



Weenthunga Health Network Inc

Annual Report
2021-2022



Corrina Eccles Welcome to Wadawurrung Country and Smoking Ceremony at our 2022 Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Big Sis Retreat

Weenthunga Artwork



Balance by Shawana Andrews 2020 ©



Palawa woman, Artist and Weenthunga Member
Shawana Andrews

This image represents balance across time, place and people. It shows the timeless anchor of mother earth with the 4 principles of relationships, respect, reciprocity and responsibility embedded within. The fish show a river of movement of community through time, from past to future, demonstrating connectedness and leadership. They also show diversity across communities that builds strength from its networks and two-way learning and working. The spiraling fish moving from the collective display strength and bravery in their leadership, leading through education and the support of generations.

The Ancestors in possum skin cloaks stand together strong beneath the ancient trees and Elders, showing the way. The moths, humble creatures who show great adaptability and resilience, represent women as they move across Country and water, linking time and place through knowledge and understanding. They show great aptitude as they emerge from the earth, move through the community, learning from their Ancestors and Elders. They create a path that others can follow and finally come together, drawing on old and new knowledge in their shared vision of First Nations health.

Weenthunga Logo

Connecting through Conversation by Shawana Andrews 2010 ©

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.

Weenthunga Health Network Inc.

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Weenthunga Health Network Inc has ATO Income Tax Exemption and DGR status.

Photo Acknowledgments: We acknowledge Jacinta Keefe, from [Jacinta Keefe Photography](https://www.jacinta-keefe.com.au) and the team at [Little Rocket](https://www.little-rocket.com.au), for capturing moments and memories along Weenthunga's journey. We gratefully share some of these photos in our 2021-2022 Annual Report.

Front Cover Image: Jacinta Keefe (Wiradjuri)



President's Report

We are pleased to share Weenthunga's 2021-2022 Annual Report with you, featuring our work over the past year and acknowledging all those who've contributed; our Members working in health and health education, young women who've connected in our *Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Spaces*, First Nations people and communities, allies and collaborators, our financial supporters, Committee and staff.

This year has been yet another big year, so firstly I want to express my gratitude to you all for continuing to pave the way in First Nations health. Over the last year, many of us have had to balance working within the healthcare environments where COVID-19 restrictions remain and reconnecting to the community. I want to acknowledge how difficult it is to juggle these extremes and share how proud I am of each and everyone one of you. I know first hand the challenges that this brings.

In 2021-2022, Weenthunga has continued to back First Nations young women on their health, wellbeing and healing career journeys. The easing of pandemic restrictions and impacts has allowed us to reconnect in person again, and it has been a highlight to gather at our *Yarning Up Strong Retreat* and *Big Sis Retreat* on Wadawurrung Country and our *Weenthunga Committee and Staff Retreat* on Wurundjeri Country in the first half of 2022.

We're excited to have secured additional funding for 2022-2023 to back the wellbeing of First Nations women working in health (many are already our Members), who shouldered a huge load throughout the pandemic in addition to their roles caring for their families and communities. This funding enables care for our carers, offering First Nations women in health access to nourishment and healing, which will prevent burnout and exhaustion, contribute to health workforce retention, and most importantly add to the wellbeing of these women who contribute to holding up our communities.

I'd like to acknowledge Weenthunga Full Members Georgia Radford (Vice President), Glenn Milliken (Treasurer) and Kevan Horder, and Associate Members Sowmya Rao, Katherine Monson and David Menzies for their continued contribution and commitment to the organisation through their governance roles on our Committee of Management in 2021-2022.

I'd like to acknowledge Weenthunga's staff for their work this year. I'd especially like to recognise Aunty Steff Armstrong and Lin Oke, who finished their roles in June 2022. Lin has been involved with Weenthunga since she and her friend and OT colleague Kelli McIntosh established the organisation in 2010, as Executive Officer for many years and more recently in the voluntary role of Executive Assistant to Aunty Steff. Aunty Steff has been connected with Weenthunga since 2012, when she established the young women's program, and in recent years was Weenthunga's inaugural Aunty. Our *Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Spaces*, *Aunty's Voice* and our 4R's of Relationships, Respect, Reciprocity and Responsibility carry on Aunty Steff's legacy at Weenthunga.

I'd like to express our ongoing gratitude for the work of ACCHOs across the state. Their leadership and work is vital for the wellbeing of our communities. We're proud to be part of the VACCHO Network as an Associate Member and we'd also like to acknowledge VACCHO for their representation and support of this Network.

This year we have commenced a review of Weenthunga's Rules as part of our commitment to securing the future of the organisation. This is an opportunity for conversations with you, our Members, reflecting on self-determination, valuing and practising two-way working and the language we use. This is a historic opportunity for our organisation, and we're pleased to be working with Terri Janke and Company Lawyers in this process.

We acknowledge and appreciate our Members, working towards our shared objectives of health justice for First Nations people, and are excited about the opportunities to deepen our engagement with you and our collective impact over the coming year.



