



Weenthunga Health Network Inc

Annual Report
2020-2021

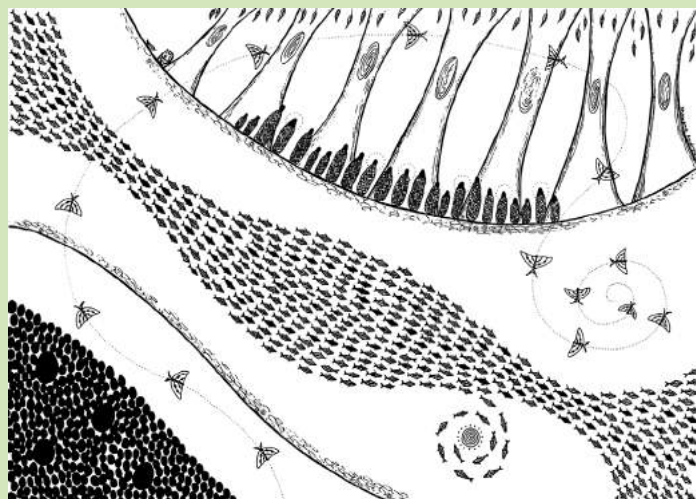




Bec Phillip's Smoking Ceremony on Dja Dja Wurrung Country



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 relationship, 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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Facebook [facebook.com/weenthunga](https://www.facebook.com/weenthunga)
Website www.weenthunga.com.au

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



President's Report

Firstly, what a year. COVID-19 has certainly continued to throw a spanner in the works. I hope you are all doing well and are beginning to enjoy the easing of restrictions. For those who don't know me, my name is Tya. I am a Gunditjmara/Wotjobaluk women with strong ties to Wathaurong country, having grown up in Geelong. I studied Occupational Therapy at Deakin and was the only Aboriginal OT graduate through Deakin Waterfront. I am now an Occupational Therapist working in Melbourne. I have spent the last 6 years working across three health organisations. This year I have been working across the COVID wards and now within the busiest Emergency Department in Melbourne, aiming to prevent long admissions.

During 2020-21, Weenthunga's work, grounded in First Nations knowledges and ways, has nurtured and added strength to the health and wellbeing of our communities. As we've continued to live through the COVID-19 pandemic, separated from friends, family, community and Country, facing prolonged periods of stress and anxiety, Weenthunga has found ways to keep staff and Committee connected; creating experiences, opportunities and connections with the First Nations young womxn in our programs and their families.

I was excited to be elected to the Weenthunga Committee at the 2020 AGM and appointed President, with support from former President Mikaela Egan who continued on in the role of Vice President. This has been a fantastic experience and I have thoroughly enjoyed watching Weenthunga grow. I'd like to acknowledge retiring Committee Members Kerrie Thomsen, Carol Mioduchowski and Meg Irwin, and thank them for their contributions to Weenthunga in their Committee roles over many years.

Weenthunga was pleased to welcome Georgia Radford to the Weenthunga Committee in 2020 – Georgia has been involved with Weenthunga for over 8 years, as one of the first participants in our young womxn's program when in high school in Bendigo. Georgia is now a Registered Nurse and completing her midwifery studies. We also welcomed Associate Members Sowmya Rao and Katherine Monson to the Committee at the 2020 AGM, and welcomed back David Menzies, who

joined continuing Committee members Glenn Milliken, Treasurer, and Kevan Horder.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Weenthunga's staff for their work and commitment this year – our leadership team of Aunty Steff, Sam and Erin, our Nyarrn-gakgo Mangkie teams in Bendigo, Melbourne and Geelong, our VAHEN Online team and other staff who've supported the organisation throughout the year.

In addition to our outgoing Committee Members we have staff who will be moving on to pursue new career paths and journeys. Your time with Weenthunga has been invaluable and I am incredibly sad to be seeing you go. Thank you for the time and effort you have put into creating a positive and safe space for us all.

I'd also like to acknowledge the network of 32 ACCHOs who have continued to keep their communities safe and connected during COVID-19 – we are proud to be part of this network and also acknowledge VACCHO for their representation and support of this network. I also acknowledge the National Indigenous Health Associations; IAHA, CATSINaM, AIDA and NATSIHWA for their leadership, advocacy and support of the Aboriginal health workforce – Weenthunga values our connections with these organisations.

And lastly a huge thank you to our members working on the front line of the pandemic to keep our communities safe, while continuing to fight for First Nations health equity and against racism and injustice. Thank you for your efforts - I acknowledge the impacts of this prolonged pandemic on your wellbeing and hope the coming year will bring time for rest, healing and re-connecting with loved ones.

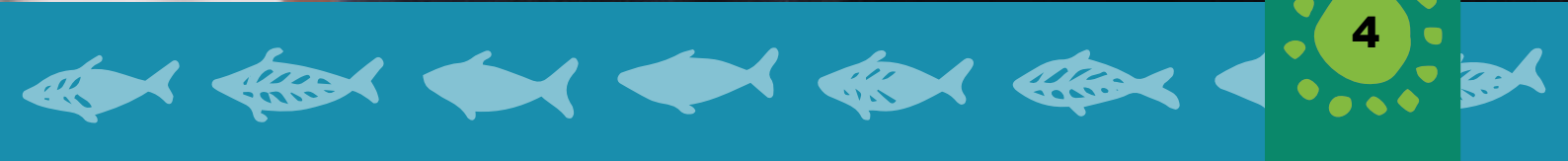


Tya Fry - Gunditjmara and Wotjobaluk
Weenthunga President





Tya Fry - Weenthunga President



Weenthunga Committee of Management



Tya Fry
President

First Nations Member
Gunditjmara and Wotjobaluk

Occupational Therapist at the
Northern Hospital



Mikaela Egan
Vice President

First Nations Member
Muthi Muthi and Gunditjmara

Founder of The Wellbeing
Connexion



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



Georgia Radford

First Nations Member
Ngarrindjeri

Nurse at First People's Health
and Wellbeing



Sowmya Rao

Associate Member

Audiologist at Royal Children's
Hospital and VACCHO



David Menzies

Associate Member

Manager of Chronic Disease
Programs at SEMPHN



Katherine Monson

Associate Member

Social Worker at VAHS and
Orygen



Committee of Management Updates

Following last year's Annual General Meeting, David Menzies rejoined the Committee of Management along with new Committee Members Tya Fry, Georgia Radford, Sowmya Rao and Katherine Monson. They joined continuing Members Mikaela Egan, Glenn Milliken and Kevan Horder. The Office Bearers were elected: Tya Fry, President; Mikaela Egan, Vice President; and Glenn Milliken, Treasurer. We thank outgoing Committee Members: Kerrie Thomsen (resigned 12/11/2019); Colleen Kelly (resigned 28/11/2019); Meg Irwin (resigned 28/11/2019); and the late Geneieve Napper (resigned 28/11/2019) for their contributions during their time on the Committee.

