

Speaker's Annual Report to Dharriwaa Elders Group ("DEG") members for 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020.

Prepared by Project Manager Wendy Spencer.

Members News

From 1 July 2019 – 13 December 2019 the following Elders Councillors presided: Speaker: Clem Dodd, Secretary: Virginia Robinson, Treasurer: Richard Lake. Elders Councillors: Paul Winters, Margaret Barden, Violet Morgan, Lewis Beale, Elizabeth Peters. At the 13 December 2019 AGM the following were elected: Speaker: Clem Dodd, Secretary: Virginia Robinson, Treasurer: vacant. Elders Councillors: Mavis Murray, Vince Kennedy, Violet Morgan, Richard Lake. After the AGM Vince Kennedy moved to Tamworth and did not attend a meeting. Mavis Murray resigned her role 13 March 2020. Full Members Lewis Beale, Elizabeth Peters were invited to join the Elders Council to fill casual vacancies. During the period DEG's Elders Council secretariat held 8 meetings. DEG contributed food vouchers to 17 families for Walgett funerals during the period. During the year we mourned the passing of Founding Elders Councillor Fay Sands in late June 2020, and Lyall Munro Senior of Moree in May 2020.

Representation

Narran Lakes Co-Management Committee. Virginia Robinson represented the Dharriwaa Elders Group on this committee, which was managed by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage. Her reports were made as regular agenda items of DEG meetings and correspondence and business arising were addressed when DEG delegates were made aware of the Committee's business.

ACHAA. Clem Dodd represented DEG in its role as a committee member of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Arts Association (ACHAA), attending meetings by phone from Walgett, and bi-annual gatherings in person when resourced.

Lightning Ridge Area Opal Reserve Manager. Wendy Spencer is the gazetted representative of the DEG for this committee which by the end of June 2020 had engaged a Manager for the Reserve, and consultants to prepare the Reserve's Plan of Management. The other members of this committee represent Lightning Ridge opal mining, opal tourism, opal retail and Lightning Ridge heritage interests and concerns.

Project Manager's Report

The Objects of Dharriwaa Elders Group continue to be implemented by the organisation. The Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership with UNSW is providing financial, human and knowledge resources to support most objectives. The Department of Health's CHSP program supports the provision of Elders Social Support and associated Transport activities. Our participation in the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety illustrated to the wider Australian community how ground-breaking and important our holistic model of care for healthy ageing is. DEG undertook with Yuwaya Ngarrali research collaborators, a small project to define DEG's approach, and Walgett Elders' understanding of Ageing Well in Walgett. The report will be published next year.

DEG's role in managing and growing Aboriginal cultural values and knowledge remains under-recognised but continues. DEG continues to network with similar Aboriginal cultural organisations in our NSW peak body ACHAA (Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Arts Association) to grow our strengths in this unsupported and undervalued domain. Our work this year also included advocating for more supportive and responsive government agency roles and approaches, particularly in response to food and water security crises, Covid19, NSW Government water management. DEG's experiences with the implementation of the NSW Government policy for Aboriginal Affairs Ochre including Local Decision-making and Connected Community Schools continued to challenge us. DEG has an ex-officio role on the School Reference Group.

The Commonwealth Government remains absent from any Aboriginal Cultural and development work undertaken by DEG. Local government is awakening to potential economic benefits from Walgett's Aboriginal cultural knowledge and values, yet shows little support for organic growth of grassroots Aboriginal cultural development. DEG's leadership faces a difficult year as it seeks to bring benefits to the Walgett community with its influential partners. We share highlights of our work during 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020 in the following pages of this report.

In Memorium – Fay Florence Sands – a DEG founder



Fay Florence Sands nee Walford was born 14 December 1938 in Walgett. Her mother was Lilly Walford. She married George Sands who was born 17 April 1936, and they had seven children - Ernie, Lionel, Ellen, Robyn, Stella, John and Jean. Fay worked on properties around Walgett and at the Imperial Hotel, the Walgett Boarding House and as a Co-ordinator at the Walgett CDEP.

Aunty Fay was a Founding Elders Councillor of the Dharriwaa Elders Group. With Lewis Beale, in 2004 she proposed that the Elders Council work towards the town providing more services that meet the needs of Walgett Aboriginal young people.

She wanted the following words to be included in the story about her in Dharriwaa Elders Group's 2008 Calendar. "In the future Fay would like to see a better education system in Walgett so our kids don't have to leave home to get a good education. She'd also like to see more recreational activities, more role models visiting Walgett for our youth, and more local employment."

Aunty Fay was a quiet and strong Gamilaraay Walgett leader who used her knowledge and experience to create a better world for her community. She will be greatly missed by members and staff of DEG.

Dharriwaa Elders Group supported the #SchoolStrike4Climate #ClimateStrike #GlobalClimateStrike 20 Sept 2019 with the message: "WAKE UP!! CLIMATE ACTION NOW!" & invited community members to take their photo with our banner. A number participated despite a continuing dust storm.



