

THE BULDAU YIOOHGEN PROGRAM PRESENTS

# BIG DREAMS

EMBRACING CULTURE AT ANGLICARE VICTORIA

BULDAU YIOOHGEN NEWSLETTER

JULY 2021

## WOMINJEKA

The Buldau Yioohgen (BY) team have been busy for months, preparing for Reconciliation Week and some very exciting things which are in the works.

In early April, we moved into one of Anglicare Victoria's buildings which we are turning into a cultural centre. We have already had a few catch-up yarns with some participants and the centre is starting to turn into a culturally safe and inspiring space for all who visit.

As you'll read in the articles, in early May we took four young people away to Lake Mungo. During our time away we were able to share cultural knowledge and life experiences with the participants we looked after.

We continue supporting and yarning with our young people every day, making sure they are connecting to culture on their personal journeys, and we are very much looking forward to working out of Darrango yan-dhan cultural centre.

Aunty Kellie and Uncle Ian



## DARRANGO YAN-DHAN: THE HOME OF BULDAU YIOOHGEN

The BY team finally have a space to call home and they've called it Darrango yan-dhan. The team will be located at an Anglicare Victoria (AV) building in East Melbourne, creating a new cultural centre for the organisation. The name means "Young Walking Together" in Woi Wurrung. In between heavy program activity, the cultural team have worked hard to prepare the centre for opening during this year's Reconciliation Week in between heavy program activity\*.

Darrango yan-dhan will support young Indigenous people to have a sense of place and community, and it will become a platform for the many cultural activities BY is now delivering.

The centre will also be open two days a week (Tuesday and Wednesday) for AV's Indigenous families to visit and spend time with Uncle Ian and Aunty Kellie. The centre is also available for all divisions of AV to use as needed.

The team aim to have a keynote Indigenous speaker every few months to inspire our young Indigenous youth and their families.

The BY team deeply appreciate AV's commitment to embracing Indigenous culture as an important part of caring for our vulnerable young people and families.

\*The opening was postponed due to COVID restrictions.



## WORDS FROM THE CEO

### Reconciliation Week: More than a word. Reconciliation takes action

*At Anglicare Victoria, we are determined to play our role in bridging the equality gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of Victoria. Staff across the agency have been working hard to ensure that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients receive culturally appropriate care and have opportunities to connect with family and culture. Buldau Yioohgen continues to build momentum, providing opportunities for young people across the agency to grow, learn and connect with culture. And our two cultural advisors are adding immeasurable wisdom and guidance in this journey.*

*But there is more to do. I look forward to continuing to build our cultural capability across all areas of our work, and I am keen that our new Reconciliation Action Plan – being developed this year – will map out an ambitious and meaningful program of work to strengthen the quality of our service delivery as well as our cultural capacity as an organisation.*

**Paul McDonald**  
Anglicare Victoria CEO

## SIDE BY SIDE: AV'S INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STRATEGY

The Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan and National Strategy Vision identifies that Victoria will be a state where the rich and thriving culture, knowledge and experience of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are celebrated by all Victorians.

Anglicare Victoria has made a great leap forward in supporting this vision with the production of a new strategy through TEACHaR (our education support program) for Indigenous children in our care. The new approach will ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, identity and aspirations are acknowledged and celebrated as an intrinsic part of the TEACHaR education program.

Over 30% of children in our education care are of Indigenous heritage. As such, appropriate cultural awareness is critically important. The new strategy focuses on community partnerships,

acknowledgement of Indigenous aspirations and self-determinism, empowerment, equality, the importance of identity, and collaboration.

Importantly, the program will be employing two new Indigenous education specialists to strengthen the team's cultural expertise. The strategy was driven by AV education specialists and co-designed with the BY team. Content stemming from the strategy will include cultural education resources for the whole of AV.

**"We are strengthening the ties between the TEACHaR program, Uncle Ian, Aunty Kellie and the Buldau Yioohgen Program. We are bringing a much more holistic approach to the educational support we offer our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children."**

– Andrea Dwyer, Director of Program Development and Innovation.

# TIME ON COUNTRY

## **BY's cultural immersion program, Lake Mungo National Park, 3 - 8 May**

Buldau Yioohgen's cultural immersion program at Lake Mungo continues to build its roots and grow in confidence. This excursion built on the success of the previous excursion in 2019, again offering quality time for Elders to build relationships with young people in the archaeological and spiritually significant setting of Lake Mungo.

