

# Girra Maa Indigenous Health Discipline Graduate School of Health

Achievements and activities in 2018:  
Our first year together



# Acknowledgement

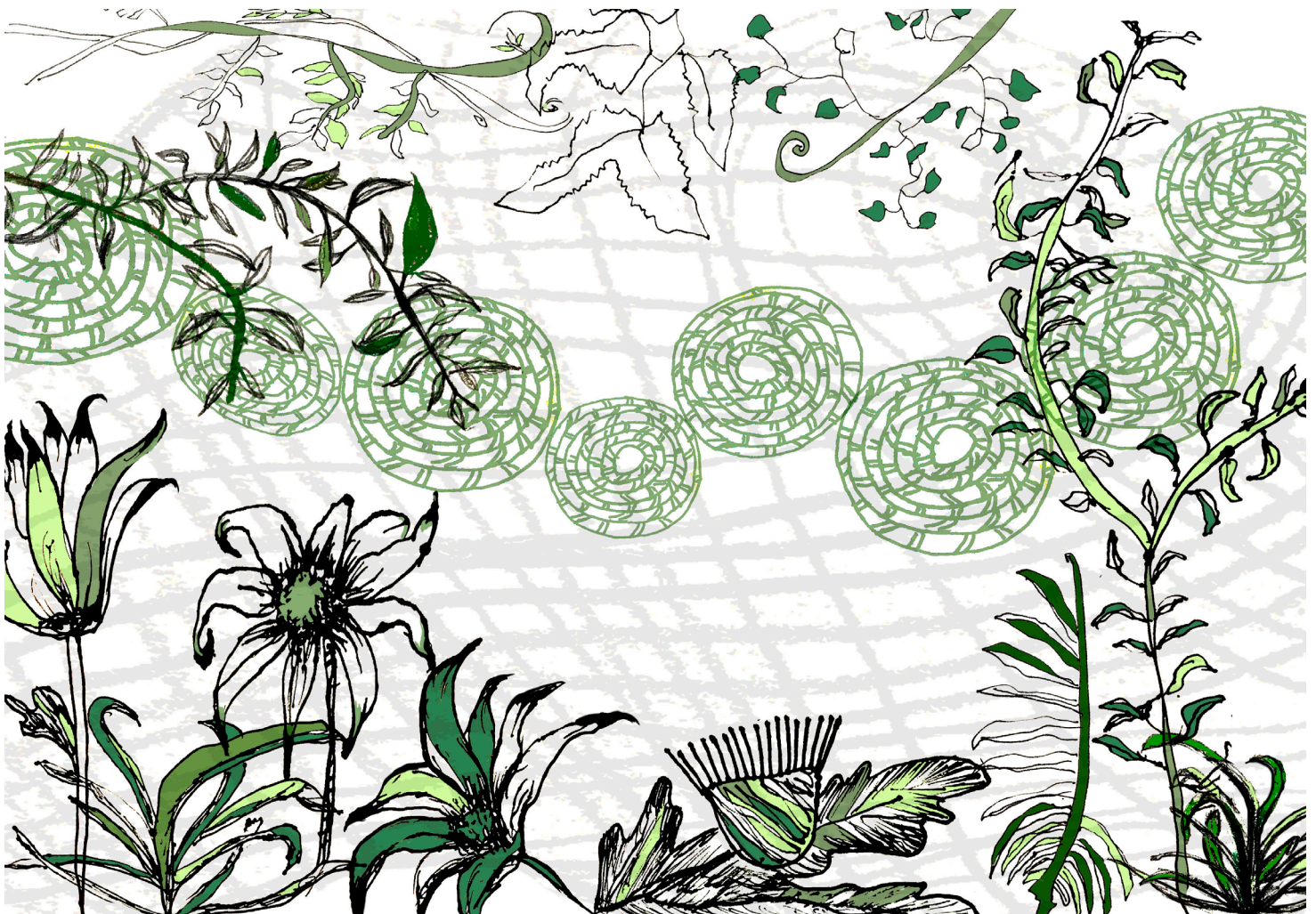
We acknowledge the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation upon whose ancestral lands the UTS City campus stands. We pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for this land.



## Our artwork

Girra Maa's visual story below is by Maddison Gibbs, artist, designer and animator. She is one of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative artists, a UTS student and collaborator on Living Data projects.

To us, the circular baskets represent each of the Graduate School of Health Disciplines that we work with, as well as others across the Faculty of Health, UTS and beyond. In the background is a woven netting, representing the object of our work, to embed Indigenous knowledges into UTS curriculum, research and community service, to weave it through, to connect people, and places and the environment. The flannel flowers in the picture are like those in Waraburra Nura, the UTS Indigenous plant garden on Level 6 of the Tower. We go to, and draw on, this garden regularly and encourage others too. Each item in the garden has a purpose, and that's what we tell our colleagues and students – “we all have our own unique role, needs and ways of connecting to Indigenous Australia and the most important thing is to keep growing in doing so”.



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# Introduction and welcome

We have written this document to share with you all the work by creative and determined people we are among through UTS, in Indigenous health. We are amazed and encouraged!

Throughout 2018 we established 'Girra Maa', the Indigenous Health Discipline in the Graduate School of Health. We are a small team with a big vision for a healthy future for Indigenous Australian families and communities, the key to which is access to quality health care. That's why we are at GSH – to convey how Indigenous people create accessible health care.

GSH provides us the opportunity to share knowledge across six Disciplines who offer post-graduate health training, as well as research and community and university service in health care – Pharmacy, Orthoptics, Psychology, Physiotherapy, Genetic Counselling and Speech Pathology. In the near future we expect to see around 800 students per year – arguably the future of the Australian health care system.

We cannot work as Indigenous people in the mainstream health system without the support of many colleagues mentioned in the following pages. We face challenges regularly, including being told by post-graduate students that “we are sick of feeling sorry for you that you lost your land”, and “we don't need to know about social determinants of health because we will be providing health care”. We are asked “Why do we need to know about Indigenous issues? They should just go to the hospital like everyone else.”

We do dream of a future of being able to go to the hospital like everyone else – a hospital that has many more Indigenous staff than now, who shape the system in culturally-informed ways, and who work among staff from a range of cultures who understand the effects of intergenerational trauma, poverty and racism on health and health care access. But we are a long way from that.

To help GSH make its unique contribution, we launched the GSH Indigenous Health Strategy in 2018, which asks us to:

- check 'Why do people see Indigenous Australians the way they do?'
- highlight the strengths of Indigenous peoples worldwide and how mainstream health can benefit from these strengths, such as holistic care
- explain historical and system-level factors that influence health
- create opportunities to meet Indigenous people and overcome shyness in relating with “them”
- form relationships with urban and regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services for up-to-date perspectives and to share university resources
- influence all of GSH actions to be inclusive of Indigenous peoples' perspectives, often through shared values and processes rather than differences.

As you can see, our work includes not only providing information about cultural dimensions of health, but also foundational concepts in public health, and connections to health organisations. You will see this in each of the projects we showcase on the following pages. You will also see how through this we enliven the UTS Social Impact Framework, and how our actions are reflected in the UTS 2027 Strategy.

We often say to GSH colleagues and students, “be confident – together we are on the right track” and “we need each of you to contribute”. Our Elders remind us we can’t achieve better health alone. We each have a role.

That’s why “Indigenous health is everyone’s business”. In order to create accessible health care – whether based on research you might be involved in, or training, service delivery or policy making – are you confident in your role, and if not, why not?

**Megan, Danielle, Jack, Ellen and Josie**

**Girra Maa Indigenous Health Discipline, Graduate School of Health, UTS.**



*Contact us for a cuppa any time, including Monday Kapati Time. Photo by Danielle Montgomery.*

## Reading this document

You will see from our work below, that our teaching, research, and university and community engagement are all connected. We have divided this document up into these three key teaching, research, and engagement areas, and also show how some of our work falls into more than one of the areas.

We generally use the name ‘Indigenous’ in this document, to signify that we are inclusive of knowledges and aspirations of all Indigenous peoples globally, in addition to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the First Peoples of Australia. This is also in alignment with the UTS use of Indigenous. We at times use ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ to indicate we are referring to specific or local peoples, contexts or organisations.

# About the team

## Background to Girra Maa

The UTS Graduate School of Health (GSH) established the Indigenous Health Discipline to lead the development of teaching, research and university and community engagement actions to meet the UTS Indigenous Graduate Attribute (IGA).

At GSH the IGA is expressed as:

*Graduates are culturally competent professionals, able to reflect on and explain their own cultural perspectives, accommodate cultural difference and achieve optimal outcomes through the adoption of a consultative approach to healthcare with Indigenous Australians and other cultural groups.*

Resources for a GSH team were championed by former Head of School Professor Charlie Benrimoj, Provost and Senior Vice President Professor Andrew Parfitt, Jumbunna Indigenous Employment Manager Mr Matthew Walsh, GSH School Manager Ms Fiona Scott and UTS support staff.

## The team



Girra Maa was so-named in early 2018. It means to be 'lively' and 'active' in the language of the Wiradjuri peoples of central NSW, from whom current Head of Discipline Dr Megan Williams is descended through paternal family.

As a team we found ourselves enjoying the lively birds around UTS, including in nearby Victoria Park – corellas, cockatoos and rainbow lorikeets soaking up the sun, nourishment from the trees, and being together.

We don't have our own Girra Maa logo as such, but the image of the rainbow lorikeet has stayed with us. To us it represents the brightness, visibility and movement we need working in the tertiary education and research settings. The rainbow lorikeet is often together with a range of other birds, and so represents diversity and harmony, as well as inquisitiveness and staying power.

From our experience and partnerships in Indigenous health service delivery, research and education, we know that inter-professional, inter-generational collaboration works best to bring about positive change. You will see from our introductions below that in all our actions, we seek to serve the aspirations of a range of Aboriginal community groups and their staff, Elders and members, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies, to inform primary prevention, health interventions and policy reform.



## Dr Megan Williams, Head of Discipline

**Senior Lecturer**

**Member of the Australian Centre for Public and Population Health Research**

**Conjoint Senior Lecturer, School of Population Health and Community Medicine, UNSW Medicine.**



As an introduction to myself, after leaving high school I wanted to do Indigenous studies at university. I had early-teen troubles and luckily my solution was to bury my head in books and join Amnesty International. My first jobs in community health were prior to finishing uni, helping establish a new needle and syringe program in my local area. This led to a peer-research project and the 'lightbulb moment' that someone like me couldn't be this interested in stories without being involved in writing some. Since the early 1990s I have combined health promotion projects, research and writing, often through health program evaluation. Over the years I developed my own evaluation framework, which I had published in 2018 and currently use, called 'Ngaabi-nya' (said naabi-nya) (1).

My first full-time role in a university was over a decade ago, and almost the direct opposite to Girra Maa... it was part of closing down a program of specialised study in Indigenous health, and was the end phase of large team and their decade of education and research. It was heart-breaking but I knew I was learning a lot, given so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – over 70 across approximately a decade: among the most of any program in Australia (2) that had successfully maintained their enrolment – graduated and were in leadership roles. This large team held a reunion and forum in 2018. It was one of the best reunions I have attended. It was rejuvenating – a strange thing to say about a work function, but that's how well things can be done in Indigenous health.

Several aspects of my work now, though, are a direct continuation of those mid-2000s experiences. I am still involved with the Lowitja Institute, which was formed out of the Cooperative Research Centres for Aboriginal Health (2003-2009) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (2010-2014), with whom I was a university-based link-person and received student project funding. I now serve as a grant reviewer and project advisor and have a funded Ngadhuri-nya (meaning 'to care for' in Wiradjuri and said 'na-jury-nya') study (this, and other projects are described later).

As I show later, I also participate in an Australian Research Council (ARC)-funded partnership between the Ted Noffs Foundation and UNSW, and a new National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)-funded collaborative research project to improve throughcare services for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaving prison – Bangamalhana – partly connected to the

Maridulu Budyari Gumal Sydney Partnership for Health, Education and Research Enterprise (SPHERE). I also undertake some social journalism tasks for health company Croakey; definitely committed to working for better translation of research into policy, practice and education.

At GSH, among other things, I participate in Heads of Discipline meetings, supervise research students and try to encourage as many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as possible to consider careers in health services research. As a parent of two teenagers and a member of mixed-culture families, I see how much room there is to just listen – listen to how people experience health, what they think will work for them and what the barriers are, combined with understanding ‘what works’ for other people. What a privilege to convey this to the next generation of health care providers.

Feel free to contact me for more information at [Megan.Williams@uts.edu.au](mailto:Megan.Williams@uts.edu.au)

## Ms Danielle Montgomery, Associate Lecturer



I have a strong sense of belonging when working with mob and out in community. My career has been a stumble, but always moving in the direction of promoting Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

I finished school and tried out a few jobs in admin and hospitality, not really sure where to go or what to do. After six months (and six jobs!) nothing quite fit so I applied to uni. I started on probation because my HSC marks were not great. I had one semester to sink or swim. I got through and commenced a Bachelor of Arts in education. I loved everything about teaching, except the essays.

Once I finished study I worked full time for five years in primary education. Although I enjoyed – and still enjoy – teaching I was looking for something more. I went back to uni and did a Masters in Communication Management. I was thinking glitz, glamour and parties.... I was wrong – more paper work and media releases! I went back to teaching.

I then worked with disengaged young people reengaging in education. This certainly was the challenge I was looking for. After five years I needed a change and commenced working at university in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student engagement. I also worked on developing pathway entry resources so students were better prepared when they started their university degrees. Sometimes parents were more scared about their kids going off to uni than the kids, so we created a parent's guide to help parents get their head around uni life.

