

Warrigunya (Warriors' Home) On Country Housing



We pay our respects to the Gunaikurnai people, the Traditional custodians of the land where Warrigunya stands



Highlights of Warrigunya's 1st Year

The achievements of the residents, learning, gaining confidence and self assurance.

- The 5 Art Workshops that Ray has successfully run, each time becoming more confident and organised.
- The peace and serenity at Warrigunya's beautiful site with resident kangaroos, bunjils and ducks
- Learning and growing every day – it has been a steep learning curve for staff and has tested our trust in each other and our resilience in ways we could never have imagined.
- Grant funding has allowed us to spend time getting the gym set up, veggie gardens established, fencing project underway and the solar project completed, which we will officially open in a few moments.
- The ongoing effort of our founding Elders – Uncle Alan and Auntie Tracey who have gone the extra mile for years in order to build this for their people. I am humbled and honoured to have the opportunity to assist them in bringing the vision to reality. They are truly exceptional people. Thank you both for maintaining a culturally safe space for us all. I hope that your contribution is always remembered and respected.



Is It Working?

- Yes it is! For the majority of our residents it has been a positive experience around living a different way, learning, creating, getting medical assistance and financial advice where needed.
- Only one of our 9 residents has returned to jail; the others are still out of the system which is heartening.
- Everyone's needs are different so what they get from Warrigunya differs from person to person.
- Our staff walk beside the men in a respectful way on their journey



Our Staff

We have one full time staff member – Kathy Minchin who has been with us since before we opened and does an amazing job!

Ray Young is our Cultural/Art Mentor and in charge of grounds/workshop area and maintenance.

Virgil Tirris and Uncle Kel Atkinson are our most recent employees doing some night and weekend work and we are very pleased to have them with us.

I have a dual role as director and Executive Officer and am in charge of finances, HR, Marketing, etc.

During the year we employed 7 Aboriginal staff, 6 of them with lived experience.

We paid \$137K in casual wages.

That is money going directly back into Aboriginal homes and something we are very proud of.



How much did it cost?

- Running costs for our first year are approximately \$500K.
- For the last financial year \$633K came in and \$586 K went out however some of that was special grants for one off projects.
- The bulk of our expenditure is for staffing costs. Approximately \$420K for Salaries/Super/Workcover to have at least one staff member on site 24/7.



How much did we save the system?

- If we work on the theory that if Warrigunya wasn't in operation, our 9 residents would return to prison soon after release ...
 - We have saved the system \$434,376 in prison costs alone.
 - Being our first year we have had an average occupancy rate of 50%.
 - If all 4 units were full for the 12 months the saving to the prison system would be \$772,224.
 - There are many other savings such as reduction in crime levels and the associated time and costs to the Police and Courts.



One Warrigunya Story

J was only with us for – 1 month following his release from prison. This was a first for J. Incarcerated many times since a young boy, he had always gone for the drugs and the same pattern when released and was soon back in prison.

He proudly announced after being with us for 2 weeks, “this is the longest I’ve gone coming out of prison without taking drugs. Im sick of that life, I’m too old for it now. This time is going to be different. Im not telling my kids I’m out yet. I want to make sure I can stay off them before I get their hopes up – I’ve done it too many times before.”

J was in constant phone contact with his ex but deliberately decided not to contact his old friends – they weren’t friends when he was in prison, never visited. After a few weeks he visited his ex for the weekend. She could see he was different. The following weekend he was ready to return to her and a different life on the outside.



Looking Forward To

- Expanding our accommodation from 4 to 7!!

We heard some good news from the Aboriginal Community Infrastructure Fund today (19/6/26) about funding for a demountable accommodation unit to sit parallel to the unbuilt wing. It will contain 3 bedrooms with ensuites so we will be able to accommodate 7 men at Warrigunya!

We also received the funding for an artist studio and our cultural circle 😊

- Our second year of operation
- Securing funding to cover our operational costs or getting a marketing or business plan in place for a social enterprise.
- Delivering the REAL (Reconnection Employment And Learning) Program in Fulham Prison for the next 4 years
- Completing the rest of our Pelican



Special Projects – Fencing & Solar Panels

- Fencing the back half of the block for stock
 - We are currently erecting an electric fence so we can keep a few cattle to keep the long grass down in the area we aren't currently using. This is courtesy of an \$18K grant from Sisters of Charity
- Solar Panels and Batteries
 - our building has been well designed with the highest energy saving ratings which is reflected in a relatively low electricity bill of \$6.5K for the year. This will be eliminated from now on as we switch over to solar panels and batteries. Supplied and Fitted by Daniel Gold of Gilded Electrical and funds supplied by DEECA's Neighbourhood Batteries program for Aboriginal communities. We intend to purchase an electric vehicle so we can also cut down on fuel expenses.



We have so many people to thank for
helping! **Warrigunya**

Over the past 4 years there have been many who have recognized the importance of what Warrigunya is doing and have extended help in many forms – THANK YOU!

- ✓ **Equity Trustees** provided \$600K through The Truby & Florence Williams Charitable Trust to fund our first year of operation. Without this funding we could not have begun operating. Thank You!!

