



**MARRIN WEEJALI**  
Aboriginal Corporation

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2024-2025**



# CONTENTS

ABOUT US	2
CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE	3
CEO'S MESSAGE	4
OUR TEAM	5-6
OUR HISTORY	7
SERVICES	8-11
DETOX AND REHABILITATION	
REFERRALS AND ASSISTANCE	12
CLIENT EXPERIENCE	13-15
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS	16-20
PARTNERSHIPS AND REFERRALS	21-22
SURVEYS	23-26
LEGISLATION	27
FINANCIAL	28

# ABOUT US

Welcome to Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation! Since our founding in 1995, we have been dedicated to supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of Greater Sydney.

As a non-government service provider incorporated under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) CATSI Act 2006, we are committed to providing substance misuse and social and emotional wellbeing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult men and women, as well as visitors from the country. Located in the Blacktown local government area at 79-81 Jersey Road, Blackett, Mount Druitt, NSW 2770, Marrin Weejali is a place where everyone feels seen, heard and valued.

## OUR VISION

We envision a future where the Aboriginal people of Western Sydney live free from addiction and emotional distress. Our mission is to lead the way in breaking the cycle of dependency, lifting our people from despair to healthy, peaceful and dignified lives.

## OUR PURPOSE

We are committed to healing the shattered spirit and helping our community overcome the challenges of addiction, emotional turmoil and social dislocation. By providing culturally safe and compassionate care, we strive to make a positive difference in the lives of our clients and their families.

### Our Values



Respect for our community is our motivation



Uphold the dignity of our clients and their families



Honour and observe Aboriginal spiritual and cultural ways



Unwavering commitment to every client's wellbeing



Value the efforts of colleagues in fostering harmony



Compassion for suffering and loss



Leadership and innovation in delivering culturally safe services

## WHAT WE DO

For nearly three decades, Marrin Weejali has been a trusted provider of culturally safe counselling, referral and advocacy services. We primarily serve, but are not limited to, Western Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

We address substance misuse, non-acute mental health issues, gambling, grief and loss, trauma, and relationship challenges with a holistic approach that recognises the importance of community and family in the healing process.

Our team of highly trained counsellors works tirelessly to reduce risk-taking behaviours through prevention efforts and culturally safe, tailored in-house treatment. Additionally, we act as a hub for support, connecting our community with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health services to ensure comprehensive care.

At Marrin Weejali, we are more than just a service provider—we are a place of belonging. We work closely with local health organisations and community members to create a supportive network that helps individuals and families thrive.

# CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

Hello,

As Chairperson of Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation, I am proud to share our achievements over the past year. Our dedicated staff, Board of Management and community members have driven us to new heights with their unwavering commitment.

Our board, composed of five passionate members, ensures we uphold cultural values and provide the best outcomes for our clients and community. We focus on delivering culturally friendly services, continually improving based on community feedback and leading addiction prevention and rehabilitation.

This year, we've seen increased referral rates and confidence in our services thanks to our partnerships with like-minded agencies. These alliances are crucial, especially in challenging times, and we deeply appreciate their support.

We maintain a low-risk accreditation status, meeting government standards, and our continuous quality improvement practices keep us at the forefront of community service delivery.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and the Primary Health Network (Wentwest) for their invaluable funding and support. The strong relationships our CEO maintains with these organisations ensure clear communication and accountability, enhancing our collective efforts.

In closing, my heartfelt thanks to everyone involved with Marrin Weejali. The dedication and compassion of our staff, the support of our Board, and the trust of our community make this organisation truly special. Together, we will continue to foster hope, healing and resilience.

Warm regards,



Chairperson,  
Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation

## Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation Board Members:

Chairperson	Ms. Nicole Donovan
Treasurer	Mr. Joe Haroa
Secretary	Mrs. Karen McNulty
Board Member	Mr. Micheal Williams
Board Member	Ms. Renee Underhill



Hello,

As we mark our 30th year of service, I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our Board of Management and the dedicated team at Marrin Weejali. Your commitment and passion continue to be the driving force behind our impact.

Collaboration remains central to our mission. We know that restoring the wellbeing of individuals and families affected by colonisation particularly in areas such as mental health, trauma, grief, loss, racism, substance misuse, and suicide requires a collective effort. No single service can do it alone.

Our partnerships with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health and allied services across Western Sydney, as well as with residential rehabilitation centres in rural NSW, are vital. These relationships enrich our programs and allow us to offer holistic, culturally grounded support especially during times of economic strain.

#### **Impact and Value**

At Marrin Weejali, the work we do is both life-changing and economically vital. Addiction and its ripple effects continue to place immense pressure on individuals, families, and public systems. A joint report by KPMG and Rethink Addiction estimated that addiction cost Australia \$80.3 billion in 2021, with domestic violence alone accounting for \$26 billion annually.

In Western Sydney, the impact on Aboriginal communities is particularly profound. Recent data shows that over 1 in 4 Aboriginal people in the region reported using illicit drugs in the past 12 months, with cannabis being the most used substance. Alcohol misuse remains a critical concern, with 12% of Aboriginal people consuming 11 or more standard drinks at least once a month. These patterns reflect deeper systemic challenges, including intergenerational trauma, economic disadvantage, and limited access to culturally appropriate services.

Substance misuse and trauma also contribute to disproportionately high incarceration rates. Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up just 3.2% of the NSW population, they represent 27% of the national prison population. In 2022, 12,900 Aboriginal people were incarcerated across Australia, with many cycling in and out of custody for short-term sentences. The cost of Aboriginal incarceration is staggering—estimated at \$7.9 billion annually and projected to rise to \$19.8 billion by 2040 if not addressed.

These figures underscore the urgent need for culturally safe, community-led interventions like ours. Marrin Weejali's programs are designed to respond to these realities with compassion, cultural integrity, and evidence-based care. By supporting recovery and resilience, we not only change individual lives—we help reduce the broader social and economic costs borne by families, communities, and governments.

#### **Growing Demand**

Demand for our counselling, referral, and advocacy services continues to rise. Each week, we continue to welcome between 25 and 35 new clients, many of whom are navigating complex challenges related to addiction, trauma, and social disadvantage. Our centre remains a place of healing and connection, where culture is celebrated and peer support thrives.

Walking through Marrin Weejali, I'm constantly inspired by the strength of our community especially those in recovery who generously share their stories, offer encouragement, and create a welcoming space for others. Whether it's a quiet conversation over a cuppa or a moment of shared laughter, these interactions are the heartbeat of our work.

#### **Acknowledgments**

To our extraordinary staff: your compassion, empathy, and unwavering commitment to our clients and each other are what make Marrin Weejali truly special. Your creativity, professionalism, and cultural insight continue to elevate the quality of our services, and the feedback we receive from clients speaks volumes about the impact you make every day.

Thank you for your dedication, your heart, and your hard work. Together, we are building a stronger, healthier, and more connected community one life at a time.

Warm regards,



CEO



# OUR TEAM

Our mission to restore hope and deliver vital services is made possible by the extraordinary commitment and talent of our team. Every individual brings not only skill but deep compassion and dedication to our shared purpose.

Together, we cultivate a culture of care, collaboration, and excellence that drives everything we do.

## RESPECT + SAFETY

Respect and safety are the cornerstones of our workplace culture. At Marrin, we uphold the same principles with our colleagues as we do with our clients—fostering mutual respect, cultural safety, and inclusivity. We embrace diversity, resolve conflict constructively, and ensure every team member feels valued and secure.

## LEADERSHIP

Leadership at Marrin is about growth, empowerment, and community impact. We actively support our team in developing their leadership potential, recognising that strong leaders emerge from opportunities to learn, lead, and inspire. By nurturing these qualities, we strengthen not only our organisation but the communities we serve.



## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

### Addictions Awareness Day

Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation remains committed to building a culturally safe, skilled, and responsive workforce. In 2024–2025, staff engaged in a wide range of professional development activities to strengthen service delivery across Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD), Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB), and community support programs.



### Grief & Loss Support

#### Six Needs of Grief – David Kessler Training

Staff participated in David Kessler's online training, which offers a compassionate framework for understanding grief. The course explored six core emotional needs:

- Acknowledgment of the loss
- Expression of emotions
- Safety in grieving
- Meaning beyond the pain
- Connection with others
- Hope for healing

Through video lessons and reflective exercises, staff gained tools to support clients navigating grief and loss with empathy and purpose.

### Suicide Prevention

#### safeTALK – LivingWorks

Staff completed the internationally recognised safeTALK training, a four-hour workshop focused on suicide prevention. Key outcomes included:

- Recognising signs of suicidal ideation
- Acting as "connectors" to link individuals with intervention services
- Reducing stigma through open conversations
- Practising intervention skills using real-life scenarios

This training enhances early intervention capacity and promotes safer communities.

### Co-Morbidity Guidelines

Staff completed the Co-morbidity Guidelines Training Modules, an evidence-based online program supporting AOD workers in managing clients with co-occurring mental health conditions. Topics covered:

- Identifying and responding to mental health and physical health comorbidities
- Delivering coordinated care
- Managing complex presentations
- Supporting worker wellbeing and self-care

This training strengthens integrated care approaches and improves outcomes for clients with multiple needs.



**"To be a great leader, one has to stand with people, NOT above them."**

## ATOP Training - NSW Health

Staff were trained in the Australian Treatment Outcomes Profile (ATOP) to enhance routine outcome monitoring in AOD services. Training focused on:

- Using a structured 4-week recall method to collect client data
- Embedding ATOP into clinical practice for treatment planning
- Contributing to service evaluation and continuous improvement

ATOP supports evidence-informed care and aligns with national reporting standards.