Now I am at UTS, working in an amazing inspirational team developing resources to include Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing into the Graduate School of Health curriculum. I am very lucky to also work with lots of different community partners to get their perspectives, voices and ways to help our graduates' value Indigenous

knowledges as beneficial for all Australians. Through this work I am enrolled in a Master of Research course documenting and evaluating the work we are doing, through the Bunya project (described later).

If you want to get updates on Bunya or want to share your story, contact me at [Danielle.Montgomery@uts.edu.au](mailto:Danielle.Montgomery@uts.edu.au)

## Mr Jack Bulman, Associate Lecturer (part-time)



I'm Jack Bulman and a Muthi Muthi man from South Western NSW. I work part-time with Girra Maa and am based on the Gold Coast, often with lots of travel.

Through the years I have been involved in a wide variety of community health projects. While completing my health sciences degree, my passion to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's health and wellbeing became stronger. While still at university, I was recruited to work among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males for a community-controlled service in Queensland. I have worked for both community and government organisations, which has created many network connections across Australia.

My close colleague Dr Rick Hayes and I set up Mibbinbah ([www.mibbinbah.org](http://www.mibbinbah.org)), a health promotion charity for Indigenous males that focuses on building safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males. We do this using 'proper way' to create safe spaces for spirit healing, empowerment, celebration and education and training, and enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males to regain their rightful place in society, whatever that may be in any community.

We know that if these safe spaces are set up proper way, communities will share their concerns and issues and then are able to seek their own aspirations. This then starts the healing process for our communities.

Rick and I were mentored by Mick Gooda who at the time was the CEO of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, and later became the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner.

Mibbinbah Men's Spaces leads the implementation of the *Be The Best You Can Be* program, which uses the movie *Mad Bastards*, and themes from it, to assist communities to develop actions to meet their needs, concerns and issues. Mibbinbah holds the educational rights to the *Mad Bastards* and is regularly invited to show the film and run the program in staff training, for community development and to discuss needs of our fellas right across Australia.

I play a part in many great teams that are doing wonderful work across our country for our communities. For the *First 1000 Days* team, I was the lead trainer for a five day course for peer researchers in Caboolture. I also worked with men in the

Moreton Bay region and Townsville, and helped the establishment of an organisation called *Deadlee Dads* that addresses issues around family violence.

I am the lead facilitator for the 'No to Violence' *Community Workshops to Address Male Family Violence in Aboriginal Communities* and am an advisor to the *White Ribbon* and *Relationships Australia* fatherhood programs. With the Lowitja Institute, I am part of a research project in far north Queensland and Western Australia about *Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young Men*.

I am regularly invited to speak at conferences and forums, as well as facilitate needs assessment discussions and support community groups who need to work through their governance and leadership concerns. These are important insights to showcase to 'mainstream' health students and staff – the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and our families, in light of our right to self-determine health services, and to do so using our own expertise and resources.

I can be contacted at [Jack.T.Bulman@student.uts.edu.au](mailto:Jack.T.Bulman@student.uts.edu.au)

## Ms Ellen Karimanovic, GSH Research Higher Degree student



My name is Ellen and I'm a proud Worimi with my mother's family strongly connected to the Port Stephens region of NSW. I also identify as German and Yugoslavian from my father's side. I have grown up in greater Western Sydney, where I am still located today. I attended local schools and the local university, where I completed my undergraduate studies.

I enrolled into uni straight out of high school into a Bachelor of Social Sciences. I found out quickly that this course was not for me after almost failing a subject in my first semester. I then transferred into a Bachelor of Community and Social Development, something that suited me well. This is a residential block program at Western Sydney University, which allowed me to study alongside a smaller group of students who were all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The cultural aspect of the studies was significant and allowed us to deeply engage with our course.

I was awarded a Dean's Merit List award for all three years of my studies and received the Dean's Medal from the School of Social Sciences and Psychology for my academic achievement, being in the top 2% of students in my cohort.

After I completed my uni course, I was successful in gaining an internship as a Program Support Officer at Western Sydney University. This role allowed me to work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander targeted programs with primary and high school students. This included health promotion, aspiration building and mentoring. Following from this, I then began my first full time position as a Project Officer, leading a health promotion program within the same department. This involved

hosting events throughout the year, with over a thousand students attending the multiple events held each year.

Later I moved on to become an Education Officer, supporting the undergraduate course that I completed a few years earlier. This opportunity allowed me to work alongside the students, as well as working closely with the academic group by supporting the overall program. This position allowed me to travel internationally with the students, by taking part in a cross-cultural placement in Fiji.

Since my studies and throughout my employment, I had a desire to continue my studies. I was particularly interested in research from my undergraduate course. An opportunity arose for me to join Megan Williams' work on the Ngadhuri-nya project, and I was thrilled to join the GSH at UTS as a Masters of Research student. I was successful to receive a research scholarship to help fund living costs while I undertake this study.

I am currently coordinating the Ngadhuri-nya in collaboration with the NSW Child Development study at UNSW. This includes convening a Working Group and maintaining our project partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community stakeholders.

In my student capacity, I am undertaking a qualitative sub-study, complementing the larger mixed-methods Ngadhuri-nya project, focussing specifically on how young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults understand and promote mental health and wellbeing.

If you would like more information about Ngadhuri-nya, feel free to contact me on [Ellen.J.Karimanovic@student.uts.edu.au](mailto:Ellen.J.Karimanovic@student.uts.edu.au)

## Ms Josie Newton, Aboriginal Health Research Associate



*Josie is employed on a full time 12 month contract with Girra Maa and is based with Bila Muuji Aboriginal Health Services Inc. in Dubbo, NSW. This is a partnership position leading a research capacity building program of work. Josie is a descendant of the Wiradjuri nation and her connection is to Country around Burrangong, Young, NSW.*

I was born in Darlinghurst and my early years were spent on the Gold Coast, and various locations around Sydney's northern beaches and you could say we moved around a lot. After leaving school in Year 10, I enrolled to do nursing and here began my lifelong wondering about injustice – health inequity and inequality in relation to our mob and other marginalised groups.

Around the same time I supported my father in bringing to the surface/rising up our Wiradjuri family story and made many trips to Burrangong and Wombat to

meet with family and connect the pieces of the puzzle – 40 years and still connecting!

The hospital environment didn't suit me and I commenced my path working in institutions that either conducted research, influenced and developed policy, or educated. I found out about the importance of truth, honesty and integrity when networking, maintaining networks and relationship building and these themes weave throughout my work history to the present.

Some key projects and roles that stand out for me in the context of my current work do so because they gave me knowledge and understanding of the health landscape we operate under, and the over-arching frameworks and legislations and how I am able to apply my perspective. These include working at: the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners as a secretariat to Standing Committees, giving me an insight into the world of politics and general practice; the Department of Health and Ageing where I helped introduce the Australian Public Service Indigenous Entry Level Recruitment Program and encouragement to cross folio and work in program areas such as the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

During this time I learned about the machinery of government, and the issue of how funding is calculated and distributed and the overburdening to our sector in terms of reporting became front of mind. My next step took me to the peak body for Aboriginal health in NSW, the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC). I was relieved to be in a place where I felt I was on the same page as everyone else, where there was reciprocity and I could talk about issues, be involved and work for hard for a cause and be further educated about colonization and injustice. I worked as a project officer at the Aboriginal Health College, tasked with coordinating the roll out of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment nationally to Aboriginal health professionals in rural, remote and very remote locations.

Other projects I coordinated were the delivery of the Good Medicines Better Health Program, and the Ear and Eye Health Skill Set training. I was fortunate while at the AH&MRC to undertake Certificate IV in Business Governance and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and attaining Quality Improvement Council Health and Community Services Standards assessor status.

Working in high level administration responsible to the CEO and Board meant learning much from leaders in the area of Aboriginal affairs, research and policy, and inspired to continue on my path. I bring to the team at Girra Maa and Bila Muuji shades of what I've learnt along the way and a sense of deep respect to those who continue to support me and those who have gone before me.

I can be contacted at [Josie.Newton@uts.edu.au](mailto:Josie.Newton@uts.edu.au)

## Other Girra Maa supports

During 2018 Girra Maa had Worimi and Kuku Yalanji young man, Cameron Manton, working as a casual Research Assistant for our teaching and research projects. Thanks Cameron!

We also take this opportunity to thank Dr Mark Ragg who has contributed to several Girra Maa projects as a strategist, project officer, writer and editor. We have had project assistance from Ms Chriss Bull including in the production of this report and the 'Top Tens' listed in the Learning and Teaching section.



*Girra Maa team members – 2018 Research Assistant Cameron Manton, with Danielle Montgomery, Megan Williams and Ellen Karimanovic. Photo taken at Waraburra Nura by Grant Turner.*

## Girra Maa guiding values

At Girra Maa we have a collective approach to education and research, working across a range of professions and disciplines.

We actively participate in community organisations and events, to serve the aspirations of Aboriginal Elders, peak bodies and partners.

Our teaching, research and engagement is guided by nationally recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values of Responsibility, Reciprocity, Respect, Equity and Cultural Continuity, bound together with Spirit and Integrity (3).

It is also informed by:

- The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Other human rights agreements
- A social-ecological model of health
- Public health and allied health curriculum frameworks
- Industry accreditation standards.

These documents all recognise that the social determinants of health are vital to address to improve the health of Indigenous peoples, including housing, income and employment, access to justice, healing intergenerational trauma from colonisation, and respecting local community initiatives.

Overall, therefore, our Girra Maa vision and key action is that:

*We encourage GSH staff and students to develop a lifelong commitment to respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, enriching the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.*

We are not necessarily at GSH or UTS to deliver content ourselves. We do lead and do some of this, but we also work for GSH staff to develop curriculum that meets their industry standards and expectations.

In our experience, success in Indigenous health means:

- Making an effort beyond the physical well-being of an individual.
- Connecting and addressing social, emotional, mental, cultural and environmental well-being and determinants.
- Engaging with the whole community, in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential.
- Caring for people across their lifespan and across generations.
- Respecting local priorities and the right to self-determination.
- Contributing to quality evidence and building capacity of future generations.

These points can be all achieved with leadership by Indigenous people. Thus Girra Maa staff have put effort into relationships with community services, Indigenous Elders, leaders, healthcare providers, scholars, artists, filmmakers, musicians and community members. We have also put much time into developing relationships with UTS staff, to develop trust and identify areas of commonality to build on in education, research and community engagement.

Below we outline our range of relationships, as well as community and governance roles and university service roles; we are very much strengthened and humbled by these.

## Community and governance roles

Girra Maa serves in a range of roles:

- Advisory Committee Member, Support for Fathers Project, Relationships Australia (JB)
- Advisory Committee Member, Recidivism, health and social functioning following release to the community of NSW prisoners with problematic drug use: An evaluation of the Connections Program (MW)
- Advisor, Research Panel Member, First Peoples Disability Network (MW)
- Associate Editor, Health Sociology Review (MW)
- Board Member, Mibbinbah Men's Spaces Health Promotion Charity (JB)
- Chairperson, Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network Human Research Ethics Committee (MW)
- Chairperson, Resource Development Working Group Chairperson, Mental Health – Children and Young People, NSW Ministry of Health (MW)
- Co-Chairperson, Parramatta Interagency (DM)
- Co-Convenor, Public Health Association of Australia 5th Justice Health Conference (MW).
- Contributing Editor, Croakey.org (MW)
- Expert Reference Group Member, Fatherhood Program, White Ribbon Australia (JB)



- Founding Board Member, Croakey Health Media (MW)
- Jurisdictional Advisor, Prison mental health services (MW)
- Presenting expert for Lowitja Institute-funded Citizen's Juries project (MW)
- Reference Group Member, Yfoundations Juvenile Justice Project (EK).

## University service roles

Girra Maa are an active part of GSH as members of the following committees, which generally have monthly meetings and tasks in between:

- GSH 100 Broadway Clinic Committee Member (MW)
- GSH Equity and Diversity Committee (DM)
- GSH Genetic Counselling Discipline Advisory Group Member (MW)
- GSH Head of Disciplines Committee (MW)
- GSH Learning and Teaching Committee Meeting and Funding Sub-Committee (DM)
- GSH Research and Innovation Committee (MW)
- GSH Social Committee (DM and MW)
- Maridulu Budyari Gumal SPHERE Justice Health Working Party convenor (MW).

Girra Maa is active in advising on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and research ethics, responding to multiple queries each week.

We are active in reviewing grants including for the Lowitja Institute and National Health and Medical Research Council, and peer-reviewing submitted articles for a range of national and international journals, and abstracts for conferences.

Megan is a member of the National Alliance of Advanced Health and Research Translation Centres and Centres for Innovation in Regional Health – the Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA).

## Awards, recognition and feedback

Ellen Karimanovic was a recipient of the Graduate School of Health Indigenous Postgraduate Research Scholarship. The Scholarship is funded by the Australian Government and Department of Education and Training, and UTS. These scholarships are awarded to Indigenous Australian and/or Torres Strait Islander students of exceptional research potential to undertake a higher degree by research, and are core to the UTS Wingara Indigenous Education Strategy (<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/indigenous-education-strategy.html>).

Danielle Montgomery attended the Jumbunna Institute-hosted Indigenous Higher Degree Research Retreat at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/>) in Canberra. The week-long retreat assisted students to network, develop academic skills, understand their learning styles and how to work toward published research.



*AIATSIS Canberra, 2018. Photo by Danielle Montgomery.*

Megan Williams was highlighted as one of 16 'Leaders in their Field' by UTS Equal Futures in 2018. See <https://www.uts.edu.au/partners-and-community/initiatives/equal-futures/leaders-in-their-field>

Megan and Croakey colleagues Dr Melissa Sweet and Mr Mitchell Ward received a 2018 Walkley Foundation Mentorship for #CroakeyGO.

