



Weenthunga Health Network Inc

2017-2018 Annual Report

President's Report

I was honoured to be re-elected as the President of the Weenthunga Health Network, and to work as part of our amazing Committee of Management. My colleagues bring a variety of valuable knowledge and experience to contribute to the Committee's work. We work together to set the strategic direction, strategic goals, the financial plans and the policies of the Weenthunga Health Network and to monitor its operations.

We value Weenthunga's model of working two-way, as well as the commitment to being First Australian led. The small operational team is led by our Executive Officer Lin Oke and our Manager Programs Steff Armstrong, who work two-way – sharing their knowledge and experience to broaden and strengthen their decision-making and leadership – and practice a model for others to follow.

In August 2017, Victorian Aboriginal Health Education Summit was held jointly by Weenthunga and VACCHO. It brought together university stakeholders to discuss ways to improve teaching of Aboriginal health courses. This event was a fantastic achievement for Weenthunga – the Committee commend all staff and participants involved. Since the Summit Weenthunga has prepared a report, and created an online network for Summit participants to continue collaborating. The Committee and I are excited to see the leadership Weenthunga is taking in this area.

I look forward to the year ahead, over-sighting the work of the Weenthunga Health Network to reduce inequities in First Australian and Australian health in Victoria through pursuit of its two key objectives.

**Brenda McDermott
President**



Brenda McDermott, President

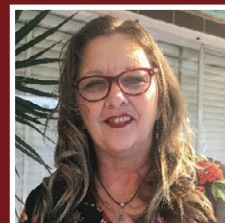
Weenthunga Committee of Management

Following last year's AGM, Melissa Deacon-Crouch and Sam Paxton were re-elected, and three new Committee members Jacqueline Watson, Liz Cameron and Sue Tuitupou also joined the Committee of Management. The Office Bearers were elected: Brenda McDermott, President; Jacqueline Watkins, Vice President; and Sue Tuitupou, Treasurer. Kevan Horder and Terori Hareko-Samios did not re-stand for the Committee, and we thank them for their contributions during their time on the Committee.



**Brenda McDermott
President**

Health role: Family Violence Group Worker, VACCA, Gippsland
First Australian: Palawa (Tasmania)



**Jacquie Watkins
Vice President**

Health Role – Manager, Aboriginal Health Policy and Planning, Western Health
First Australian: Jingili/Mudburra (NT)



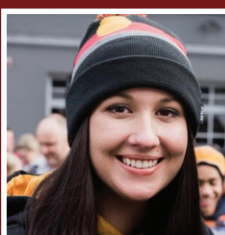
**Sue Tuitupou
Treasurer**

Health Role – Aboriginal Advanced Case Manager, Community Correctional Services Bendigo
First Australian: Barkindji/Kurnu (NSW)



**Professor Liz Cameron
Committee Member**

Health Role - Director of Institute of Koorie Education, Deakin University
First Australian: Dharug (NSW)



**Sam Paxton
Committee Member**

Health Role - Digital Work and Study Specialist at headspace,
First Australian: Waywurru (Victoria)



**Melissa Deacon-Crouch
Committee Member**

Health role: Senior Lecturer; Nursing & Midwifery La Trobe University
Australian



**David Menzies
Committee Member**

Health role: Chronic Disease Programs Manager and Team Lead, Health Care Homes, South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network
Australian



**Carol Mioduchowski
Committee Member**

Health role: Podiatrist, North Area Health.
Manager – Barwon Health Community Health and Rehabilitation Services
Australian

Executive Officer's Report

The 2017-2018 financial year has been a productive one for Weenthunga. We have been fortunate enough to secure Government funding for secretariat services for the first time. I would like to thank the Minister for Health, the Honourable Jill Hennessey MP, and the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing branch for their support. The funding has allowed us to run our core operations, whilst we expand programs to meet our objectives.

We are very grateful to Minister Hennessey for her strong support. At the Victorian Aboriginal Health Education Summit we held in August she said: "I want to compliment Weenthunga on their tremendous work and great spirit of collaboration. Their mission to improve the cultural knowledge and the working relationships between Victorian health practitioners and Aboriginal peoples and their communities – is absolutely vital."

We are also very grateful to have secured a recurrent grant from the Ian Potter Foundation for the Bendigo Girls Resilience Program, which will allow us to better support the amazing young women in our Program. In June 2018 we received advice of funding from the Department of Education and Training (DET) to expand the Girls Resilience Program to a new location in Victoria. I would like to thank DET for their support and for this exciting opportunity to assist more young First Australian women into health careers.