Governance and Operational Model

Weenthunga is First Nations-led and values collaboration between First Nations people and Settler-Australians. The Committee of Management comprises a majority of First Nations people and the position of President can only be held by a First Nations person. Only Full Members of Weenthunga, First Nations people, are able to vote. This model underpins Weenthunga's operations, as we acknowledge the value and possibilities when First Nations people and Settler-Australian work together.

Weenthunga's Leadership

Weenthunga's vision is shaped by our First Nations-led Committee of Management. Weenthunga Committee and staff are supported by a leadership team of three: a First Nations Aunty, Aunty Steff Armstrong and Durrong Ngulu Sam Paxton and Erin McKinnon. "Each of our voices are informed by family, community and our own lived experience. We are all sharing our own messages, and advocating for change in our own way. At the end of the day, our messages are connected by the same purpose: Weenthunga's vision."

Weenthunga's Aims and Objectives

Weenthunga Health Network aims to contribute to the health and wellbeing of First Nations people in Victoria by:

- Backing First Nations young womxn into health careers, thereby increasing the Aboriginal health workforce
- Advocating for anti-racism and decolonising within the health and education sectors
- Embedding and valuing First Nations' knowledge and practice, and
- Ensuring better understanding and practice of health professionals to improve experiences, care and outcomes for First Nations people and communities.

Weenthunga's Members

In 2020-2021, Weenthunga welcomed 50 new Members. Our Members work across organisation's and within Aboriginal Health Services, public and private hospitals, community health centers and universities. Of our active Members, 128 are Full Members, 273 are Associate Members, and 35 are Student Members. This year, as part of our new Membership Project, Weenthunga retired Members for the first time. 118 Members retired as a result of moving out our health/health education roles. Some past Members remain connected to Weenthunga.

Weenthunga's Members work in diverse health roles, including: Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers; Audiology; Chiropractic; Counseling; 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

Key Language

First Nations: A collective term for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. We back the right of people to express their identity as they choose.

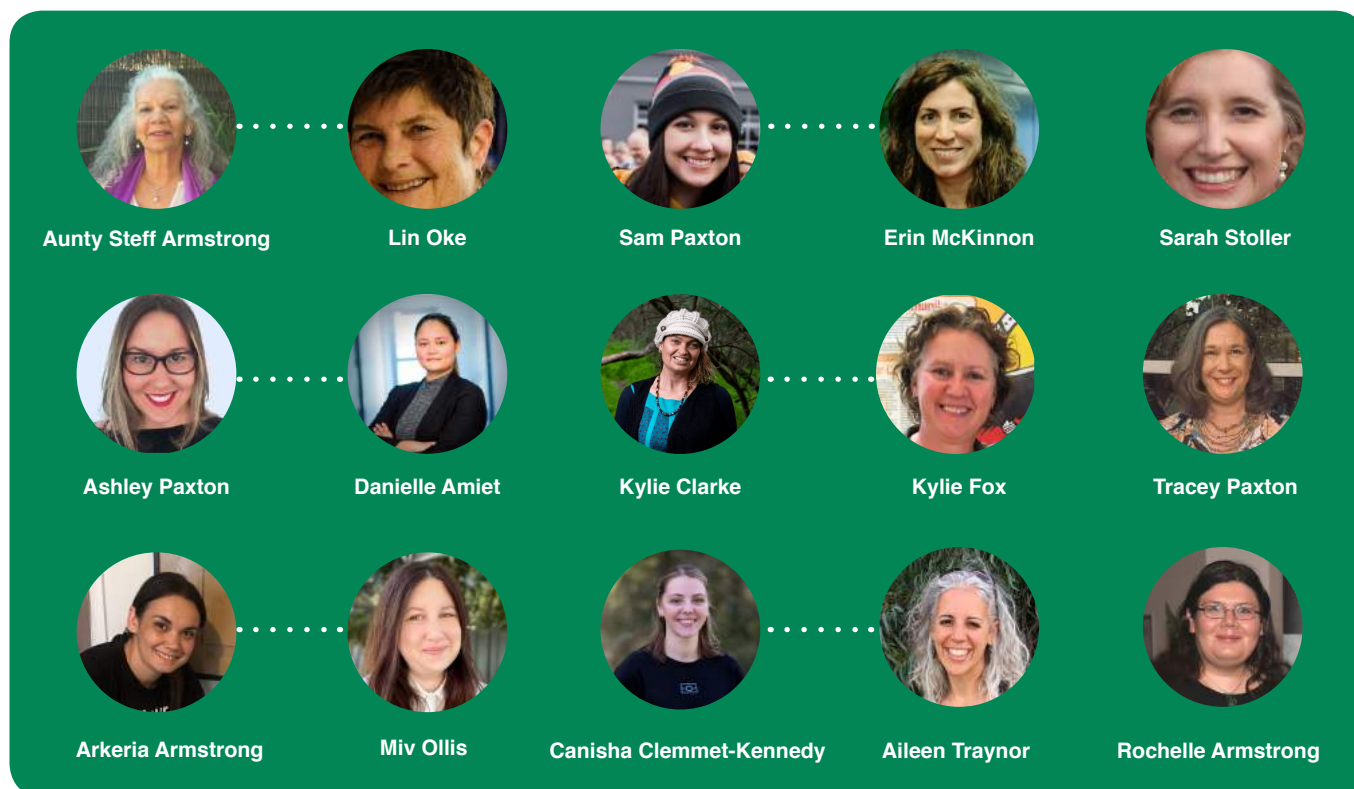
Settler-Australian: Weenthunga uses the term 'Settler Australian' as a collective term for non-First Nations people in recognition of their identity as settlers from countries outside so-called 'Australia'. We do so recognizing the violent and ongoing nature of colonisation, and informed by the discourse of some First Nations academics on the use of this terminology.