## Internal Training

Marrin Weejali delivered tailored internal training for Aboriginal AOD/SEWB centres, focusing on:

- Culturally safe care
- Community-led healing
- Alignment with local values, knowledge systems, and lived experience

This strengthens culturally responsive practice and empowers staff to deliver holistic support.

## DBT & Beyond - The Psych Collective

One staff member completed the DBT & Beyond Facilitator Training, a two-day workshop for mental health clinicians. Training highlights:

- Advanced DBT strategies for emotion regulation and distress tolerance
- Group facilitation techniques
- Applications for complex clinical presentations
- CPD accreditation

This training enhances therapeutic capacity and supports client-centred care.



## CPR & First Aid - A&B First Aid Training

Staff completed nationally accredited courses:

- Provide CPR (HLTAID009)
- Provide First Aid (HLTAID011)

Training included:

- CPR and defibrillator use
- Emergency response for injury and illness
- Online pre-study and practical sessions
- Same-day certification

These skills support workplace safety and emergency preparedness.

## TAFE Diploma of Counselling

Several staff and community workers completed the Diploma of Counselling (CHC51015), delivered onsite at Marrin Weejali by TAFE NSW.

Course content included:

- Micro-counselling and communication techniques
- Counselling theories and frameworks
- Ethical and culturally responsive practice
- Supervised placement and real-world application

Graduates are equipped to provide professional support across health and community settings.

## Corrective Services Security Awareness

Two staff members completed mandatory Corrective Services Security Awareness Training to provide counselling to clients in custody, including via JUST Connect. Training included:

- Security protocols and conduct standards
- Booking and identity verification procedures
- Safe and ethical engagement with incarcerated clients

This ensures compliance with Corrective Services NSW and safe service delivery.



## Case Note Writing Workshop

Staff completed internal training aligned with Clinical Care Guidelines to ensure:

- High-quality, consistent documentation
- Culturally safe and responsive record-keeping
- Improved continuity of care and accountability

## Ongoing Learning

Staff participated in over 150 online webinars covering:

- Emerging trends in AOD and SEWB
- Trauma-informed care
- Cultural safety and community engagement
- Professional upskilling and sector updates

This ongoing learning reflects our commitment to continuous



# OUR HISTORY



## Pre-1996

Marrin Weejali was founded by Tony, drawing from his personal experiences with trauma, grief, loss, and substance misuse. Initially, we provided counselling, advocacy and support through weekly AoD group meetings at Holy Family Church in Emerton, and group therapy programs along the banks of Windsor River.

## 1999

Formally acknowledging Marrin's pivotal role as a provider of culturally-safe substance misuse services in Western Sydney, the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health commissions a Regional Plan.

## 2009

Acknowledging Marrin's value and success as a culturally safe AOD service provider and trusted community hub, the federal government provided Marrin with a larger center in Blackett.

## 2015

Marrin Weejali celebrates 20 years of service, marking two decades of culturally grounded support for Aboriginal communities in Western Sydney.

## 2025

For three decades, Marrin Weejali has stood as a beacon of healing, resilience, and cultural strength - walking alongside our Aboriginal communities with unwavering commitment, compassion, and purpose. Thirty years on, our journey continues, grounded in culture and driven by hope.

## 1996

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

## 2002

In accordance with the 1999 Regional Plan, Marrin and five other healthcare providers in Western Sydney signed a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure culturally sensitive AOD services are accessible to Aboriginal people. This cements Marrin's status as a leader.

## 2012

Expansion of services to include mental health support

## 2024

Marrin Weejali reaches a new milestone with 20 staff members on board, reflecting growth in demand and capacity to deliver holistic, culturally safe services to the community.

# SERVICES

## THREE DECADES OF HEALING AND EMPOWERMENT

In our 30th year of service, Marrin Weejali continues to be a culturally grounded sanctuary for healing, resilience, and transformation. Since our founding in 1995, we have grown into a trusted community hub, offering holistic support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Western Sydney. Our work is guided by cultural integrity, compassion, and a commitment to walking alongside our clients on their journey toward recovery and wellbeing.

### OUR SERVICES

We deliver a wide spectrum of culturally safe and trauma-informed services, including:

#### **THERAPEUTIC COUNSELLING**

Tailored interventions that blend education, therapy, and cultural understanding to support individuals navigating addiction and mental health challenges.

#### **ADVOCACY AND REFERRALS**

We stand beside our clients in their interactions with housing, legal, health, and social services, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs met.

#### **HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAMS**

Preventative health initiatives and connections to allied health providers help our clients access the care they deserve.

#### **CASE MANAGEMENT**

Individualised care plans built around each client's strengths, goals, and cultural context.

#### **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**

Assistance with appointments, medication routines, and housing stability to help clients thrive in their communities.

#### **AFTERCARE AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION**

Ongoing support through self-help groups, social programs, and cultural activities that reinforce recovery and reduce relapse risk.

#### **OUTREACH PROGRAM STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ACCESS**

Marrin Weejali has hosted a fortnightly Community Outreach Program at our Blackett centre, bringing essential services directly to our clients in a culturally safe environment. This initiative has strengthened access to legal, housing, and financial support, reducing barriers and empowering our clients to engage with services in a culturally respectful setting.

#### **COMMUNITY WORK**

Most importantly, Marrin Weejali remains a safe and welcoming hub for all. Our centre is a place where people gather regularly—not just for services, but for belonging. It's where stories are shared, healing begins, and culture is celebrated. The strength of our community lives in the relationships built within these walls, and we are honoured to continue being a trusted space for connection and care.

#### **CULTURAL BROKERAGE**

We bridge the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal systems, ensuring culturally respectful access to mainstream services.

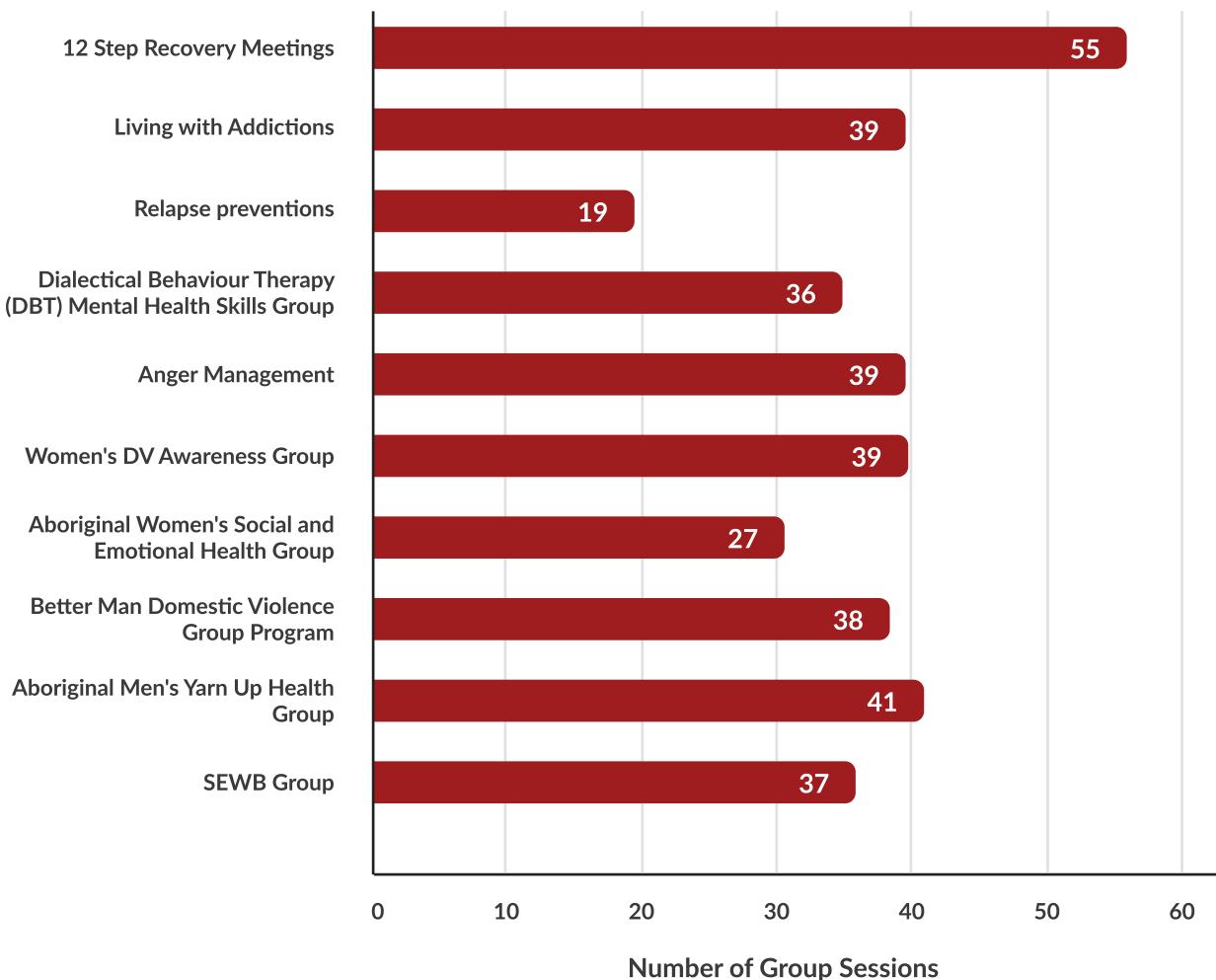


## NUMBER OF GROUP THERAPY SESSIONS DELIVERED IN 2024/25

Integral to our holistic approach to substance misuse treatment and mental health support, group therapy is led by our team of trained counsellors and mental health specialists. Clients participate in sessions for maintenance or relapse prevention, drawing strength and resilience from each other to combat alcohol or narcotics addiction.