This year, five young people were selected for the trip, supported by two volunteers and the BY mob. The young people attending were chosen from programs across AV, such as Compass and TRAK Forward (Gippsland).

**"We tasted bush tucker, fished, worked on possum skins, conducted smoking ceremonies and finished off with star gazing and dreamtime stories." – Aunty Kellie**

Cultural program activities included traditional food gathering and cooking, possum skin art, smoking ceremonies, Aboriginal astronomy and bush foods medicine (collecting Gumbi-Gumbi). A personal cultural journal was provided to each student to capture their unique experiences and reflections while out on Country.

During the astronomy session, timeless stories were shared by Uncle Ian and Aunty Kellie. Heath, AV volunteer and expert night photographer, captured the emu in the sky with each participant in the foreground holding their unique possum skin. Each participant will receive their photo as a memento of their time at Lake Mungo to help stay connected to their experience.

**"The program is moving from strength to strength, as the team continues to improve the organisation culturally and deliver programs that are culturally appropriate" said Program Manager David Law.**

**"With the full support of AV behind us, the team is gaining confidence. Being together for our Aboriginal community – in a culturally safe space – is so important.**

**We do the possum skin markings when it's time, we dig for ochre when it's time, but it's about being together."**

Aunty Kellie reflected on the remarkable progress the young people had made in just five days

**"When Alice\* first came on the bus, she didn't say a word, but when she got off the bus back home, she was glowing."**

\*Name has been changed.



# FINDING THE TRACK BACK HOME

Maddie\*, one of our TRAK Forward\* Inner Gippsland clients, is a young woman with two children who share Indigenous heritage. She and her children had relocated to live with a new partner many hours from their home, but sadly things had gone downhill, and domestic violence had become a regular part of their lives.

Maddie felt isolated and disconnected from her familiar places and people. She said she didn't know who she was anymore and wondered if she would ever get back to who she once was.

Maddie's family have experienced generations of cultural disruption. Her mother was a member of the stolen generation, and one of her children's fathers is also Indigenous. As part of her empowerment goals for TRAK Forward, Maddie chose to focus on "culture confidence" for both her and her children. As a step towards this goal, TRAK Forward funded and facilitated the family to attend the Buldau Yioohgen Cultural Camp at Lorne.

At the camp, Uncle Ian and Aunty Kellie created a reverent space for culture to be taught and remembered. They shared stories and cultural practices through dance, language, art and astronomy. Maddie and her children began to reconnect to something they were longing for. Being back among community was incredibly beneficial. The children were given a possum skin to etch their story into and take home.

**"I've never had anything like this in my life, and to share it with my daughter and with Elders is incredible. My generation has missed out – today, young people are taught things again, but it just wasn't there for us. I've never been to a smoking ceremony, and I'm 34 – but they didn't make me feel self-conscious. I just felt welcomed back. It's not just my daughter and me who have benefitted; it's our whole family. I'm planning a possum skin ceremony for my family now; it's such a powerful way to connect. I cried on the last day. It was such an emotional experience. Truly life-changing."**

– Maddie

**"I came home buzzing with energy; I have a new sense of connection. I feel I have a community now. My mother has started to talk about her life now – before she would mention her culture about once a year if something came up on the news, then shut that door straight away. Now we have talked and talked; she told stories I never heard before. I think this has given her permission to be proud."** – Maddie's adolescent son

Program Manager David Law said it was incredible to see the participants build connections with each other, passing on and reactivating culture together. "At ten o'clock at night, after most of us had gone to bed, I looked out the window and saw Andrew, one of the young participants, painting with ochre onto Maddie and her daughter, reconnecting with ancient culture. It was amazing."

Andrew later said to David, "Before this, all I knew was that my grandfather was from the Wurundjeri tribe, but now I'm a proud Wurundjeri man."

\*Our client's name has been changed, but their stories and words are real.

\* TRAK Forward offers a range of therapeutic interventions to support the recovery of people, including children, who are moving forward away from the impact of family violence.