Our action to support the #climatestrike was noticed & included in Croakey 23 Sept 2019 <https://www.croakey.org/united-nations-chief-urges-young-people-to-fight-on-check-this-twitter-wrap-of-climatestrike/> about the New York climate meeting. Walgett Elders were pleased to join the many voices from around Australia who are urging Climate Action NOW!

DEG was shocked to learn 21 April 2020 that Walgett institution - Nova Employment's Cafe 64 – Walgett's only Aus. Disability Enterprise & Transition to Work employer closed down with no notice. DEG wrote to the NSW Premier, NSW Minister for Disability and relevant Commonwealth Ministers to investigate, and has been following this issue with the help of Roy Butler MP since. So far no remedy has been provided to address this market failure.

Elders' civic participation



Left: Clem Dodd attended Walgett meeting 14 Aug 2019 with [Minister Don Harwin MLC](#) and spoke of concerns re landclearing. DEG also asked for greater local govt. disaster preparedness, provision of local data to local ACCOs, better quality drinking water, ground & surface waters mngmnt [#publichealth](#) [#nswpol](#). DEG invited the Minister for Arts and Aboriginal Affairs to Walgett's Aboriginal cultural org. when next visiting Walgett.



22 Nov 2019 DEG welcomed Senator Tim Ayers to Walgett. Elders asked "what happened?" (re election failure). Also talked jobs, drought, civic empowerment for Aboriginal people, wellbeing, education, Country, life. He is a loyal @DharriwaaEGroup follower on Twitter.



In the height of Covid19, Speaker Clem Dodd laid a wreath on behalf of DEG at the Sheepyards War Memorial. Leonard Simpson laid the wreath on behalf of DEG at the Walgett cenotaph earlier this morning.



10 Oct 2019 DEG wrote to urge Walgett Shire Council to renew its 2011 resolution & do all in its powers to reject coal seam gas exploration and mining within the LGA and in the Narrabri Gas Project.

In July 2019 DEG found that it was no longer eligible to apply for NSW Environmental Trust Protecting Our Places projects because they had revised their guidelines to exclude Aboriginal organisations that are incorporated under the NSW Associations Act!

After legal advice from long-term partners GT Law, DEG wrote objecting. We are told that the guidelines for 2021 will be changed to ensure that Aboriginal community-controlled organisations like Dharrriwa Elders Group will be eligible in 2021.

In Oct 2019 the long-awaited NSW Ombudsman Report regarding NSW's implementation of its Ochre Policy including its Connected Community Schools was released. DEG's YN Director Research & Evaluation provided a summary of all Walgett-related data for DEG to share with Walgett colleagues. Walgett's school was highlighted.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/nitv-news/article/2019/10/29/independent-report-delivers-glowing-review-nsw-governments-indigenous-strategy>

DEG wrote to NSW Minister for the Environment Matt Kean MP 12 Dec 2019 "Walgett's Aboriginal community is suffering the effects of Climate Change & its poor management. Our rivers are dry, our drinking water is unacceptably high in sodium, native vegetation by unsustainable farming activities is occurring regularly & the consequent cleared landscapes are being blown by strong winds sending frequent dust storms. Our gardens and green spaces are dying because we are on Level 5 water restrictions. We are experiencing a public health catastrophe."

DEG wrote to thank Mr Kean for his courage & integrity in urging the NSW Govt to make immediate emissions reductions to address #ClimateChange & prepare NSW communities & agencies for managing disasters more effectively. Also for recognition of climate science warnings.

Yuwaya Ngarra-li “vision”



Yuwaya Ngarra-li (YN) is a community-led partnership between the Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG) and the University of NSW.

Professor Eileen Baldry, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, is the Academic Lead of Yuwaya Ngarra-li. The core Yuwaya Ngarra-li (“YN”) team is based in Walgett and UNSW Sydney. At UNSW Sydney, Yuwaya Ngarra-li sits within the Institute of Global Development.

The purpose of Yuwaya Ngarra-li is for the Dharriwaa Elders Group and UNSW to work in partnership to improve the wellbeing, social, built and physical environment and life pathways of Aboriginal people in Walgett through collaborating with government, philanthropy and community organisations on evidence-based initiatives, research and capacity building, and to evaluate this model of CommUNITY-Led Development as a way of working with other Aboriginal communities.

YUWAYA NGARRA-LI
A community-led partnership between the Dharriwaa Elders Group and UNSW



The DEG has identified the following long-term aims for Yuwaya Ngarra-li in Walgett:

1. Greater Aboriginal community control and capacity
2. Increased numbers of Aboriginal young people in education, training & employment
3. Reduced numbers of Aboriginal people in contact with the criminal justice system
4. Improved social determinants of health and wellbeing amongst Aboriginal people
5. Improved sustainability of energy, water, land and natural resource management
6. Redirection of government funding towards strengths-based, holistic, community-led and sustainable initiatives

The partnership is developing and testing a new model of ‘CommUNITY-Led Development’ which is a place-based approach to breaking the cycle of systemic disadvantage, centring the needs and priorities of Aboriginal people through the leadership of a respected local community-controlled organisation and drawing on the expertise, influence and resources of UNSW. The diagram top right is our approach to this model in Walgett.