They were also selected for the 2018 Global Editor's Network, Walkley Foundation and Google News Editors Lab, for #CroakeyGO.

Megan was a 2017 Nominee for the NSW Law and Justice Foundation Awards.

Megan was also a 2017 Finalist for the National Indigenous Human Rights Awards.



# Learning and teaching

## Girra Maa approach to learning and teaching

Part of Girra Maa's work is teaching, particularly to embed UTS's Indigenous Graduate Attribute (IGA) in GSH subjects. Approximately 40% of Megan, Danielle and Jack's (part-time) time is contributing to a range of tasks, outlined below.

As a Discipline, Girra Maa is unique to GSH by not having its own coursework subjects on offer. Instead, Girra Maa works across all of GSH's Disciplines. Our role is to embed Indigenous peoples' experiences, knowledges, strategies and aspirations to health and wellbeing. This is very much about increasing the accessibility and cultural safety of Pharmacy, Clinical Psychology, Orthoptics, Physiotherapy, Genetic Counselling and Speech Pathology.

Each of the GSH Master's degree in these disciplines is two years' full-time study, with approximately 16 subjects each. Most of these 96 GSH subject offerings are opportunities to understand Indigenous peoples' ways of caring for health.

As identified in the GSH's Indigenous Health Strategy, Girra Maa's objectives in learning and teaching are to:

- Value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledges, experiences, methods and care-giving practices.
- Deliver world-leading Indigenous health education, research and community engagement and ensure all curricula reflect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander view of health and wellbeing.
- Enhance the capability and confidence of GSH staff and students to engage respectfully with Indigenous peoples and their communities throughout their careers.
- Support student learning and professional development through demonstration and embodiment of strengths-based examples, community-led projects and Indigenous peoples' evidence.

As we indicated earlier, we are a small team and it is not possible to teach into all GSH subjects. And, that is not our style or pedagogy. We seek to influence learning and teaching through a range of strategies, which are outlined below.

## Girra Maa learning and teaching activities

### Understanding the building blocks

Given that we started the GSH Indigenous Health Discipline 'from the beginning' in late 2017, we spent time on:

- Building relationships and getting to know staff (see Kapati Time below).
- Getting to know current curriculum.
- Working with GSH Educational Designer Jim Woulfe and understanding the GSH use of the Equella coursework database.
- Devising a Traffic Light System as an overview of which subjects we had engaged with, and which we still need to.

- Understanding various industry accreditation requirements, which differ for each GSH Discipline.
- Gathering literature and resources available for each Discipline.
- Making available The Koori Mail national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander newspaper and other local information in the GSH foyer.

### Spotlight on Kapati Time

Throughout 2018 the Girra Maa team dedicated each Monday to 'Kapati Time' (pronounced 'cuppa-tea time'). Led by Danielle, Kapati Time involves working in the communal kitchen area of GSH with an open invitation to all staff, academic and professional to sit with us for a cuppa and yarn.

A cuppa and yarning is an approach to learning that is focused on building relationships and storytelling. It is based on guidance by senior custodians to embrace respect, balance, reciprocity, flexibility and time availability and of course a pannikin or two of tea (4, 5).

We yarn about all sorts of topics related to Indigenous health, share information about available resources, and strategise to develop opportunities for cultural competency.

We also use Kapati Time to share our own stories, and hear others' stories, including about the diverse cultures and backgrounds that GSH staff and students are from.

In 2019 we will continue with Kapati Time every Monday for an hour. We will also encourage GSH staff and students to also make an appointment to yarn with us at a time that's convenient to them.



*Kapati Time at GSH. Photo by Danielle Montgomery.*

## Broader UTS learning and teaching connections

In terms of influencing broader UTS learning and teaching, we:

- Developed and distributed a 2018 calendar of events.
- Developed and distributed four 'Top Ten' lists to share:
  - Ten things to do after NAIDOC week (13 Aug 2018)  
<https://staff.uts.edu.au/Lists/GlobalFeatures/DispForm.aspx?ID=798>
  - Ten Indigenous-focused conferences and forums (03 Oct 2018)  
<https://staff.uts.edu.au/Pages/StaffNotice.aspx?ct=All+Notices&ItemID=4780>
  - Indigenous-focused workshops, events, art, films, fireworks! (28 October 2018)  
<https://staff.uts.edu.au/Pages/StaffNotice.aspx?ct=All+Notices&ItemID=4854>
  - Ten Books For Holiday Reading (19 Dec 2018)  
<https://staff.uts.edu.au/Pages/StaffNotice.aspx?ct=All+Notices&ItemID=5018>

We also created opportunities for staff and students to connect to Indigenous peoples, knowledges and processes, such as through:

- "Living data Lens on Health" event for Sydney Science Week (reported later).
- #CroakeyGO Searching for Hidden Secrets walk (reported later).
- The UTS library, with Indigenous Health now on the search list, and key resources listed for easy access.
- Guest lectured for two Faculty of Health subjects.
- Waraburra Nura (The Happy Wanderer's Place) Indigenous plant garden, located on the north-facing balcony of Building 1 (The Tower), including attending and inviting others to the Launch. See [www.waraburranura.com](http://www.waraburranura.com)



**Waraburra Nura Garden Launch**  
Thursday 31st May 3pm-5pm

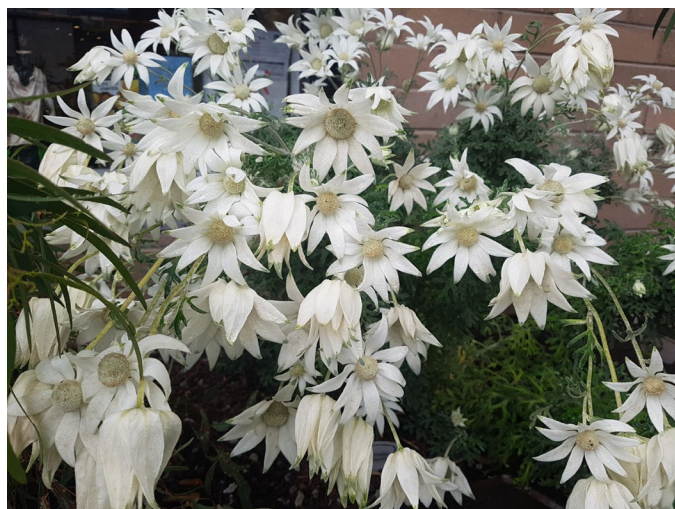
Waraburra Nura (The Happy Wanderer's Place) is UTS' Indigenous plant garden on the North-facing balcony of the main tower. The garden is a joint project between JIIEP and UTS ART that focuses on plants that have medicinal uses and are native to the Sydney basin. The design was created by Yamatji Wajarri woman Nicole Monks and plants were chosen under the consultation of D'harawal Senior and botanist Aunty Fran Bodkin.

The traditional uses of these plants, their stories and their history of cultivation in this region have been shared by Aunty Fran Bodkin in audio recordings on the purpose built website [www.waraburranura.com](http://www.waraburranura.com)

Please join us to celebrate the launch of this garden at UTS to hear Uncle Allen Madden give a Welcome to Country and Aunty Fran Bodkin share some of her knowledge of the plants.

Afternoon tea will be provided.

RSVP essential <http://bit.ly/WaraburraNura> (or tell Blanch)



*Flannel flowers in bloom at Waraburra Nura. Photo by Megan Williams.*

## Scholarship of learning and teaching

Girra Maa is active in the scholarship of learning and teaching. This means not only teaching, but researching our teaching, how people learn about Indigenous health, and how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are best supported to develop health careers. Key projects are 'Bunya', and 'Inner Qualities', as well as membership of the Education Working Party of Maridulu Budyari Gumal. These are outlined below.

### The Bunya Project



*Bunya artwork by BossLady Creative Design.*

The Bunya Project is led by Danielle, working with Megan and Professor Andrew Hayen in the Faculty of Health. It has Human Research Ethics Committee clearance from the UTS (ETH18-2618) and the AH&MRC (1451/18).

Bunya occurs in collaboration with the following Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations:

1. Katungul Aboriginal Medical Service
2. The Glen Centre
3. Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation
4. Bimbadeen College
5. First Peoples Disability Network, and
6. Gamarada Community Healing and Leadership.

The Bunya Project also has a Working Group, fondly called 'the Bunya Nuts', including:

- Professor Lisa Pont, Pharmacy
- Dr Amanda French, Orthoptics
- Dr John McAloon, Clinical Psychology
- Dr Ian Skinner, Physiotherapy

- Associate Professor Alison McEwen, Genetic Counselling
- Dr Chris Jacobs, Genetic Counselling
- Ms Harmony Turnbull, Speech Pathology
- Dr Megan Williams, Girra Maa
- Ms Danielle Montgomery, Girra Maa.

Associate Professor Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews, Centre for Advancement of Indigenous Knowledge (CAIK) has provided methodological advice about researching the IGA at UTS, and is a critical friend of the project.

We are inspired by the Australian Bunya Pine that grows slowly and through its development nourishes pine cones to form edible nuts, which provide sustenance to the surrounding community.

The Bunya Project is designed on the same principle – to grow in collaboration with communities to develop authentic teaching and learning resources to nourish communities, GSH staff and students. GSH will be able to plant culturally-capable and aware professionals throughout primary healthcare, where they will flourish in helping meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' healthcare needs.

Aboriginal community participation is paramount, so that we develop culturally respectful, engaging resources for student learning across the GSH Disciplines. Their involvement ensures we privilege Aboriginal voices, knowledges, experiences and solutions in health care, and to help achieve health equity for Indigenous peoples.

The Bunya Project overall is action research, to develop, implement and evaluate these health-focussed teaching resources.

The Bunya Project research questions are:

1. What are the healthcare needs, experiences, knowledges and aspirations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to primary healthcare?
2. What do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and service providers recommend for tertiary education in the primary healthcare context to improve health equity?
3. How do the new teaching resources impact on embedding the Indigenous Graduate Attribute?
4. How do the new teaching resources impact on the knowledge and awareness of students and staff?

We will draw on Kapatı Time (described earlier) to create an interactive, flexible and reciprocal space for sharing, creating a safe space that facilitates yarning and storytelling.

The Bunya Project is designed to span 2018 to 2022, over four phases:

1. Gathering community data through development of relationships with Aboriginal organisations (Jan to April 2019).
2. Analysing the data to develop and embed resources with the above-listed community partners and the Bunya Working Group (below) (April to Dec 2019).
3. Using / testing resources (starting in 2020).
4. Reflection (and learning, adjusting...).

Our intended outcomes include:

- Development of community-led teaching and learning resources.
- Evaluation of teaching resources to understand the impact on GSH staff and student knowledge, attitude and practices.
- Understanding about process of embedding the Indigenous Graduate Attribute into GSH curricula.
- Development of solid, positive relationships between UTS, GSH and Aboriginal community organisations.



*Bunya Project launch, 2018. L to R Associate Professor Gawaiian Bodkin-Andrews, Ms Danielle Montgomery, Dr Lisa Roberts, Associate Professor Alison McEwen, Ms Harmony Turnball, Dr Ian Skinner, Dr Megan Williams, Dr Amanda French, Dr John McAloon, Dr Chris Jacobs.*

### **Inner qualities versus inequalities: Educating change agents in Aboriginal public health.**

This research began at UNSW in 2014 by the Muru Marri Indigenous Health Unit in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine. The research continues and is contributed in-kind to Maridulu Budyari Gumal SPHERE and its education-as-research translation activities (see further below). The Inner Qualities project team is:

- Ms Sally Fitzpatrick, WSU
- Professor Melissa Haswell, QUT
- Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver AM, University of Sydney
- Dr Megan Williams, UTS
- Dr Loius Meyer, UNSW
- Dr Sally Nathan, UNSW
- Associate Professor Jan Ritchie, UNSW.





*Muru Marri UNSW logo: Many pathways. Artwork by Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver AM*

The Inner Qualities research pays attention to the student experience of learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, via data from two post-graduate blended-learning coursework offerings at UNSW. The courses sought to provide a 'third space' for students beyond 'black and white' thinking, with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples being binaried.

The coursework instead provided role-modelling of safe spaces in which to grapple with complexities forced by colonisation, neo-colonialism and power differentials in society which contribute to health inequity experienced by Indigenous peoples. The Growth and Empowerment measure, a psychometrically-validated instrument developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and partners in the context of the Aboriginal Family Wellbeing Program, was used for pre- and post-coursework data collection, as well as qualitative data collection. This research aims to contribute to 21st Century education in health and cultural safety, as well as how learning and teaching processes and outcomes can be measured. The Muru Marri team pay particular respect to UNSW Medicine's Inaugural Elder-in-residence, Aunty Ali Golding, for supporting the team and sharing her experience in education.

### **Maridulu Budyari Gumal Sydney Partnerships for Health, Education and Research Enterprise (SPHERE)**

It's hard to place this project here in the Learning and Teaching section only, because it is also about translating research. However, one of the key reasons Girra Maa staff are involved in research is to inform learning and teaching strategies.