As leaders of the organisation, Steff and I would like to thank our small and dedicated group of (very) part-time staff: Arkeria, Sarah, Luisa, Sue and Phil. We are very grateful for our committed Committee of Management who generously take time out of their busy lives to contribute on the Weenthunga Committee.

Lin Oke
Executive Officer



Minister Hennessey and Lin Oke

Manager Programs Report

This year Lin and I have worked together two-way as leaders of Weenthunga to secure funding, and represent Weenthunga.

Our Program in Bendigo has grown and been strengthened. We hosted two governors from the Ian Potter Foundation in Bendigo and discussed the benefits of the Program for the Bendigo community with some of the local network of supporters. In March we held a wonderful Women's Talk Health Day. I continue to be very proud of the alumni of the program. During this year a number of the senior students have spoken up as young leaders. I wish to particularly thank Georgia Radford, Charmaine Gray, Skye Anderson and Shania Charvat.

We celebrated the generosity of Meg Irwin, who has provided new bursary funding for girls studying health courses.

I am also excited to be involved in planning for the expansion of the Girls Resilience Program to new locations. I am looking forward to sharing learnings from our success in Bendigo and help to foster two new programs.

As Weenthunga grows, I have reflected on the continued importance of working two-way and providing space for learning within our organisation. We have a unique 'active reconciliation' model. As Weenthunga expands, we will continue to value the importance of relationships at the centre of our organisation.

Stephanie Armstrong
Manager Programs



Steff Armstrong, Georgia Radford, Lin Oke

Governance and Operational Model

Weenthunga's governance is one of First Australian leadership, whilst emphasising First Australian and Australian collaboration. First Australians are the decision-makers as they collaborate and share with the Australians in Weenthunga. The Committee of Management will always comprise a majority of First Australians, and the position of President can only be held by a First Australian. The model underpins Weenthunga's operations, as we acknowledge the value of combining First Australians' knowledge, experience and skills in working with First Australian organisations, communities, health services and people, with the Australians' knowledge, experience and skills in the health system and services, and organisational management.

Weenthunga's Aims and Objectives

Weenthunga Health Network aims to contribute to strategies to improve the health and wellbeing of First Australians in Victoria. To achieve this aim, Weenthunga's primary focus is to contribute to:

- Improving the uptake of health careers by First Australian school leavers; and
- Improving the knowledge, competencies and collaboration of the Victorian health workforce working with First Australians, better equipping health workers to provide culturally responsive services.

Weenthunga Staff

Weenthunga's part-time staff work flexibly and make the most of their very small hours of employment.

The Weenthunga staffing team (average EFTs shown) in July 2017 to June 2018 comprised:

- Lin Oke, Executive Officer (0.6)
- Steff Armstrong, Manager Programs (0.6)
- Sarah Stoller, Operations Manager (0.2)
- Arkeria Armstrong, Health and Education Support Manager (0.1)
- Luisa Hope, Communications Manager (0.1)
- Sue Bray, Senior Project Officer (0.2)
- Phil Huntington, Finance Manager (0.2).

Weenthunga's Members



Steff Armstrong and Desley Slade
Bendigo Health Day 2018

Weenthunga's membership has grown steadily to 386 by the end of June 2018 – with 26.4% of members being First Australians. This is a significant indicator of value when compared to the percentage in Victoria's health workforce, which is estimated to be about 4%.

Weenthunga's members come from a great diversity in health roles, including: Aboriginal Health Project Management; Aboriginal Health Research; Aboriginal Hospital Liaison; Audiology; Chiropractic; Community Development; Counselling; Dental Therapy; Diabetes Education; Dietetics; Exercise Physiology; Fitness Training; General Practice; Health Education; Health Services Management; Health Promotion; Indigenous Healthy Lifestyle Work; Medical Specialty; Medicine; Mental Health Work; Midwifery; Neuropsychology; Nursing; Nutrition; Occupational Therapy; Optometry; Osteopathy; Pharmacy; Physiotherapy; Podiatry; Public Health; Psychiatry; Psychology; Social Work; Speech Pathology. Our members work in a variety of sectors such as Aboriginal Health Services, public and private hospitals, dental services, and community health centres, schools, universities.

