

BAGARAYBANG BAGARAYBANG MAYINYGALANG

REPORT TO

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OF ALBURY WODONGA 2024



Photo: Murray River.



Albury Wodonga
Aboriginal Health Service



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



Bunmabunmarra (to show, help and assist) by Dan Bundadhaany Clegg (comissioned in 2018)

We acknowledge the traditional custodians and Elders past and present, who have raised children, taught them about the world around them and gave them the gift of culture and language. We recognise our part in bringing fairness to our Indigenous brothers and sisters and creating a community where all children, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, can 'grow up strong'.

We acknowledge:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first owners of this land. Their cultures and human rights suffered after colonisation.
- The important connection to the land that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel and how it flows with deep respect through their distinct cultures, languages, customs, arts and laws, as part of Australia's heritage and identity.
- The right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self-determination, to fair participation in the community and just access to resources and services.
- The positive and unique contributions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that have been made to Australia and its communities.
- The role our service will play in reconciliation and commitment to engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We support diversity and inclusivity and welcome all people to our service, regardless of race, religion, gender or sexuality.

Artist Story: Bunmabunmarra

This painting demonstrates the often complex pathways to knowledge and direction through Elders and Snr Law Men/Women based on Wiradhuri learning models. It tells of a journey for knowledge in law (and lore), social instruction and cultural conduct.

It shows individuals and groups across varying degrees of initiation and ceremony connecting with Elders and Snr Law Men/Women along the river. This is where much learning and ceremony took place and are special areas for cultural continuity. Rivers were also sometimes described as 'highways' - along these flowing waters, knowledge could travel and journey across Country to be shared. A river has also been used here to indicate that support services offered by the Hume Riverina Community Legal Service are available on both sides of the river in NSW and Victoria.

Seeking out higher level Elders with the right knowledge was vital to expanding one's own knowledge and finding direction through a sometimes complex system of living and social/spiritual interaction. It allowed personal and family growth while providing the means by which one could navigate unknown or even hostile environments.

This story has also drawn on Buugang, the Bogong Moth, to embody the coming together of people and the setting aside of differences. In traditional times, many people from different first nations would gather at a large site by the big river (Murray) in the local area. All conflicts were put aside and business was conducted peacefully including resolution of outstanding political issues. The men and male initiates would travel to the high country to feast on the buugang before returning to their own homelands.

The colours used in the creating of this painting are based on the Wiradhuri custom and representative of the different levels of knowledge and initiation (with white indicating Snr Law Men/Women). Blue has been used for the bila (river) but also to complete the concept of coming together in reconciliation through the use of both the Aboriginal and Australian flag colours.

ABOUT OUR HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP



Photo (left to right): Becky Smith, Deborah Fisher, Dr Liz Curran (evaluator NTU), Gabby Maginness, and Anthony Nguyen.

WHO ARE WE AND WHAT DO WE DO?

We are the Bagraybang Bagaraybang Mayinygalang (BBM) Health Justice Partnership. Our team includes a lawyer and a community engagement worker from the Hume Riverina Community Legal Service (HRCLS) who work closely with health workers from the Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service (AWAHS). Together, we help the local Aboriginal community with legal support to improve their social and emotional well-being.

In addition to providing legal help, we engage with the community by attending cultural events and running workshops. We focus on professional development by training health staff and other service providers about the legal needs of the Aboriginal community. Additionally, we offer community legal education to help people understand their rights and how to use the legal system to their advantage.

We have prepared this report to share our achievements and learnings with the entire community. Each year, Dr Liz Curran from Nottingham Trent University in Nottingham visits Albury Wodonga and independently evaluates our project. This report is a summary of Dr Curran's more detailed report.

We want to be open and honest about our work, so community can see how we have helped people and how we may be able to help you. Sharing this information gives a voice to the staff and community who participated in the evaluation, which is very important for our partnership.

By reading this report, you can understand how we are making a difference, and you can tell us how to improve. We also want to recognise the hard work of everyone involved and use your feedback to keep getting better.

“WHEN MULTIPLE PROFESSIONS COME TOGETHER TO SOLVE CLIENTS’ PROBLEMS AND EXPLORE THE ISSUES, THE OPTIONS INCREASE AND SOLUTIONS BECOME QUICKER TO FIND OR MORE SUGGESTIONS ARE PUT ON THE TABLE. I REALISE THAT WE ALL BRING DIFFERENT LENSES, INCLUDING CULTURE, VALUES AND POSITIONS AND DIVERSITY. THIS IS INCREDIBLY RICH AND POWERFUL IF WE WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF THE COMMUNITY.”