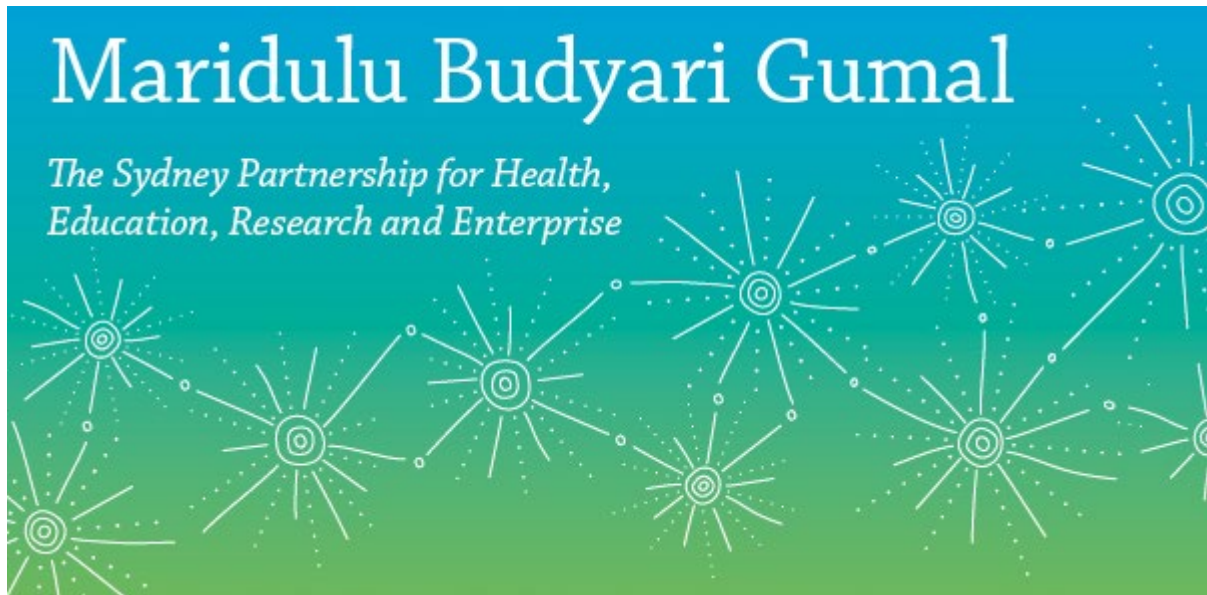
Maridulu Budyari Gumal a Dharug name meaning 'working together for good health and wellbeing'. This is the preferred name for SPHERE, an integrated health science network of global significance in NSW (see <http://www.thesphere.com.au/about/> ).

Maridulu Budyari Gumal brings together three universities, two Local Health Districts, two Local Health Networks, seven Medical Research Institutes, nine major teaching hospitals, and *ex officio*, the NSW Ministry of Health.

It has an accredited the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Clinical Academic Group in which Girra Maa staff participate. Within the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Clinical Academic Group there are four key areas of work, one being an Education Working Group.

Current projects of the Working Group collaborators and to be used at GSH include:

- Paperbark: A Guide to Holding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students in Higher Education.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health: An Overview online 3-hour module.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research: An Introduction 3-hour online module
- Critical reflection on tensions between Accreditation and embedding IGAs.



Artwork by Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver AM.

## Indigenous Health Student Advocacy Group

The Indigenous Health Student Advocacy group commenced in 2018 as an inter-disciplinary group with the common goal to promote Indigenous health and wellbeing among students. The group is student-led, with support from Girra Maa. In 2018 the group included:

- Alessandra Provera, Pharmacy
- Nelson Osifo, Pharmacy
- Narendran Kumaraselvam, Orthoptics
- Ashleigh Vrailal, Physiotherapy
- Laura Stendell, Physiotherapy
- Daisy Commerford, Physiotherapy
- Eline Bisterbosch, Physiotherapy
- Thea Richardson, Physiotherapy
- Timothy Waters, Physiotherapy
- Lucas Di Paolo, Physiotherapy
- Sebastian Gaspari, Physiotherapy

- Liam Casey, Clinical Psychology.

Group activities have included:

- Acknowledgement of Country at the GSH Pharmacy Gala Dinner.
- Commenced registration as an Activate UTS Club.
- Assistance planning for Professional Skills Week 2019.

Invitations for new members and new ideas are welcome!



*Nelson Osifo giving an Acknowledgement of Country at GSH Pharmacy at Gala Dinner. Photo by Grant Turner.*



## Research student supervision

The following have been supervised as part of Girra Maa's work:

Mr M Doyle, PhD UNSW, completed 2018. *Alcohol and drug treatment experience of males in prison*. Supervision team: Butler, T., Shakeshaft, A., Guthrie, J. and Williams, M.

Ms E Cooper, PhD UTS, year 1. *Family interventions and services to improve Aboriginal youth wellbeing*. Supervision team: McAloon, J. and Williams, M.

Mr P Mulongeni, PhD UNSW, year 1. Quantitative analysis of residential rehabilitation outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Supervision team: Nathan, S., Hayen, A. and Williams, M.

Ms S Fitzpatrick, Professional Doctorate UNSW, year 3. *Transformational learning in Aboriginal health*. Supervision team: Haswell, M., Ritchie, J., Meyer, L., Williams, M. and Jackson Pulver, L.

Ms E Karimanovic, MPhil UTS, year 1. *Intergenerational impacts of parental incarceration on Aboriginal youth wellbeing*. Supervision team: Williams, M., Green, M. and Tzoumakis, S.

Ms D Montgomery, MPhil UTS, year 1. *Impact of Aboriginal-led allied health curriculum on student learning*. Supervision team: Williams, M. and Hayen, A.

Ms B Hill, Medicine Honors UNSW, completed 2018. *Experiences of Aboriginal young people in residential treatment services*. Supervision team: Nathan, S., Wolfenden, S. and Williams, M.



Megan with Michael Doyle as he handed his PhD thesis in, February 2018. Photo by Graduate Research School UNSW staff.

# Research

## Our approach to research

Girra Maa, engages in quality research that helps convey the value of Indigenous peoples' knowledges and practices as being relevant for all.

Cross-disciplinary in nature, Girra Maa's research involves development and translation activities that have widespread importance to all GSH staff and students.

We work to ensure researchers understand the unique position Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have in Australia, and cultural imperatives that underpin research, as set out by through the NHMRC (<https://nhmrc.gov.au/>).

Girra Maa team members work with others, particularly:

- Supporting ethical conduct of Indigenous health research.
- Increasing Indigenous health research activities, translation and outputs.
- Contributing to the development of the next generation of Indigenous health researchers.

Girra Maa team members' own research spans prevention, interventions and policy reform, particularly on:

- Aboriginal youth social and emotional wellbeing.
- Criminal justice as a determinant of health.
- Models of care and program evaluation.
- Methods for learning and teaching about Indigenous health.

In addition to research on Indigenous health education identified earlier in this report, our other various research projects are outlined in three sections below:

1. Justice health research (7 projects)
2. Research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male health and wellbeing (3 projects)
3. Workforce development research (3 projects).

Feel free to contact us with any inquiries.

## Justice health research: Seven projects

The Girra Maa team are involved in projects at the nexus of justice and health, including

1. Ngadhuri-nya (to care for) data linkage study
2. Ngadhuri-nya (to care for) qualitative study
3. Positive life pathway for vulnerable adolescents study in partnership with UNSW and the Ted Noffs Foundation
4. Bangamalhana young women's throughcare service delivery development project

5. Australian Centre for Research Excellence in Offender Health
6. Justice Health Working Group of Maridulu Budyari Gumal SPHERE
7. Evaluation of the Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities.

### **Ngadhuri-nya (To care for) data linkage study**

The Ngadhuri-nya project was funded by the Lowitja Institute (<https://www.lowitja.org.au/>) in 2017 to bring together experienced Aboriginal health researchers with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and child development researchers to examine the data on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the NSW Child Development Study (NSW-CDS) (<http://nsw-cds.com.au/>).

The NSW-CDS is an existing longitudinal population-based study of 87,000 children being undertaken by UNSW's School of Psychiatry and colleagues. The study is designed as an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to lead analysis, interpretation and discussion of findings related to the 6,800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are part of the study.

Ngadhuri-nya aims to better understand the intergenerational impacts of the effects of intergenerational trauma, poverty and racism on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It incorporates linked-data about parents' health, justice, family and community services and education.

We are following the Lowitja Institute's Facilitated Development Approach (<https://www.lowitja.org.au/page/research/research-development/facilitated-development-approach>). Through qualitative Roundtable discussion and Working Group meetings we explore the existing data and collaborate on analysis and knowledge exchange. We are doing this by holding collaborative discussions to contextualise the data and gain a common understanding, choose topics of priority to pursue, identify strengths and weaknesses of data and advise on future research.

The study has been designed to ensure that interpretation and reporting of the NSW-CDS occurs through the lens of First Peoples, taking into account diversity, lived experience and the right to choose how issues and solutions are communicated to others. We welcome more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to join us, as well as maintaining input of regular Working Group members.

This project has ethics clearance from the UTS Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (ETH 17-1670) and the AH&MRC HREC (1241/16).



*Ngadhuri-nya Roundtable, April 2018. Photo by Danielle Montgomery.*



*Ngadhuri-nya Working Group Meeting, July 2018. Left to Right: Mr Ken Zulumovski, Dr Megan Williams, Professor Melissa Green, Ms Mary-Anne Fazekas, Dr Stacy Tzoumakis, Ms Kristen Ella, Ms Natasha Wood, Dr Lisa Roberts, Ms Ellen Karimanovic, Ms Cynthia Ceissman. Photo by Redfern Community Centre.*



*Ngadhuri-nya Working Group Meeting, December 2018. L to R Mr Ken Zulumovski, Professor Melissa Green, Associate Professor Kimberlie Dean, Dr Megan Williams, Ms Ellen Karimanovic, Dr Lisa Roberts, Ms Kristen Ella, Ms Sally Fitzpatrick. Photo by Merrick Zed.*

### **Ngadhuri-nya (To care for): Qualitative study**

The Ngadhuri-nya qualitative study sits within the larger overall Ngadhuri-nya study. It came about because of discussions within the Ngadhuri-nya's Aboriginal-led Working Group, who identified that qualitative research was required to provide descriptive material to complement quantitative analysis of mental health and social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) data.

Ellen is a Masters-level research student working on the qualitative study, with ethical clearance from UTS (ETH18-2780) and AH&MRC (1246/16). Ellen is exploring the social influences on mental health and SEWB of urban young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (18-25 years), understanding their experiences of 'what works' to promote mental health and SEWB, as well as perspectives of Elders and community leaders within the Sydney region.





*Ellen presenting to Ngadhuri-nya Working Group, October 2018. Photo Megan Williams.*

### **Positive Life Pathways for Vulnerable Adolescents: A Noffs Foundation Project**

The Positive Life Pathways for Vulnerable Adolescents project (2014-2018), in collaboration with the Noffs Foundation, is funded through the ARC (LP140100429). The work is led by a team including:

- Dr Sally Nathan, UNSW
- Professor Eileen Baldry, UNSW
- Mr Mark Ferry, Ted Noffs
- Dr Joanne Bryant, UNSW
- Professor Andrew Hayen, UTS
- Professor Marian Shanahan, UNSW
- Dr Patrick Rawstorne, UNSW
- Dr Megan Williams, UTS.

The research will provide evidence about outcomes of young peoples' participation in a residential drug and alcohol treatment program. The program takes a harm minimisation approach, aiming to develop among young people a positive basis for life outside the program, through group and individual therapy, vocational education, mentoring and participation in community activities. Approximately 30% of participants identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Data includes baseline program entry and three-month follow up repeated measures, linked health and corrections data and in-depth qualitative inquiry.

Data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people can only be analysed, interpreted and published with input from the Aboriginal Advisory Group. This includes Aboriginal-led organisations and their staff:

- Mr Tony Hunter, Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation, see <https://www.marrinweejali.org.au/>
- Mr Dale Huddlestone, Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation; see <https://www.gugan-gulwan.com.au/>

A publication outlining the research protocol can be viewed at <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/6/5/e010824>

Open Access

Protocol

## BMJ Open Examining the pathways for young people with drug and alcohol dependence: a mixed-method design to examine the role of a treatment programme

Sally Nathan,<sup>1</sup> Patrick Rawstone,<sup>1</sup> Andrew Hayen,<sup>1</sup> Joanne Bryant,<sup>2</sup> Eileen Baldry,<sup>3</sup> Mark Ferry,<sup>4</sup> Megan Williams,<sup>5</sup> Marian Shanahan,<sup>6</sup> Ranmalie Jayasinha<sup>1</sup>

To cite: Nathan S, Rawstone P, Hayen A, *et al*. Examining the pathways for young people with drug and alcohol dependence: a mixed-method design to examine the role of a treatment programme. *BMJ Open* 2016;6:e010824. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010824

### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Young people with drug and alcohol problems are likely to have poorer health and other psychosocial outcomes than other young people. Residential treatment programmes have been shown to lead to improved health and related outcomes for young people in the short term. There is very little robust research showing longer term outcomes or benefits of such programmes. This paper describes an innovative protocol to examine the longer term outcomes and experiences of young people referred to

### Strengths and limitations of this study

- The proposed study directly addresses key gaps in the current research evidence evaluating residential drug and alcohol treatment programmes for young people.
- The study includes a comparison group and is the first internationally to combine multiple methods (data linkage and a prospective cohort study using a survey and in-depth interviews).
- There is potential loss to follow-up in the pro-

*Front page of Noffs Foundation project protocol paper*

The Ted Noffs Foundation Annual Report 2017 can be viewed at [https://noffs.org.au/static/media/uploads/ar\\_final\\_15nov\\_rs.pdf](https://noffs.org.au/static/media/uploads/ar_final_15nov_rs.pdf)