**DHARRIWAA
ELDERS GROUP**



Investigation

Stripped bare: Australia's hidden climate crisis

An epidemic of land clearing is sabotaging efforts to address climate change. Farming communities are bitterly divided over the issue - but it also has global consequences

Support our independent journalism with a [one-off or monthly contribution](#)
Anne Davies, Mike Bowers, Andy Ball and Nick Evershed

Above: On 17 October 2019 DEG's advocacy was featured in *The Guardian's* significant investigation into landclearing. DEG's Speaker Clem Dodd and colleague ecologist Phil Spark were quoted.
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2019/oct/17/stripped-bare-australias-hidden-climate-crisis>

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and environmental management

DEG's Virginia Robinson drew attention to a letter by 240 leading scientists that called on Scott Morrison to stem extinction crisis published in the *Guardian* 28 October 2019 "The review of the EPBC Act ... held against a backdrop of escalating land-clearing, particularly in Queensland and New South Wales".
She said "This is important. You don't hear top scientists come out of the woodwork like this every day"

Right: On 15 October 2019 DEG attended a poor "information session" held by NSW DPIE re the Draft Barwon Darling Water Resource Plan. The community was given a short window to comment - with submissions due by 29 October. The NSW Government had been so slow developing the Plan that public responses were crunched by the MDBPlan deadline. We wondered whether it was because of staff shortages and reflected that rare and unskilled communications limits public knowledge. We wondered if this was the intention of NSW DPIE.



Land clearing has always been of great concern to DEG. DEG wrote to NSW Minister imploring not to enact its Biodiversity Conservation Act in 2016. Deaf ears. On the 1 August 2019 DEG tweeted "From today's meeting: "Minister [@AngusTaylorMP](#) must be made accountable. There is too much landclearing and our rivers and communities are suffering. Climate change is real out here."

In 18 August 2019 DEG tweeted: "We eat dust daily as a result and worry deeply re impacts of excessive landclearing on birds, animals, remaining native vegetation".

16 August 2019: NSW OEH warned less than 1% of koala habitat in NSW would be protected under new deforestation laws. "Since then, landholders have given notice of 51,210ha of clearing and a further 288,556ha for clearing for agriculture has been approved". DEG tweeted outrage about the impacts of landclearing on a koala colony close to Walgett familiar to Elders.

Right: DEG continued to monitor Walgett's water crisis. Right: 24 July 2019 Namoi River Walgett boat ramp. After the river bed has been dry for so long the water is acidic. Also the riverbanks were collapsing in places.



Right: Dharriwaa - Narran Lakes Sunday 29 July 2019. Totally dry, the lake is dependent on water from Narran River flows & flood events from a series of waterways & lakes stretching from Qld through northern NSW. All are drastically affected by drought & management of [#murraydarlingbasin](#). All year DEG concerns were rising.



Cultural values maintenance

24 Jul 2019 the NSW Natural Resources Commission released a scathing report detailing the NSW Government's complicity in pushing the Barwon / Darling River to the brink of collapse, and confirming DEG fears & knowledge.



Above: 1 Aug 2019 DEG hosted a small gathering to watch "Pilliga Rising" in Walgett. A few stayed to discuss the campaign to reject Coal Seam Gas mining. All present were greatly concerned to protect groundwaters for the survival of us all & the environment we love & depend upon. We were joined by long term collaborators Peter Thompson and Meg Leathardt.



Above: On 29 July 2019 David Sullivan, Reserve Manager of the Opal Fields Reserve, was introduced to DEG (a Reserve Manager member) and we discussed our work & dreams for the Reserve. The Reserve lands contain many places of high Environmental and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Values.



Yaama Ngunna Baaka was a dance event that began in Walgett in September 2019 and processed to other dry river Baawan communities downstream. DEG's Speaker Clem Dodd was interviewed for radio. DEG's Virginia Robinson performed the Welcome to Country for the visitors at the Walgett Showground and is seen here with the busy event organizer Jenny Brown. Some might not be aware that DEG had written a letter of support for the project to its funding body, with other ACHAA sister organisations.



Cultural maintenance

Right: In May 2020 Werringah Elders Aboriginal Corp visited DEG for [#SorryDay2020](#). We learnt of the strong values driving this organisation in its work with children & young people in Lightning Ridge. DEG shared information that could help – including key governance documents and reflections about organisation building.



Left: 21 Aug 2019 John Paul Young visited and performed in Goodooga. Love was definitely in the air to honour Goodooga war efforts Inc those of Archie (Tracker) Murphy.