Tya Fry - Gunditjmarra and Wotjobaluk
Weenthunga President



Georgia Radford, Weenthunga Vice President and Tya Fry, Weenthunga President, at our 2022 Weenthunga Staff and Committee Retreat on Wurundjeri Country

Weenthunga Committee of Management



Tya Fry
President

First Nations Member
Gunditjmara and Wotjobaluk

Occupational Therapist at the
Northern Hospital



Georgia Radford
Vice President

First Nations Member
Ngarrindjeri

Community Engagement
Coordinator at Satellite
Foundation



Glenn Milliken
Treasurer

First Nations Member
Kamilaroi

Physiotherapist at St Vincent's
Hospital Melbourne
Project Management Officer at
Telstra



Kevan Horder

First Nations Member
Kooma and Guamu

Ranger Field Services Officer at
Parks Victoria



Sowmya Rao

Associate Member

Audiologist at Royal Children's
Hospital and VACCHO



David Menzies

Associate Member

Head of PanSupport at Pancare



Katherine Monson

Associate Member

Social Worker at VAHS and
Orygen

Committee of Management Updates

At last year's Annual General Meeting, Full Members Kevan Horder and Glenn Milliken were re-elected to the Committee unopposed. They rejoined continuing Full Members Tya Fry and Georgia Radford and Associate Members Sowmya Rao, Katherine Monson and David Menzies. Former Committee Member and Vice President Mikaela Egan resigned from her position – we thank Mikaela for her contribution to the Weenthunga Committee. The Office Bearers were elected: Tya Fry as President, Georgia Radford as Vice President and Glenn Milliken as Treasurer.

Weenthunga's Aims and Objectives

Weenthunga contributes to health equity and justice for First Nations people in Victoria by:

- Growing and nourishing the First Nations health workforce.
- Leading transformational change in health and health education systems by advocating for First Nations-led spaces, anti-racism work, and embedding and valuing First Nations' knowledge and practice.
- Ensuring better understanding and practice of health professionals and organisations to improve experiences, care and outcomes for First Nations people and communities.
- Valuing and practicing two-way working.

Weenthunga History

Weenthunga (meaning 'hear/understand' in Woi wurrung) grew out of a First Nations community need for health equity. Inspired by the work of National Indigenous Health Associations (IAHA, CATSINaM, AIDA and NAATSIHWP) Weenthunga's contribution to progress this need was to convene a network which connected First Nations health professionals and Settler Australian health professionals who were demonstrating allyship in the space.

In 2010, following yarns with local Elders and community consultations, Weenthunga was established under the leadership of Kelli McIntosh, a proud Muruwari and Kooma woman, and the backing of Lin Oke. Kelli and Lin, both

Occupational Therapists, formed Weenthunga's first two-way team, with Kelli as President and Lin as Public Officer and Secretary. Two-way teams are integral to how we do business today.

In 2012, Aunty Steff Armstrong, a proud Gamilaraay and Bigambul woman, joined Weenthunga, forming a new two-way leadership team with Lin. Aunty Steff had an extensive background in education and established our Girls Resilience Program (now Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie spaces). Now at Weenthunga, we centre First Nations young women and women across all of our work. Aunty Steff also embedded the 4Rs at Weenthunga: Relationships, Respect, Reciprocity and Responsibility, which guide us in everything we do.

Country and people have held spaces we've created. Within these spaces, knowledge and stories have been shared and passed on. People come to these spaces with a lifetime of memories, experiences and connections. Because of relationships, each space has grown. Because of responsibility, each space and its impact continue.

Weenthunga's Members

Connecting health professionals and students who share our vision of health justice and who contribute to keeping Weenthunga's flames burning brightly.

In 2021-2022, Weenthunga welcomed 29 new Members. Our Members work across organisation's and within Aboriginal Health Services, public and private hospitals, community health centers and universities. Of our 463 active Members, 146 are Full Members, 288 are Associate Members, and 29 are Student Members.

Weenthunga's Members work in diverse health roles, including: Aboriginal Health Worker, Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer (AHLO), Audiology, Chiropractic, Chinese Medicine, Dentistry, Dietetics, Exercise Physiology, Health Education, Health Promotion, Medicine, Mental Health, Midwifery, Nursing, Nutrition, Occupational Therapy, Optometry, Osteopathy, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Podiatry, Public Health, Psychiatry, Psychology, Social Work and Speech Pathology.

Words of Gratitude for Aunty Steff and Lin

Aunty Steff and Lin finished up in their formal roles with Weenthunga in June 2022. Many of you will have your own memories and experiences of the impact of this dynamic duo, and here we share some of our own reflections in gratitude.

Aunty Steff has been connected with Weenthunga since 2012, when she established our young women's space, and in 2020 she became our inaugural Aunty. Aunty Steff's vision, wisdom and guidance has been integral to the journeys of many First Nations young women and their families; some of whom have been part of these spaces over the last 10 years. Aunty Steff brought the 4R's of Relationships, Respect, Reciprocity and Responsibility to Weenthunga, and they continue to inform all that we do. We're so grateful for Aunty Steff's love, zest, and deep commitment to relationships, and the enduring legacy she has left within Weenthunga.