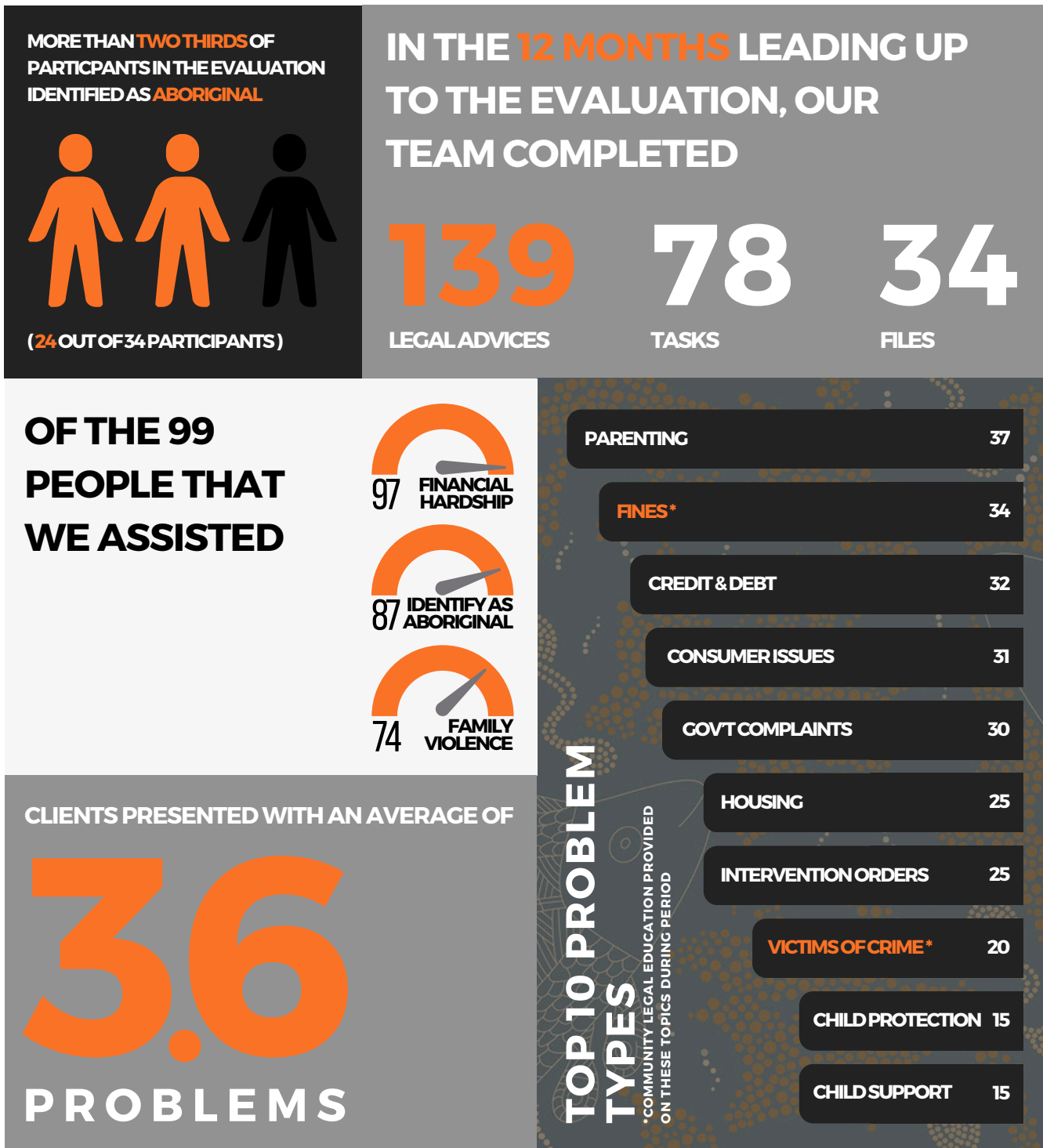
**- INTERVIEW WITH
BBM STAFF**



OUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Our goal is to provide free legal advice and assistance to those who need it most, especially people facing mental health challenges. By working together, we ensure that everyone can get the help they need in a safe and supportive environment.