# LOOKING TO THE HORIZON

## Buldau Yioohgen (BY) and AV Cultural Competence

A strategic workshop was held early in 2021 to discuss the development and future directions of Buldau Yioohgen. The workshop was attended by AV's Cultural Advisors, Uncle Ian Goolagong and Aunty Kellie Hunter, the BY team, CEO Paul McDonald, and AV's Directors of Strategy, Strategic Projects and Innovation and Marketing and Communications.

The meeting discussed plans for BY, including ways to promote access to the leadership academy while acknowledging that there is now an opportunity to provide a broader range of cultural and personal support to Aboriginal children, young people and families across the agency, led by Uncle Ian and Aunty Kellie.

Future activities discussed at the meeting included establishing a cultural 'hub' as a safe space for Aboriginal people that AV are working with and the development package of collateral to promote the range of supports available and how to access them.

The meeting also discussed the range of related activities planned or underway across the agency

that, together, will develop our organisational capacity and cultural competence and ensure the provision of safe and appropriate services to our Aboriginal children, families and young people.

These activities included (but are not limited to):

- Development of AV's next Reconciliation Action Plan
- The audit process currently underway for Aboriginal family violence services
- Ongoing support of the AV's First Nations Staff Network
- Training and development for all staff
- Using media and communications to raise the profile and understanding of Aboriginal culture within the agency and the broader community
- The proposed establishment of a sub-committee of AV's Executive Group to provide organisation-wide coordination of these and other development and improvement initiatives.

# HIKE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

This year's Hike for Higher Education (H4HE) in Tasmania again delivered inspiration and guidance in an informal setting to young people from across Victoria struggling to engage with their school work. Delivered to two cohorts over two different weekends, a total of 52 students and 22 mentors climbed the hills of Maria Island while being exposed to ideas, people and discussions "too large" for the classroom. The mentors were a selection of high level, positive role models such as Nova Peris (OAM, first Aboriginal Australian to win an Olympic gold medal), Indigenous Elders, and people from program partners such as Tennis Australia (TA).

With over half the group holding Indigenous heritage, the camp had a distinctly cultural focus. AV's Cultural Advisor Uncle Ian, set the tone for the retreats, integrating his cultural knowledge throughout activities across the entire trip. The young people were immersed in story, language and land from the moment Uncle began his Acknowledgement to Country. Program Manager, David Law said, "To have Ian there as an Elder guiding everyone, showed the children and staff a way to become more connected to where you are, in Country and life. They were able to see through his eyes as he connects to Country".

After a long year of pandemic restrictions, the excursion was the first school trip to leave the state in 15 months. The young participants were noticeably quiet - even uncomfortable - after a long year of social separation. It took some time for them to settle in, but soon they were thriving among the other kids and adults. David Law said "to hear the kids reconnect in a group sense was beautiful". "Education over the last 12 months has been very much just a tool, delivered online. The camp reiterated the importance of human connectivity; for human health, mental health, but also our aspirations".

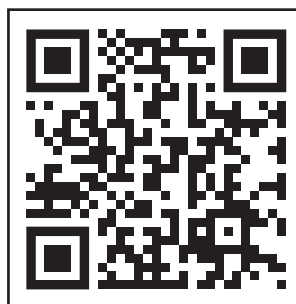
Our partners were impressed with the participants' engagement and the camp delivery. TA continue to cement its relationship with the program, extending support in raising aspirations. All camp participants have been offered jobs at the next Australian Open and will be prioritised as applicants.

The TA crew reported to organisers that they are moving away from resume-based applications, and the selection of 100 AO staff will be informed by scenario-based interviews. They intend to trial this new HR practice with the H4HE applicants, further demonstrating TA's openness and appreciation to learning, while implementing new approaches to cross-cultural recruitment practices.

**"I used to think the world was against me—now I think the world is my oyster."**

**Dylan, BY participant.**

Scan the QR Code to hear Dylan explain what the discovery of culture has meant to him.





If you are interested in hearing more about anything you've read in this season's newsletter, please contact the BY program via **email: [by@anglicarevic.org.au](mailto:by@anglicarevic.org.au)**

[anglicarevic.org.au](http://anglicarevic.org.au)



OUR FOCUS IS ON TRANSFORMING THE FUTURES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, FAMILIES AND ADULTS. OUR WORK IS BASED ON THREE GUIDING PILLARS, PREVENT, PROTECT, EMPOWER.

**BETTER  
TOMORROWS**