As a result of our internal training and program reviews, we have introduced the following new groups:

- Navigating Relationships Group - 2 x 2 day sessions
- Circle of Security - 3 x 4 day sessions
- 123 Magic - 3 x 2 day sessions



“  
Great small group with counsellors adding funny twists in the sessions to make it more enjoyable. They deliver content in a way you remember.

“  
I really enjoyed the groups, and will walk away with a lot better head space and a new look of life

“  
I learnt the difference between fitting in and belonging. I know I BELONG at Marrin.

“  
The impact of DV  
Listening to everyone shares, learning about the consequences of DV and to be aware of the ramifications of DV on families and children.

“  
Honesty, Openmindedness & Willingness  
How to stop relapsing

“  
Stand out for me was how early trauma starts & Boundaries

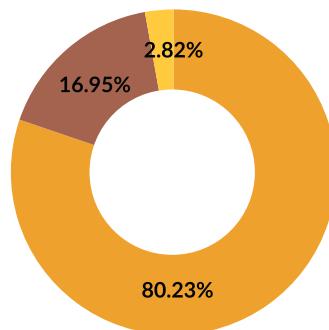
# GROUP WORK FEEDBACK

Which group are you completing this survey for?



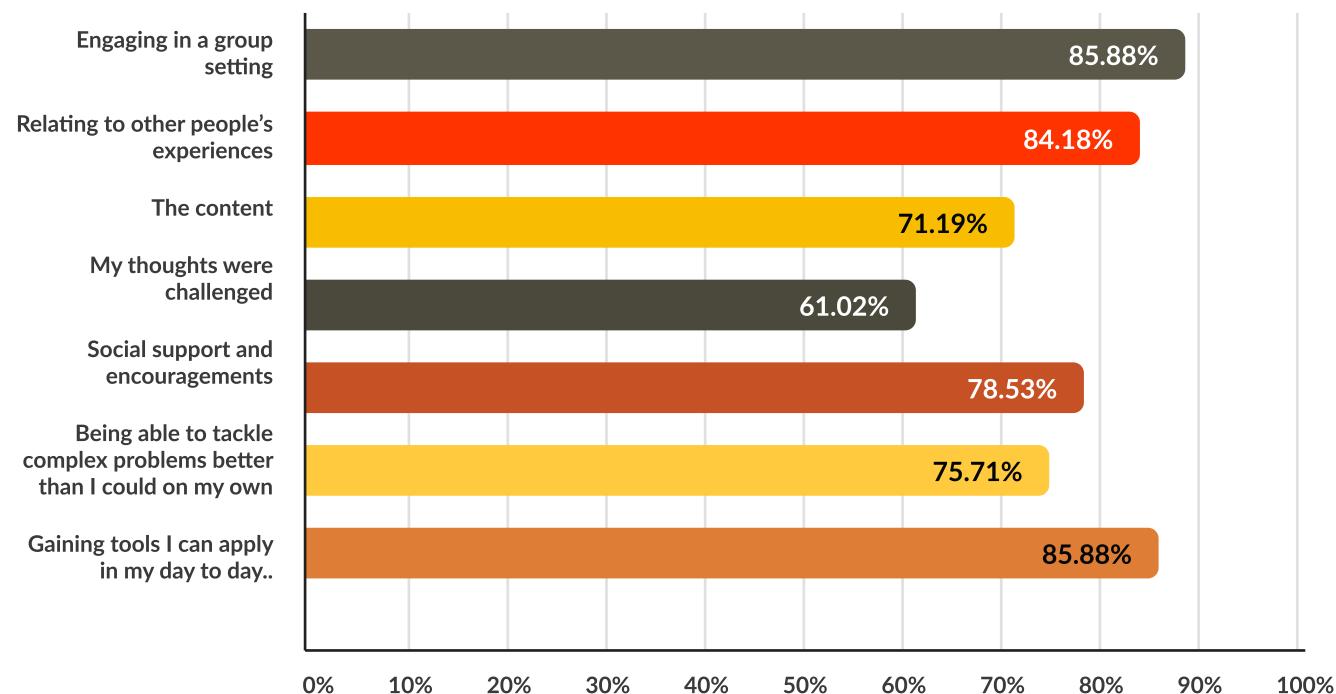
- Anger Management 23.73%
- Better Man 9.04%
- DBT Mental Health Skills Group 6.21%
- Living with Addictions 16.95%
- Men's Health Yan Up 15.82%
- Relapse Prevention 7.91%
- SEWB Group 6.21%
- Women's DV Group 7.91%
- Women's Social Group 0.00%
- First 3 Steps 2.82%
- New Ways (Criminal Mentality Change Group) 3.39%

Overall, how happy were you with the program?



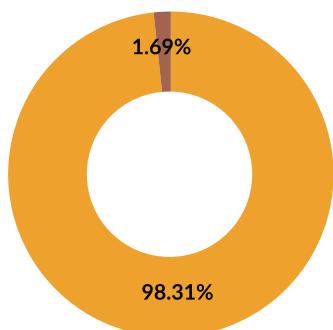
Not at all	0.00%
Not very	0.00%
Okay	2.82%
Pretty happy	16.95%
Very happy	80.23%

What did you find helpful about this program?

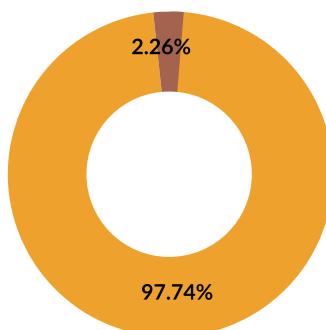


We'd like to know

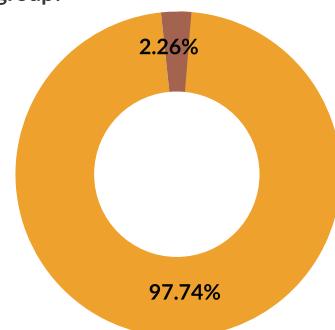
Did you feel safe in the group?



Were you able to contribute in the group?



Did you understand what was discussed in the group?