SNAPSHOT



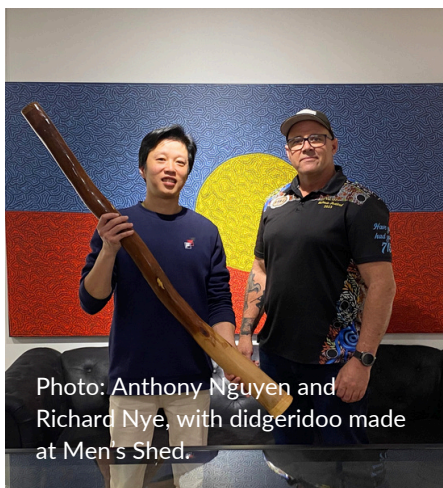


Photo: Anthony Nguyen and Richard Nye, with didgeridoo made at Men's Shed.



Photo: Gabby Maginness, with possum skin made with Women's Group.



Photo: Anthony Nguyen and Gabby Maginness, AWAHS Health Van outreach in Wangaratta.

**WE RAN 2
COMMUNITY EVENTS
AND ASSISTED
CLIENTS WITH**

20

WILL DOCUMENTS

69

BIRTH CERTIFICATES

WE RESPONDED TO

108

**QUESTIONS FROM STAFF
(SECONDARY CONSULTATIONS)**

**COMMUNITY
LEGAL EDUCATION**

7

FINDINGS

THIS SECTION HIGHLIGHTS SOME OF THE FINDINGS ABOUT OUR PROJECT.

“OFTEN AT MY END I’LL GET A CLIENT MAKING A PANICKED CALL, AND I SAY, ‘DON’T PANIC I’LL CALL LEGAL’. BECAUSE OF PREVIOUS CLIENT EXPERIENCES WITH LEGAL, THEY ARE IMMEDIATELY RELIEVED, AS AM I.”

- INTERVIEW WITH HEALTH STAFF.
(CALLED “TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES” IN FULL REPORT)

Collaboration

The BBM project brings health and legal workers together. This teamwork helps the community with their mental health by addressing legal issues that affect their well-being. This combined approach leads to better outcomes and improves overall health and happiness.

Engagement

People in the Aboriginal community of Albury Wodonga have started trusting the BBM project. In 2023, there was doubt about how the law could help them. Now, after working with the BBM team, they feel more positive about the law's role in their lives. This change happened because the BBM team is always

present and works closely with the community to address their legal problems.

It is also noted that the BBM project has built trust faster than expected. This is because of the long-standing relationship between HRCLS and AWAHS, thanks to a sister program called the "Invisible Hurdles Program." This history helped BBM connect with the community more quickly and effectively.

Empowerment

The BBM project is on track to improve the lives of Aboriginal clients by providing early legal support. This helps prevent problems from getting worse and reduces stress, anxiety, and other health issues. The project also creates a safe and culturally respectful

“YOU GIVE UP OR BELIEVE WHAT YOU'RE TOLD. AUTHORITIES SAY YOU CAN'T DO THIS OR THAT AND WE TEND TO BELIEVE IT. WHAT THE LAWYER DOES IS IT SHIFTS THE DIAL ON THIS.”
- INTERVIEW WITH HEALTH STAFF.

“WHAT THE LAWYERS HAVE SHOWN ME IS IT IS GOOD TO BE CURIOUS. THEY HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT NOTHING SHOULD EVER BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE. IT DOESN'T HURT TO PUSH BACK.”
- INTERVIEW WITH HEALTH STAFF.

environment, contributing to better decision-making and empowerment.

The BBM project plays a crucial role in the "Closing the Gap" efforts by addressing legal needs early and effectively. This helps improve the social and health outcomes for the Aboriginal community, ensuring a more equal and just society.

Reach

Aboriginal participants feel that BBM staff are easy to talk to, available, and understand their problems. The staff work hard to help the community, even when facing tough challenges. They not only guide people through the legal system but also go above and beyond to provide support. Although

the team are not always able to achieve the desired outcome, participants were grateful for the support and felt listened to.

Capability

Some community members pointed out that the BBM project has limits because of its small size and the large number of people needing help. Despite regular referrals, BBM team cannot assist with wills and estates, child protection, and criminal matters. This shows the importance of continuing and expanding the program. There is a need for ongoing funding for programs like BBM to continue closing the gap in Aboriginal inequality and unmet legal needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here is a summary of the key recommendations from Dr Curran's more detailed report. These recommendations were developed from staff interviews and community yarning circles to address the legal and social needs of the Aboriginal community of Albury Wodonga, calling attention to the importance of cultural respect and self-determination.