Right: DEG and Yuwaya Ngarrali visitors with Brenda McBride at Angledool Reserve Memorial and Barrali Mugulbaa August 2019.





Left: 3 March 2020 DEG's Robyn Morgan & Lewis Beale were interviewed by Bev Smiles and Max - Inland Rivers Network videomaker to contribute to advocacy for the wellbeing of surface & groundwaters. The recordings were made at Walgett's Namoi River boat ramp - Namoi dropping at the time. [#ReviveOurRivers](#) @<https://youtu.be/FTBVQYRSaXM>

On the 29 October 2019 DEG made brief submission for better management of ground & surface waters by Draft Namoi/Barwon-Darling Watercourse Water Resource Plans. DEG requested that community-led knowledge inform water management. Also DEG requires that river flows & wellbeing ARE RESTORED before extractions determined.

DEG prepared briefing papers regarding Walgett's water crisis. One was prepared for Walgett AMS and NACCHO & other public health advocates by DEG, WAMS with Yuwya Ngarrali partners 16/9/19 .

https://www.dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/FinalWAMS_ISSUES-PAPER---WATER-QUALITY---16-SEPTEMBER-2019.pdf

Water learning and advocacy



Above: Our first DEG outing since [#Covid19](#) began [#BacktoBusiness](#)

On 15 May 2020 DEG took advantage of the new Covid19 rules, and had a work session at Yumanbaa on the Baawan - while continuing social distancing, with newly-engaged colleague Bill Johnson. We began work on an essay for the Stockholm International Water Institute. This opportunity was provided by an introduction from Yuwya Ngarrali UNSW collaborators The Global Water Institute. DEG is bringing together under Yuwya Ngarrali a group of experts and scientists to progress and amplify DEG's efforts to restore wellbeing to Walgett's waterways.

11 Feb 2020 DEG wrote: "Just gobsmacked that NSW has allowed floodplain harvesting to commence after just one lot of decent rain in the #NorthernBasin These flows are a lifeline for our dying rivers. No excuses. NSWDPIE_Water get your plans done and protect the flows!"

On 17 Feb 2020 DEG tweeted: "Large cotton farms in northern NSW allowed by NSW govt to divert flood water from rivers into their own private dams - starving downstream communities, rivers and wetlands of this precious resource".

26 Feb 2020 DEG returned to its concern for Narran Lakes: "Dharriwaa "common meeting place" for ALL species, must be saved. But buying water twice from Caymans-based company will get our scrutiny. Also water being traded as a commodity remains a big concern".



While we waited to hear about Walgett's Reverse Osmosis solution for drinking water, DEG continued delivering bottled water & developing plans for chilled drinking water stations for 13 locations in the town. In November 2019 we hosted Gonzalo Portas, Louise McKenzie & Hamish McFarlane from UNSW Built Environment Faculty. DEG hosted a community workshop session in the high school's "Community Hub" to discuss the best locations for the drinking water, and possible designs. During Covid19 the Built Environment faculty's participation was withdrawn, so DEG's Yuwaya Ngarrali team pressed on with other collaborators.

Access to quality drinking water



Above: an online session working remotely with UNSW Built Environment industrial designer before they withdrew from the project during Covid.

Throughout the period DEG continued to advocate for a Reverse Osmosis system to be installed in Walgett. At the height of the summer 2018-2019 and bottles of plastic water were being generously donated, it was the Dharriwaa Elders Group that were a lone voice saying "we need water, and we need a long-term solution".

We are very excited to hear the announcement from NSW Government that a reverse osmosis system will be built in Walgett in response to community concerns regarding the quality of town drinking water. The Yuwaya Ngarrali Partnership supported the advocacy and organising efforts of [@DharriwaaEGroup](#) with [@Walgett_AMS](#), who advocated for many months on this critical public health and wellbeing issue for the whole of the Walgett Community. Thank you to [@rachelcarbonell](#) for telling this important story for many remote NSW communities, and communities all across the country. (Radio 22 Jul 19 Rachel Carbonell <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/am/drought-affected-inland-communities-to-get-desalination-plants/11330138>) "The [@Walgett_AMS](#) and the [@DharriwaaEGroup](#) have both expressed concerns about the potential effect on community health. DEG Speaker Clem Dodd said the bore water was not healthy". <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-22/saltwater-solution-for-drought-towns-brackish-drinking-water/11326154>

31 Jul 2019 DEG's Clem Dodd told the truth to the wider world armed with undeniable evidence from Yuwaya Ngarrali collaborator Jacqui Webster and Walgett AMS. "We have not received any details yet from NSW Govt re RO commitment. Also NSW water bureaucrats know nothing. Is it a real commitment?". Story by DEG with Brooke Fryer <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2019/07/30/drought-towns-feeling-impact-their-backup-water-supply>

On the 27 Jan 2020 DEG was thanking Sydney Morning Herald for acknowledging our work with [@Walgett_AMS](#) with Yuwaya Ngarrali UNSW-based water & public health experts, & [@abcnews](#) and reporting "Now we await Walgett desal system install, after long delay. Mining manage installs without fuss. But we rely on NSW Govt."

