workers Compensation: Validated.
- Professional Indemnity: Validated.
- Building and Contents: Validated.
- Public liability: Validated.

Work Health & Safety

- This is the eleventh year for tracking these measurements in the Annual Report, which are monitored for trends.
- 2020-2021 lost time injuries – 0
- 2020-2021 reported hazards and incidents – 0
- Senior First Aid current for all permanent staff
- Fire Inspection conducted biannually.
- Electrical testing conducted annually.

Legislation Review

We have reviewed legislation applicable to all aspects of business at state and federal level. Where new legislation requiring change was found, we have modified practice. We have reviewed and incorporated changes into our policy and procedure where necessary, in order to comply with legislation.

Qic Accreditation

Marrin Weejali was granted re-accreditation in February 2020, which carries through to 2023. We maintain a 'continuous quality improvement register' which continues to be a useful tool to provide evidence towards our accreditation. As part of our ongoing works, improvements are continuously planned and documented as they have been achieved. Our commitment to Continuous Quality Improvement is embedded in our weekly meetings and work evaluations.

The Path Forward

Strategic Plan

MARRIN WEEJALI ABORIGINAL CORPORATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



OUR VISION is that Aboriginal people of western Sydney live lives free from addiction and emotional distress.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: Marrin Weejali will take a leadership role in breaking the cycle of dependency, misery and social dislocation to lift our people from despair to live healthy, peaceful and dignified lives by repairing the shattered spirit.

OUR VALUES

- Respect for our community which provides our motivation
- Respect for the dignity of our clients and their families
- Observance of Aboriginal spiritual and cultural ways of knowing
- Total commitment to the wellbeing of our clients
- Recognition for the efforts of colleagues in creating a harmonious workplace
- Compassion for suffering and loss, and
- Leadership and innovation in the delivery of culturally-safe services

OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS are:

Strategy 1	Reduce the physical, social and emotional distress experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women living in the western Sydney region suffering the harmful effects of Aod use and/or mental health impairment, including co-occurring disorders
Strategy 2	Enrich the lives of our clients, families and community through facilitating access to model allied health and human services
Strategy 3	Incorporate new and better ways of working into our service delivery
Strategy 4	Integrate the findings of our research, monitoring and evaluation into our ways of working
Strategy 5	Strengthen awareness and recognition of Marrin Weejali's presence as a knowledge-leader in our areas of expertise
Strategy 6	Build and nurture partnerships with health and human services providers where these support Marrin Weejali's core service objectives, align with our values and contribute to improved client physical, social, emotional and economic wellbeing
Strategy 7	Invest in our people and embed Aboriginal spiritual, cultural and family values in all our dealings
Strategy 8	Use and grow Marrin Weejali's physical and non-physical resources in the best interests of our clients and stakeholders, in support of Marrin Weejali's Statement of Purpose, meeting our compliance obligations, and reflecting the value placed on the regard with which we are held by our Aboriginal community
Strategy 9	Be an ethical advocate for our community

THESE STRATEGIES guide Marrin Weejali in the design and delivery of local and outreach culturally safe Aod, non-acute mental health and SEWB assessment, counselling, referral and advocacy services. Our strategic and organisational plans, policies and practices define the way we meet client needs, satisfy the expectations of our community and sustain a contented workforce. We foster partnerships with values-aligned health and human service providers where the relationships enhance client outcomes. Services are available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women living in western Sydney, and to those non-Indigenous people who choose to use our service.

THE RESULTS of our efforts will ensure that individuals and families of our community at risk from, or experiencing, the harmful effects of substance misuse and/or mental health impairment are aware of, have access to, and are using to the full, the greater range of Aod, SEWB, spiritual and cultural healing services available through Marrin Weejali and our health, allied health and human service partners. Through our collaborative efforts, we continue to witness a measurable improvement in the health, social and emotional wellbeing of our people, in family cohesion, community resilience and restoration of cultural values.

Our Foundation: Commitment to service underpinned by Aboriginal spiritual and cultural values



Marrin Weejali
Aboriginal Corporation
Substance Misuse – Social Emotional Wellbeing Healing Centre



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