Kiralee Hogema - Aboriginal Flag and 'Stay Strong' Tattoo



Weenthunga Staff



Weenthunga's part-time staff work flexibly and make the most of our small hours of employment. The Weenthunga staffing team (average FTEs shown) in 2020-2021 comprised:

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



From January to February 2021, Weenthunga was blessed to be able to host Tiwi student Dayna Stanislaus Lawson for an internship, which was arranged with the Aurora Education Foundation. Dayna is a second year Philosophy and Psychology student at the University of Melbourne. During her time at Weenthunga, Dayna made amazing contributions across Weenthunga, with a core focus on VAHENonline. Dayna wrote two articles on white fragility and haunting. She also conceptualised a white fragility workshop, which she presented to fellow students living at college with her. We hope to be able to journey with Dayna into the future!

Weenthunga Aunty Report

The space between guiding, leading and waiting has been challenging as I took up the space of Weenthunga Aunty.

During late 2020 I finished leading the space of NGM and started to understand how to use my voice in many yarns. Shared leadership is complex and moving out of spaces you have created is even more unsettling. I value courage and connections and with Weenthungas ways of creating shared space and my values has meant the handing of the reins to my daughter to continue the NGM space in Bendigo has been a joy and I leave with a deep sense of pride having created a space that can change and grow as needed in so many challenges in our lives.

To work alongside Sam and Erin (Durrong Ngulu's team) has been a slow and steady journey. Learning to take time to listen and create a unique way of working requires creating ripples and circles folding back into circles, to make deeper spirals to find a way to model Weenthunga's 4R's and to travel along a path of leadership in decolonising our small organisation. With Sam and other staff having leave and following new pathways this has meant that my Aunty role slowed as I took on more fee-for-service work.

We have had time to work together with a couple of ACCHO's and health organisations. I have found that 2021 created many ups and downs, moments of quiet amongst long busy days. With flexibility and responsibility being stretched as I become more involved in the space of workshops around anti-racism, I look back on some wonderful deep yarns that avail both staff and those we work with to find new ways. A few highlights have been the yarns with N'arweet Aunty Caroline Briggs, our staff retreat and catching up with Alumni.

COVID-19 restrictions to meet and spend time has meant that relationships, particularly spending time with staff and community in Melbourne, became very difficult and my feeling of reaching out more often, meant trying to create online spaces.

In November 2020 we launched Baagii Maliyaa to not only be used as a fund raiser but also to begin online voice.

I wish to thank all staff for their constant support and going above their roles. A big thank you to Sam, Erin for their vision and patience.

Lastly I would like to express my gratitude to Lin my friend and ally who "backs" my role, to the Committee who provide their wisdom and knowledge and also to the community who support Weenthunga's work.

I reflect and passionately say: "as a Gamilaraay, Bigambul woman living on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, I am constantly reminded that the need to be On Country more often is necessary to be able to make decisions that impact our lives. Warm, controlled environments where conversations occur without empathy and compassion see us making the mistakes of the past and leaves sterilized ways of hearing not only our inner voice but the spirit of Country which searches for truth and healing"

Biame blessings,
Aunty Steff

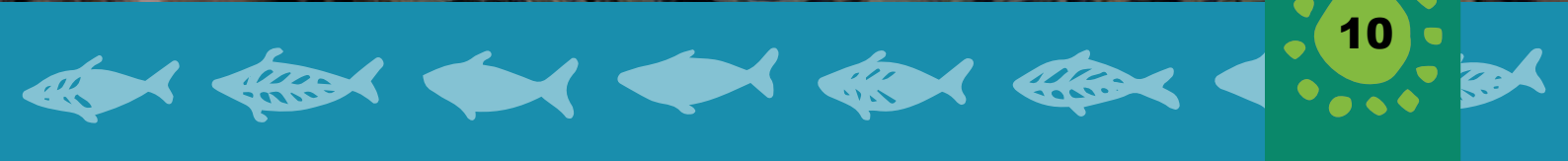
Note: you can connect with Aunty Steff's Baagii Maliyaa blog here:
<https://baagiimaliyaa.com/?p=1>



Aunty Steff Armstrong - Gamilaraay
Weenthunga Aunty



Auntie Steff Armstrong - Weenthunga's inaugural Auntie



Durrong Ngulu's Report

I'm deeply grateful to be able to write another Durrong Ngulu Report within our 2020-2021 Annual Report, as it means my journey with Weenthunga is continuing. The spaces Weenthunga creates feel like home, and the people who gather in these spaces feel like (and at times are) family: Elders, Committee, Staff, Members, young womxn and community members.

This year, our Weenthunga family grew by many, and I was blessed to have my family grow by one. On 21 March 2021, I birthed my second son, Norroka, at sunrise on Wurundjeri Country. The final Weenthunga event I attended prior to his birth was our annual Committee and Staff Retreat on Wadawurrung Country in February 2021. During one of our powerful yarning circles, my sister Ashley (who is also Weenthunga's VAHENonline Leader) shared: "I think about my nephew, who is here with us, and who is witnessing and listening to our conversations; he is already learning, taking this in".

I reflect on all the yarns and experiences Norroka would've heard and had within our Weenthunga spaces in the nine months before he was born. He would've heard about First Nations holistic wellness and leadership, including leadership shown during the enduring COVID-19 pandemic. I imagine he would've felt proud. He would've experienced our groundings; meaningful breathes, song, story, connecting to Country. I imagine he would've felt peaceful. Conversely, he would've also heard about the injustices that exist in health and education, perhaps realising he was coming into a world where the white majority maintain systems and structures that will oppress him in the same way they did his Ancestors and do his community. I imagine he would've felt angry. He would've experienced my trauma response when confronted with racism, ignorance, disrespect. I imagine he would've felt grief.