Lin has been involved with Weenthunga since its

inception, as Public Officer and Secretary, then as Executive Officer for many years. More recently, Lin has been in a voluntary role as Executive Assistant to Aunty Steff. Lin's infamous determination (earning her the moniker of 'ankle-biter') contributed to many of our early achievements. Lin's commitment, including countless volunteer hours, diligence and organisational skills lay the foundations for Weenthunga to grow and flourish.

Together Aunty Steff and Lin secured philanthropic grants that enabled the establishment of the *Girls Resilience Program* (now *Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Spaces*), and subsequent government grants to underpin and further establish the organisation; joined the VACCHO network as an Associate Member; co-hosted with VACCHO the 2017 *Victorian Aboriginal Education Summit*, which resulted in the establishment of the *Victorian Aboriginal Health Education Network (VAHEN) Online*, and; developed our Membership base through communications and networking. We're appreciative of Aunty Steff and Lin for modelling and paving the way for two-way working at Weenthunga. Two-way working continues with three two-way teams now working at Weenthunga.



Aunty Steff Armstrong and Lin Oke at our 2021 Staff and Committee End-of-Year Celebration on Wurundjeri Country

Weenthunga Staff



The Weenthunga staffing team (average FTEs shown) in 2021-2022 comprised:

- Aunty Steff Armstrong, Gamilaraay and Bigambul, Weenthunga Aunty (0.6)
- Lin Oke, Executive Assistant to Aunty Steff Armstrong (volunteer)
- Sam Paxton, Waywurru, Durrong Ngulu (0.6) (maternity leave until August 2021)
- Erin McKinnon, Durrong Ngulu (0.6)
- Sarah Stoller, Operations Manager (0.2) (maternity leave until September 2021)
- Ashley Paxton, Waywurru, VAHENonline Leader (0.2)
- Danielle Amiet, VAHENonline Collaborator (0.2)
- Kylie Clarke, Gunditjmara, Wotjobaluk and Ngarrindjeri, Geelong Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Program Leader and Networked Community Project Officer (0.4) (until October 2021)
- Kylie Fox, Geelong Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Program Collaborator (0.4) (until October 2021)
- Arkeria Armstrong, Gamilaraay and Bigambul, Bendigo Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Program Leader (0.6)
- Miv Ollis, Bendigo Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Program Collaborator (0.4) (until September 2021)
- Canisha Clemmet-Kennedy, Trawlwoolway, Melbourne Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Program Leader (0.3)
- Aileen Traynor, Melbourne Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Program Collaborator (0.8)
- Tracey Paxton, Waywurru, Member Project Officer (casual)
- Rochelle Armstrong, Gamilaraay and Bigambul, Research/Communications/IT/Administration (casual)

To our outgoing staff - Aunty Steff, Lin, Kylie C, Kylie F, Miv and Rochelle - your contributions to Weenthunga have been profound and we look forward to continuing our relationships with you in new ways. With changes to staffing, Weenthunga moves into 2022-2023 with three two-way teams: Sam and Erin, Ash and Dani, and Arkeria and Aileen. We congratulate Canisha on becoming a qualified Osteopath, after completing her studies with RMIT University. Canisha continues on in a casual role at Weenthunga in our *Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Spaces*.

Durrong Ngulu's Report

As I've done in the past, I begin my Durrong Ngulu Report sharing my deepest gratitude to be continuing my journey with Weenthunga for another year. It's a blessing to be guided by the voices of Elders, Committee of Management, staff, Members, First Nations young women and community, as we continue to take individual and collective action towards health justice for mob.

In this journey, I'm also guided by my Waywuru Ancestors and family, and I acknowledge my responsibility to continue our generational fight. I particularly center First Nations women here, as we do in our work at Weenthunga. Everyday, I look at the Weenthunga flames and I feel the fire in me. This fire, this feeling, connects me to my Ancestors and family. This fire meant my Nan, Audrey Roberts (née Kirby) was able to share art practice and language with our family; a language my sons are now named in. This fire meant my Mum, Tracey Paxton (née Roberts) was able to share wellbeing knowledge and grounding practice with my sisters and I. This fire has led myself and my sisters, Ash and Britt, to First Nations health, wellbeing and healing spaces.

I often find myself reflecting on the stories of my Ancestral Nan, Mary-Anne Brangy, and her sisters, my Ancestral Auntys, Kate (Kitty), Amelia and Edith (Eda). As a consequence of the violent invasion of Waywuru Country, four sisters were separated. My Ancestral Nan fought to stay on Country, and was able to do so in exchange for free labor. My Auntie Kitty was removed to Cummeragunja Mission, where we see movements like the Cummeragunja Walk Off. My Auntie Amelia and Auntie Eda were removed to Coranderrk Station, where my Auntie Amelia passed away (aged 12) due to untreated illness and my Auntie Eda went on to testify in the Coranderrk Inquiry. Their fight was different and unique to them, but each had purpose and place in a collective movement for Country, community and culture.

This brings me to the leadership of our Matriarchs and of women. The continued words of the 2018 NAIDOC theme *Because of her we can!* and the subsequent shared sentiments of community "Because of her we do!" remain front of mind for me. Matriarchal leadership is all I've ever known and it's shaped my world. I know it to be staunch, strategic and courageous. I also know it to be gentle,

nurturing and nourishing. The learning is where the energy is placed; the fight is with the systems, and the values, actions and people that uphold them.