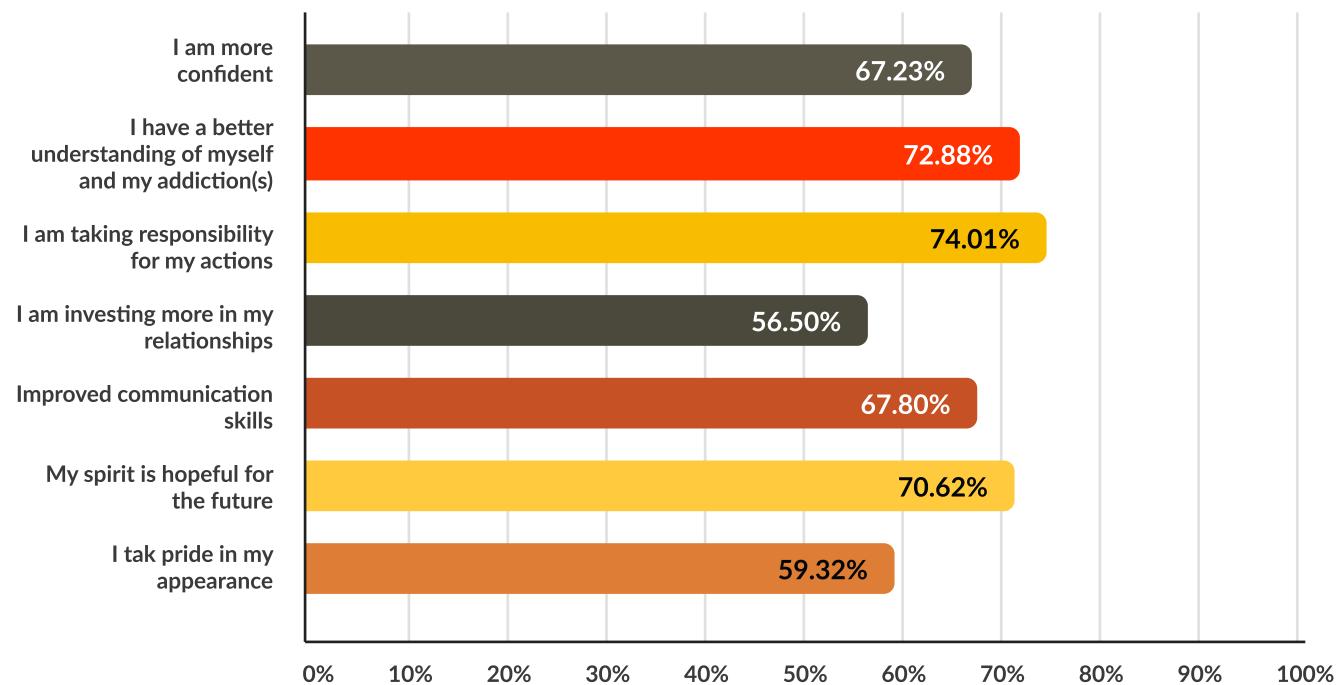


Yes 98.31% No 0.00% NA 1.69%

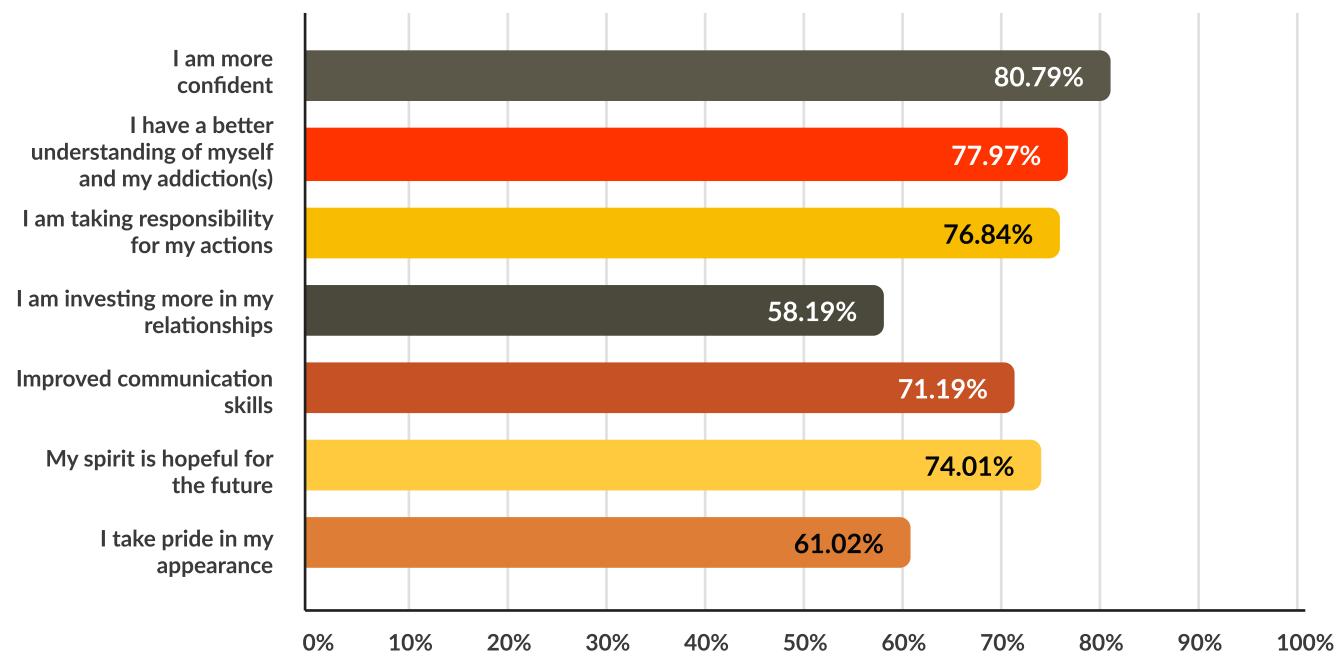
Yes 97.74% No 0.00% NA 2.26%

Yes 97.74% No 0.00% NA 2.26%

## Since completing the group program, what changes have others said they have noticed in you?



## Since completing the group program, what changes have you noticed in yourself?



“

I related to every topic, and the facilitators are down to earth

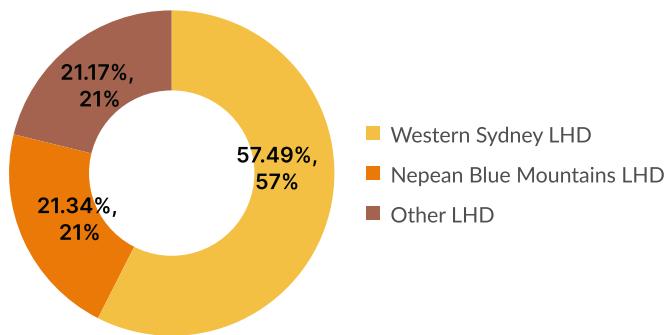
“

The group was run very well, and I enjoyed learning about things to put in place of my addiction and the support that is around to help myself and others.

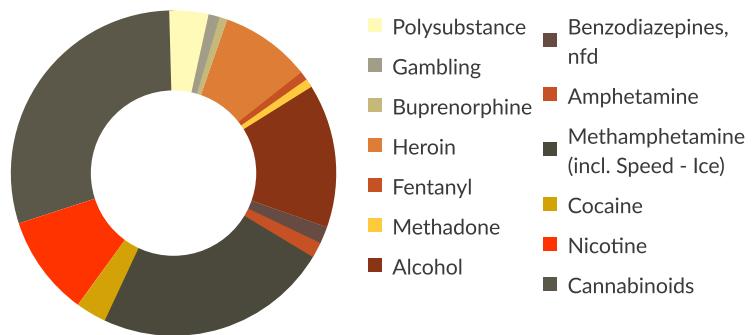
“

I really enjoyed it, and will walk away with a lot better headspace and a new outlook on life.

## Client Demographics by Health District



## Principal Substance of Concern



In every referral made and every conversation held, our focus remained clear: to walk alongside individuals as they reclaimed their health, autonomy, and hope for the future.

## DETOX AND REHABILITATION REFERRALS AND ASSISTANCE

Throughout the year, we remained steadfast in our commitment to supporting individuals experiencing substance dependency by providing timely, respectful, and person-centred referrals to detoxification and rehabilitation services. Our team worked closely with clients, families, and partner organisations to ensure that pathways to recovery were not only accessible but also aligned with each individual's unique circumstances and readiness for change.

Recognising that the journey toward healing is rarely linear, we prioritised continuity of care and emotional safety at every stage. This included offering practical assistance with intake processes, transportation, and follow-up coordination, as well as advocating for culturally appropriate and trauma-informed treatment options. Our approach was grounded in empathy and dignity, ensuring that no one seeking help felt alone or judged.

We also strengthened our relationships with local health providers, residential programs, and community-based services to streamline referral pathways and reduce barriers to entry. By fostering these collaborative networks, we were able to respond more effectively to urgent needs and support long-term recovery outcomes.

# CLIENT EXPERIENCE



## 1. ANONYMOUS

I'm originally from Hawkesbury but now live in the Nepean area. I've been married for 18 years, and together my partner and I have nine children.

### Before Support Services

Life before I accessed support was intense in many ways. I was self-medication with alcohol to cope, but it only made things worse. Eventually, I ended up in prison, and my mindset was in a very dark place, I felt hopeless and believed nothing could help me. That changed when I started counselling sessions. The kindness I received was inspiring and motivated me to improve myself.

### What I Learned

Through counselling and programs like anger management, I've become a better parent and partner.

I've learned to identify my triggers and manage them before they escalate. This has helped not only in my family life but also in everyday situations. I've become more emotionally available to my loved ones. I'm currently working on my mental health and have signed up for a DBT course next term, which I believe will help me even more. I've recommended these services to friends and family because I truly believe these programs can benefit everyone.

### Positive Changes

Since joining the program, I feel more positive about life. I'm less angry and more patient with things that used to trigger me. I have better control over my emotions. Friends and family have noticed the changes, like being more tolerant, slower to anger (especially while driving), and generally calmer.

## 2. ANONYMOUS

I grew up in a small Aboriginal Community with a close-knit community where family was always around. Moving to Sydney was a huge adjustment. I went from being surrounded by loved ones to feeling isolated and alone. I've struggled with a loss of connection ever since.

For as long as I can remember, I've struggled with my mental health. About ten years ago, things got much worse. My mental health deteriorated to the point where I attempted to take my own life multiple times. I ended up in hospital emergency wards and even spent three weeks in a mental health facility. I felt stuck in a cycle of hopelessness, unable to find my way out. I also have a history of drug and alcohol addiction.

Through counselling, I've gained a much deeper understanding of my mental health. I've learned about my diagnosis, my triggers, and how my disorganized attachment style and fear of rejection have shaped my life and relationships.

For a long time, I was stuck in a toxic relationship that left me feeling completely worthless.

I didn't know what healthy relationships looked like or that I deserved to be treated with respect. With the support of my counsellor, I was able to navigate the breakup and begin rebuilding my self-worth. I truly don't know if I would still be alive if it weren't for that support.

Since engaging with support services, I've made a lot of progress in stopping behaviours that aren't good for me. I used to isolate myself or stay in unhealthy situations, but I'm getting better at recognizing those patterns before I act on them.

One of the biggest things I've learned is that ending my life is not a solution. It's the hardest lesson, but also the greatest gift. I'm not there yet, and I still have struggles, but I'm starting to see that there's more to life than I thought.

People have noticed that I'm happier and more in control of my emotions. When things get tough, they see I'm handling it in healthier ways. I still have my moments, but I'm breaking free from old patterns I've been stuck in for years. These services have helped me make changes I didn't know were possible. I'm in a much better place than before.





### 3. ANONYMOUS

I'm a 61-year-old Aboriginal man who's been with my partner for nearly three decades. Together, we're raising three grandchildren full-time. It's only recently that I've come to truly understand the depth of my alcohol addiction, and how much it's shaped my life.

For most of my life, I saw myself as a hard worker. I'd reward myself with a cold beer after a long day, and that habit followed me for years. But slowly, the drinking took over. It wasn't just after work anymore, it became something I needed just to get through the day. Morning or night, I'd sneak beers before my family woke up, or before heading to work. Deep down, I knew I had a problem. I felt out of control, lost, and unsure how to ask for help—or even accept it.



But today, I'm 102 days sober. That number means everything to me. It's not just a number it's proof that change is possible. With the help of detox, support meetings, and counselling, I've learned to take life one day at a time. And that's enough.

I've learned how to live again and how to enjoy life with my family without needing alcohol to cope. Every day is still a challenge, but I'm not facing it alone.

My counsellor has been a lifeline, guiding me forward with patience and understanding. Each morning before work, I mark down another day sober on a piece of paper. That simple act fills me with pride.

I've also met others on this journey, people who've shown me that support is always there, whether I need help, a chat, or just a cuppa. The door is always open, and that means the world to me.

The changes in my life are real and powerful. I go to work now knowing I'm sober, clear-headed, and safe. I can drive without fear of being pulled over. I can walk into public spaces without worrying about the shakes or withdrawal symptoms. It's still early days, and yes—I still think about having a beer. But I'm learning to pause, breathe, and take it one day at a time.