First Nations families know all too well that we can't protect our babies from this unjust world; from the violent systems and structures that are against us and fail us from the time we're in our Mother's wombs. We also know that one of our biggest protective factors - our communities - are behind us to build up, and love up, our babies. My hope is that through all of this, I was able to provide Norroka with

a balanced perspective on what to expect in this life and that he understands, or comes to understand, his purpose within this.

Last year, I came across an image. It was a crossroads. To the left was "tackling racism", to the right was "practicing culture". Naturally, my preference will forever be to practice my Waywuru culture. But I know that my freedom to do this within my own life (not to be generalised to others) interplays with the fight to abolish racism.

Weenthunga is a protective space for me, and our team adds so much strength to my spirit; Auntie Steff Armstrong, First Nations womxn, Durrong Ngulu Erin McKinnon, and Settler-Australian allies. It's such a blessing to walk together in this work. To prepare, debrief, learn, listen, add voice, challenge each other, share, laugh, cry, and much more. To feel seen, heard and held.

In the year ahead, I hope to use the majority of my energy ensuring First Nations people working in health, wellbeing and healing are nourished. It's crucial that we sustain this workforce; the carriers of First Nations knowledge and practices within the sector. Our workforce will continue to feel the weight and trauma of the pandemic, and this will be compounded with the racism our people face.

I thank all our Members who, through your work in health and/or health education, are continuing to get us through this pandemic in your own meaningful and skillful ways. As we move towards "living with COVID-19", I look forward to reigniting face-to-face connections, especially around campfires, and continuing our collective work in decolonising, anti-racism and embedding and valuing First Nations knowledge and practice. There's no doubt in my mind that the future is First Nations.



Sam Paxton - Waywuru
Durrong Ngulu



Durrong Ngulu's Report

Living and working through the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 has brought huge challenges for our all of us, and I think it'll take some time to understand the impacts of this period – on our communities, the spaces we work in and on Weenthunga's work and team – and what this means for us as we emerge out the other side.

I'm grateful beyond words to be sharing this journey with our team, and am proud of the way we support each other, not just through a pandemic but all that life brings. I'm also grateful to the Committee for backing the team, recognising and celebrating the work and their calm and capable governance of the organisation through these stressful times.

In many ways Weenthunga was well equipped to deal with the challenges of remote working, having had a staff team already working in those ways and a Committee used to connecting virtually. This enabled us to quickly and creatively adapt, to deliver programs and stay connected online.

However, these times have brought into sharp focus the value and importance of connection, of people being together – something that's always been central for First Nations peoples and cultures. We've certainly missed this in our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie spaces with First Nations young womxn and their families, and we've missed it as a team and as an organisation.

When we were fortunate to come together in person over a weekend in February on Wadawurrung Country, the energy, learning and growth created by our staff and Committee connecting in person gave us such a boost, and many areas for action to take into 2021.

I want to acknowledge the work and commitment of our staff, who bring their heart and soul to their work.

Ash and Dani – a powerhouse two-way team who lead our work challenging and supporting the tertiary sector to do better in First Nations health education.

Our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie teams Kylie Clarke

and Kylie Fox working on Wadawurrung Country, Arkeria and Miv working on Dja Dja Wurrung Country and Canisha and Aileen working on Wurundjeri Country, who have centred First Nations knowledge and ways and Weenthunga's 4R's to create experiences, opportunities and connections with First Nations young womxn that have added to their wellbeing during such a difficult time.

Sarah who continues to support our operations especially in the grants space, Tracey who supports our membership space, Chris who manages our finances and Lin who, as a Weenthunga founder, continues to back Aunty Steff in her role pro-bono as we carry forward her legacy.

And of course to Aunty Steff and Sam, whom I'm blessed and honoured to work alongside and be guided by, in our roles backing and nurturing the team and organisation, and contributing to the spaces of cultural safety, critical consciousness and anti-racism.

Together as an organisation we continue to go deeper in exploring what working two-way means and looks like for Weenthunga, as we back the journeys of First Nations young womxn in health spaces, share our learnings with others to advance cultural safety and anti-racism, and share our stories to advocate and secure resources for Weenthunga's work.



Erin McKinnon
Durrong Ngulu

2020-2021 Moments and Memories

Jul
2020

3rd National Reconciliation Week Film Series continues. We watch *In My Blood It Runs* virtually on Zoom.

17th Group Healing for Weenthunga Staff hosted virtually via Zoom. Yorta Yorta womxn, healer and psychic Allira Potter.

31st National Reconciliation Week Film Series continues. We watch *The Australian Dream* virtually on Zoom.

Oct
2020

6th Weenthunga hosts CS&CC workshop for ACCO staff across Victoria.

16th *Sista Yarns and Healing* evening held virtually on Zoom, with 18 First Nations womxn working in health and education in attendance.

28th Weaving Workshop held virtually on Zoom for First Nations young womxn at Thornbury Hight School in collaboration with Deadly Sista Girlz.

Jan
2021

4th Tiwi student Dayna starts her internship with Weenthunga.

7th Weenthunga hosts CS&CC workshop for ACCO staff across Victoria.

23rd Weaving Day on Dja Dja Wurrung Country (Bendigo) for Year 11 and 12 students.

24th *Racism in the Classroom: How Do I Respond?* event hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom, with 93 Health Academics in attendance.

1st & 2nd IAHA Conference, with presentations shared on our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie spaces and VAHENonline.

10th & 13th Weenthunga hosts two NAIDOC events for Ngarara Willim students and staff. We create space to yarn about the film *In My Blood it Runs*, and the book *Living on Stolen Land* by Ambelin Kwaymullina.

26th AGM and Member Meet-Up held virtually on Zoom, with 37 Members in attendance.

Sep
2020

Nov
2020

13



Feb
2021

Apr
2021

Jun
2021

20th & 21st Weenthunga Retreat held on Wadawurrung Country, attended by Committee and Staff. We thank Narana for providing us with a safe, culturally enriched space to gather and yarn.