At the end of Nov 2019 DEG & Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service convened a group of Yuwaya Ngarra-li collaborators and helpful agencies to provide advice as we proceed our Food & Water for Life project. With mounting drought & climate concerns, and after April's Yuwaya Ngarrali Walgett Food Forum & the June 1999 supermarket fire, we were determined to be water-efficient & ensure our community eats better, more locally grown food. UNSW partners from the Sydney Yuwaya Ngarra-li team, including Jacqui Webster from the George Institute and Greg Leslie from the Global Water Institute and UNSW Impact Engineer students joined DEG staff from Walgett's Yuwaya Ngarra-li team, directors & staff from DEG & Walgett AMS. While together we work on various town water & food matters with Council, Jessica Spencer NSW Regional Aboriginal Environmental Health Project Officer, Luke Farr, gardener Walgett Community College & Walgett's IGA, TAFE and public schools. We agreed on governance for Yuwaya Ngarra-li's Food & Water for Life Working Group and made plans for undertaking a community food project incorporating a more productive and water efficient community garden,



Above: The Walgett Food and Water for Life Working Group physically meeting in the days pre-Covid 19 in the Walgett AMS boardroom



Above: DEG & WAMS Chairs with UNSW Greg Leslie meet to discuss current town water emergency – the town bores were not productive enough & firefighting water reserves had run low.

Food and Water for Life Working Group



Left: Collaborators from UNSW, WAMS and DEG discuss a test garden bed that wicks moisture from a reservoir. The students trialled this water-efficient system at the request of WAMS gardener Sophia Byers who we thank for her generosity and commitment.



Above: In June 2020 one of Walgett's Food and Water For Life projects began. DEG received financial assistance from the NSW Govt through its "Increasing Climate Change Resilience" program and this was added to by philanthropic funds from the UNSW Philanthropy and volunteer contributions from UNSW Impact Engineer students. The project will install 48 new water-efficient garden beds and shade structures so that the Walgett AMS Community Garden's output will be increased, & more water efficient.

Food & Water 4 Life projects



Left: a meeting at DEG with James McTavish, Ashley Albury, Christine Corby OAM and Bill Kennedy to work for the Reverse osmosis system for Walgett. Both organisations made a statement 14 Aug 2019 regarding our work towards improving Walgett's drinking water in Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership with UNSW experts.

Right: Thanks to a financial contribution from UNSW Global Water Institute, SMK Surveyors surveyed the Walgett AMS Community Garden at the end of June 2020 - the first step in DEG's Yuwaya Ngarrali Water Efficient Community Garden project being undertaken by [Walgett AMS](#) with [UNSW Impact Engineers](#).



Below: DEG's Speaker Clem Dodd in the temporary & limited IGA store that opened months after IGA was lost.



In response to Minister Wyatt's media statement "Securing the essentials for remote communities" 8 April 2020 DEG announced that with the Walgett Food and Water For Life Working Group "we look forward to shifting some food systems that do not serve us".



Walgett infrastructure

In October 2019 DEG's Vanessa Hickey & social housing tenants collaborated with UNSW Hons student Angela Begg from UNSW Engineering on DEG-led research to assess thermal comfort of Walgett houses. Stay tuned for findings to be reported in November 2019.



From the Elders Council meeting 1 Aug 2019: “[@Barnaby Joyce](#) earns heaps. Our young people don't. [#RaiseTheRate](#) so we can raise their quality of living”.



Throughout the year DEG pressed on with its cemetery upgrade project and in June 2020 organised a survey of the Memorial Garden location so the plans being prepared by Indigenous Community Volunteer Steven Davies could be developed by the structural engineers from Yuwya Ngarrali partners in UNSW Engineering. Walgett Council was successful in obtaining Community Infrastructure funds from the NSW Govt leading up to the March 2019 election for DEG's Memorial Garden project. Covid and the drought has delayed this project but it should be completed in the 2021 financial year.

Left: Yuwya Ngarrali collaborator Greg Leslie Director of UNSW Global Water Institute was asked in October 2019 to provide advice to Council engineers during the Walgett water emergency when the town bore struggled to produce enough water for the town and fire reserves had fallen dangerously low. In November 2019, DEG facilitated Council to meet with UNSW Built Environment to talk about the heat of play surfaces and drinking water kiosks for Walgett.



Left: ABC Country Hour broadcasted live from Walgett 17 Jul 2019 the day before a drought summit in Dubbo. DEG staff Vanessa Hickey and Robyn Morgan gave lots of ideas for stimulus!!



Right: 15 November 2019 DEG's Lewis Beale investigating augmented reality with Vanessa Hickey.
DEG Elders – dhirrabuu giirr (deadly)!