For full details of the 22 recommendations made by Dr Curran, please refer to her full report.

Empowerment and Self-Determination

It is crucial to empower Aboriginal community members to understand and use their legal rights. This includes holding governments and agencies accountable, and providing legal information in accessible ways.

Increased Voice and Advocacy

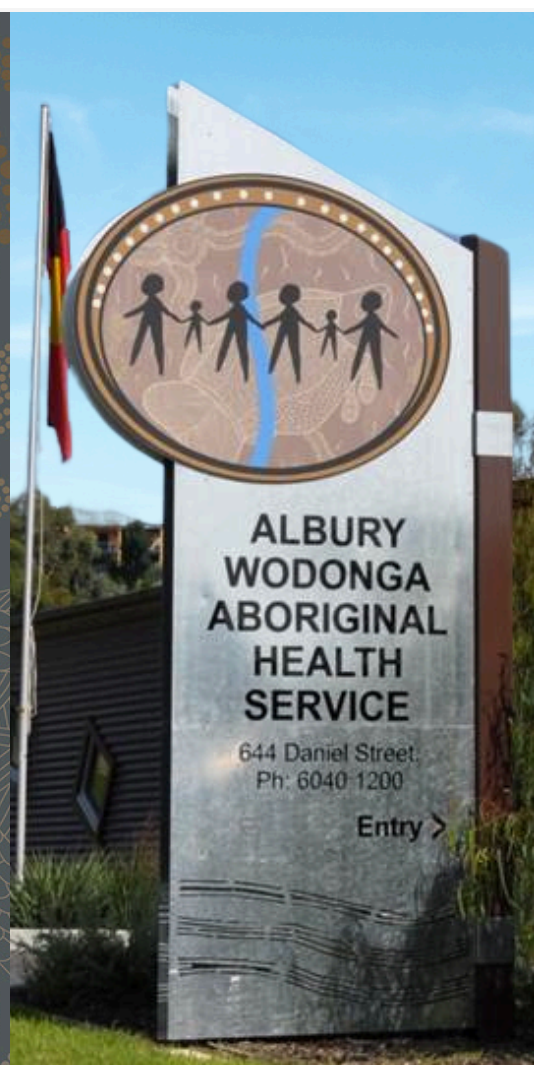
Develop a list of laws and policies that affect the local Aboriginal community that need changing. Work with AWAHS staff and community to give voice to these issues and advocate for change.

Ongoing and Expanded Funding

Stable, long-term funding is essential for the continuation and expansion of the BBM program to meet the complex needs of the community.

Cultural Respect & Trauma-Informed Practice

The recommendations highlight the importance of cultural respect and trauma-informed practice in legal and social services, ensuring that community members feel safe and supported.



These recommendations bring out the voices of the Aboriginal community of Albury Wodonga and are designed to ensure the BBM program continues to make a positive impact, addressing legal inequalities and supporting the well-being of our community.

Thank you to those who participated in this research for enabling us to do this study and to learn about ways in which Aboriginal people can be better supported.

Many people don't understand the sorts of problems that might have a legal solution or that lawyers can help by providing other options that might not be known.

The learning from this study, including your participation and views, is shaping how the legal service will operate to ensure that you are able to know about, access, and ensure your human rights in a place of cultural safety.

Dr Curran will return in late April of 2025 to Albury Wodonga for our next annual evaluation. If you would like to be a part of our research, we welcome you to reach out to us by asking for our team at AWAHS reception.

**“THANK YOU FOR YOUR BEAUTIFUL,
KIND, AND SUPPORTIVE NATURE, YOU
MAKE PEOPLE FEEL CALM AND LESS
STRESSED WITH THESE TYPES OF
ISSUES, YOUR SMILE GIVES PEOPLE
HOPE! I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH
FOR YOUR EFFORTS AND MAKING ME
FEEL SUPPORTED”
- CLIENT FEEDBACK.**

If you would like to read Dr Curran's more detailed report, please visit the website of Hume Riverina Community Legal Service at <https://www.hrcls.org.au/hrcls-publications/>

For more information, please feel free to contact:

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**Nottingham
Law School**
Nottingham Trent University

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We are a service of  Upper Murray Family Care