Participant experience at Warrigunya

1. Intake

In prison and/or community:

- Learn about the program
- Meet with Warrigunya staff
- Submit EOI
- EOI assessment
- Intake process completed

2. Orientation

- Settle-in and test fit
- Clothes, phone, IT
- Health check
- Meet board, support workers and staff
- Rules, roles and responsibilities
- Elders/mentor

3. Build plan

- Assess needs
- Develop goals
- Commit to plan
- Monitor/review plan

4. Action the plan

Link resident to support services

5. Participate in programs

Heal and connect to culture

SEWB/ Healing program (cultural)

- Behaviour change program
- Connection to country/ culture activities
- Elders
- Yarning Circles
- Recreational outings

Art/craft programs

- TAFE delivery
- Adult education
- Local artists
- The Torch where relevant

Build personal skills

Training programs

- Life skills
- Resume writing
- Financial literacy
- General education

6. Exit transition

- Warrigunya support self-initiated transition to longer term, secure housing
- 6-month follow-up
- Supported to engage/volunteer with Warrigunya
- Economic independence (social enterprise, business, employment)



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- ✓ **ACSO** have, applied for the funds, auspiced the build and walked alongside us through the ups and downs of the journey since mid 2020
- ✓ **Homes Victoria** granted \$3M for the first stage of the build
- ✓ **Woor Dungin** gave us advice about finances and invited us to On Country events which led to meeting many supportive people and organisations and securing Operational funding.
- ✓ **Heartwood Investments** leased us 20 acres of land for 50 years for \$50 at Darriman.
- ✓ **Preschem Investments** donated a laptop, set up our website and hosted it for 3 years.
- ✓ **Ramahyuck, Gegac, Leah, Traralgon Neighbourhood house, Simon Anderson Consultants, Wellington Shire and Kilmany Church** have all given us space for meetings and gatherings over the past 4 years.
- ✓ **Desh Balasubramaniam, Ondru**, assisted with Strategic Planning at the very beginning



Thank You for Helping **Warrigunya**

- ✓ **NIAA** gave \$30K for furniture for accommodation
- ✓ **Gandel Foundation** gave us the funds to purchase a generator.
- ✓ **DDFH** funded consultants (\$150K) to consult community and stakeholders and produce a report which covers aspects of how Warrigunya will operate. **Glawac** auspiced these funds.
- ✓ **Sunrise Rotary Club** in Bairnsdale gave us a 40ft shipping container and \$8K for office setup
- ✓ Jo Porter's Collaborative Evaluation Unit at **Federation Uni** undertook a baseline study for free
- ✓ **St Vincents** donated food vouchers for our BBQ at the Block in December and pledged to be longterm partners
- ✓ **Office Choice** in Sale donated a **printer/scanner/copier** for our office
- ✓ **Russell Jaffe and Judith Friedlin from Community First Development** helped us with Strategic and Financial Planning
- ✓ **Creative Victoria** gave us \$76K to finish our workshop and purchase equipment



Thank You for Helping **Warrigunya**

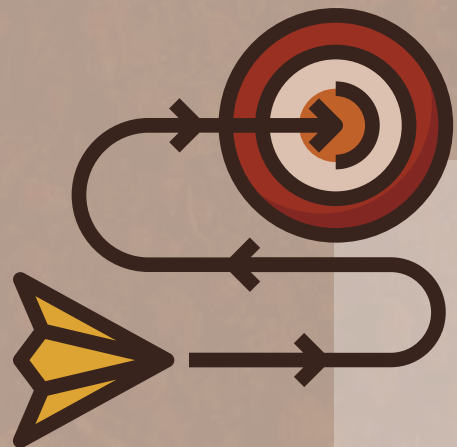
- ✓ **Andrews Foundation** gave us \$40K towards our Workshop and large tank.
- ✓ **FRRR** gave us a grant for a tractor and slasher
- ✓ **Uniting** have assisted with advice, meeting space and auspicing a grant application.
- ✓ **Dhelk Dja** gave the project funds to run 4 x Art Workshops and an Elders Visiting program
- ✓ **Highways and Byways** gave us \$6K to set up our Veggie Gardens
- ✓ **Thomas Crosbie** assisted with technology expertise
- ✓ **Australian Communities Foundation** facilitated a \$6K grant from Pollinate.
- ✓ **Radial Timber** gave \$20K for our Workshop/Artspace and a Car
- ✓ **Star of the South** windfarm gave \$20K for our Workshop /Artspace
- ✓ Mel Field Pimm of **VACRO** produced a distilled version of our program after leading a workshop in 2023 at Ramahyuck in Sale



Thank You for Helping **Warrigunya**

Since we began operation:

- ✓ **DEECA** gave us the funding for solar panels and batteries
- ✓ **Sisters of Charity** gave us \$18K for fencing for stock
- ✓ **Alinta** gave us \$5K for a ride on mower
- ✓ **CFD** gave us \$5K for motivational speakers
- ✓ **Brockhoff** gave us \$30K which we used for operational funds
- ✓ **Vlad Postica Foundation** pledged \$20K for 5 years
- ✓ **IVAIS** provided funding for our Art Mentoring Program for one year
- ✓ **Bunnings** provided paint for the container, materials and labour to build veggie boxes and donated a vast amount of tools, wheelbarrow, gazebo and BBQ
- ✓ **ACIF** \$291K for demountables and cultural circle
- ✓ **Anglican Parish of Maffra** has donated regularly over the life of the project



The vision

Warrigunya's vision is to provide a collaborative, holistic model of post release support, from a base of safe and stable housing, for Aboriginal men to enable them to readjust to life and to give them the best chance of becoming financially independent, culturally strong and not re-enter prison.



How much funding do we have to operate next year?

- For the coming year we have
 - \$20K from Vlad Postica Foundation
 - \$140K from REAL program
- The building and assets belong to Warrigunya, lease is paid up for the next 45 years
- We continue to liaise with NIAA, Dept of Justice and DFFH
- Options to use volunteers, begin a social enterprise, have a live in caretaker rather than overnight staff are being considered.
- Efforts will be increased to attract donations, maybe you can help?
- Donate now button on our website if you would like to make a donation