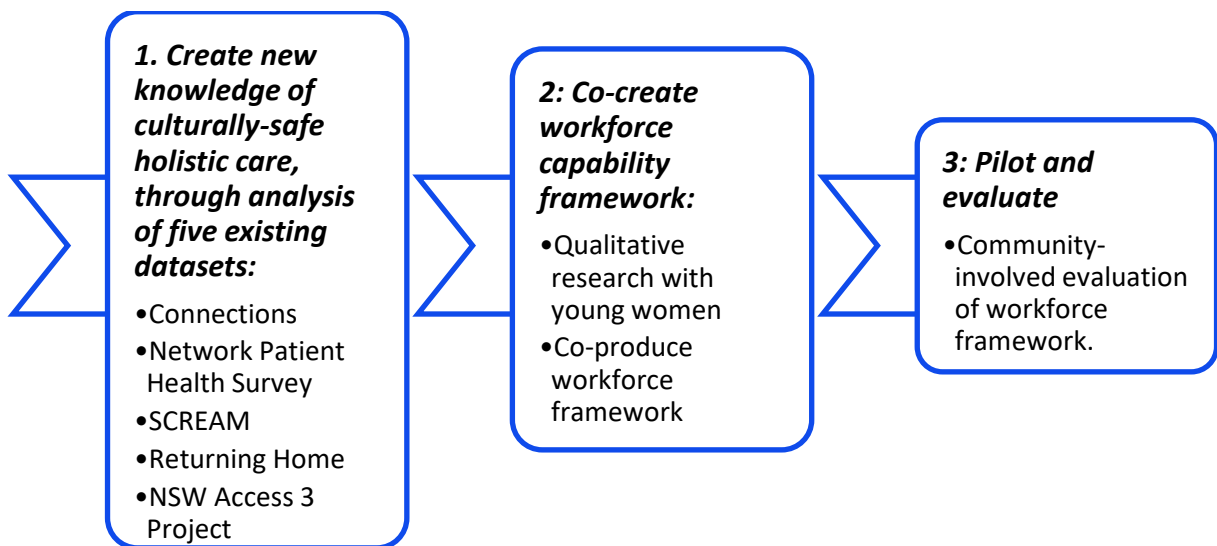
Information about UNSW School of Public Health and Community Medicine partners is at <https://sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/>



Megan and UNSW's Dr Sally Nathan: Solid working relationship. Photo by Telphia-Leanne Joseph.

### **Bangamalhana: A collaborative throughcare program for young Aboriginal women transitioning from prison to community**

The Bangamalhana project is designed to work in partnership with Aboriginal communities, young Aboriginal women in prison or recently in prison, their families, and service providers. It is a 3-stage project to (1) analyse existing data and undertake in-depth qualitative data, (2) co-produce and build capability of the throughcare workforce to (3) better deliver culturally-relevant services for the young Aboriginal women (18-24 years) transitioning from NSW prisons to community living.



Bangamalhana means 'to share' in the Wiradjuri language and reflects the aim of sharing throughcare data, insights and service delivery responsibilities between all project partners.

The research team is:

- Professor Elizabeth Sullivan, UTS
- Dr Megan Williams, UTS



- Dr Sungwon Chan, UTS
- Professor Eileen Baldry, UNSW
- Professor Juanita Sherwood, University of Sydney
- Associate Professor Melissa Kang, UTS
- Dr Julia Bowman, Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network
- Professor James Brown, UTS
- Ms Faye Worner, Waminda
- Dr Sarah Wayland, University of Sydney.

Bangamalhana has been funded by the NHMRC until 2023 (APP1154002).

See UTS News: <https://researchdata.andcs.org.au/bangamalhana-collaborative-throughcare-prison-community/1349121>

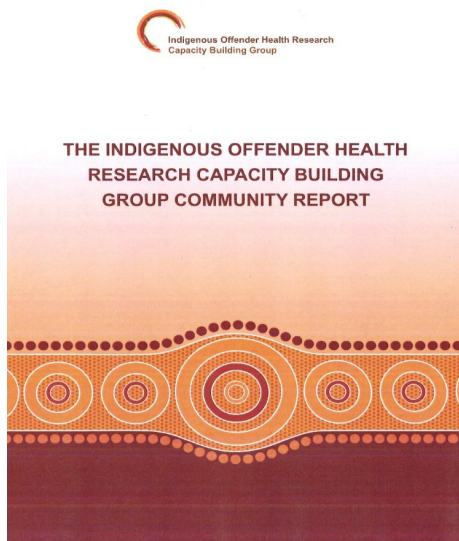
### **Australian Centre of Research Excellence in Offender Health**

Megan has worked across several years with the Justice Health Research Program, funded through NHMRC (from 2013 to 2018), with the following researchers:

- Professor Tony Butler, UNSW
- Professor Andrew Lloyd, UNSW
- Associate Professor Peter Schofield, UNSW
- Professor James Ward, South Australian Health & Medical Research Alliance
- Professor Phillip Mitchell, UNSW
- Dr Paul Simpson, UNSW
- Dr Jill Guthrie, ANU
- Professor John Kaldor, UNSW
- Associate Professor Kimberlie Dean, UNSW
- Associate Professor Georgina Chambers, UNSW
- Dr Jocelyn Jones, University of Western Australia
- Dr Michael Doyle, University of Sydney.

The research program works on a range of projects involving adult and juvenile prisoners, community-based offenders. These groups endure some of the worst health outcomes in society and this has implications for the health of the wider community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations are significantly over represented in the criminal justice system and form an important part of the work. Megan's involvement is particularly related to the *Role of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in correctional centres* project. There is a story on her research journey in the 2017 Justice Health Research Program Community Report; see [https://kirby.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/kirby/report/JHRP\\_IOJR-CBG-Community-Report.pdf](https://kirby.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/kirby/report/JHRP_IOJR-CBG-Community-Report.pdf)



*Front cover of the Justice Health Research Program Community Report 2017.*

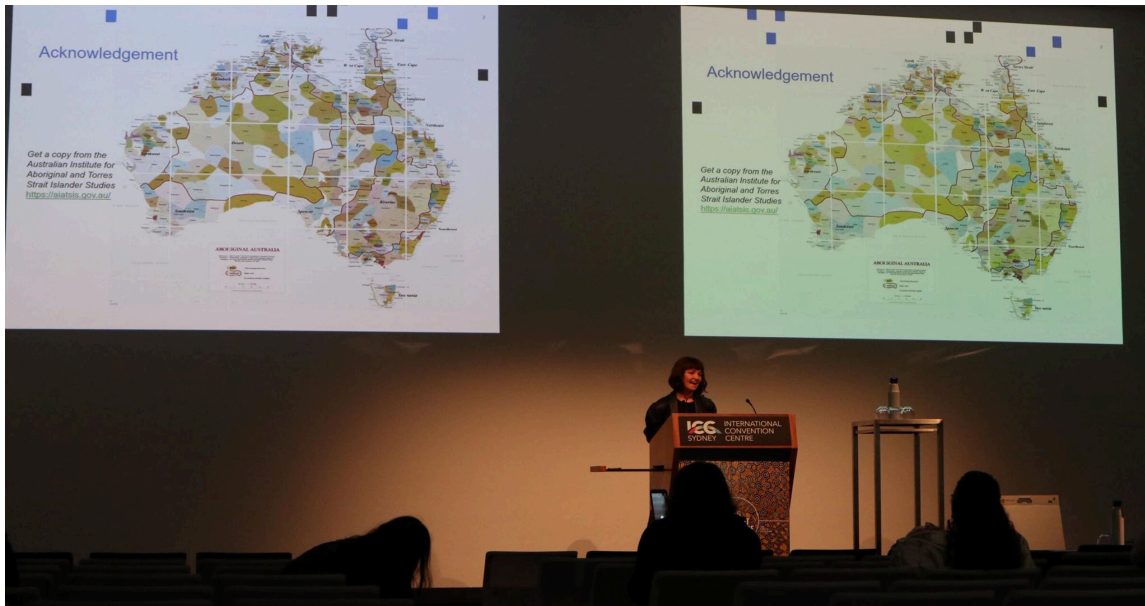
### **Justice Health Working Group**

Megan is an active participant and has been convenor of the Justice Health Working Group of the Maridulu Budyari Gumal SPHERE research translation partnership. She works on two key projects:

1. Do we have a policy enabling environment through which to provide better continuity of care for people exiting NSW prisons? A critical review of policy and literature.
2. Development of research translation methodology and methods for an urban Indigenous context.

Both these projects are designed to be written into communiques for wide dissemination, and to stimulate further discussion among Maridulu Budyari Gumal SPHERE partners about what each can contribute to making improvements in the future, respecting that incarceration rates have continued to rise despite statements in government documents to reduce them.

As part of project 2, Megan presented 'Translating research into policy and practice: (How) does it (really) happen? A framework to guide future efforts from an Australian Aboriginal perspective' at the International Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Conference held in November 2018 in Sydney.



*Megan Williams presenting 'Translating research into policy and practice' at the International Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Conference, November 2018. Photo by Danielle Montgomery.*

### **Evaluation of the Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities, Legal Aid NSW**

Megan has worked with Dr Mark Ragg and the Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities (CLSAC) team, to produce an evaluation of processes and outcomes. The evaluation was funded by Legal Aid NSW and ethical review clearance was obtained from UTS (ETH18-2740).

The Ngaa-bi-nya evaluation framework was used for the evaluation, and data collection occurring in three sites across NSW, via in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and document reviews. Data collection also occurred with Aboriginal women in prison about their use of civil law services.

The evaluation documented many successful outcomes of CLSAC and associated benefits. It also elicited a model of service, with a visual image produced to represent critical success factors, resources, stakeholders and outcomes associated with CLSAC. The evaluation also identified key workforce-level issues, including the need for Aboriginal ways of providing services in Aboriginal communities to be more clearly identified, recognised and respected in workload planning, remuneration, career pathway planning and future service development planning.

The evaluation was supported by a Working Group, with expert feedback from Legal Aid NSW leaders, with UTS's Professor Chris Cunneen from the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research having input at a meeting to discuss key findings.

## Indigenous male health research: Two projects

Girra Maa part-time staff member Jack Bulman is involved in two key projects with Indigenous Australian males:

1. Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men
2. Our Men Our Shields.

### **Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young Men**

Jack and Megan were part of the initial planning and development of the Lowitja Institute's *Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young Men* project, now led by Professor Uncle Mick Adams at Edith Cowan University. The project is about identifying ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men remain strong and resilient in the face of adversity in their lives.

As part of his UTS Girra Maa role, Jack is a member of the large funded team of researchers facilitating this project. They have been on two field trips so far, to Cairns and Doomadgee.

The research is being co-constructed and co-designed with communities to develop adaptable approaches to meet the needs and requirements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men involved. Elders provide advice and direction, and there is also input from cultural representatives and paid local researchers to ensure it is culturally safe and empowering for the young men.

Yarning and digital storytelling are central to the work to enable in-depth conversations between young men about personal strengths in the face of adversity.

All data and outputs from the project extending on the principle of research being 'done with': this project is undertaken by and for the young men. The strengths-based approach aims to dismantle deficit thinking and colonial practices that have contributed to young males' distrust of mainstream health and support providers. The team supports the talents and strengths of the young men and teach highly valuable research and film production skills also in an effort to improve their social and economic capital.

The team aims to influence governments to adopt strong, financially sustainable programs across Australia that will demonstrably include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men in wider Australian society and economy. This inclusion and participation is required to stimulate then their influence on policies and decisions that will affect their lives, and the generations to come.

For more information see <https://www.lowitja.org.au/page/research/research-categories/health-policy-and-systems/data/projects/young-men>



*Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young Men workshop participants. Photo by Lowitja Institute staff.*

### **Our Men Our Shields: First 1000 Days Australia.**

First 1000 Days Australia and Jack Bulman in his Girra Maa and Mibbinbah Aboriginal Male Health Promotion Charity roles have developed *Our Men Our Shields*, a program that supports and celebrates the roles of mothers, fathers and extended family in ensuring our children are well and healthy in their first 1000 days. The vision is that:

*The birth of our children heralds the arrival of a future Elder. We honour our collective duty to use these 1000 days to build a lifetime of support so that our children grow up strong in their identity and into these roles over time.*

First 1000 Days acknowledges that the role and contribution of men and boys in the first 1000 days of a child's life, and beyond, is important and deserves focused support. The Our Men Our Shields program provides an approach to support and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys to take pride in their roles in families and communities - as fathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, sons, partners, friends and leaders, as well as protecting the wellbeing of children and their mothers.

The Our Men Our Shields work aims to capture and evaluate this targeted and strength-based approach to health and wellbeing promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fathers and their young families. For more information see:

<http://www.first1000daysaustralia.org.au/our-men-our-shields>

[http://www.first1000daysaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/position\\_statement/Our%20men%20our%20shields\\_0.pdf](http://www.first1000daysaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/position_statement/Our%20men%20our%20shields_0.pdf)





## Workforce research: Three projects

As well as the Bunya Project led by Danielle, and the Inner Qualities project that Megan is a team member of, Girra Maa are also involved in two other projects that aim to contribute to strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce of the future:

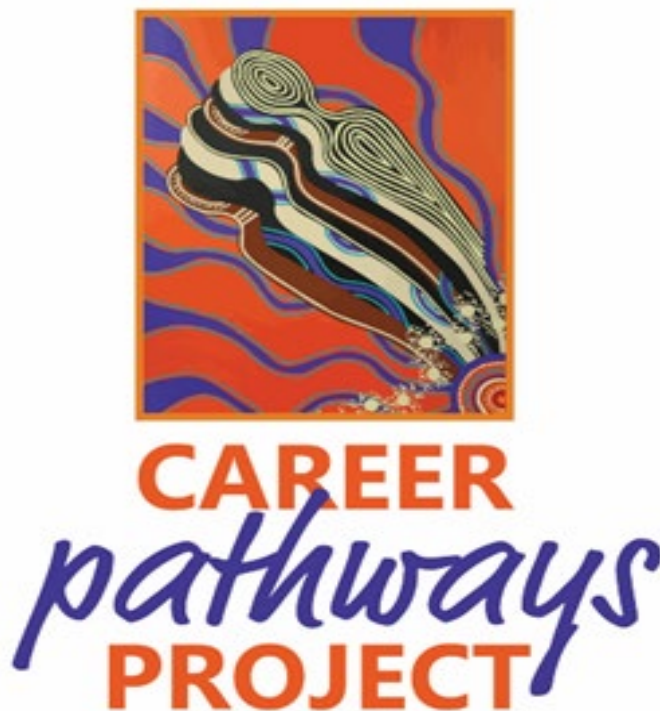
1. The Lowitja Institute Career Pathways Project
2. Aboriginal Allied Health Career Pathways Scoping Study
3. Aboriginal Health Research Capacity Building Project.