Right: 16 November 2019 DEG's Raja Simpson Santa at Walgett's Christmas market.
The Walgett Show was cancelled so Rajah the Clown was not seen in 2020.



Left: DEG's Speaker Clem Dodd in the height of Covid 19 responsibly wearing a mask in March 2020. Photo courtesy Kim Sullivan.



Evaluating our work with YN



YN's Ruth McCausland presenting draft community data gathering results in February 2020.

Above: DEG's Yuwya Ngarrali Community Troubleshooter Vanessa Hickey and Yuwya Ngarrali's Peta MacGillivray talked to many young people at Yuwya Ngarrali's second annual pool day 30 November 2019. We combined our efforts with Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service, joined by Mission Australia and the PCYC, to launch the Goonimoo Child Injury Prevention Project – another Yuwya Ngarrali initiative. Kids and their families told us what's what in Walgett. YN researchers led by DEG, use this info to guide our work in Walgett.



Left: After discussing the draft annual Community Data Gathering surveys with the DEG Elders Council, DEG invited Walgett's AECG, LALC and other Aboriginal leadership to share the findings and discuss their significance. Yuwya Ngarrali's evaluation of our work and others accelerated in 2020.



CHIPP team visited in August 2019 to start the co-design process of a Child Injury Prevention Project with WAMS Goonimoo. DEG provided a Walgett induction and facilitated the early relationship building with WAMS. One highlight of the year was the Pool Day that DEG, WAMS and the CHIPP team undertook in November 2019. Covid permitting the CHIP program will begin in the new WAMS building in 2021.

Developing the capabilities of Walgett Aboriginal Community-Controlled organisations



**DHARRIWAA
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During the period DEG provided policy support to Walgett AMS, and shared secretarial services with community groups we participate in including the School Reference Group and the Walgett AECG. Employee Assistance Program supplier Elizabeth McEntyre supported the organisation, as did May Miller Dawkins and Meredith Turnbull with business process advice. A Yuwaya Ngarrali Workforce Strategy and Onboarding materials were begun to be developed during the period, as were job descriptions and plans for the growing Yuwaya Ngarrali Walgett team.

We are working with our colleagues at UNSW to build the capabilities and support the leadership of Walgett ACCOs through a customised program and professional development opportunities.



**COMMUNITY-LED
DEVELOPMENT**



Left: This year DEG with Yuwaya Ngarrali worked to further a transfer of capability between large national NGOs present in Walgett, to Walgett Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations - Walgett AMS and DEG.

On 30 Oct 2019 Mission Australia CEO James Toomey met with DEG & Walgett AMS CEOs to resume discussions re changing the paradigm of service delivery in Walgett.

James is pictured here with DEG Speaker Clem Dodd and Elders Support Officer Robyn Morgan.



Left: In June, July, August 2019 DEG responded to the emergency brought by the IGA fire by attending the emergency ctee, steering voluntary efforts to distribute donations from well-meaning individuals & organisations, and starting a fundraising appeal, buying & distributing food & groceries to the vulnerable in the months while the town awaited IGA's temporary store which was finally opening in August 2019. Walgett was supported by the volunteers from FIRE in Sydney (below) – students who were first responders to first the water and then food emergency in Walgett. Other donors included the CWA and many small individuals and groups from around NSW. DEG staff and Elders volunteered to help with their distribution, while DEG raised funds online to purchase food and water.

Food & Water Emergency

Through most of the period, DEG was responding to the food and water security crises brought on by the river being managed dry, the supermarket fire and then Covid 19. DEG's Food and Water for Life online appeal and our deliveries and advocacy assisted.



Left: a receipt from an August grocery purchase from DEG's Food and Water for Life online appeal August 2019.





PCYC location negotiation

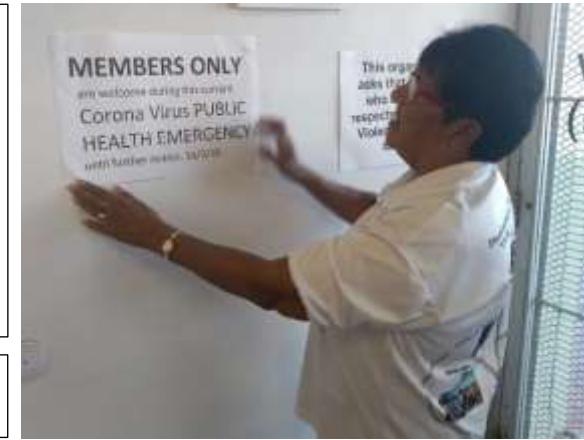
In August 2019, AECG and DEG delegates from the Walgett Connected Community School Reference Group convened a public meeting so that the PCYC organisation, NSW Education, Walgett Shire Council and NSW Aboriginal Land Council could discuss locations alternative to the high school for the new PCYC building in Walgett – determined in an undisclosed agreement between PCYC, Education and Council.