9th *Lunchtime Yarnz* with Aunty May Owen and Aunty Athalie Madden held on Wadawurrung Country (Geelong).

18th *White Fragility and Privilege* session hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom.

30th *First Nations Success within the Institution; Equality, Achievement and Wellbeing* session hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom.

19th Womxn's Talk Health Day held on Dja Dja Wurrung Country (Bendigo), with 16 First Nations young womxn from high school in attendance.

28th *Reflecting on Privilege and the White Identity* session hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom.

26th *How do I Deliver First Nations Content as a Non-Indigenous Lecturer* session hosted by VAHENonline team virtually on Zoom.

Mar
2021

May
2021





Redgum Island meeting space installation on Wadawurrung Country



2020-2021 Event Highlights

Celebrating Staff Achievements

Within this reporting period, Weenthunga backed First Nations staff in their professional endeavors.

This included:

- Kylie Clarke: participation in the Barring Djinang Leadership Program, recipient of the 2021 First Nations Woman in Community Life Award (presented by City of Greater Geelong).
- Ashley Paxton: invited onto Monash University's Turner Institute Community Reference Council.
- Sam Paxton: invited onto Canada and Australia Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Youth Committee, recipient of the 2020 Local Allied Health Champion (presented by IAHA).

We also congratulate Arkeria Armstrong on her solo exhibition, 'Yilambu', which ran in February 2021 at Castlemaine Contemporary Art Space. One of Arkeria's works, 'Balabalaa' was purchased by LSN organisation Castlemaine Health. Arkeria shares: "Balabalaa means 'butterfly'. It is the name given to my daughter by my mother." The piece is now displayed in Castlemaine Health's Maternity Ward.

Living on Stolen Land by Ambelin Kwaymullina

This year, as part of our internal learning and development, we purchased a copy of *Living on Stolen Land* for all Weenthunga Staff and Committee Members.

The Magabala Books website shares: "Living on Stolen Land is a prose-styled look at our colonial-settler 'present'. This book is the first of its kind to address and educate a broad audience about the colonial contextual history of Australia, in a highly original way. It pulls apart the myths at the heart of our nationhood, and challenges Australia to come to terms with its own past and its place within and on 'Indigenous Countries'".

Ambelin's writing, concepts and ideas have contributed a lot to our internal growth at Weenthunga this year, and had a profound impact on our organisation. We have started internal and external meetings by reading passages from the

book, and connected over a Staff Gathering to collectively share on what We extend our deepest gratitude to Ambelin and strongly recommend that you invest in a copy if you haven't already!

NAIDOC Events with Ngarara Willim

On 10 and 13 November 2020, our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Melbourne team, alongside Aunty Steff, hosted two events for Ngarara Willim - RMIT students and staff. These events were part of postponed NAIDOC Week Celebrations, and connected to the theme 'Always Was, Always Will Be'. The first was a discussion about the film *In My Blood It Runs* and the second was a discussion on the before mentioned book *Living on Stolen Land* by Ambelin Kwaymullina. We enjoyed co-creating this space with our Ngarara Willim, who is one of our program partners. Together we had some deep and powerful yarn.

Panel Discussion For Members

On 26 November 2020, Weenthunga hosted Panel Discussion for Members, which followed on from our AGM. The panel was hosted by Arkeria Armstrong with two guest speakers: Waywurru woman Ashley Paxton (psychologist) and Gamilaroi woman Tracy Hardy (dietitian/nutritionist, owner of Wattleseed Nutrition). Ashley and Tracy shared of their work in wellbeing and healing spaces, reflections and learnings, actions mob, allies and organisations can take in decolonising, and resistance.

IAHA Conference

From 1 to 3 December 2020, Weenthunga supported a delegation of representatives to attend Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) National Online Conference: 'Staying Connected, Stronger Together'. At the conference, Weenthunga presented within the 'Our Stories, Our Solutions' segment, on both Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie and VAHENonline. We also connected with First Nations and Settler-Australian health professionals nationwide, learned about other incredible work in the space, and had heaps of fun along the way. We thank IAHA for the opportunity and for making our first online conference presentation experience so engaging and enjoyable!

2020-2021 Programs and Services

Weenthunga's programs and services have continued to grow, thrive and adapt to changing environments over the past year. Our 4R's - Relationships, Respect, Reciprocity and Responsibility - are deeply considered and embedded within each part of our work.

Our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie spaces on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, Wadawurrung Country and Wurundjeri Country carried on as local, place-based programs. During the enduring COVID-19 pandemic, it became apparent that a shift in focus within the space was needed; one which centered the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations young womxn and was complimented by continued career exploration. Additional funding enabled us to commence work on Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie online (launching late 2021) as part of our 'Networked Community Project'. This will be an online space for First Nations young womxn and their families, and will offer culturally based resources and opportunities across education/employment. The space will feature videos capturing the voices, stories and messages of First Nations Elders, Aunties, womxn in health, and young womxn.

VAHENonline received funding for the first time in 2019-2020, and has extended on the foundational successes this year. VAHENonline is improving content and teaching in tertiary health courses. In addition to building their LMS, the VAHENonline team commenced hosting monthly reflective sessions. These sessions stem from the initial VAHENonline webinar, 'Racism in the classroom: How do I respond?' which attracted an audience over 90 Health Academics. Since then, the VAHENonline team has delivered this session and others within Universities as part of their fee-for-service endeavors. The team has also delivered lectures to University students in health courses, and are in conversation to deliver more.

The continuation of Aunty's Voice, led by Aunty Steff Armstrong as the inaugural Weenthunga Aunty, recognises the importance of listening to Aunties voices to inform our work, and valuing the role of Aunties in nurturing wellbeing. Within this reporting period, Aunty Steff hosted an 'Anti-racism and Building Allyship' meeting, as part of

her role on the Bendigo Reconciliation Committee. 20 people attended the meeting, and there were some key actions identified for the group moving forward. Aunty Steff also worked alongside Sam on a project and report for Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-Operative's (BDAC) Early Years Centre. Aunty Steff and Sam journeyed closely with Dja Dja Wurrung woman Bec Phillips from Djandak for this body of work, which brought together experiences and knowledges of health and education; and in Weenthunga's way, recognised the interconnectedness of these. Aunty Steff added voice to many spaces in her role, some of which included Social Ventures Australia (SVA) Education Conference, Reconciliation Victoria's Education Strategic Plan review and VACCHO's Balit Durn Durn report. Aunty Steff has some availability to contribute her wealth of knowledge and experience to conferences, consultations, key notes, meeting facilitation, and guest speaker engagements as part of the external scope of her role (*Note: costs for these engagements apply and can be discussed with our Durrong Ngulu team*).