These projects are gathering evidence to understand:

- How to best recruit and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into higher education?
- What supports are required for successful progress and graduation?
- What strategies facilitate successful career development including into leadership roles?
- Strategies required to advance culturally-relevant and culturally-safe policies, resourcing, programming, workforce and workplace in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander work and study?

Learnings from these projects is being currently translated into the 'Paperbark' and 'Online Modules' described in the Learning and teaching report section.

### Lowitja Institute Career Pathways Project



The Lowitja Institute-funded Careers Pathway Project is being conducted by a large team across Australia, funded by the Lowitja Institute. Girra Maa's Megan is a team

investigator and part of the Aboriginal Reference Group, and Ellen has been a Research Assistant – very minor roles compared to many others in the team!

The NSW named team investigators are:

- Mr Jamie Newman, Orange Aboriginal Medical Service
- Mr Phil Naden, Bila Muuji
- Dr Sally Nathan, UNSW
- Associate Prof Ilse Blignault, Western Sydney University (WSU)
- Dr Lois Meyer, UNSW
- Ms Sally Fitzpatrick, WSU
- Ms Telphia-Leanne Joseph, UNSW
- Ms Jannine Bailey, WSU
- Ms Cris Carriage, WSU
- Dr Megan Williams, UTS, UNSW.

The Northern Territory named investigators are:

- Ms Erin Lew Fatt, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT)
- Ms Karina DeMasi, AMSANT
- Mr David Cooper, AMSANT
- Mr Lee Ridoutt, Consultant
- Ms Carol Vale, Consultant
- Ms Kate Kelleher, Consultant
- Mr Rob Curry, Consultant
- Ms Debbie Sanford, Consultant.

This project includes extensive qualitative research about career pathway development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, as well as a national survey to provide a comprehensive picture of our workforce. The team's national survey has been widely distributed, including being shared on Twitter using [#CareerPathwaysProject](#)

The logo artwork by Joanne Nasir includes figures that each represent an Australian State or Territory. The purple and blue lines represent the career pathway (purple) of the worker, and their professional, personal and spiritual journey (blue). The cream circles at the bottom of the figures represent the Stone Dreaming to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers strong, resilient and spiritually connected to their cultural identity.

Results of the research are due to be distributed in the second half of 2019. A project overview is available on the Lowitja Institute website: <https://www.lowitja.org.au/career-pathways>

## Aboriginal Allied Health Career Pathways Scoping Project



*Allied Health Career Pathways Scoping Project logo by BossLady Creative Design.*

Girra Maa's Megan and Danielle along with consultant Dr Mark Ragg, Bila Muuji's Mr Phil Naden and UTS Jumbunna's Industry Professor Nareen Young tendered for, and were successful in receiving, NSW Ministry of Health funding for a research project scoping pathways for allied health careers of and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The research is to inform NSW Ministry of Health strategies and policies to grow and support the NSW Health Aboriginal allied health workforce.

Phil is Wiradjuri and one of the most experienced managers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in NSW. Phil's active role in workforce development, health policy and research includes being a lead researcher on the Lowitja Institute-funded Career Pathways Project outlined earlier.

As an Industry Professor, Nareen brings extensive experience and success in employment diversity including her leadership of two peak diversity employment organisations – NSW Working Women's Centre and Diversity Council Australia. She was also previously responsible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment at PwC's Indigenous Consulting.

At the time of writing, the allied health career pathways scoping study is under ethical review. It has been designed as mixed-methods research, with qualitative data to provide rich details about people's experiences, pathways and needs in relation to allied health careers, while quantitative data will provide an overview of trends and priorities in allied health career development.

The study is designed as strengths-based, moving away from identifying deficits and inequities (6) to understand 'what works', with future-oriented thinking about the various individual family, community and system-level factors in allied health career pathways, with focussed critique of past and current pathways and strategies. The study is to be guided by an Aboriginal Health Advisory Group connected to Girra Maa, as well as an Expert Reference Group supported by the Ministry.

## Aboriginal health research capacity building project

A partnership between Girra Maa and Bila Muuji Aboriginal Corporation Health Services Incorporated (<http://www.bilamuujihealthservices.org.au/>) has resulted in the establishment of a new research position. Josie Newton has been employed by GSH as an Aboriginal Health Research Associate for 12 months full time, based at Bila Muuji on Wiradjuri country in Dubbo.

Bila Muuji, meaning 'river friends' in Wiradjuri, was formed in 1995 as a strategic approach to support to Aboriginal health service CEOs in rural and remote NSW. The CEOs identified how a regional body could address shared issues impacting the health and social needs of Aboriginal communities, and that a unified voice in western NSW would be strengthened through the development of Bila Muuji. Bila Muuji members include Aboriginal community-controlled health services from across western NSW.



*Bila Muuji, meaning 'river friends' in Wiradjuri. Photo by Simon Bayliss.*

The new research capacity building project will help gathering success stories about Aboriginal community-controlled-health service delivery. The partnership project has also has the vision of developing resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and services to make decisions about research, to guide research partnerships, map and report on research, and inspire more ethical, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research in the future.



## Guest researcher engagement

Girra Maa had a couple of guest researchers visit to share their experience and findings and think about ways of working together.

In October 2018, team member Ellen arranged for Gamilaraay and Wiradjuri postdoctoral researcher Dr John Hunter to join us, and promoted his visit. John holds a Macquarie University Fellowship for Indigenous Researchers, in the Department of Geography and Planning. John described how his research is to enliven the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, traditional knowledges, and self-directed change to address disempowerment of First Nations peoples. His current work among young people is extensive – and as we heard from GSH audience members “inspiring, informative and much needed”. He especially showcased community leadership in research design, data collection and analysis. For more information about John see <https://researchers.mq.edu.au/en/persons/john-hunter>

In December 2018 we had Professor Rona Beattie visit from the Glasgow School for Business and Society at the Glasgow Caledonian University, pictured in the centre below with Danielle and Associate Professor Kenny Lawson from WSU. We explored commonalities in our work on co-creation in health service delivery and research, as well as unpacking what constitutes ‘success’ in co-creation.



*Danielle Montgomery (UTS) and Kenny Lawson (WSU) receiving sweets from Scotland, from visitor Rona Beattie (Glasgow Caledonian University, centre). Photo by Megan Williams.*

## Publications and presentations

The sections below include publications, presentations and media articles that Girra Maa staff have led and contributed to since starting at UTS:

### Peer-reviewed articles

Blignault, I. & Williams, M. (2017). Challenges in evaluating Aboriginal healing programs: definitions, diversity and data. *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, 17(2), 4-10. doi:[10.1177/1035719X1701700202](https://doi.org/10.1177/1035719X1701700202)

- Fitzpatrick, S. A., Haswell, M. R., Williams, M., Nathan, S., Meyer, L. ... Jackson Pulver, L. (2019). Learning about Aboriginal health and wellbeing at the postgraduate level: Novel application of the Growth and Empowerment Measure. *Rural and Remote Health*, 19(2), [doi.org/10.22605/RRH4708](https://doi.org/10.22605/RRH4708)
- Sweet, M., Geia, L., Dudgeon, P., McCallum, K., Finlay, S., Williams, M., . . . Ricketson, M. (2017). Outlining a model of social journalism in health. *Australian Journalism Review*, 39(2), 91-106. Retrieved from <https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=360447587025341;res=1ELLCC>
- Tsey, K., Onnis, L., Whiteside, M., Williams, M., McCalman, J. ... Kinchin, I. (2019). Assessing research impact: Australia Research Council criteria and the case of Family Wellbeing research. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 73, 176-186. Retrieved from [https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0149718918302088?dgcid=c\\_omauthor](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0149718918302088?dgcid=c_omauthor)
- Williams, M. (2018). Ngaa-bi-nya evaluation framework. *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, 18(1), 6-20. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1035719X18760141?journalCode=evja>
- Williams, M., Sweet, M., Finlay, S., & McInerney, M. (2017). #JustJustice online campaign to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-incarceration. *Australian Journalism Review*, 39(2), pp. 107-118. Retrieved from <https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/handle/10453/122585>
- Williams, M. (2017). Stories from Croakey's JustJustice Series. *Parity*, 30(1), 22-24. Accessed from <https://croakey.org/category/croakey-news-and-projects/justjustice/>

### Peer-reviewed conference proceedings

- Williams, M., Sweet, M., Finlay, S., McInerney, M., & Ward, M. (2017). #JustJustice online campaign to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-incarceration. In L. Coleman (Ed.), *Proceedings from the 14<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference*. Canberra: National Rural Health Alliance. Retrieved from <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/14nrhc/>

### Manuscripts submitted

- Davidson, F., Clugston, B., Perrin, M., Heffernan, E., Williams, M., & Kinner, S. (submitted). Prison mental health workforce.
- Fitzpatrick, S., Haswell, M., Williams, M., Meyer, L., & Jackson Pulver, S. (accepted). Change starts from within: Indigenous health teaching and learning. LIME Network case study.
- Jackson Pulver, L., Williams, M., & Fitzpatrick, S. (accepted). Social determinants of Indigenous Health. Oxford University Press book chapter.
- Maru, K., Williams, M., Rawsthorne, P., Palmer, K., Nathan, S., Nathan, S. (submitted). Residential rehabilitation.
- Wainer, Z., Carcel, C., Hickey, M., Schiebinger, L., O'Neil, A. ... Norton, R. (submitted). Gender in research.

## Reports

- Adams, M., Bani, G., Blagg, H., Bulman, J., Higgins, D. ... & Wenitong, M. (2017). *Towards an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Violence Prevention Framework for Men and Boys*. Canberra: The Healing Foundation and White Ribbon Australia. Retrieved from [https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/HF\\_Violence\\_Prevention\\_Framework\\_Report\\_Oct2017\\_V9\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/HF_Violence_Prevention_Framework_Report_Oct2017_V9_WEB.pdf)
- Byrne, Z., Bailey, J., Robertson, C., Blignault, I., Naden, P., & Karimanovic, E. (2018). *Career Pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals: Brewarrina Aboriginal Health Service Limited, Summary of findings*. Unpublished service report.
- Byrne, Z., Bailey, J., Robertson, C., Blignault, I., Naden, P., & Karimanovic, E. (2018). *Career Pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals: Dubbo regional Aboriginal health service, Summary of findings*. Unpublished service report.
- Byrne, Z., Bailey, J., Robertson, C., Blignault, I., Naden, P., & Karimanovic, E. (2018). *Career Pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals: Orange Aboriginal medical service, Short summary of findings*. Unpublished service report.
- Conroy, E. & Williams, M. (2017). *Preventing homelessness after release from government services*. Rapid Review. Sydney: Sax Institute.
- Starr, M., Bulman, J., & Arabena, K. (2018). *Our Men Our Shields: Messages of Belonging and Hope*. Melbourne: First 1000 Days Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.first1000daysaustralia.org.au/our-men-our-shields>

## Submission

- Croakey.org (2018). *Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition*. Sydney: Croakey.org

## Invited conference presentations

- Williams, M. (2018). *Communication Rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*. Presentation to Speech Pathology Australia, UTS Sydney.
- Williams, M. (2018). *Aboriginal health research translation: Current opportunities, lessons and needs*. Presentation to Western Health Research Network, Orange.
- Williams, M. (2018). *Culture is Inclusion: First Peoples' Disability Network book launch panel discussion*. Panel discussion at Australian Human Rights Commission, Sydney.
- Williams, M. (2018). *What is the role of research and evidence in closing the prison gap?* Presentation to Close the Prison Gap 3<sup>rd</sup> National Indigenous Incarceration Conference, Kingscliff.
- Williams, M. (2018). *Ethical research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*. Presentation to the UTS Graduate School of Health Seminar Series, Sydney.
- Williams, M. (2018). *Qualitative research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. Panel discussion at UNSW Qualitative Research Network Hub, Sydney.

Williams, M. (2018). *Joined up care in prevention: What needs to connect?* Presentation to the Public Health Association of Australia Prevention Conference, Sydney.

Williams, M. (2017). *We wear multiple hats: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people navigating multiple roles in relation to alcohol and drugs.* Presentation to the Australasian Professional Society for Alcohol and Drugs, Melbourne.

Williams, M. (2017). *Research translation in the Aboriginal space: Recent relational examples.* Presentation to the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, NSW Health, Sydney.

### Conference abstracts accepted and presentations made

Bargaille, D., Cunneen, B., Marchetti, E., Tauri, J., & Williams, M. (2018). Ethics in Indigenous research. Presentation to the Critical Criminology Conference, Sydney.