DEG's Virginia Robinson explained the DEG Elders' concerns for why police and the PCYC building should not be located on school grounds. NSWALC explained that the lifting of Aboriginal land claims on available crown lands would be expedited for the PCYC. NSW Education did not reveal who or why they had decided to offer the high school location to the PCYC. Council did not explain their process for deciding the school location for the PCYC. DEG had offered to the SRG written advice from UNSW Built Environment regarding decisionmaking around location of youth facilities. The community advised that it supported the PCYC to deliver services in Walgett and successfully argued that another location near current sporting facilities be chosen.



Left: By April 2020 DEG's Robyn Morgan & Richard Lake were regularly delivering frozen meals to Elders who are staying at home during the Covid19 emergency. We were able to make a number of weekly deliveries of frozen meals until our Elders Centre funds ran out. It was difficult to choose the neediest recipients, but a list of 40 Elders received single frozen meals weekly.

Covid19 responses



Covid19 brought with it supermarket shortages and the closure of schools and their canteens. This compounded Walgett's food security emergency – already suffering from dried up rivers, loss of Community Garden, then loss of only supermarket in June'19. DEG began receiving reports of hunger and discovered that no agency was responsible for responding to food and welfare needs for NSW communities in the Covid emergency. In mid March 2020 DEG began advocating in its network for urgent responses to food and grocery shortages and called for the Walgett Local Emergency Committee to be convened. DEG researched grocery relief and discovered that the Woolworths Basix Box was not available for Walgett. Some swift lobbying by Jacqui Webster (The George Institute), Christine Corby (WAMS) and Anne Dennis (NSWALC) was followed by the news that NSWALC by mid April was soliciting registration for a food relief program and this was matched by Woolworths. Our work was documented by the DEG team in Croakey "Walgett community unites to tackle pandemic-related food shortages" <https://www.croakey.org/walgett-community-unites-to-tackle-pandemic-related-food-shortages/>.

Dharriwaa Elders Group was also monitoring the effects of school closures and the Covid19 lockdown. With our Yuwya Ngarrali partners we prepared a briefing paper for the School Reference Group and principals re ways the schools could maintain engagement with students and become important community hubs during crises.

Above: on the 16 March 2020 DEG decided that it had to close its premises to visitors. Elders Councillor Elizabeth Peters posted the notice at the front door.

10 April DEG wrote: "Could / should Walgett's Kookaburra Court be repurposed to community [#COVID19Aus](#) isolation facility for workers returning after Easter hols while they await swab results? And if cases confirmed, a covid19 recovery facility?"

DEG often found itself in a role of identifying community needs to the LEMC (local Emergency Management Committee), and often finding that no NSW agency was tasked with fit for purpose responses. DEG started designing with the UNSW George Institute a research project to document Walgett's emergency responses and plan for future emergencies. This project will begin in late 2021, funds permitting.

Yuwya Ngarrali's Peta MacGillivray voiced another important part of our Covid19 experience in Croakey 8 April 2020.

"We are all in this together. When public health becomes punitive, rather than supporting communities"

<https://www.croakey.org/when-public-health-becomes-punitive-rather-than-supporting-communities/>



Left: DEG's Kim Sullivan, now working for the Orana Haven Walgett Aboriginal Hub Project, recorded DEG's first Covid video promotion "Take Care – Don't Share". Right: On 3 April 2020 DEG produced "Keep Kids Safe & Stay at Home. Stay Deadly" – a message from Bungee Dennis. Bungee works with Kim. DEG's Robyn Morgan also made a video asking people not to party – explaining how she had to postpone her 60th birthday.



In the absence of NSW Health and other messaging by 20 March 2020 DEG was making its own COVID community safety messaging. DEG members and staff realized straight away that we had to produce Covid communications so with our YN team we gave updates & video announcements on Facebook Below: DEG's Shirley Weatherall Stay Home and Safe at Easter.



DEG's early Covid communication in March 2020 featured DEG's Vanessa Hickey, Robyn Morgan and Bow Simpson. It was accompanied by "It's LIFE OR DEATH! - clean hands for at least 20" with soap & water, or alcohol-based sanitiser with > 60% alcohol - cover sneeze or cough with elbow or tissue - avoid close contact with ill people - avoid touching eyes, nose & mouth - stay home if sick".

By 2 May 2020 police were calling on DEG staff for community messaging after DEG had begun raising the need for community messaging in the Local Emergency Management Ctee. Below: LECOM Trent Swinton and Vanessa Hickey.



'Yuwaya Ngarra-li'
A Community-led Partnership
to Improve Wellbeing and Pathways out of the
Criminal Justice System for Aboriginal People
Reintegration Puzzle Conference 2019

Clem Dodd
Kim Sullivan
Peta MacGillivray
Ruth McCausland



In early July 2019 our Walgett and UNSW Yuwaya Ngarrali team presented on our work at the @ReintPuzzle conference in Darwin. Right: Clem Dodd and Kim Sullivan with Ruth McCausland and Peta MacGillivray.