Victorian Aboriginal Health Education Summit

On 7 August 2017, Weenthunga led the Aboriginal Health Education Summit, with support from VACCHO and with funding from the Victorian Government. Held at Victoria University, the Summit attracted the attendance of over 80 academics and health professionals from across Australia. The aim of the Summit was to contribute to improving Aboriginal health outcomes in Victoria by strengthening the quality of Aboriginal health education and curricula. The wealth of knowledge and experience on the day contributed to fascinating conversation about the problems faced in achieving this goal, and ways to move in the right direction. The Hon Jill Hennessy MP, Minister for Health, opened the Summit with words about the barriers faced in changing health curricula, and how to overcome these barriers. Jill Gallagher AO, then CEO of VACCHO, followed the Minister to speak of the importance of change in health education, in order to have culturally safe graduates and culturally safe workplaces.

With the direction of star facilitator Greg Phillips, panelists discussed the need for changing attitudes, more resources for teaching and learning, and Aboriginal leadership and involvement in education reformation and delivery. The afternoon session saw participants break out into groups, to brainstorm strategies to achieve positive goals. Summit participants agreed to the proposed creation of an online network to facilitate discussion and maintain connection between the participants. The Victorian Aboriginal Health Education Network (VAHEN) has been developed and built on throughout the year.

From all at Weenthunga Health Network and VACCHO, we thank our speakers and panellists on the day; N'arweet Carolyn Briggs, Hon Jill Hennessy MP, Jill Gallagher AO, Kevan Horder, Dawn Bessarab, Sue Jones, Donna Murray, Ali Drummond, Candice McKenzie, Joanna Zubrzycki, Shawana Andrews, Liz Cameron, Auntie Kerrie Doyle, Petah Atkinson, Professor Mark Rose, Professor Andrew Gunstone, and Professor Christine Bennet. Special thanks to Associate Professor Greg Phillips for his fantastic facilitation of the Summit.

The full report on the Summit can be found on Weenthunga's website.



Lin Oke, Kevan Horder, David Menzies,
Donna Murray and Steff Armstrong



Steff Armstrong, Kevan Horder,
N'Arweet Carolyn Briggs, Greg Phillips



Summit participants



Jill Gallagher AO, CEO VACCHO

Highlights of Weenthunga's Work

Weenthunga Health Day

On 2 March 2018, 25 Year 9-12 students from five schools in the Bendigo region attended the Weenthunga Women's Talk Health Day. Led by Aunty Steff Armstrong, the day started with visits to St John of God Hospital, the new Aboriginal Liaison Unit at Bendigo Hospital and Bendigo & District Aboriginal Cooperative. The students heard about the many services provided by these organisations, and the various professions and health roles they could choose to pursue on completion of their schooling.

The young women were inspired by stories from women who had challenged others' expectations and taken various paths to become health professionals. The students were encouraged to draw on their identity as young Aboriginal women as a source of power and resilience.

The afternoon at La Trobe University included presentations from professionals and panel discussions with Weenthunga alumni now at university, inspiring the students to find their own path and use the support available to them. The day wound up with three activities shared by Aunties Gabby Gamble, Kath Coff and Steff Armstrong, encouraging the young women to see their inner beauty to draw strength from traditional stories, teachings, songs, dances and the land.

That evening, students and parents attended a dinner at the Reservoir Hotel. Three students received Weenthunga scholarships sponsored by St. John of God Hospital to support them in their studies: Oliver Darroch (Year 12), Takeetah Charvat (Year 10/11) and Zali Cohen (Year 10/11).

Weenthunga acknowledges and thanks the Health Day presenters: Banok Rind; Desley Slade; Dave Kerr and Melissa Silk; Steph Blyth; Jacqui Watkins; Rachel Muir; Kath Coff; Mishel McMahon and panellists: Shania; Maya; Michellie; Skye and Morgan.



Phil Bretherton, Takeetah Charvat, Olivia Darroch, Zali Cohen, Steff Armstrong



Students, presenters, supporters enjoying the feather activity guided by a local Elder



Steff Armstrong and Tashara Roberts participate in group activity

Working for a Healthy Future

Weenthunga takes an Aboriginal holistic view of health, valuing Aboriginal knowledge from the outset by 'seeing the whole self' with a much more integrated approach to health and wellbeing than that most commonly underpins mainstream health services in Australia. This approach is supported by research into the social determinants of health.