Our work in the space of cultural safety and critical consciousness continues to grow and develop as we listen, learn and unlearn. Within this reporting period, we hosted a workshop for Weenthunga Committee and staff, to instill and reflect more ideas and experiences. We now offer half day workshops (4 hours), full day workshops (7.5 hours) and two hour workshop series (with a minimum of three workshops within the series).

Additional fee-for-service work also continued. For example, we worked with VACCHO to plan and host focus groups in the audiology space, and report back on observations and understandings. We welcome discussions for fee-for-service work within health and health education where appropriate remuneration is offered in return; in respect for First Nations people sharing time and knowledge.

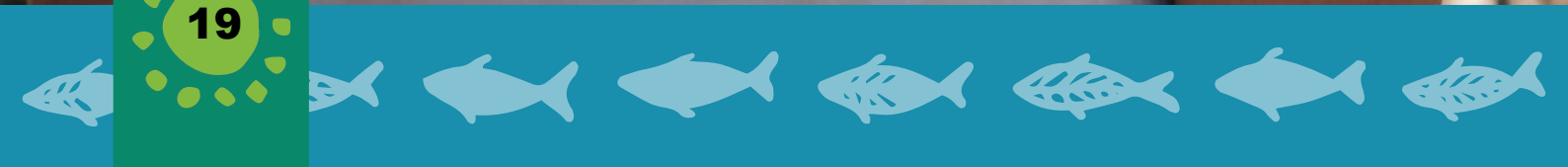
Weenthunga's programs and services intersect, and we explore links and relatedness within our internal events. These events include our quarterly staff gatherings, as well as in our fortnightly First Nations spaces and Collaborators spaces. Within these spaces, we build our work collectively through sharing reflections and collaborative planning.







Morgan Carter - Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Alumni



Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Program

We come together in a safe environment to hear and understand other womxn's stories. We are supported by community and Ancestors to listen to our own voice; to reflect. We move forward on our journey into a health career with new information, confidence, cultural knowledge and strength in our identity.*

At the heart of all of Weenthunga's programs and services is our work with First Nations young womxn who are interested in, or passionately pursuing, a career in health. Our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie program nurtures opportunities, experiences and connections for First Nations young womxn in senior secondary school, tertiary 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.

The deleterious effects and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, compounded with instances of racism, took its toll on the spirits of First Nations young womxn's. For young womxn in high school, the challenges of remote learning continued. For Alumni, many of whom are frontline health workers, heightened anxiety and trauma was experienced. We listened to young womxn, and heard their feelings of stress, isolation and disconnection, which unfortunately became commonly shared.

We were inspired and informed by Gee, Hart, Shultz and Kelly's (2013) Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework in conceptualising and carrying out new Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie activities. We contributed to young womxn's health, wellbeing and healing, including gifting Wellbeing Packs to all young womxn, which in turn strengthened feelings of belonging and connection. With a strong sense of purpose, young womxn in our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie program continued their engagement in education and/or employment.

*Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie is a space for female identifying, trans-women, gender-fluid and non-binary mob. We use the term 'First Nations young womxn' and are here for all sistas; not just cis-ters.

Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Bendigo

In 2020-2021, our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Bendigo Program was led by Arkeria Armstrong, in collaboration with Miv Ollis. 16 First Nations young womxn were engaged across two schools.

Our Bendigo Team hosted their annual Womxn's Talk Health Day on 19 March 2021 on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, at Bendigo Senior Secondary School. Dja Dja Wurrung woman Bec Phillips Welcomed everyone to Country shared a Smoking Ceremony. 10 First Nations womxn working in health, which included six Alumni, shared their stories, including their work in health, on the day. Included as part of this experience was a bush tucker feed, catered by Murnong Mummas.

Two face-to-face Weaving Days were also hosted on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, bringing together young womxn and significant womxn in their lives (e.g. Mums, Aunties, Carers, Sisters), for sharing, teaching and learning weaving practice.

Aunty Steff also convened a local Nursing and Midwifery Network in Bendigo, comprising nurses, midwives and health academics; there is a large uptake of careers in nursing and midwifery within the Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie program. This Network exists to wrap-around young womxn who choose this career path, backing them in their endeavors, as well as addressing systemic issues that result in spaces being culturally unsafe for them.

The team continued to undertake work with St John of God Bendigo, a long-term supporter of Weenthunga, with whom we have a formal collaboration agreement.

We would like to thank the Ian Potter Foundation and the RE Ross Trust for their funding support of this program.

Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Melbourne

In 2020-2021, our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Melbourne Program was led by Sam Paxton until October, at which time Canisha Clemmet-Kennedy was successfully appointed into the role. Sam continued to support Canisha in her role, until Aileen Traynor commenced as a collaborator in



February. 15 First Nations young womxn were engaged across five schools.

Our Melbourne Team's annual Womxn's Talk Health Day was twice planned to take place on Wurundjeri Country, at Reservoir High School, but was canceled due to ongoing lockdowns.

Within this reporting period, we connected with Thornbury High School's "Deadly Sista Girlz" program (an initiative of the Wirrapanda Foundation) and hosted two Zoom workshops, sharing, teaching and learning weaving practice.

We also hosted a 'Sista Yarns and Healing' for First Nations womxn in our LSN. We shared a dinner together, then had a healing and reading with Yorta Yorta woman Allira Potter.

We would like to thank Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (now Department of Fairness, Families and Housing), and Ngarara Willim - RMIT University for their funding support of this program.

Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Geelong

In 2020-2021, our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Geelong Program was led by Kylie Clarke, in collaboration with Kylie Fox. 20 First Nations young womxn were engaged across six schools.