I acknowledge the incredible First Nations women across Weenthunga's Committee and staff: Aunty Steff Armstrong, Tya Fry, Georgia Radford, Mum Tracey Paxton, Ash Paxton, Arkeria Armstrong, Kylie Clarke, Canisha Clemmet-Kennedy and Rochelle Armstrong. The moments and memories we've created together live in my heart. I also acknowledge the First Nations men on our Committee: Glenn Milliken and Kevan Horder. Thank you for always making us feel valued and respected, and for adding your own crucial voice and perspective.

Weenthunga is a place of learning, wellbeing and healing. Weenthunga can be this place because we are all committed to this, for ourselves and for each other. Our processes and priorities are intentional; the space we afford to reflective practice enables this. One of my biggest learnings since connecting in with Weenthunga is working two-way, with allies and collaborators. I've existed in too many spaces where the majority of Settlers sit in a self-appointed, performative ally role, with some exceptions to the rule. Weenthunga flips this dynamic, and the work that happens when this occurs is such a privilege to be a part of. I acknowledge Erin McKinnon, who I work alongside in the role of Durrong Ngulu. Thank you for your dedication to this movement, for sharing your voice and for making spaces safer for mob, including me. In my eyes and the eyes of many, you're such an amazing leader in the ally space and it's an absolute honour to work two-way with you.

Everyone, here's to another year of working towards Weenthunga's vision together, with our voices, actions and resistance; your part in this is essential, seen and valued.



Sam Paxton - Waywuru
Durrong Ngulu

Durrong Ngulu's Report

I continue to feel very grateful for the opportunity to work with Weenthunga and be connected with this network, and to share some reflections with you about our work over the past year. The unique place and value of Weenthunga in health and health education spaces has shone through this year - our 11th year since establishment. We have engaged and created impact with the diverse people and communities within our network - our river of fish - in different ways, all contributing to our shared vision of health equity and justice for First Nations people.

Building on our continued relationships with and backing of First Nations young women pursuing health careers - represented by the beautiful Bogong Moths - whose voices and experiences we centre in our work, we have secured resources for the next year to nourish and nurture First Nations women working in health; many of whom have been long-term Weenthunga Members. I acknowledge and am in awe of my colleague Sam Paxton, whose work and leadership I so greatly admire. Sam passionately and successfully made the case to Government of the critical need to provide care for the carers. This work acknowledges the burnout and exhaustion being experienced by the health workforce after a prolonged pandemic, which is compounded for First Nations women by the cultural load they carry and the daily racism they face. We're so excited that the government funding we've secured for 2021-2022 enables us to extend social and emotional wellbeing offerings to strengthen the health, wellbeing and healing of First Nation women in health, whose work is central for achieving health equity and justice for First Nations people.

Alongside this work growing and nourishing the First Nations health workforce, we have continued to fight racism in health and health education spaces, through *VAHENonline* and our *Cultural Safety and Critical Consciousness* work. In these spaces we have been engaging with allies and collaborators in collective learning and anti-racist action. Through this work Weenthunga is leading transformational change in health and health education systems, working alongside those committed to backing First Nations-led spaces, anti-racism work, and embedding and valuing First Nations' knowledge and practice. Weenthunga's commitment to reflective practice has enabled us to deepen our

understanding and practice of two-way working as staff.

We Collaborators have continued our journeys of unlearning and relearning, practicing cultural humility, and improving our capacity to see and call out the many pervasive forms of racism that show up daily in language and behaviours of Settler Australians, including ourselves, and are entrenched in our systems which are built on racism.

It's been a privilege to listen and engage with conversations the Committee have been having around Weenthunga's Rules, reflecting on self-determination, two-way working and securing the future of Weenthunga. Coming together as staff and Committee at our Retreat on Wurundjeri Country in Healesville in May was a special experience, commencing with a Welcome to Country from Aunty Joy Murphy, who has been connected with Weenthunga since our early days. During the many challenging conversations had over that weekend and in the months since about our work and the future of our organisation, including with our Members, the 4Rs Relationships, Respect, Reciprocity and Responsibility have grounded and held us.

I want to acknowledge and thank our Committee, Aunty Steff Armstrong and Lin Oke, whose work and legacy we strive to carry forward, and my colleagues, including those who finished up their roles with us during the year - I continue to learn so much from you and feel so lucky to be connected with you all. I also want to thank and acknowledge VACCHO and the 32 ACCHOs, the health organisations and their staff who've engaged in training with us, and our Members and Associate Members, for your invaluable role in our network and in this movement towards health equity and justice.