Social determinants of health are socio-economic and cultural factors which evidence shows impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. We know that lack of education, employment and job security are important social determinants of health. The Girls Resilience Program works to address these key social determinants of health. The Girls Resilience Program builds upon the resilience of the young women in the program by fostering in them a stronger sense of their Aboriginal identity. There is growing evidence that Indigenous cultures and languages are protective factors against health and wellbeing risks. Connection with culture, education and employment are significant not only to building resilience in the young Aboriginal women in our Program, but also to help these women lead healthy lives.

We also know that by investing in women, you invest in the whole community. Research shows that educating girls has a multiplier effect. Better-educated women tend to be healthier, and provide better health care to their children. Thus our Program contributes to improved intergenerational health outcomes.



Group activity – Bendigo Health Day 2018

Bendigo Network Meeting

On 27 November, the local Bendigo network met at La Trobe campus in the shade of the ironbarks. It was well attended with 22 participants from TAFE, BSSC, La Trobe University staff, Bendigo Health, Education Department as well as community members and students both secondary and tertiary.

Key points of the discussions were setting dates for 2018 which included the annual "Girls Health Careers Day", which is now funded. Introductions amongst the group highlighted the many individual achievements over the year. We celebrated the generosity of Meg Irwin, who has provided funds for a new bursary for girls studying health courses in a tertiary institution. The commitment to strengthen the network and for other organisations to extend and build new ideas led to enthusiasm to work together in 2018.



Participants at the Bendigo Local Support Network meeting

Ian Potter Foundation

We are very pleased to announce that Weenthunga Health Network has been approved for a grant from the Ian Potter Foundation. The grant will span over three years, and will support and help to grow the Girls Resilience Program in Bendigo.

Steff, Lin, and members of the Bendigo network of students and supporters had the opportunity to meet with two highly respected governors from the Ian Potter Foundation in Bendigo to discuss the Program and its benefits for the Bendigo community.

The Weenthunga staff and Committee would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the organisations who wrote letters of support –Phillip Bretherton of St John of God Bendigo; Tashara Roberts of Bendigo TAFE; Acting Principal Linda Lyons of Bendigo Senior Secondary College; as well as Shirley Godwin and Kath Coff who wrote testimonials of Weenthunga's work. We would also like to thank the students, families and local supporters who, at short notice, joined Lin, Sue, Arkeria and Steff at the meeting with the governors to show their support and share their thoughts. Their presence and their words helped the governors to hear and understand (the meaning of Weenthunga in Woiwurrung) the importance of the Girls Resilience Program. A huge thank you to Susan Pickles, Melissa Deacon-Crouch, Maya Coff, Shania Charvat, Michellie Charvat, Sam Charvat, Mishel McMahon, Charmaine Gray, Georgia Radford, Emily Harper, Kate Booth, Kerry & Kait Rowland and Sue Tuitupou for your presence and invaluable involvement in Weenthunga's success.



Girls Resilience Program participants and staff meet the Ian Potter Foundation board governors

State Award for Weenthunga Girls Program

Each year Aboriginal Victoria Department of Premier and Cabinet bring together local people who participate in their local network groups. The Local Aboriginal Networks (LAN) connect with many local groups to support development in 6 priority areas.

At the state LAN Forum held on 22 and 23 November, the Weenthunga Girls Resilience Program, led by Steff Armstrong and supported by members and others in Bendigo, was recognised for their efforts to **“support young people”**. The award was a proud achievement to be recognised at a local and state level.



Steff Armstrong receives the Bendigo Local Aboriginal Network Award on behalf of Weenthunga

Weenthunga's Financial Supporters 1 July 2017 - 30 June 2018

Personal donations from members and others amounted to \$3,154 in this financial year and was put towards various operational costs.

Scholarship and bursary monies (\$32,000) to encourage and support secondary and tertiary students in the Girls Resilience Program were provided by:

- Towards a Just Society Fund (funds retained from previous year)

The Towards a Just Society Fund

A sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation



- St John of God Bendigo



- Meg Irwin (a very generous Weenthunga member)

Generous contributions amounting to \$147,500 from our supporters in the following **Philanthropic organisations** has enabled Weenthunga to continue to work towards our key objectives.

Lord Mayors Charitable Fund



Australian Communities Foundation sub funds:

- BB & A Miller Fund
- Sunning Hill Fund



The Ian Potter Foundation



The **Victorian Department of Health and Human Services** supported Weenthunga Health Network in its core operations and expansion of the Girls Resilience Program.