My siblings have noticed the difference. They tell me they're proud. They say Mum would be proud too. That brings tears to my eyes.

I want others to know: if you're struggling, reach out. The road is rough, but it's not impossible. There's hope. There's help. And there's healing. Just reach out to Marrin Weejali.



### 4. FROM SHADOWS TO LIGHT: A JOURNEY OF HEALING

I come from the Yuin Nation, where the Black Duck is our totem—a symbol of resilience and connection. My roots stretch across cultures: my mother, torn from her family as part of the Stolen Generations, and my father, of Irish descent. I'm a parent to six beautiful children, though for much of my life, I couldn't be the parent they deserved.

For decades, I lived in chaos. I didn't know I was carrying the weight of childhood trauma. I just knew pain, and I numbed it with drugs, alcohol, and lies. I wore a mask so well that even I believed it sometimes. But behind it was a person drowning. Thirty-nine years lost to addiction. Fifteen years behind bars. And a heart aching from the distance between me and my family.

Then came Marrin Weejali.

It wasn't just a place, it was a lifeline. Through counselling and programs, I began to peel back the layers of who I thought I was. I learned how to live without running. I learned how to set boundaries, how to care for myself, how to ask for help.

I found friendships rooted in truth, not survival. I reconnected with my children not just physically, but emotionally. I saw them begin to trust me again. I saw myself begin to trust me again.

The changes were slow, but they were real.

My father, who once looked at me with disappointment, now sees someone he can believe in. My children, who once kept their distance, now call me when they need help. I'm the full-time carer of my grandson a role I cherish more than words can say. I've built a relationship with a Higher Power that grounds me. I got my driver's license. I bought a car. I was approved for the Disability Support Pension. I have a home. I have peace. And I have something I never thought I'd say: I've been clean and sober for 11 months.

I've stayed out of jail longer than ever before. I've stayed honest with myself. I've stayed present. I belong.

## 5. A JOURNEY THROUGH HEALING



When I first walked through the doors of Marrin Weejali, I was pregnant and overwhelmed. My two sons had been removed from my care, and I felt shattered. Depression consumed me, and life felt meaningless. I didn't understand what domestic violence truly was—I just knew I was hurting.

The women at Marrin Weejali helped me begin to understand. Through counselling and support, I gained clarity about the cycle of domestic violence and how it had shaped my life. The group sessions gave me strength, and the guidance I received helped me start to rebuild.

One of the most powerful moments was being referred to a service that helped me begin the process of restoration with my boys. I listened to the advice I was given, and slowly, I began to find myself again.

The support I received from the beginning until now has been unwavering. I was shown how to fight for my children, how to believe in myself, and how to walk a new path.

At Marrin Weejali, I felt a spiritual connection. I felt safe. And most importantly, I felt seen.

Today, my children are back with me. I am a strong Aboriginal woman and a proud mother of three sons. I've found my voice. My spirit has lifted. I've grown in so many areas of my life.

I am deeply grateful for the support that helped me become the person I am today. Marrin Weejali gave me the strength to change, and for that, I will always be thankful.

## 6. A MOTHER'S JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF AND HEALING



I am a mother of five adult children. One of them my youngest took his own life at just 20 years old. That moment shattered my world. It took me three years and six months to realize I needed help to cope with the immense grief that had taken hold of me.

I wasn't even sure if I was eligible to access the services at Marrin Weejali. But I made a call. The woman who answered listened with such empathy and kindness that I felt a glimmer of hope. She booked me in to see a counsellor the very next day.

I was nervous. My past experience with counselling hadn't been great. But the moment I walked into Marrin Weejali, I felt something different. There was a spiritual energy in the space. Strangers greeted me warmly. I felt safe.

When I met my counsellor, I felt an instant connection. She truly listened. She explained the services available, counselling, support groups, women's activities and helped me create a plan tailored to my healing. I joined grief counselling, a domestic violence group, and a mood group. I also sat in on addiction recovery sessions to better understand the struggles my children had faced: one with alcohol and drugs, another with gambling, and the third my son lost to suicide had battled ICE.

Five months into this journey, I've gained a deeper understanding of myself. I've learned so much. I've felt the healing power of community. The people in the groups—each at different stages of recovery have inspired me with their stories and welcomed mine.

Marrin Weejali gave me more than support. It gave me a place to belong. It gave me strength. It gave me hope.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS



## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY 2024 – “LET’S TALK ABOUT IT”

In celebration of Mental Health Month 2024, Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation proudly hosted a vibrant and deeply meaningful Mental Health Awareness Day, bringing together over 100 community members in a spirit of connection, healing, and open conversation. Delivered in partnership with TAFE NSW Mt Druitt and other valued agencies, the event embodied this year's theme, “Let's Talk About It,” by creating a safe and welcoming space for dialogue around mental health and wellbeing.



The day featured inspiring guest speakers and powerful lived experience stories that resonated deeply with attendees, breaking down stigma and encouraging early intervention. Through shared experiences, cultural connection, and community support, we reinforced the message that seeking help is a sign of strength – and that mental health deserves the same care and attention as physical health.

With a free BBQ, lucky door prizes, and heartfelt conversations, the event was not only informative but uplifting. It reminded us all that everyone has mental health, and that by talking about it, we build a stronger, more compassionate community.

## CULTURAL EXCURSION TO GALLERY 76 WITH BARKINDJI ELDER UNCLE BADGER BATES & EDUCATOR JUDITH BURNS

This year, Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation proudly facilitated a deeply enriching cultural excursion for our Men's Group, centred around learning, connection, and healing through culture and art.



The group had the honour of spending time with Uncle Badger Bates, a respected Barkindji Elder, artist, and environmental advocate. Through his powerful artworks and storytelling, Uncle Badger shared the spiritual and ecological significance of the Barka (Darling River), offering our men a profound insight into Barkindji culture and the enduring relationship between Country and community.

Supporting this journey was Judith Burns, a passionate educator whose commitment to lifelong learning and cultural respect continues to uplift our clients. Judith's presence helped bridge the experience with reflective discussion, encouraging participants to explore how art, history, and identity intersect in recovery and personal growth.



Together, Uncle Badger and Judith created a space where our Men's Group could engage meaningfully with Aboriginal heritage, deepen their understanding of Country, and strengthen their own healing journeys. We extend our heartfelt thanks to both for their generosity, wisdom, and unwavering support of our community.



## OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY 2024 – TOGETHER WE CAN END OVERDOSE

In August 2024, Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation proudly hosted our annual Overdose Awareness Day, bringing together community members, service providers, and partners in a united stand against overdose. Held in collaboration with TAFE NSW Mt Druitt, Emerton Amcal Pharmacy, and other dedicated agencies, the event was a moving tribute to lives lost, lives saved, and the collective strength of our community.

Over 100 attendees gathered to hear survivor stories, learn practical prevention strategies, and engage in open, stigma-free conversations. The message was clear: overdose prevention is never an individual effort – it takes a village. By fostering empathy, education, and connection, we empower families, friends, and neighbours to support those at risk and encourage help-seeking without shame.

Education remains one of our most powerful tools. Through events like Overdose Awareness Day, we raise awareness, reduce stigma, and equip our community with the knowledge to intervene early and compassionately. Together, we are building a future where every life is valued, and every person feels supported.



## ADDICTIONS AWARENESS DAY – A COMMUNITY UNITED FOR CHANGE

Each year, Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation proudly hosts our Annual Addictions Awareness Day – a powerful gathering that brings together community, service providers, and lived experience voices to shine a light on addiction, recovery, and hope.

In 2024, the event welcomed a strong turnout of community members to our Blackett centre, where guest speakers shared personal journeys and professional insights into addiction and healing. With support from our partners – including Amcal Emerton Pharmacy, NSW Health, Wayside Chapel, and TAFE NSW – the day offered education, connection, and practical tools for prevention and recovery.

From the free BBQ to the lucky draw giveaways, the atmosphere was warm and welcoming, but the message was clear: The evidence is clear – invest in prevention. Addiction affects individuals, families, and communities, and addressing it requires compassion, understanding, and collective action.

At Marrin Weejali, we deliver culturally safe drug and alcohol programs that support people through every stage of their recovery journey. Events like Addictions Awareness Day remind us that healing is possible – and that no one should walk that path alone. Together, we raise awareness. Together, we break stigma. Together, we heal.





# EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE TYPE 2 DIABETES TECH FORUM IN BLACKETT

On Monday, 10 February 2025, the Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation in Blackett, NSW, became a hub of innovation, connection, and empowerment as we proudly hosted the Type 2 Diabetes Tech Forum in partnership with Diabetes Australia.

This dynamic event brought together community members, health professionals, and tech advocates to explore how emerging technologies are reshaping the way we manage and understand Type 2 diabetes. From smart glucose monitors to mobile health apps, the forum showcased tools that are not only improving health outcomes but also putting power back into the hands of individuals.

## A Community-Centered Approach

Held in the heart of Western Sydney, the forum was designed with accessibility and cultural safety in mind. Marrin Weejali provided a welcoming space where attendees could engage in open dialogue, ask questions, and share lived experiences. The event was facilitated with warmth and respect, ensuring everyone felt heard and valued.

## Insights & Innovation

The session featured expert presentations, interactive demonstrations, and real-life testimonials from people using tech to manage their diabetes. Topics included:

- How wearable devices are transforming daily care
- The role of data in personalized treatment plans
- Bridging the digital divide in underserved communities

Attendees left with practical knowledge, new connections, and a renewed sense of possibility.

## Nourishing Body and Spirit

Following the forum, guests were invited to stay for a community lunch—an opportunity to continue conversations, build relationships, and reflect on the day's learnings in a relaxed setting.