Erin McKinnon
Durrong Ngulu

2021-2022 Moments and Memories

Jul 2021

- 8th to 16th** Big Sis Charmaine walks Larapinta Trek on Arrente Country with Aunty Steff, Erin, Aileen and friends
- 14th** Filming video story on Dja Dja Wurrung Country with Aunty Peta Hudson, founder of Wunyun: Ancient Traditional Healing
- 23rd** *White Privilege* monthly reflective session hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom

Sep 2021

- 10th** Weenthunga hosts Virtual Dinner and Blak Trivia night for Committee, staff and loved ones
- 22nd** Aunty Steff, Tya, Sam, Ash, Arkeria and Big Sis Maryanne are backed by Weenthunga to take part in Yolanda Finette's *Honouring You* space
- 24th** Wellbeing care packs delivered to young women connected to *Nyarm-gakgo mangkie*

Dec 2021

- 3rd** Weenthunga *End-of-Year Celebrations* at Studley Park Boathouse
- 3rd** Tya recognised as Indigenous Allied Health Association's (IAHA's) *Health Professional of the Year*

Jan 2022

- 28th** *Book Club* hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom

Feb 2022

- 14h & 15th** Sam and Erin attend *VACCHO Members Meeting* in Torquay on Wadawurrung Country
- 23rd** *Where Are You on Your Anti-Racism Journey* session hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom

Apr 2022

- 29th to 1st May** We hold our 2022 *Big Sis Retreat* on Wadawurrung Country at Baanya Biامي Adventure Camp in Staughton Vale
- 29th** *Strategies for Interrupting Racism* monthly reflective session hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom

Jun 2022

- 1st to 23rd** *Cultural Safety and Critical Consciousness* session series delivered with MDAS and DFFH staff, Dhelkaya Health leaders, MurrayPHN staff and DoH Transition Care Program Managers, on Latji Latji Country, Dja Dja Wurrung Country, Wurundjeri Country and online
- 27th and 28th** Filming video stories on Wadawurrung Country with Aunty Athalie Madden and Aunty May Owen and on Wurundjeri Country with N'arwee't Aunty Carolyn Briggs

Aug 2021

- 11th** Ash invited onto Monash University's Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health Community Reference Council (CRC)
- 27th** *Reflecting in Reciprocity* monthly reflective session hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom

Oct 2021

- 29th** *Backing First Nations Peoples to Receive Appropriate Remuneration in Universities* monthly reflective session hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom
- 30th** *AGM and Member Meet-Up* held virtually on Zoom

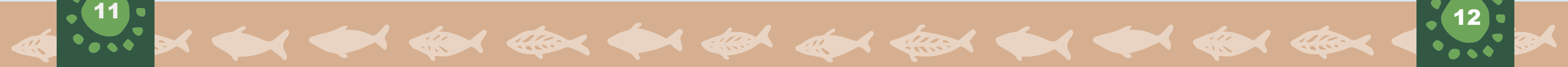
Nov 2021

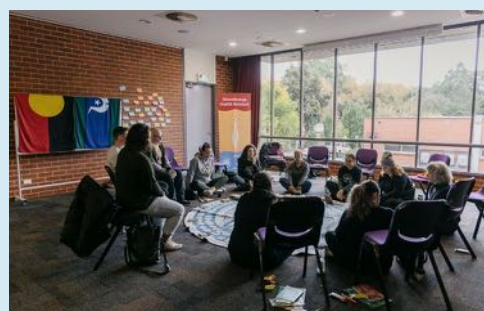
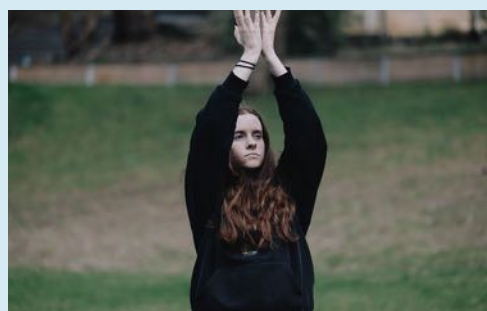
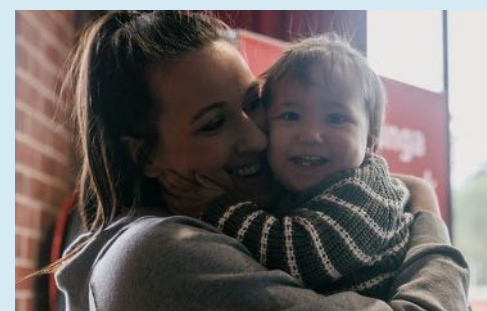
Mar 2022

- 17th to 19th** We hold our 2022 *Yarning Up Strong Retreat* on Wadawurrung Country at Baanya Biامي Adventure Camp in Staughton Vale
- 26th** *Being Called Out vs. Calling Others Out* monthly reflective session hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom

May 2022

- 6th to 8th** Annual *Weenthunga Staff and Committee Retreat* takes place on Wurundjeri Country in Healesville and includes a Welcome to Country and time with Aunty Joy Murphy
- 28th** Launch of *Nyarm-gakgo mangkie: Voices of First Nations Womxn* videos, sharing the voices of First Nations women in health on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. The launch is held at LaTrobe Art Institute in Bendigo as part of the *Central Victorian Indigenous Film Festival*







Stacey Trowell and daughter Scarlett at our 2022 Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Big Sis Retreat on Wadawurrung Country

Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Spaces

Backing First Nations young women who are passionately pursuing a career in health; from their senior secondary years and beyond.