Our Geelong Team's annual Womxn's Talk Health Day was twice planned to take place on Wadawurrung Country, at various locations, but was canceled due to ongoing lockdowns. Instead, the team hosted two events: 'Lunchtime Yarnz with Aunties' and 'Connections and Insights with Mob Working in Public Health and Community Health' webinar.

Lunchtime Yarnz with Aunties was hosted at Narana Cultural Centre. Alongside Aunty Steff, local respected Elders. Aunty May Owen, a proud Yorta Yorta and Taungurung woman, and Aunty Athalie Madden, a proud Yorta Yorta woman, shared their stories. Held over the school holidays, this space encouraged the young womxn to connect together in person, after not having done so for the past year. Included as part of this experience was a bush tucker feed and nature

immersion opportunity.

Yalanda Neal-Edwards, who has been involved in the Geelong program since its inception, completed a six-week community placement as part of her VCAL studies. Yalanda joined Weenthunga one day a week over this time, and made an invaluable and significant contribution to the space.

The team organised connections with health and education professionals, including a radiographers, pediatric nurse, natro-path, pharmacist and staff at NIKERI - Deakin University.

We would like to thank Give Where You Live and the Geelong Community Foundation for their funding support of this program.

Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Alumni

In 2020-2021, our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Alumni Program was led by Arkeria Armstong. Alumni are young womxn who we met in high school as part of our program, and who we have continued to journey alongside; some for near to 10 years now.

20 First Nations young womxn were engaged in our Alumni space.

Alumni opportunities, experiences and connections included:

- One-on-one yarns with Aunty Steff/Arkeria.
- One-on-one readings and healings Allira Potter.
- Alumni end-of-year celebration dinner.
- Guest speaking platforms, including at our Womxn's Talk Health Day.
- Featuring in video stories, as part of our Networked Community Project.
- Six online Zoom yarns, focusing on health, wellbeing and healing, as well as unpacking topics such as 'The Sugarcoated Language of Racism in Medicine'.
- Gifting wellbeing packs.

Four bursary's were awarded to Alumni, under the Meg Irwin Bursary fund, We express our gratitude to Meg for her generosity. Meg is a Speech Pathologist, former Weenthunga Committee Member, and current Weenthunga Member.





Kylie Fox, Kelly Barrett (Alumni) and Kylie Clarke



2021 Womxn's Talk Health Day on Dja Dja Wurrung Country



Aunty's Voice

Yaama/Hello. A reflection/yarn about the search for peace and patience ... to nourish and nurture a space for our young, our way. The Aunty space has continued to grow steadily and in late 2020, we launched Baagii Maliyaa (Grandmothers Friends) to raise funds for an Alumni Retreat planned for late 2021 and also to investigate big ideas and yarns. Various social media such as a blog, Twitter and Instagram were used to begin to lay a bit of an imprint. Like any Nana/Aunty, having a go at social media meant reaching out and asking for help; thank-you my precious daughter who came to the rescue to set up this online space. Again, it is wonderful to have family to "back" you; even when they may not know what it is you want, they still "back" you, believing you, believing your experience.

One of my paths is about passing on knowledge and ways of being and doing to our next group of young warriors. As a "little, black, older" woman I have lived experience that is formed in crevices of rocks to create change, every "yarn", every action, every moment of quiet, etches a tiny line for blood to run and for old ways to edge its way closer to our young. I have done this with my children and now my granddaughter, I wish to continue this with our Weenthunga family. Over the past 12 months I have had to help and step into other spaces of leadership but always trying to keep true to the auntie space. It looks different, it feels different, it takes time to get to this space It feels like deep pain but it is a strength of lived experiences that can be shared with our young people. Our Old People have always done this, this etching and passing along bits or drips of nourishment of our ways over time. The ways of "growing up strong" children, and for them to reach out for help as needed and to sit and listen to guidance even when it is hard to sit and harder to listen.

Having spaces for auntie's voice in decolonising spaces means lots of "waiting", for small moment of space to consider elements of my ways passed on by my mother and generations before. Not only considering the past but listening to it deeply and engaging with the present is very different for the inner spirit. It is a slowing process of making sure steps and actions don't cause you to rush and cause pain. Overwhelmed – tired – fatigued, has

entered into my life like I had never thought, could it also be age and the space to slow a little mmmm. I have also made space to sit, reflect and walk and the best healer has been walking on Country training for the Larapinta in July 2021.

Though this was quoted in the 2019/2020 report, I thought once again the protocol of an Aunty trying to teach. "The onus is on the listener therefore when you are "growled" you are required to learn to sit not just for a little time, but it could be for years ... It is a gift, to allow for self-reflection, it is for moments of your own change, it means lots of frustration, the bruising of the ego and the belief to wait".

I wish to thank Sam and Erin for their patience, to Lin my unpaid PA and friend and to my wonderful family who back me with these three words, as a Gamilaraay grandmother my mantra is "I believe in lore, laughter and legacy."

We would like to thank the Donald Fraser Family Fund for their funding support of the Aunty role.

Note: This is a yarn, an invitation to those who read this to reach out.

Cultural Safety and Critical Consciousness Workshops

This year, we continued pursuing our intention to work in the space of addressing racism in health and health education, with our Cultural Safety and Critical Consciousness workshops and consultations. Our unique approach covers topics of the 4Rs, identity, culture, power, privilege, racism, decolonising, anti-racism and working two-way. We assist people and groups to understand the need to get comfortable with having uncomfortable yet crucial conversations. Our content and delivery style provides opportunities for reflection and learning that build the essential foundations for developing understandings of our past, present, and possible futures.

In September and October 2020, we delivered two workshops to Victorian ACCO staff. These workshops were free to ACCOs and participants, with Weenthunga acting in the spaces of reciprocity and gratitude, acknowledging the

dedication and hard work of ACCOs. We had 45 ACCO staff join us across the two workshops. In February 2021, we delivered a workshop to St John of God Hospital Geelong, who had heard of the many successes stemming from our workshop delivery at St John of God Hospital Bendigo.