## Voices from the Day

Following the forum, guests were invited to stay for a community lunch—an opportunity to continue conversations, build relationships, and reflect on the day's learnings in a relaxed setting.

“

It's not just about the tech—it's about making sure our mob has access to it and knows how to use it.

Forum Participant

“

This was the first time I felt like the future of diabetes care was something I could be part of.

Community Member

## Looking Ahead

This forum was more than an event—it was a step forward in our shared journey to close the gap in diabetes care. We're grateful to Diabetes Australia for their partnership and to every attendee who brought their energy, curiosity, and stories.

Together, we're uniting in the fight for tech—and for equity, empowerment, and better health for all.



# NATIONAL SORRY DAY 2025 – A DAY OF REFLECTION, HEALING, AND UNITY

On National Sorry Day 2025, Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation proudly hosted a deeply moving community event that welcomed nearly 200 people throughout the day. In partnership with The Healing Foundation and Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council, the gathering honoured the Stolen Generations and reaffirmed our collective commitment to truth, healing, and reconciliation.



Held on Country and guided by the wisdom of Elders, the day offered space for ceremony, storytelling, and cultural connection. Community members came together to reflect on the past, acknowledge ongoing impacts, and stand in solidarity with those whose lives have been shaped by intergenerational trauma. The presence of our partners enriched the event, bringing strength, knowledge, and shared purpose to every moment.

National Sorry Day is a powerful reminder that healing is not a solitary journey – it is a shared responsibility. Marrin Weejali continues to walk this path by offering culturally safe services and community-led programs that honour our people and our stories. With the support of The Healing Foundation and Deerubbin LALC, we are building a future where truth is spoken, culture is celebrated, and every voice is heard.

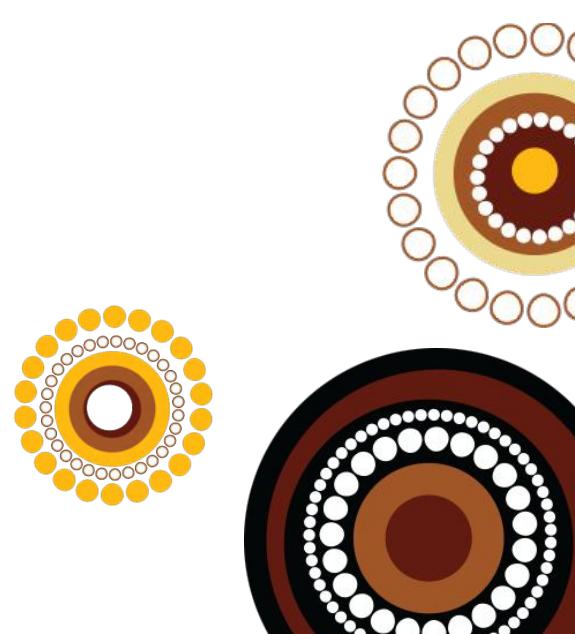


## CHRISTMAS NIGHT SUPPER & SUPPORT – A GATHERING OF HEART AND HEALING

On Christmas night 2024, Marrin Weejali opened its doors to welcome all for a heartfelt evening of supper and support. In the spirit of togetherness, we came together not just to share a meal, but to share stories, strength, and connection. The event was well attended, with clients, community members, and staff gathering in a safe and welcoming space that honoured both the season and the healing journeys of those present.

The night was filled with warmth – not just from the delicious food, but from the genuine care and companionship that filled the room. For many, it was a chance to feel seen, supported, and embraced during a time that can be especially difficult. Our support group offered a gentle space for reflection, encouragement, and solidarity, reminding everyone that they are never alone.

We're deeply grateful to everyone who joined us and helped make the evening so special. It was a true reflection of the Marrin Weejali spirit – community, compassion, and connection.



# PARTNERSHIPS

Recovery thrives in the presence of community support. When organisations unite, they create pathways to healing and hope. Our partnerships power our ability to deliver comprehensive services and vital resources, enabling clients to rebuild their lives and reconnect with those they love as they overcome addiction.

At Marrin Weejali we understand that healing is not a journey taken alone. Collaborating with organisations that share our values, champion the same causes and complement our services is crucial to our mission.

Our CEO, Tony Hunter, often emphasises, *"It takes a network of people to truly make a difference in someone's life. Each partnership and contribution helps guide individuals through their journey towards lasting change."*

## Celebrating our recent achievement

Marrin Weejali received the 2024 OCTEC National Community Award. OCTEC's Board and Management commended our commitment, stating:

*"...it is my great pleasure to advise that your organisation has been nominated for, and won, a 2024 OCTEC National Community Award.*

*The OCTEC National Community Awards recognise progressive and supportive organisations, assisting OCTEC to create pathways to employment for people with disability. This has certainly been the case with Marrin Weejali. We value and appreciate our partnership with you."*



## FORTNIGHTLY COMMUNITY OUTREACH – CONNECTION, SUPPORT, AND EMPOWERMENT

Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation's fortnightly Community Outreach program continues to be a cornerstone of support for our clients and the wider community. Held every second Friday at our Blackett centre, these outreach sessions offer a welcoming, one-stop hub where individuals can connect with essential services, receive guidance, and feel empowered in a culturally safe environment.

The success of this initiative is made possible through the incredible collaboration of our partner services, including Anglicare, Aboriginal Housing Office, Birribee Housing, Centrelink, EWON, Sydney Region Aboriginal Corporation (SRAC), Western Sydney Community Legal Centre, and many more. Their consistent presence and commitment ensure that our clients have direct access to housing support, legal advice, financial assistance, birth and identity documentation, and more – all under one roof.

These outreach days are more than just service delivery – they're about building trust, breaking down barriers, and walking alongside our community in their healing and recovery journeys. Whether someone is seeking help for the first time or reconnecting with support, the outreach program meets people where they are, with dignity and respect. A huge shout-out to all the services who attend and contribute to making this initiative such a success. Your dedication helps us create a stronger, more connected community – and we couldn't do it without you.

# PARTNERSHIPS AND REFERRALS

We take a holistic approach to drug and alcohol misuse in Western Sydney, focusing on community-based prevention. Substance abuse impacts the entire community, not just the individual. That's why Marrin Weejali partners with many like-minded organisations to promote healing, rehabilitation and prevention.



**BIRRIBEE  
HOUSING**



**Western Sydney  
COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE LIMITED**



**Transport  
Roads & Maritime  
Services**



**LawAccess / NSW**



**Cancer  
Council**



**Health  
Nepean Blue Mountains  
Local Health District**



**TEAMCARE  
INSURANCE BROKERS**



**ARDAC**



**BUNNINGS  
warehouse**



**MURU  
MITTIGAR**



**Aboriginal  
Housing  
Office**



**Australian Children's  
Education & Care  
Quality Authority™**



**Health  
Western Sydney  
Local Health District**



An Australian Government Initiative



**Hearing Australia**



**The  
Commonwealth  
Fund**



**MISSION  
AUSTRALIA** | together  
we stand



# PARTNERSHIPS AND REFERRALS



Healing Foundation

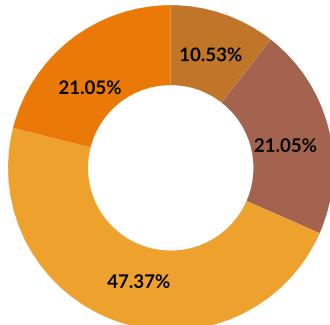
Marrin Weejali is also connected to the following peak organisations

- Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW (AHMRC)
- Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Network (ADAN)
- University of Western Sydney
- National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC)
- Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA)

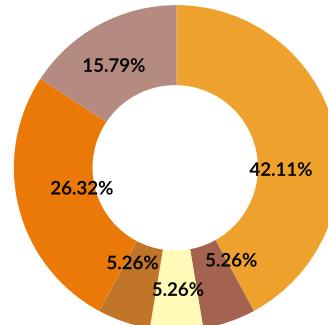
# SURVEYS

## COMMUNITY EVENT FEEDBACK

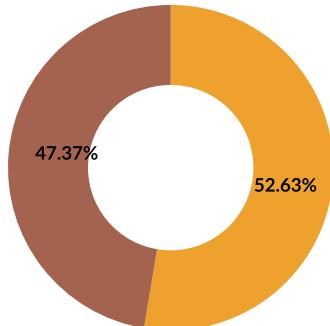
### My age bracket is:



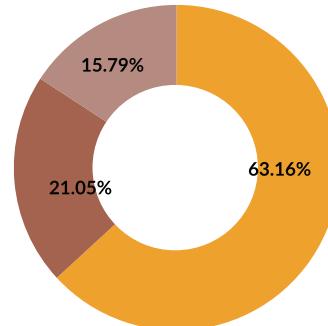
### How did you find out about this event?



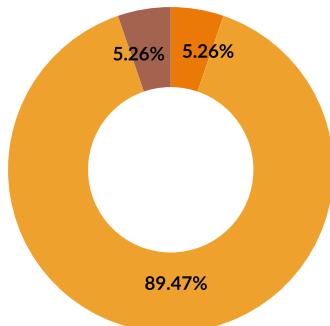
### How well was the event organized?



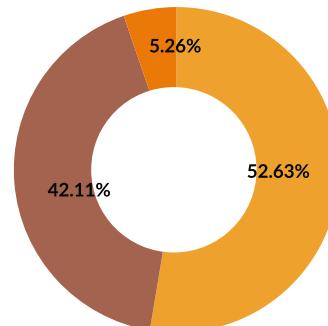
### How well did the event meet your expectations?