Health
and Human
Services

Treasurer's Report

In 2017 - 2018 Weenthunga continued to pursue its two key objectives whilst staying within its limited budget. As in previous years, this year Weenthunga's resources have been used predominately on staff which underpins the strong emphasis on relationships.

The sources of funding for Weenthunga have changed significantly this year. Weenthunga is very appreciative of the funding grant from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services for core secretariat expenses. Just before the end of the financial year Weenthunga was advised that it would be receiving a grant from the Department of Education and Training to expand our Girls Resilience Program to another Victorian location. We are very grateful for the support from the Victorian Government, which will allow us to continue our essential operations and provide an opportunity to expand our evidence-based model. We appreciate the support of Ministerial and departmental staff in both departments who have worked to assist us in obtaining these grants.

Weenthunga also received a recurrent grant from the Ian Potter Foundation for the Bendigo Girls Resilience Program. We are enormously thankful for this grant which will sustain our successful program.

We would also like to thank our members who have given personal donations to support Weenthunga financially and we appreciate your assistance to achieve our vision. This year we are particularly appreciative for the large donation made by Meg Irwin, which allowed for the establishment of the Meg Irwin Bursary.

The organisation targets our expenditure to achieving successful outcomes. Weenthunga had retained earnings of \$178,230 for 2017-2018, as some funds were received late in the year and will be well utilised in 2018-2019. We will continue to pursue other funding avenues to maintain our sustainability in the longer term. There are no outstanding liabilities for Weenthunga.

I would like to thank Phil Huntington for capably managing our finances and financial reporting, and Lin Oke for her oversight of finances and the operations of Weenthunga.

Sue Tuitupou
Treasurer



Sue Tuitupou, Treasurer Weenthunga Health Network

Note: a full copy of the audited financial statements, provided at the AGM, are available on request from members.

Meg Irwin Bursary

In August 2017, Weenthunga was able to launch a new Bursary scheme to complement the Girls Resilience Program, thanks to a generous donation from Weenthunga member Meg Irwin. The Meg Irwin Bursary has been made available to post-secondary First Australian female health and allied health students, known to Weenthunga Health Network and its allies. The scheme is intended to financially assist these students who are facing financial hardship, so they can achieve their education goals.

Since its launch, the Meg Irwin Bursary has financially assisted three students in their health education journeys.



Meg Irwin

Prudent financial management strategy of the Weenthunga Health Network

As there is no certainty in the level of funding obtained each year, Weenthunga endeavours to prudently manage its expenditure to ensure there are sufficient funds retained in reserves to meet core operating costs for 12 months ahead.

As can be seen in the comparative figures for this and the last financial year, Weenthunga has been able to increase its staffing whilst maintaining other expenses. The retained earnings partially reflect that some funds were received late in the year.

Financial Report	June 2018	June 2017
Income	339,013	131,259
Expenditure		
Administration	25,860	29,112
Occupancy	2,541	7,916
Promotional expenses	656	1,700
Project activities	15,048	17,509
Staff expenses	176,877	113,534
	221,437	169,771
Deficit	117,576	(38,512)
Retained earnings	178,230	61,616

The year ahead 2018-2019

Continuing to Strengthen Weenthunga's Capacity and Effectiveness in 2018-2019
In 2018-2019 Weenthunga aims to increase its effectiveness through:

- Commencing planning for the new Girls Resilience Program in either Ballarat or Geelong, including recruitment of the Program Leader
- Pursuing strategies to establish a Girls Resilience Program in the the North East of Melbourne
- Planning for transitions in the leadership of Weenthunga
- Pursuing key strategies and solutions identified at the Summit
- Growing our membership
- Gaining core funding from Government
- Growing and building on our partnership with VACCHO.



Weenthunga Health Network Inc
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Collingwood 3066

ABN: 95 615 678 762
Weenthunga Health Network Inc has ATO Income Tax Exemption and DGR status.

Weenthunga means 'hear / understand' in Woiwurrung, language of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation

Weenthunga artwork by Shawana Andrews 2010: Connecting Through Conversation: the flames represent the campfire, a focal point for sharing knowledge and listening. The circles represent communities, which have an abundance of knowledge to share.

First Australians is our preferred term for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People – regardless of where they live and avoiding the implication of non-entities for others.

Graphic Design: Dixon Patten Jnr (Yorta Yorta, Gunnai) - Bayila Creative
www.bayila.com.au