I am grounded.
I am nourished.
I am strong.
Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Spaces Affirmation

At the heart of all of our spaces and services is our work with First Nations young women who are interested in, or passionately pursuing, a career in health. Our *Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Spaces* nurture opportunities, experiences, and connections for First Nations young women in senior secondary school, further education, and the health workforce. Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie means 'hear within' in Woiwurrung, and this name was gifted to us by Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Gail Smith.

Our focus this year has been contributing to young women's health, wellbeing, and healing. This included addressing the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and instances of racism, which harmed the spirits of First Nations young women we're connected with. This approach showed young women a range of health, wellbeing and healing careers, by allowing experiences with First Nations women working in these roles.

We curated and delivered wellbeing and healing care packs with products sourced from First Nations businesses. These packs strengthened the social and emotional wellbeing of young women during the height of the winter waves during the pandemic.

The recruitment of Ashley Paxton, proud Waywurru woman and Clinical Psychologist, into the role of Social and Emotional Wellbeing Spaces Lead has contributed to further building our capacity to back young women's health, wellbeing and healing journeys.

Little Sis Space

In 2021-2022, 42 First Nations young women in senior secondary school were engaged with Weenthunga's *Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Little Sis*

Spaces across both Dja Dja Wurrung Country (Bendigo) and Wurundjeri Country (North-East Melbourne).

Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Little Sis Spaces showed up for 29 young women from three main schools in Bendigo and 13 young women from five schools in the north east Melbourne region.

The easing of COVID-19 restrictions has made it possible to connect with the young women and their families in person. Our school visits have involved yarning, weaving, possum skin burning and drawing while sharing stories and making connections.

Yarning Up Strong Retreat

Our 2022 *Yarning Up Strong Retreat* was held from 20 April to 1 May 2022 on Wadawurrung Country, at Baanya Biami Adventure Camp in Staughton Vale.

The Retreat provided spaces for young women to connect with Aunties and First Nations staff and facilitators, as well as opportunities to explore and celebrate their identity in a safe space.

First Nations facilitators created experiences for young women to listen to their inner voice, connect to Country and explore what spirituality and self-care looks like for them. We deeply value the growing sista-hood between First Nations young women, Aunties, facilitators and Weenthunga staff.

"I absolutely loved connecting to my culture in a way I didn't think was possible or in ways I would have thought were silly and wouldn't work but they did indeed work. You're such beautiful, inspirational women to be around and have the most respect for you. This Retreat was something I didn't know I truly needed."

- M, Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Little Sis

Experiences at the Retreat included Aunty's yarning spaces, painting, weaving, possum skin and wood burning, campfire yarns, walking on Country and reflections, Wayapa Wuurrk, exploring art awareness and intuition, spirituality and First Nations catering throughout the Retreat.

Big Sis Space

Our *Big Sis Space* is for young women pursuing health careers through further education or working in health roles. Many Big Sis' have been connected with *Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Spaces* since secondary school. Some of these young women, including those working in frontline health roles, experienced heightened anxiety and stress due to the pandemic. We listened to the voices of these young women, and heard their feelings of stress, isolation and disconnection. To counteract this, we maintained ongoing monthly contact with young women. We hosted individual and small group yarns, held social and emotional wellbeing experiences and offered career backing, including advocacy.

Bis Sis Retreat

The inaugural *Big Sis Retreat* was from 29 April – 1 May 2022 on Wadawurrung Country at Baanya Biami Adventure Camp. This was a healing and wellbeing gathering for Big Sis' to connect to each other and a community of strong First Nations women and Aunties. The Retreat provided cultural, wellbeing and healing experiences and opportunities to connect to Country after an intensely challenging and stressful period of study and working in health roles during the pandemic.

Financial Backing

Four bursary's were awarded to young women in the Big Sis Space by the Meg Irwin Bursary fund. We express our gratitude to Meg for her generosity. Meg is a Speech Pathologist and former Weenthunga Associate Committee Member.

Voices of First Nations Womxn

On 28 May 2022 we held a film event inviting Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie young women, their families, Local Support Network and community to launch 'Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie: Voices of First Nations Womxn'; a series of short film clips that capture the voices of First Nations' women as we journey in health, wellbeing and healing roles.

The event included a panel discussion with members of the project and afternoon tea with [Murnong Mamas](#). Film clips are available to view online at Weenthunga's [YouTube channel](#).

Aunty's Voices

As part of our Networked Community Project, we had the honour of sharing space with Aunty Peta Hudson (Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung), Aunty May Owen (Yorta Yorta), Aunty Athalie Madden (Yorta Yorta, Taungurung) and N'Arwee't Aunty Carolyn Briggs (Yalikit Weelam of the Boon Wurrung language group, Wemba Wemba, Barapa Barapa, Trawlwoolway). Each Aunty has expressed words they wish to share with First Nations young women journeying in health, wellbeing and healing roles. These videos will be launched at a special celebration in late 2022.

"The space that was created by the Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie team at Baanya Biami allowed for absolute rest and stillness. The ability to be held by and gather with other women, babies/young ones, Aunties and Elders was truly magical ...

The Retreat allowed me to revisit some wonderful stories and memories with them but mostly to nurture one another, practice culture, hug and hold each other and our babies as one.