Lifelong learning and sharing knowledge

Right: 12 Sept 2019 DEG's Clem Dodd visited Bingara's Living Classroom. Rick Hutton showed the koala drinking station, cochineal beetle breeding (for our Hudson Pear struggle) & steam weeder (eliminate Roundup) & much more. All excellent learnings/takeaways.



Many thanks to Gaawaa Miyay for offering the jewellery project with @AusDesignCentre in Walgett in October 2019 - we hope the first of ongoing series.

It provided an important opportunity given Walgett has existing jewellery practitioners needing encouragement & industry development.



Left: In Sept. 2019 DEG's Speaker Clem Dodd & Project Manager attended the bi-annual 2 day meeting of ACHA with sister Aboriginal Cultural Heritage & Arts organisations from around NSW & invited guest speakers. Armidale Aboriginal Cultural Centre & Keeping Place on Anaywan country hosted. Right: 'Yuwaya Ngurra-li' spoke 31 August 2019 at APRU Sustainable Cities and Landscapes Conference.



Justice matters



Above: Mat Baker & Nathan Brennon from Revenue NSW dropped by to talk "fairer fines" - recommendations to be presented to Minister Tudehope for implementation by end 2020. This initiative has the potential to reduce hardship & enable licence retention - so essential where no community transport. DEG aims to keenly support and implement these initiatives when they are rolled out in Walgett.

Throughout the period, DEG staff attended the Yuwalya Ngarrali Youth Justice Working Group meetings, troubleshooting where required.

This group, led by Peta Macgillivray from Yuwalya Ngarrali UNSW and Vanessa Hickey Yuwalya Ngarrali DEG, meets once a month to talk about how to make things better for young people in Walgett who are getting in trouble at school and with the police. The Group has been working on developing a plan to help young people and make sure they don't end up in court.

The Group also includes representatives of police, the school principals, the Aboriginal Legal Service, NSW Legal Aid, the Court Registrar, TAFE, PCYC, Dept Communities and Justice and other groups who work with young people, like Mission Australia.

The work the Youth Justice Working Group has done has led to Peta being able to develop a plan for how DEG's youth team will help young people, where all these organisations work together to help support them. Some of the organisations, like the Police, have obligations to use different ways to deal with young people who are doing the wrong thing. These are called 'diversions', and they keep young people out of court by helping build skills and interests that make them much less likely to offend. Working with this Group has helped Peta design a "Youth Diversion Demonstration Model" which was approved by the Elders Council after this period and will be offered in Walgett in 2021.

Right: On the 29 July 2019 the new Walgett Police Superintendent Trent Swinton met with DEG's Virginia Robinson and Yuwalya Ngarrali partner Peta MacGillivray last week for an introduction to our collaboration with police, justice agencies and to progress our Walgett Action Plan for Children and Young People.



Dharriwaa Elders Group sustainability and supporters

DEG staff (part-time and casual) during parts or all of this year were Vanessa Hickey, Robyn Morgan, Wendy Spencer, Clem Dodd, Virginia Robinson, Brendan Welsh, Richard Lake, Thomas Morgan, Jennina Doolan.

Efforts to build the capacity of the Dharriwaa Elders Group (an Aboriginal Walgett community cultural organization of 20 years standing) were continued during the period. Services the DEG offers to governments and external NGOs now attract fees. During the period the DEG became stronger in rejecting advances from entities who want to use DEG's assets but do not serve DEG's priorities or enhance DEG's capabilities. We also became stronger in controlling the way research is conducted in Walgett, and continued to assert community sovereignty over its own data. The wellbeing of our members and safety of staff remains our highest priority and the skill in providing a safe meeting place and harmony amongst Elders and their visitors has become an increasing challenge in our troubled community.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group was supported financially or in kind by:

- a. Leading and providing services to the Yuwaya Ngarrali project – DEG's partnership with University of NSW
- b. The Commonwealth Government through the CHSP program of the Dept. of Health for Social Support and related Transport
- c. Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers, Environmental Defenders Office, Darrell Burkey, Ian Urquart and Andrew Tridgell; Steven Davies and Indigenous Community Volunteers
- d. The many donors to the Food and Water Appeal, the Organisational Support Appeal, the Premises Appeal and general donations. For the financial year of 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020 \$5977.40 was received and \$6965.91 was spent by the Food and Water Appeal.
- e. DEG's Water Resilient Garden project received funds of \$29,980.00 from the Increasing Resilience to Climate Change program of the NSW Dept Primary Industry and Environment #Adapt NSW.

DEG directors are determined to develop DEG's fundraising and social enterprise activities, and continued to develop relationships with the private sector to continue DEG's valuable culturally-led community development activities.

Staff undertook training in a suite of community development theory of change mapping, reflection, analysis and documentation methods and First Aid. Finding training through TAFE continues to be a challenge.

DEG continued acting as banker for Aboriginal Women of Walgett ("AWOW") during the period.