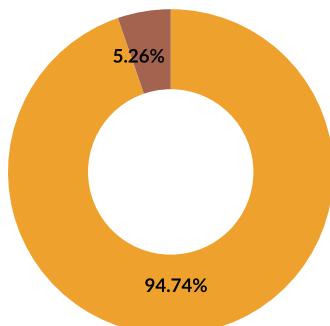
### Was the event length too long, too short or about right?



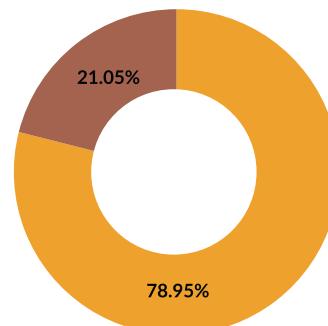
### How helpful was the content presented in the future?



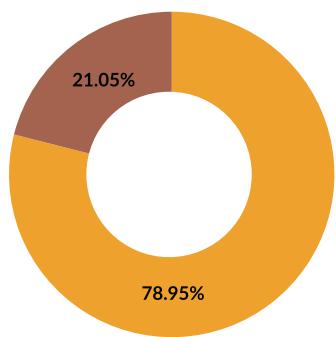
### Did you find the other services at the event helpful and friendly?



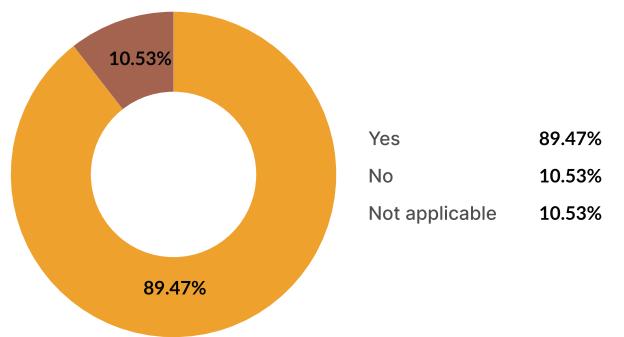
### How helpful were the staff?



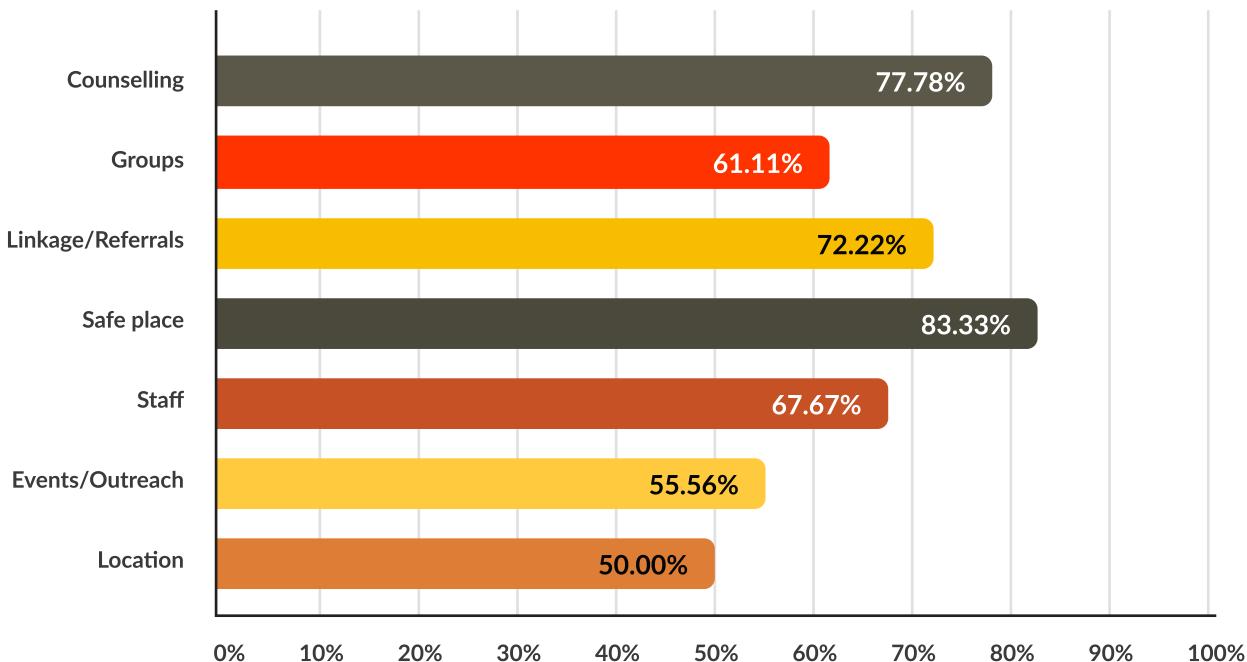
## How friendly were the staff?



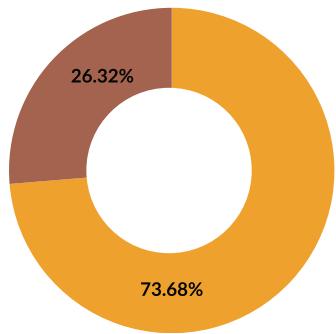
## Did you have an opportunity to ask questions during the event?



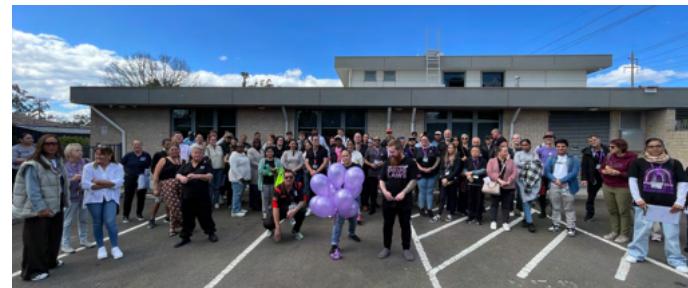
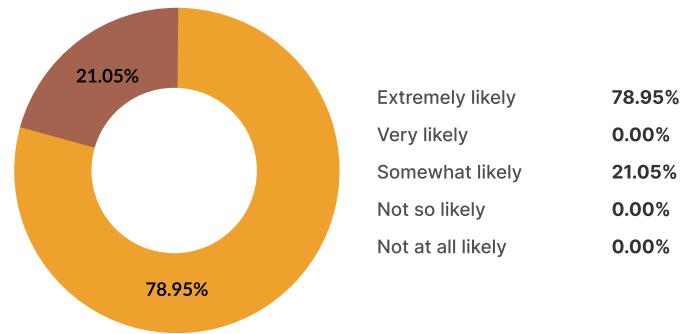
## In your experience, what are Marrin Weejali's strongest attributes?



## How likely are you to attend another event at Marrin Weejali in the future?

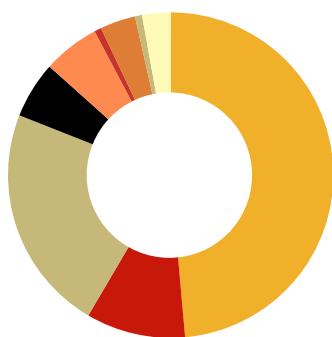


## How likely are you to recommend a friend, family or community member attend an event at Marrin Weejali in the future?



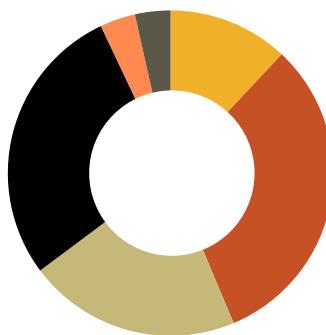
# CLIENT SURVEY FEEDBACK

## I was referred to Marrin Weejali through:



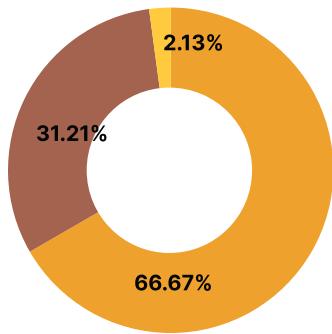
Source	Percentage
Self	48.59%
Friend/Family	9.86%
Community Corrections	22.54%
DCJ - Child Protection	5.63%
Court	5.63%
Housing	0.00%
Job Network	0.70%
Hospital / Medical / GP	3.52%
Mental Health Services	0.70%
Other	2.82%
Other Answered	0.00%

## My age bracket is



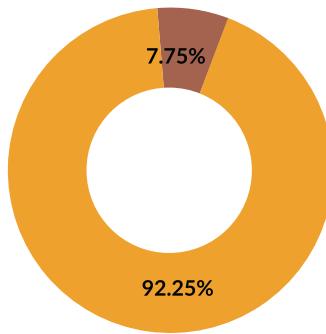
Age Bracket	Percentage
18-24	11.97%
25-34	31.69%
35-44	21.13%
45-54	28.17%
55-64	3.52%
65+	3.52%
65+ Answered	0.00%

## I identify as



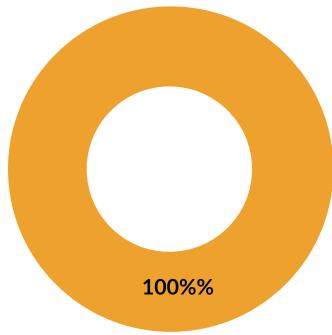
Gender Identity	Percentage
Male	66.67%
Female	31.21%
Indeterminate/Intersex/Unspecified	2.13%

## I felt supported by Marrin Weejali as I worked towards my goals



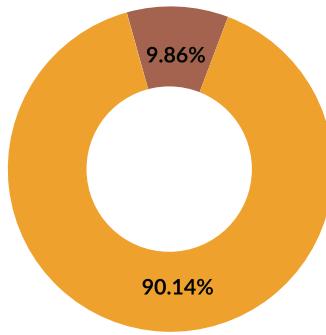
Response	Percentage
Strongly agree	92.25%
Agree	7.75%
Disagree	0.00%
Strongly disagree	0.00%

## Marrin Weejali staff were considerate and respectful of my gender identity and orientation through the way they treated me.