I often think about how still my body and mind felt on Retreat. I sometimes feel disconnected from Country when living in urban Naarm (Melbourne) but I was reminded that if you stop to listen to Country, observe Country and take the time to sit with Country that you can find that stillness and connectedness again.

To create space and time to be away from the demands of life, from technology and get back to land and people; that is when real rest happens - the Retreat allowed for pure emotional recovery."

- G, Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Big Sis

We would like to thank: the Victorian Department of Health, VACCHO and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Ian Potter Foundation and the RE Ross Trust, the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Youth in Philanthropy Program, the City of Greater Bendigo and Ngarara Willim at RMIT University for their support of Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie spaces in 2021-2022.



N'Arwee't Professor Carolyn Briggs AM PhD filming an *Aunty's Voice* video at Ngarara Willim, RMIT University (City Campus)

VAHENonline

Working to address absent, inadequate and/or racist curriculum content about First Nations people. Encouraging and supporting collaboration between health academics and disciplines across Victorian Universities.

VAHENonline is a platform for collaboration, discussion and sharing resources between health academics and disciplines across Victorian Universities. VAHENonline contributors include community members, academics, and health professionals.

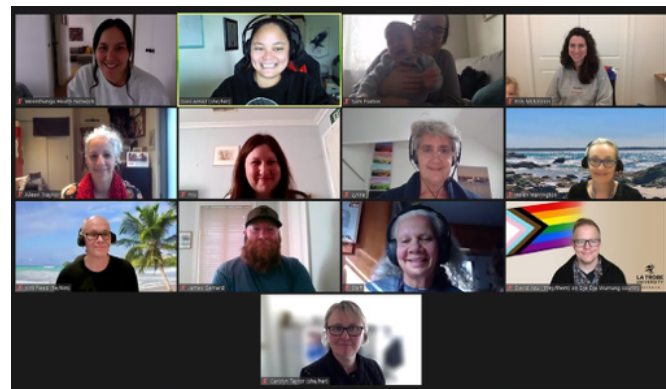


Image: VAHENonline Guests at the August 2021 Session 'Reflecting in Reciprocity'.

In 2021-2022 the VAHENonline team has delivered guest lectures, continued to develop the online Moodle platform and deepened engagement with regular VAHENonline users through monthly reflection sessions via Zoom. This financial year, the following sessions were held:

- White Privilege – July 2021
- Reflecting in Reciprocity – August 2021
- Backing First Nations Peoples to Receive Appropriate Remuneration in Universities
 - * Part A: Valuing First Nations Knowledge – October 2021
 - * Part B: Sharing Experiences – November 2021
- January Special: Blak Bookclub - January 2022
- Interrupting Racism
 - * Part A: Where You Are in your Anti-Racist Journey – February 2022
 - * Part B: Being Called Out vs. Calling Others Out – March 2022
 - * Part C: Strategies for Interrupting Racism – April 2022

These sessions involve sharing content and resources, offering the lived experience and perspectives of VAHENonline's two-way team and providing opportunities for discussion and reflection.

To value the relationships we developed with our members, and in reciprocity for their vulnerability and commitment to decolonising health curriculum, we gifted regular attendees a copy of Weenthunga's Annual Report and the book *Another Day in the Colony* by Professor Chelsea Watego.

"I was floored and delighted by the generous gift of Professor Watego's book... It is incredibly generous that after all you have given to me – your time, kindness, thoughtfulness, expertise – you thank me by giving me yet another opportunity to reflect and learn. Thank YOU both, truly, for the beautiful reflective spaces you create. The world is better for having you in it – I am better, too."

"...It is me who should be thanking you for the invitation to the VAHEN space and for the gift of your shared teachings and knowledges. It provides a space for the continuing learning and unlearning that I have to do."

There are now 101 registered users of VAHENonline, across 14 different universities and associated institutions. Of the users, 27% have identified as First Nations peoples.

VAHENonline are always welcoming new users to the site. If you work in health with First Nations peoples or are a health academic, we would love to have your knowledge shared in the space. To join in on the discussions taking place on VAHENonline please complete the short registration survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/2MVR5Z7.

We would like to thank The Lord Mayors Charitable foundation for their support in funding the VAHENonline project.

We would also like to thank all VAHENonline users for continuing on this learning journey with us.

Cultural Safety and Critical Consciousness

Contributing to transformational change in health organisations and systems, through unpacking discomfort, power, privilege, racism, decolonising and working two-way.

In 2021-2022 Weenthunga further developed our *Cultural Safety and Critical Consciousness* offerings, including working with leadership groups within health organisations committed to transformational change, delivering workshops to staff in government departments and ACCHOs and delivering guest lectures in university health courses.

"It was a wonderful and transformational experience that I would highly recommend for all healthcare leaders."
- **Transition Care Program (TCP) Manager**

This work has grown from the strength of Weenthunga's relationships and connections. It has enabled us to connect with and back our members, allies and collaborators working in health. This includes some individuals who have a long history of connection with Weenthunga's network and some individuals who are just discovering us.

