

Wadamba Wilam Renew Shelter



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land we work on and pay our respects to their elders past and present.

We welcome and appreciate diversity in all its forms, including staff and consumers, and believe diversity makes our teams, services and organisation stronger.





Above artwork: Brim by Leo Baksh

Social and Emotional Wellbeing and the Collaborative Recovery Model

We aspire to deliver a culturally safe and responsive service. We employ two Aboriginal service delivery workers and have supported placements for two Aboriginal students.

The principles behind Social and Emotional Wellbeing guide all our work - staff have completed cultural responsiveness training with AIPA (Australian Indigenous Psychology Association) and use the SEWB framework to inform their practice.

All our staff are trained in the Collaborative Recovery Model (CRM) which assists consumers to direct their healing process by building on their strengths and values and supporting them to define their recovery. Integrating the principles of SEWB and CRM has proven a useful cultural model in supporting and engaging consumers in their recovery.

Interagency Collaborative Practice

Establishing an integrated outreach team comprised of staff from multiple partner agencies required careful planning, a genuine desire by all parties to collaborate, and a model that is culturally responsive and innovative.

Staff in the team receive fortnightly supervision from the Wadamba Wilam Service Manager with 'back to base days' to ensure staff regularly connect with their agency and to promote the program within their organisation.

The team utilise the expertise of VAHS staff for cultural learning. Cultural mentoring is provided for a range of purposes, including mentoring for our Service Manager, and facilitation of team planning days.

Wadamba Wilam and its partners have worked together to promote the service in a range of contexts such as co-presenting at TheMHS, Mental Health Victoria and National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) conferences, highlighting the positive consumer and system outcomes that have flowed from the partnership. The team also have a regular presence at the VAHS Family Counselling Service and participate in team-based reflective practice.

"I got a home through Wadamba Wilam. I have two teenage children, and I think it came all at the right time.

I have been there for about 12 months and I've been going excellent. I've got my son with me and my daughter comes and stays with us.

Now, having a home, I have started to work toward and repair the disconnection my mental illness caused with my children."

Consumer comment

About Wadamba Wilam

Since 2013, Wadamba Wilam has provided holistic outreach support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are experiencing homelessness and require support around their Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB). Our service, which works with consumers from the Darebin and Whittlesea Local Government Areas, is a partnership of organisations across these regions including Neami National (lead organisation), Victorian Aboriginal Health Services (VAHS), Uniting Care ReGen and Northern Area Mental Health Services (NAMHS).

The program works with people experiencing homelessness and provides housing and healthcare support. We work with consumers from intake, throughout their journey into their homes and beyond, helping to ensure sustained tenancies over the long term.

Wadamba Wilam offers intensive outreach to 30 consumers at any one time. Outreach provides an opportunity for more intensive community intervention and flexibility in service provision.

Most consumers of the service experience PTSD or Complex Trauma, and we employ a trauma-informed approach to our work. Through the development of a strong therapeutic relationship, we assist consumers in reducing the impact of these traumas on their daily life.

People engaging with the program can experience major improvements in their Social and Emotional Wellbeing, demonstrated by greater cultural connectedness and an increased sense of safety and self-esteem.

In 2015, the work of the program was recognised by the Council for Homeless Persons (CHP) when we were awarded the “Excellence in ending homelessness – Adults” at the annual Victorian conference. The program has also received a “Highly Commended” Community Award in 2016 from Melbourne Health and was a finalist in 2017 Victorian Public Health awards “Improving Indigenous Health – Closing the gap”.

Factors for success

Interdisciplinary team

The strength of the model lies in the capacity within the team to work with each consumer intensively, reducing the need for referrals to external agencies and minimising the chances of a consumer ‘slipping through the gaps’ in the service system.

Having a team with diverse skills such as psychiatry and psychiatric nursing, alcohol and other drug counselling, housing, and cultural knowledge provides an integrated response to multiple needs and eliminates the requirement for consumers to retell often traumatising stories.

Having access to the knowledge and resources of the partner organisations greatly assists staff in maximising opportunities for consumers.

The team

- Service Manager (Neami National)
- Social & Emotional Wellbeing Worker (Victorian Aboriginal Health Service)
- Senior Psychiatric Nurse (Northern Area Mental Health Services)
- Senior AOD Clinician (UnitingCare ReGen)
- Community Rehabilitation Support Worker (Neami National)
- 0.1 FTE Consultant Psychiatrist (Northern Area Mental Health Services)
- 0.2 FTE Specialist Housing Support Worker (Neami National)

FTE (Full-time equivalent) refers to the portion of a standard working week.

Cover artwork: Life by Nicole Atkinson | Below: Yellow Belly by Leo Baksh



Consumer achievements

With the tailored intensity of support consumers have shown improvements in a range of areas.

Housing

31 consumers have secured safe tenancies (with a 95% retention rate after 12 months) alongside supported referrals to Community Care units and Residential Supported accommodation. The program also supports consumers who are at risk of homelessness to maintain their housing.

Legal

The program has supported positive court outcomes and a reduction in offending behaviours, completed correction orders, good behaviour bonds with no convictions, and avoidance of incarceration.

Physical health

To improve the management of chronic health conditions we support consumers to collect and administer their various medications for physical and psychiatric conditions, including depots and Webster packs. There has been a significant increase in linking consumers who were not accessing primary healthcare with a regular GP.

Drug and Alcohol

Through the holistic nature of support, consumers are more likely to address the impact their drug and alcohol use has on their healing and recovery within the program.

The team conducts assessments and makes referrals to detox and residential rehabilitation programs, maintaining contact with consumers throughout this time.

The capacity to respond quickly to consumer's readiness to work on drug and alcohol use has been instrumental in achieving positive outcomes.

More information

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Consumers have completed CATALYST and TORQUE, non-residential rehabilitation programs (provided by UnitingCare Regen) and have ceased long term IV use and adopted pharmacotherapy replacement treatments.

Cultural connection

There is a strong correlation between the protective factors of connection to culture and improvements in Social and Emotional Wellbeing.

The team support consumers to attend cultural groups in the community such as the VAHS Men's group and Sister Circle. Consumers have also attended an annual men's camp.

Access to services

Consumers have improved and timely access to mainstream services through the program. We have referred over 40 consumers (some with multiple stays) to the Northern Prevention and Recovery Care facility, supported admissions to the Northern Psychiatric Unit and Community Care Unit and made referrals to adult detox and rehabilitation programs.

Education

- Improved opportunity for consumers to access education and training.
- One consumer has commenced full-time work in a government organisation
- One consumer has returned to school after missing three years of secondary school.
- There are consumers now enrolled in Cert IV community services and at TAFE.
- One consumer has completed peer helper training.
- Consumers have begun work, two in casual roles and one in a part-time position