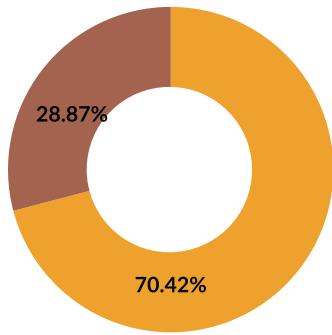
Response	Percentage
Strongly agree	100%
Agree	0.00%
Disagree	0.00%
Strongly disagree	0.00%

## Marrin Weejali staff were considerate and respectful of my culture through the way they treated me.



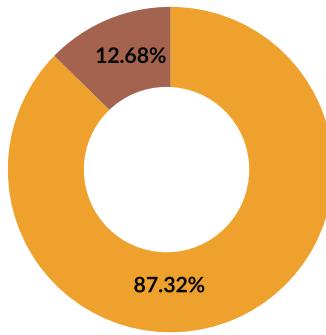
Response	Percentage
Strongly agree	90.14%
Agree	9.86%
Disagree	0.00%
Strongly disagree	0.00%

## My family or friends have seen positive changes me since engaging with Marrin Weejali?



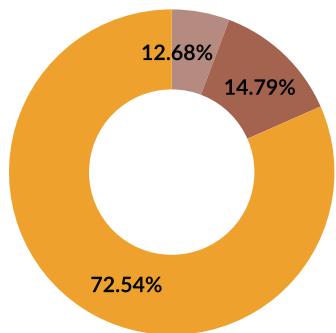
Response	Percentage
Strongly agree	70.42%
Agree	28.87%
Disagree	0.00%
Strongly disagree	0.00%

## Since engaging with Marrin Weejali I feel confident to seek help in the future if needed.

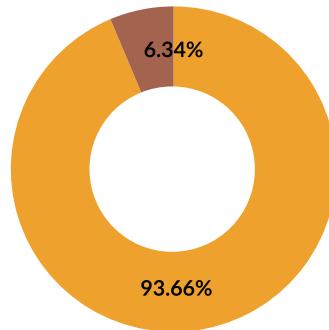


Response	Percentage
Strongly agree	87.32%
Agree	12.68%
Disagree	0.00%
Strongly disagree	0.00%

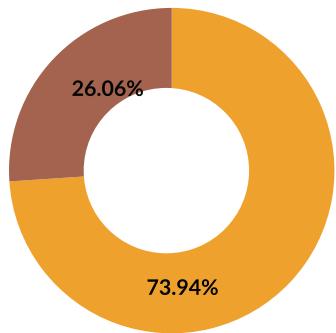
**Marrin Weejali staff were considerate and respectful of my religious beliefs through the way they treated me.**



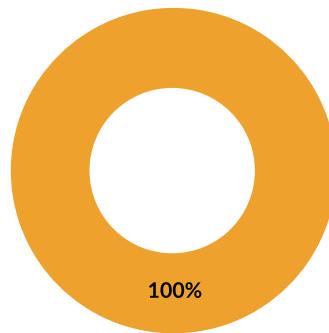
**Marrin Weejali staff were polite, courteous and professional in the way they treated me and delivered the service**



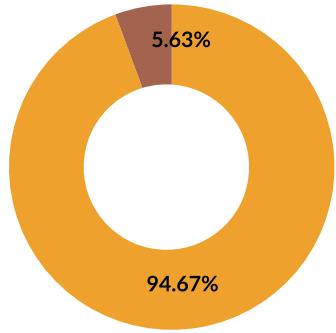
**My ability to cope has improved since engaging with Marrin Weejali**



**I would recommend Marrin Weejali to family, a friend or community member.**



**I would rate Marrin Weejali overall as Weighted Average**



“

Everything seemed easy to understand and take on board, there were no difficult words and I felt comfortable to ask.

“

It's a great place to come have a chat and get things off your chest without the feeling of being judged.

“

Very helpful service and grateful for the support. Good place to access help and my spirit is being healed.

# LEGISLATION

## 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 thirteenth year for tracking these measurements in the Annual Report, which are monitored for trends.

**0**

2024 - 2025  
lost time injuries

**0**

2024 - 2025  
reported hazards &  
incidents

**100%**

Senior First Aid  
current for all  
permanent staff

**6** Every  
mth

Fire inspection  
conducted

**12** Every  
mth

Electrical testing  
conducted

## LEGISLATION REVIEW

We continue to review legislation application to all aspects of business at state and federal level. Where new legislation requiring changes was found, we modified practice. We have reviewed and incorporated changes into our policy and procedures where necessary, to comply with legislation.

## QIP ACCREDITATION

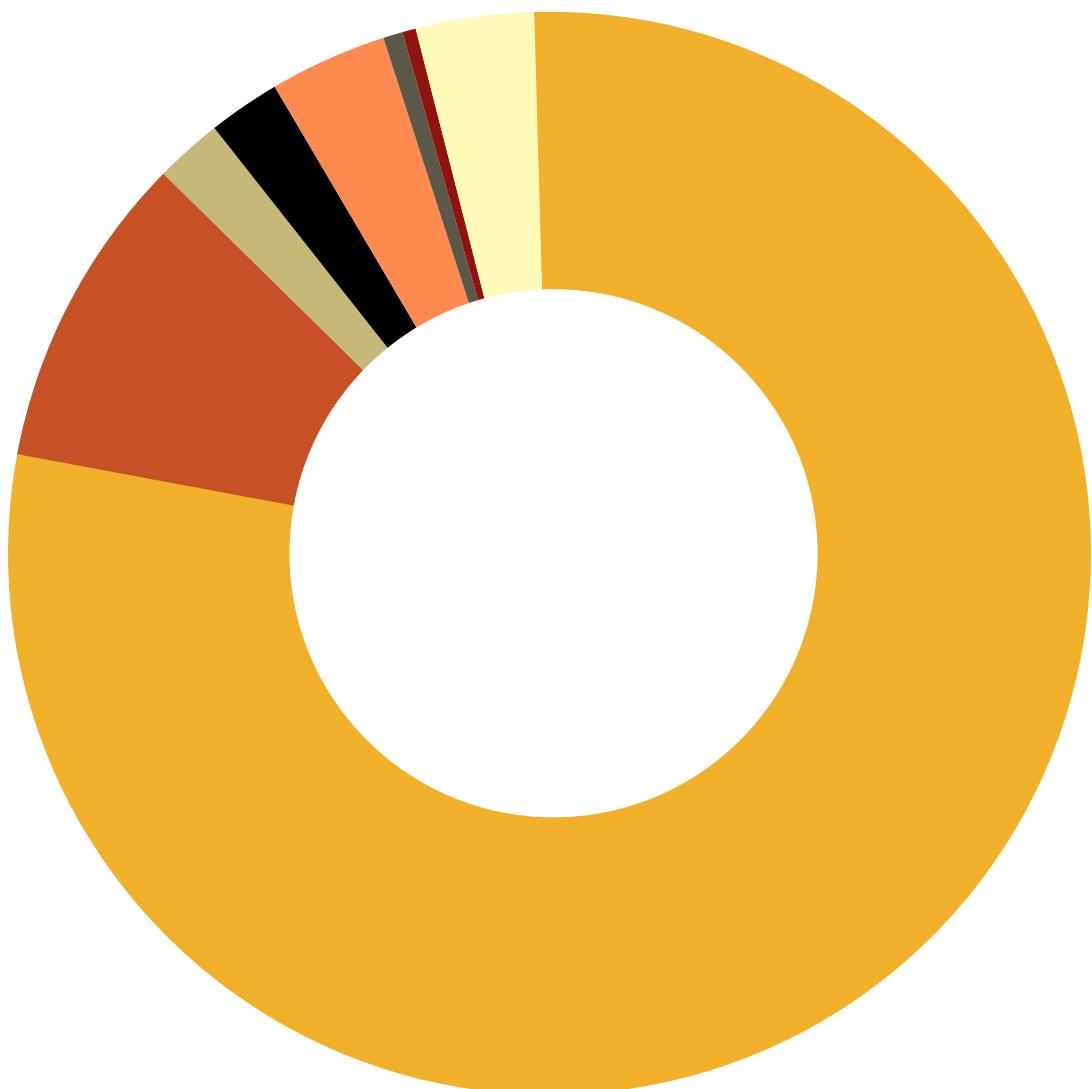
This year, we were proud to complete a mid-cycle assessment with Quality Innovation Performance (QIP) on 3 April, which resulted in a very positive outcome. The feedback confirmed our continued compliance and highlighted the strength of our systems and service delivery. With our current accreditation valid through to 20 May 2026, we remain committed to maintaining excellence and preparing for re-accreditation in the year ahead.

**We are proud to be a  
QIP accredited organisation**



# FINANCIAL

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2024 - 25



■ Staffing costs 78%

■ IT and Phones 9%

■ Transport costs 2%

■ Insurance Costs 2%

■ Repairs & maintenance 4%

■ Utilities 1%

■ Cleaning 1%

■ Program costs 4%

■ Audit & Accounting 0%

**“As it has done since first constituted, Marrin Weejali has again received an unqualified audit report for 2025, indicating ongoing good governance and financial reporting and controls”**



**MARRIN WEEJALI**  
Aboriginal Corporation

Substance Misuse - Social Emotional Wellbeing Centre

02 9628 3031

79 - 81 Jersey Road, Blackett,  
New South Wales, Australia, 2770