We've shared facilitation of this work across our two-way teams within Weenthunga, and have continued our practices of debriefing, reflection, collective learning and improvement. In doing so we continuously consider cultural safety of our First Nations staff and participants in those spaces, optimising learning outcomes for participants, and creating impact through ensuring learning is applied to improved cultural safety in health settings.

"I am grateful to MurrayPHN for making this program available to me as a person and employee. And I am deeply humbled and grateful for Weenthunga people for taking ownership of guiding us on this journey."
- **MurrayPHN staff member**

We've come to understand that our approach in this space may not be suitable for individuals who are beginning their learning journeys and those who aren't accustomed to self-reflection or able to sit with discomfort. We are staunch in our framing of the issues. Our approach has been deeply impactful and transformative for many who have taken on their responsibility to go on the journey of unlearning and relearning.

"The coin model and white privilege were challenging/eye-opening for me. I did further research on the other elements of privilege that weren't listed on the coin to learn more. I spoke with my family and colleagues who didn't do the training about the coin model especially."
- **Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) staff member**

Bringing our collective experiences, knowledges and capacities to this space as two-way teams, and listening to and learning from the organisations and participants who've engaged with our services, has greatly enhanced our approach and offerings. This is evidenced by organisations we have been working with committing to continued engagement with Weenthunga, and the substantial growth of this work for us over the last 12 months.

I strongly recommend this type of training to all staff working in the domain of health. The lived experience of the facilitators was the most effective component and carried the most weight in terms of impact on the participants.
- **Dhelkaya Health (formerly Castlemaine Health) staff member**

We look forward to continuing to grow in this space and generating income for our work with First Nations young women, while simultaneously directly combating racism in health.

We are grateful to those organisations we've worked closely with in this space over the past year - MurrayPHN, Dhelkaya Health, Mallee District Aboriginal Services and the Transition Care Program in the Victorian Department of Health.

Treasurers Report

This finance report is drawn from our 2021-2022 financial statements, prepared in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act (2012), and audited by Easy Tax & Accounting. The auditors report is unqualified.

Weenthunga's income has continued to grow steadily, with our fee-for-service income almost doubling this year to \$234,679 (from \$118,405 in FY2021), primarily through our *Cultural Safety and Critical Consciousness* work with organisations. This reflects our efforts to diversify income generation in the absence of any recurrent funding, and enable Weenthunga to sustain and thrive into the future.

We have continued to keep our overhead costs to a minimum through effective use of technology and work-from-home arrangements, which has also supported staff wellbeing.

We also continue to prioritise buying Blak, and in FY2022 procured \$67,680 of good and services from First Nations owned businesses.

The deficit of \$38,671 was impacted by the need to sustain programs and retain program staff within the context of short-term, one-off and uncertain grant funding.

The Federal Government COVID-19 Cashflow Boost of \$47,380 we received last year was not repeated in FY2022.

Weenthunga had retained earnings of \$191,449 at 30 June 2022 (FY2021 \$230,120), and is in a strong position to meet its' obligations.

Weenthunga is grateful to the following organisations for their support of our work in 2021-2022:

- Victorian Department of Health
- Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
- VACCHO and the Department of Prime Minister

- and Cabinet
- Ian Potter Foundation
- RE Ross Trust
- Ngarara Willim, RMIT University
- Werribee Secondary College and Melbourne Girls College for their recommendations through the Youth in Philanthropy Program

Weenthunga would like to express our gratitude to our members and supporters who have given donations to support Weenthunga. Your assistance is vital in supporting us to achieve our vision.

Special thanks to:

- The Donald Fraser Family Fund
- The McMahon Family Foundation
- Malcolm France
- Simon Matthee
- PRL Charitable Fund, a Charitable Fund Account of Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
- City of Greater Bendigo
- Reconciliation Victoria
- Ethical Investments
- Moreland Reconciliation Network

I would like to thank Chris Dragisic for managing our finances and financial reporting, Douglas McCracken-Skeggs and Easy Tax & Accounting for providing pro-bono auditing services, and Erin for her oversight of Weenthunga's finances.

Glenn Milliken
Treasurer

Note: A full copy of the audited financial statements are available on request from Members.



Glenn Milliken - Kamilaroi
Treasurer

Finance Report

	June 2022 \$	June 2021 \$
Income	728,146	649,177
Expenditure		
Administration	75,400	74,984
Disbursements	1,090	4,581
Promotional expenses	4,328	5,660
Project activities	79,935	90,082
Staff expenses	601,437	458,719
Total expenditure	766,817	634,026
Surplus	(38,671)	15,151
Retained earnings	191,449	230,120

2021-2022 Financial Supporters

Weenthunga is grateful to the Victorian State Government (Department of Health), Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, the RE Ross Trust, the Ian Potter Foundation, [VACCHO](#), City of Greater Bendigo and the Australian Government (Department of Premier and Cabinet) for your grant support this year.



2021-2022 Collaborators and Partners

Weenthunga is also grateful to St John of God Bendigo Hospital and [Ngarara Willim](#) at RMIT University, who value our vision and provide us with financial support as we work together towards our shared objectives.





Weenthunga

[ween-tunga] noun

'Hear / Understand' in Woi wurrung, language of the Wurundjeri Peoples of the Kulin Nation