Finlay, S., Williams, M., Sweet, M., McInerney, M., & Ward, M. (2017). #JustJustice online campaign to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-incarceration. Presentation to the 15th World Congress on Public Health, Melbourne.

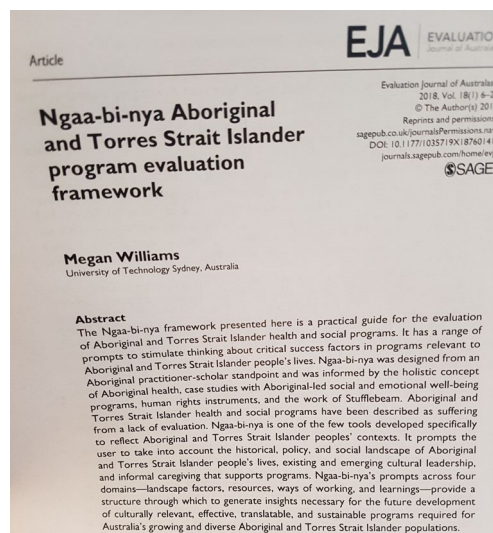
Montgomery, D. (2018). Bunya poster presentation at the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide International Indigenous Conference, Sydney.

Williams, M. (2018). Translating research into policy and practice: (How) does it (really) happen? A framework to guide future efforts from an Australian Aboriginal perspective. Presentation to the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide International Indigenous Conference, Sydney.

Williams, M. & Bulman, J. (2017). The Be The Best You Can Be Mibbinbah Mad Bastards Program. Presentation to the NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Workforce Forum, Sydney.

Williams, M. (2017). Research translation in the health and justice space: An ongoing journey. Presentation to the NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Workforce Forum, Sydney.

Williams, M., Finlay, S., Sweet, M., McInerney, M., & Ward, M. (2017). #JustJustice online campaign to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-incarceration. Presentation to the 14th National Rural Health Conference, Cairns.



Front page of Ngaa-bi-nya evaluation framework article published in the EJA in 2018.



# Engagement and service

## Collaboration and engagement

For Girra Maa, education and research often overlap, and overlap with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community connections and university service. Girra Maa feels like a lively and active place to work in this regard, in weaving these things together. Without engaging various parts of communities outside UTS, as well as within UTS, our work conveying strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in health care would not be possible. We very much seek a collective approach to education and research, to reflect the great diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Indigenous peoples globally, and with respect to the Traditional Owners of the lands upon which we work.

Collaboration is most often the starting point in planning our work, and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families are the motivation for our work, the people to whom we feel most responsible. We always 'think backwards' from how our Elders, mentors and families will think about us, and intend for our work to reflect our various communities' knowledges, strategies, needs and aspirations. It is part of our UTS role and responsibility to actively participate in ways our communities require us to, including in health organisations, events to honour meaningful relationships within communities, assisting individuals to navigate university and among families in the health and welfare systems. Strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and connection to community organisations, based on a healthy, ever-growing sense of oneself, are the foundations of our work at GSH.

## Key activities

### **Be The Best That You Can Be: Aboriginal Men's Health Program, drawing on the Australian feature film *Mad Bastards***

*Mad Bastards* is a story at the heart of many Aboriginal families – facing multiple traumas and difficulties through spirit healing, connection to country, and strengthening relationships.

*The movie 'Mad Bastards' speaks to all of the key issues facing Aboriginal men and their relationships, as sons, uncles and partners ... as well as the usual social issues of incarceration, violence and alcohol abuse. Most importantly, it brings a message of hope, an inspiration that they can break cycles and be the men they want to be.*

(Cape York Health Council Public Health Medical Advisor Dr Mark Wenitong) (7)

The film is perfect material to stimulate deep discussions about how to 'Be The Best You Can Be'.

#### ***The backstory***

Over seven years ago, Girra Maa's Jack and Megan were invited to join a Mad Bastards Working Group to assist the film's writer and director, Brendan Fletcher, to develop a community outreach kit to go with the film. Together about ten experts in male and family health promotion, media production and marketing developed and trialled a group-based program, later developed into Be The Best You Can Be and toured to locations across Australia by Mibbinbah male health promotion charity.

The film inspires deep conversations about themes vital to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing (and the health and wellbeing of peoples of any culture, for that matter):

1. Deciding to change
2. Relationships
3. Identity
4. Transformation
5. Taking responsibility
6. Staying strong.

The program also offers a safe space to discuss racism, trans-generational trauma, grief, and loss of land, language, culture and identity – profound issues over which individuals can often feel they have little power, and issues that lie behind over-incarceration, violence and alcohol abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

### **Girra Maa's role**

In 2017 Jack and Megan worked together to show the Mad Bastards film and facilitate a two-day intensive workshop with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fellas from that community. This was part of the fellas developing a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male health strategy in the area and forming partnerships, including to plan potential research.



*Jack facilitating a Be The Best You Can Be workshop. Photo by Bush Turkey Films.*

In 2017 Megan worked with the Mad Bastards writer and director Brendan to produce a retrospective document detailing all of the many screenings, tours, actions and achievements of Mad Bastards and Be The Best You Can Be (8). This document conveys the scope of the film and program, to inform organisations who potentially wish to work with the team.

In 2017 and 2018, Jack, in collaboration with Mibbinbah, planned and ran several other programs or variations of it.



*“You need to sort out what you came here for. So don’t go wandering off”. Scene from Mad Bastards Film. Photo by Bush Turkey Films.*

The film’s website is <http://www.madbastards.com.au/> - so beautiful. More images from Be The Best You Can Be are on Brendan’s own website at <http://www.barefoot.net.au/passion/> .

### **Lens on Health: Indigenous and Western Views**

In August 2018, Girra Maa team members helped design and facilitate, as well as participate in the ‘Lens of Health: Indigenous and Western Views’ event. This was part of National Science Week and the Sydney Science Festival, and was an opportunity to collaborate with others across disciplines and universities, connecting to elements of country, spirituality and community. It was intended as a quiet, reflective space to explore what health means and how we experience it in our lives – big picture and personal.

The invitation for the event went out far and wide, including National Science Week and Sydney Science Festival promotional materials and on the UTS Social Impact website (<https://socialimpact.uts.edu.au/event/lens-health-indigenous-western-views/>).

Event organisers were:

- Dr Lisa Roberts, UTS Faculty of Science Artists in Residence
- Dr Megan Williams, Girra Maa Indigenous Health Discipline, UTS:GSH
- Dr Sean Walsh, UTS Life Scientist
- Dr Cat Kutay, UTS Software Engineer
- Mr Michael Lynch, UTS eResearch Support Analyst
- Ms Anne Colville, UTS environmental toxicologist and Research Associate
- Ms Sue Fenech, UTS Professional Officer, Technical Services Research
- Ms Claire Sives, UNSW freshwater ecologist and PhD student
- Mr Darren Charlwood, Aboriginal artist and University of Sydney student
- Ms Maddison Gibbs, Aboriginal artist and UTS student.

The aim of the Lens on Health event was for participants to be “Welcomed, Introduced and Engaged”. We had around 25 participants in the group; our event was booked out, and had a full schedule from 11am to 5pm.

Special guest was Auntie Fran Bodkin, Aboriginal Elder, descendant of the D'harawal people of the Bidiagal clan, and educator of D'harawal knowledge. See stories she shares at <https://dharawalstories.com/> and her biography at [https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/oatsiee/aboriginal\\_and\\_torres\\_strait\\_islander\\_employment\\_and\\_engagement/gok\\_profiles/a - z\\_listing/aunty\\_fran\\_bodkin](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/oatsiee/aboriginal_and_torres_strait_islander_employment_and_engagement/gok_profiles/a-z_listing/aunty_fran_bodkin).

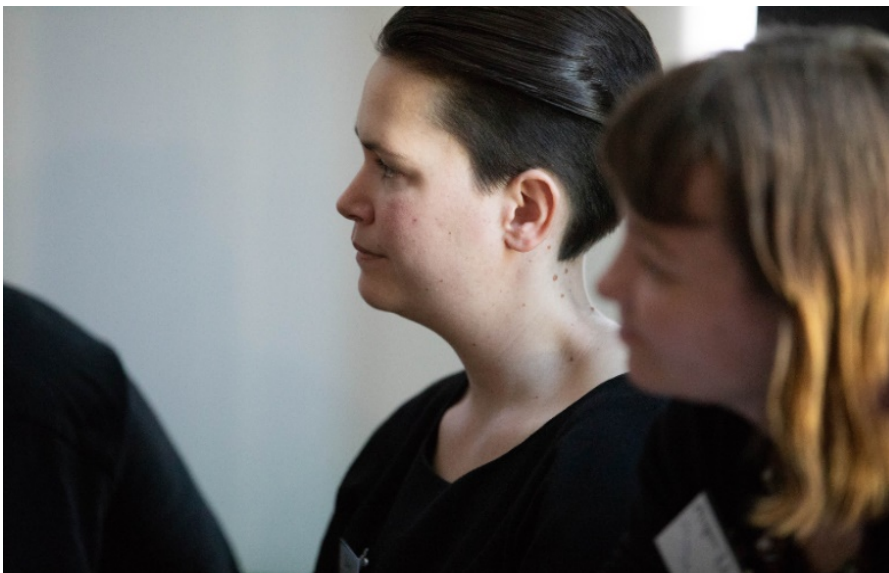
We also benefitted from Faculty of Science volunteers to ensure smooth running of the day.

The event was presented in three parts, interweaving Western science and Indigenous worldviews to demonstrate and recognise the different ways we perceive and participate in shaping the natural world:

1. Roundtable discussion – Lens on Us
2. Microscopes – Lens on Microbes
3. Virtual Journey – Lens on a Bigger Picture.

Megan facilitated Part 1 which was held at GSH in Building 07, Level 04. Participants were invited to speak about who they are, where they're from, and their relationship to Aboriginal Australia.

Stimulus for discussion was a video of marine microbial ecologist Dr Andrew Davidson connectivity in the Antarctic ecosystem (see <http://www.livingdata.net.au/content/research/trackchanges/trackchanges.php>). Megan reflected how connectivity is understood and appreciated from an Indigenous perspective.



*Ellen Karimanovic and Megan Williams during the Roundtable. Photo by Sebastian Reategui.*

In Part 2, held in Building 07 on Level 06 at the Faculty of Science's School of Life Science, everyone was given the opportunity to view tiny living things found in local freshwater and salt water systems through microscopes, led by Sue Fenech, Anne Colville and Claire Sives. And then, to draw what we saw.



*Artist and UTS student Maddison Gibbs at Lens on Us session. Photo by Sebastian Reategui.*

Part 3 was held in the UTS Data Arena, and was an interaction between participants, data and stories about health and connection to country. It's hard to explain – you had to be there - immersed in 180 degrees of sound and vision and new friends. The picture below shows some data 'plotting' that is 'behind' images we got to see.

These photographs provide just a glimpse of what was displayed:



*Living Data: Lens on Health in the UTS Data Arena. Photo by Megan Williams.*





*Immersion in health at the UTS Data Arena. Photo by Sebastian Reategui.*

The Lens on Health has been documented by Dr Lisa Roberts on the Living Data website at <http://www.livingdata.net.au/content/presentations/2018presentations/2018LensOnHealthSSF.php>.

Also, we were recorded and interviewed by Jake Morcom and Miles Herbert from 2SER, for a ThinkHealth podcast on 04 October 2018, available at <https://player.whooshkaa.com/episode?id=283014>.

### **Lens on Health: Reading Mother Country**

Drawing on some of the Lens on Health material, the film, 'Reading Mother Country', was developed and presented by Girra Maa friend and UTS Faculty of Science Artist in Residence Dr Lisa Roberts at the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide conference: <http://hosw.com/>.

Reading Mother Country is a short, animated story in response to Megan's Lens on Health question, 'What's your relationship to Aboriginal Australia?' and was developed by Lisa.



*Lisa's incredible looking film projected at the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Conference, November 2018. Photo by Megan Williams.*

Reading Mother Country begins with a childhood memory of Lisa's and expands to reflect many interactions with people and with places, where past, present and future stories may be read in the languages of the arts and the sciences - and felt within these languages, through the universal primal forms in nature - circling, spiralling and crossing. These ancient forms are recognised as individual expressions of connection and as collective scientific observations.

View the animation at:

<http://www.livingdata.net.au/content/presentations/2018presentations/2018LensOnHeal thHOSW.php?fbclid=IwAR0xy0mij9t1xSrrtYM79TiphP3YDAoEzGPUARXI-QKrlewNo4O6aculnGM>

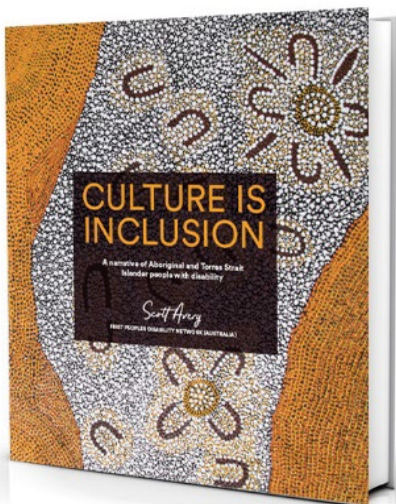
### **Living Our Ways, community-driven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability research program**

This Aboriginal community-led research project, funded by NSW Family and Community Services 2015-2018 produced the book 'Culture is Inclusion: A narrative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability', authored by Scott Avery. Worimi man Scott is the Research and Policy Manager at First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), and a UTS PhD Student in the Faculty of Health. The research was guided by a research team across multiple organisations:

- Mr Scott Avery, FPDN
- Associate Professor Jo Trevaglia, UTS
- Dr Megan Williams, UTS
- Professor Melissa Haswell, QUT
- Dr Ruth McCausland, UNSW
- Professor Leanne Dowse, UNSW.