Within this reporting period, we also commenced long-term journeys of transformational change with two organisations: Castlemaine Health and Murray Primary Health Network. Weenthunga has worked, and continues to work, with managers and leaders within these organisations, including their CEOs. Our approach in these spaces includes a series of two-hour workshops, with preparation work before sessions, and reflective work after sessions. In our work of transformational change, we meet regularly with key people at organisations to debrief and unpack how sessions went, sharing observations and understandings.

The enduring impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns meant our workshops were delivered in mixed modes, with some online, and some face-to-face. As we transition to “living with COVID”, we will be able to offer both to organisations who are interested and ready to work with us. You can contact us at info@weenthunga.com.au if you'd like to talk more.

VAHENonline

The Victorian Aboriginal Health Education Network online offerings have continued to grow over the past 12 months. Throughout 2020, efforts were placed into developing the LMS platform Moodle, sourcing content from various First Nations peoples and organisations to share and distribute with VAHENonline users. There are currently 101 registered users of VAHENonline.

In September 2020 the VAHENonline team hosted their first event titled 'Racism in the Classroom; How do I respond?'. The event brought together over 90 academics and educators to discuss how to work towards creating anti-racist spaces for learning and working together to address racism. The event received positive feedback and indicated that VAHENonline users preferred to network and share thoughts/reflections live with one another, rather than post or share resources online asynchronously.

In 2021, the main source of engagement with VAHENonline users shifted from relying primarily on asynchronous communication via the LMS platform Moodle to synchronous communication via Zoom.

Monthly reflective sessions were introduced and brought together university academics and professional staff across disciplines and institutions to discuss topics, such as: 'Innovation in Teaching First Nations Curriculum: Decolonising Your Material', 'How do I deliver First Nations content as a non-Indigenous lecturer?', 'First Nations success within the institution: Equality, achievement and wellbeing' and 'Reflecting on the White Identity'.

VAHENonline users have shared that the monthly reflective sessions are something that they look forward to, providing them an opportunity to network with health academics outside of their department and universities that otherwise wouldn't be available through their work. Users frequently reported being positively challenged by the content shared and ongoing learning through engagement. VAHENonline users have reflected that having access to a safe space to be vulnerable in sharing about their anti-racism journey has directly benefited their work in university settings.

“My understanding of what it means to decolonize curriculum has developed a great deal through these workshops. I feel more aware of how I am and am not decolonizing my curriculum and what I need to do to do better”

VAHENonline Member

VAHENonline are always welcoming new users to the site. If you work in the health space 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/2MVRSZ7. Additionally, the VAHENonline team have also expanded to now offer fee-for-service workshops, delivering tailored content or training to your staff and students.

We would like to thank the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation for their funding support of VAHENonline.

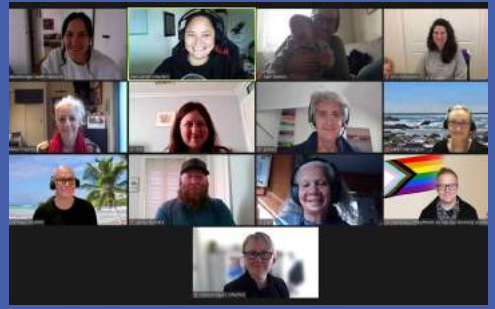




Ash Paxton - VAHENonline Leader







Treasurers Report

In 2020-2021 Weenthunga's income and expenditure increased, with successful grant applications, funding through COVID-19 response and the growth of our team to implement our programs.

Weenthunga is grateful to the following organisations for their support of our work in 20/21:

- Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing for their support of our Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie program and Networked Communities Project.
- Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions for their support of our Networked Communities Project.
- The Foundation for Young Australians for their support of our healing and wellbeing spaces with First Nations young womxn.
- Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and two of their sub-funds - Eric Burton Memorial Fund and PRL Charitable Fund, and B B & A Miller and Alf and Meg Steele Fund (sub-funds of Australian Communities Foundation) for their support of VAHENonline.
- VACCHO and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet for their support of the Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie program on Wurundjeri Country.
- Ian Potter Foundation and the RE Ross Trust for their continued support of the Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie program on Dja Dja Wurrung Country.
- Give Where You Live Foundation and the Geelong Community Foundation for their support of the Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie program on Wadawurrung Country.
- Ivanhoe Grammar School and Melbourne Grammar School for their support of our work with First Nations young womxn through the Youth in Philanthropy Program backed by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation.
- The Inner-North Community Foundation for their COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant supporting wellbeing packs and activities with First Nations young womxn.
- The City of Greater Bendigo for their COVID-19 Community Group Essentials Grant supporting cultural and peer support for First Nations young womxn.

Weenthunga would like to express our gratitude to our Members and supporters who made donations to support Weenthunga in 2020-2021. Your assistance is vital in supporting us to achieve our vision. Special thanks to:

- The Donald Fraser Family Fund for generously backing Weenthunga's Aunty role.
- Malcolm France.
- Radiant Radicals.
- Women's Health Loddon Mallee.

Finally we acknowledge the generous support of Meg Irwin for the Meg Irwin Bursary which supports young women studying tertiary health courses.

Weenthunga had retained earnings of \$230,120 for 2020-2021. Our fee-for-service income increased substantially this year enabling us to invest more resources into our programs. With continued funding uncertainty and reliance on short-term project grants, we will continue to look for ways to more sustainably resource our work and organisation, to enable Weenthunga to grow and thrive into the future.

I would like to thank Chris Dragisic for managing our finances and financial reporting, Douglas McCracken Skeggs (Easy Tax & Accounting) for providing pro-bono auditing services, and Sam Paxton and Erin McKinnon for their oversight of finances and the operations of Weenthunga.

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



Glenn Milliken - Kamilaroi
Treasurer



Finance Report

	June 2021 \$	June 2020 \$
Income	649,177	533,312
Expenditure		
Administration	74,984	95,271
Disbursements	4,581	14,367
Promotional expenses	5,660	8,656
Project activities	90,082	34,666
Staff expenses	458,719	363,809
Total expenditure	634,026	516,771
Surplus	15,151	16,541
Retained earnings	230,120	214,968

2020-2021 Financial Supporters



2020-2021 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 backing as we work together towards our shared objectives.