To buy the book go to:

<https://fpdn.org.au/product/cultureis-inclusion/>



*Book artwork by Uncle Paul Constable Calcott. On-stage interview at the book launch by Mark Walters (from Sylvanvale), centre, with Scott Avery (FPDN), right, and support from Megan Noyeaux (Sylvanvale). Photo by Megan Williams.*

## Croakey.org and #CroakeyGO

Croakey is an independent social journalism organisation that enables debate and investigations of health issues and policy using a holistic lens. Girra Maa and Croakey have been exploring the role of social journalism in research teams and research translation and have provided opportunities at UTS for training researchers in using new media technologies. Croakey have been operating for approximately 10 years, and Megan joined for special series #JustJustice in 2015-16, about community and public health solutions to rising rates of incarceration of Indigenous peoples. Megan has remained connected as a Commissioning Editor.

Megan has also collaborated with Croakey on #CroakeyGO events (see <https://croakey.org/croakey-go/>) – using walking as an act of public health journalism, to connect with people and communities, and hear about public health-related issues they believe are priorities for addressing, as well as community solutions to improve public health.

On Saturday 13 October 2018, Croakey and Girra Maa collaborated to present #CroakeyGO event 'Searching for hidden secrets', walking from Marrickville to UTS. This had a connected workshop on Freedom of Information applications, led by Civic Technologist Henare Degan, who mentored the #CroakeyGO team as part of their Walkley Foundation and Global Editors Network award, and following on from our participation in the Global Editors Network and Google Hackathon about finding ways to include community members in the production of news items.



*#CroakeyGO and Girra Maa event invite by Megan Williams and Mitchell Ward.*

The #CroakeyGO Searching for hidden secrets walk attracted about 30 community members, including UTS staff. We met at the premises of frontyard projects, a not-for-profit collective who provide space and support for community cultural engagement, critical research and skills sharing. Mentor Henare and UTS staff member Luke Bacon are involved with frontyard, and provided walk participants with an introduction, and inspiration (see <http://www.frontyardprojects.org/>).

We wound our way past good coffee in Marrickville to Enmore, where we viewed a real-life air quality monitor as part of a citizen science project Henare and Luke



are involved in. The Enmore resident read us the air quality information, and with some levels viewed being above/worse than Australian government recommendations. We discussed environmental and human factors contributing to those readings, including the trucks travelling frequently and illegally on that section of road. Croakey Managing Editor Dr Melissa Sweet interviewed Henare and Luke about these issues, and broader developments in citizen science and air quality monitoring, which can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YDO5NleyuI>

After leaving Enmore, we traipsed through laneways parallel to Newtown's busy King Street, lest our snail's pace annoyed too many Saturday shoppers and diners. We discussed Aboriginal peoples' use and knowledge of the land including their shaping of today's King Street, amazed at just how many people, travellers and businesses now (still) benefit.



#CroakeyGO attracts and includes people from all walks of life (pun intended), breaking down usual social barriers, throwing people together on narrow footpaths who wouldn't usually talk, skewing any sense of social hierarchy when people are 'dressed down' in casual clothes, and involving dogs and children. And of course, being physically active, as a collective; time passes fast.

There's a wider movement of walking as an artistic practice too, including by Girra Maa critical friend and pedestrian artist (another pun intended) Molly Wagner (<https://www.mollywagner.com/>) who has been researching the incredible peace-bringing walk by Wiradjuri warrior Windradyne. We also acknowledge recent walks of Aboriginal people to raise awareness about rights to self-determination and justice (see <https://www.clintonswalkforjustice.org/> and Five Lands Walk <http://www.5landswalk.com.au/north-avoca.html>).

#CroakeyGO occurs with the deep knowing that our Indigenous ancestors relied on walking far more than us in their everyday life, and had little or no impact on the environment, but instead drew themselves closer to country.

In cities, walking in a group does provide time and space conducive to talking, with plenty of spare moments waiting at traffic lights, or on street corners for others to catch up...



*Waiting and talking on CroakeyGO. Photo by Melissa Sweet.*

The original #CroakeyGO and Girra Maa invitation flyer and info is here:

<https://croakey.org/please-join-us-on-a-croakeygo-in-sydney-searching-for-secrets/>

And the Freedom of Information workshop details are here:

<https://croakey.org/join-us-for-this-croakeypopup-workshop-and-investigate-using-foi-for-public-health/>

For more information on Mapping Croakey GO see <https://medium.com/editors-lab-impact/how-to-better-interact-with-and-report-on-local-communities-an-editors-lab-in-sydney-to-the-rescue-3268067c46dc>

<http://community.gloaleditorsnetwork.org/content/mapping-croakeygo-0>

Thank you to all UTS colleagues who joined #CroakeyGO!

### **Working with UTS colleagues**

In 2018 we established new networks and re-engaged with prior colleagues through:

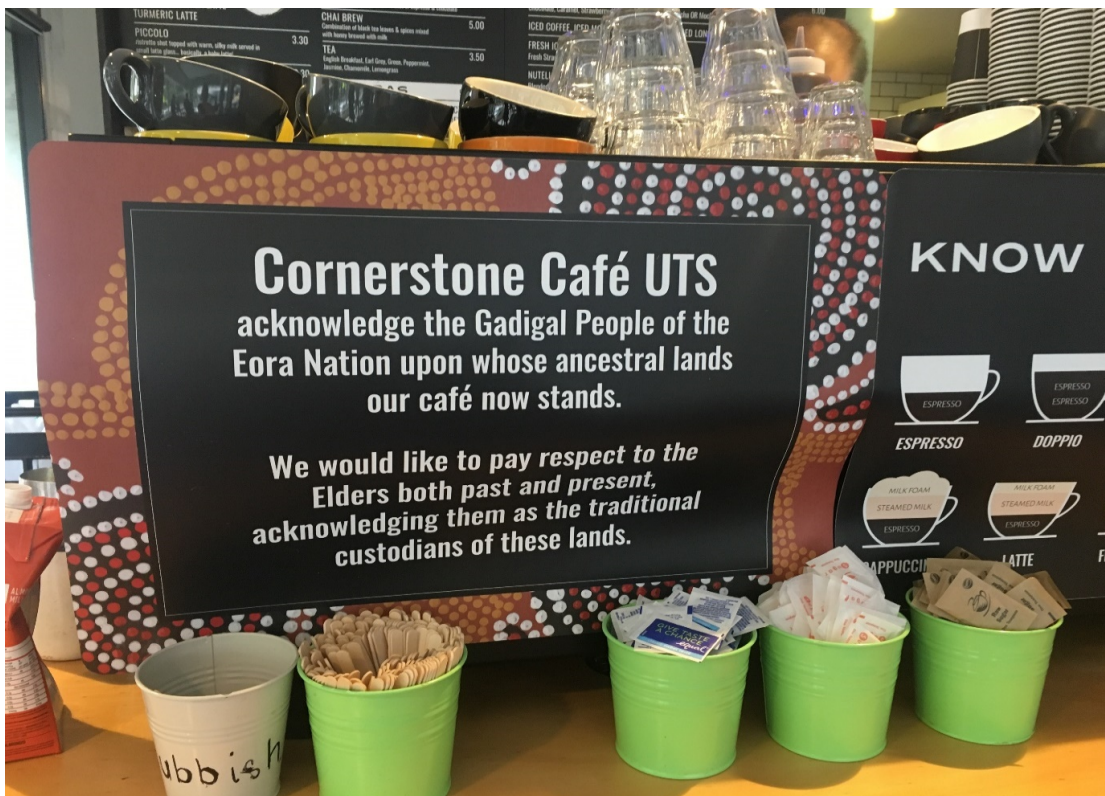
- Developing a relationship with UTS and Jumbunna higher degree research students, across Business, Law, Faculty of Arts and Social Science and Health faculties.

- Attendance at UTS events and gatherings and specifically supporting our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues organising or participating at events.
- Following the leadership of UTS's Centre for Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges (CAIK) and their multi award-winning work on Indigenous Graduate Attributes: <https://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/centre-advancement-indigenous-knowledges/about-us/about-caik>

Within GSH, Girra Maa staff participate in at least six committees:

- 100 Broadway Primary Health Clinic Committee
- Learning and Teaching Committee
- Research and Innovation Committee
- Social Committee
- Equity and Diversity Committee
- Discipline-specific committees, such as the Curriculum Committee for Genetic Counselling.

We have also met with staff from other schools, faculties and professional services at UTS, introducing people to Girra Maa's work many, many times. We have seen some heartening changes including this new signage at our local on-campus coffee shop:



*New Acknowledgement of Country sign at Cornerstone Café, UTS Building 07. Photo by Danielle Montgomery.*

## Social media

Check us out on Instagram: girramaa

Twitter: @MegBastard @UTS\_GSH

## Media items

Roberts, L., Williams, M., Bodkin, F., Charlwood, D. and Walsh, S. (2018, October 4). Think: Health #99 – Our Stories.

<https://player.whooshkaa.com/episode?id=283014>

Williams, M. ResearchIntoPolicy – Expert reflections and challenges from the field. (2018, May 16). *Croakey.org*. Retrieved from

<https://croakey.org/researchintopolicy-expert-reflections-and-challenges-from-the-field/>

Williams, M. Putting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community priorities into policy: What will it take? (2018, May 13). *Croakey.org*. Retrieved from

<https://croakey.org/putting-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-community-priorities-into-policy-what-will-it-take/>

Williams, M., Conyer, M., Wells, R., & Dickes, A. (2018, Oct 5) Shifting the lens on psychology 2: Colonialism and practice (panel). 2SER.

<https://2ser.com/thinkhealth>

Williams, M. (2018, September 1) Shifting the lens on psychology 1: Indigenous mental health <https://2ser.com/thinkhealth>

Williams, M. (2018, 6 August) Success factors in Aboriginal youth services. Byron Bay FM Collaborations Hour. <https://www.bayfm.org/>

Williams, M. (2018, 26 July). Experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians with a disability. ABC The World Today.

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/adelaide/programs/worldtoday/>

Williams, M. (2017, September 8). *Role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregiving in the criminal justice system*. 2SER. <https://2ser.com/elders-helping-prevent-indigenous-re-incarceration/>



*Lisa Roberts, Merle Conyer and Mark Ragg at the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Conference. Girra Maa has worked with each separately on media projects (Living Data, decolonising psychology podcast and Croakey respectively); it was fun to introduce them. Photo by Megan Williams.*

## Looking forward



*Journey Tree by Worimi Land Council at Bulahdelah Mountain. Photo by Danielle Montgomery.*

As we indicated earlier, Girra Maa is a small team at the Graduate School of Health. We are the Indigenous Health Discipline with the task of weaving the Indigenous Graduate Attribute across six Master programs in health. Our work is wide ranging:

- Supporting staff to be more confident talking about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues, data, aspirations, rights and models of health care
- Writing material for curriculum
- Distributing information specific to Disciplines
- Guest lecturing
- Mapping curriculum
- Developing resources to guide future actions by GSH
- Supporting GSH students on their journey

- Influencing GSH policies and process
- Collaborating on research design
- Connecting to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

We all also have our own funded research, and community partnerships we are responsible to.

As with most research, funding is time-limited and depends on competitive tending. But 2018 saw good grants funded and not much room for more without new staff.

Our biggest challenge is only having funding for one team member out of the five after the end of 2019. This funding is vital to cover most of our teaching and IGA-related tasks.

Of course, without funding for teaching, we will not be able to help Disciplines meet accreditation or IGA requirements.

Thus, the onus is on GSH staff in 2019 to become as confident as possible in weaving Indigenous knowledges through their curriculum. Hence, our focus on creating opportunities for them to learn about Indigenous peoples, critically check their own perceptions, biases and concerns, and be confident using our resources and engaging with our diverse mobs, informed by human rights and ethics statements.

### **Ideas for future projects**

Despite only having funding for one out of five Girra Maa staff after 2019, we still have many ideas for expansion.

The following would meet needs that we regularly witness, and requests that we regularly receive:

#### *Student skills data base – for hire*

- We would like to see the development of a cultural knowledge and skills database of willing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to promote their skills and talents for hire, to be employed through UTS for various events.
- The database would provide a place for students to register their skills – for example if they play the didgeridoo or do weaving, dancing, painting, storytelling or guest lecturing.
- This could occur, for example, in collaboration with Jumbunna and UTS Business School. We would encourage a transparent, equitable and fair fee structure to hire students for their time, and opportunities for building skills in business operations and enterprise.

#### *Collaborating with Indigenous community organisations to utilise UTS student knowledge and resources to develop their capacity.*

One specific example and idea is working with Bimbadeen College in Cootamundra to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, culture and design into the restoration project of the Cootamundra Girls home site and facilities to become a campsite and college. Many Faculties and Schools of UTS, and UTS staff, students and associates could be involved, as cross-faculty, inter-disciplinary and multi-generational collaborations with a view for health people and environments in the future, and preserving cultural heritage.

Just two ideas of many that we have. We very much hope to continue Girra Maa and the Indigenous Health Discipline into the future, and in 2019 will also put our minds to sourcing further funding for staff. We will continue to seek to highlight the diversity of Indigenous peoples, and their/our leadership and solutions to major health and social issues.

Mandaang guwu, thank you, for the opportunities thus far.

Kind regards,

**Megan, Danielle, Jack, Ellen and Josie**



*Babaayn Aboriginal Corporation banner at 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Australia's Parliamentary Apology to the Stolen Generations. Photo by Danielle Montgomery.*

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