

REPORT TO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OF ALBURY WODONGA

Bagaraybang bagaraybang mayinygalang (BBM): Empowering & Alleviating: A Health Justice Partnership (HJP) between the Hume Riverina Community Legal Service (HRCLS) & Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service (AWAHS) offering legal support for social & emotional well-being.

The BBM project is a partnership between HRCLS and AWAHS. A lawyer and community engagement worker from HRCLS work with AWAHS staff to provide legal services, and support client wellbeing.

The BBM project is in its first year of a three year project. The aim of the project is to improve access to justice and to improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples.

Nottingham Trent University researcher Dr Liz Curran is the project evaluator. In April 2023 she met with Aboriginal people, counsellors, doctors, nurses, financial counsellors, drug and alcohol workers, psychologists and other people who work with the local Aboriginal community to ask about how the project is going. She gathered feedback from the lawyers in the program and the managers who run HRCLS and AWAHS.



Albury Wodonga
Aboriginal Health Service



What Community Told Us

- “We don’t trust law. Law has done a lot of damage to us. The justice system is part of institutional racism. Lawyers and the legal system doing things to us, not with us or for us.”
- “This is why we need the lawyers, but they must be lawyers who are on our side and who work with the people here at the health service but also who listen and work for us.”
- “We want a legal service that knows that we should have the authority and power to do what's right for our people and to work with us to advocate for this.”
- “When I saw her after her interview there were no tears, and I could see that the body language signified that she went from a feeling of having no hope and ... that she was going crazy, to being heard and listened to and things being put in a context for her. Her whole presentation was different. She felt she was able to take action rather than feeling she was the victim.”

What Our Findings Are

- There is a high level of distrust in Aboriginal communities in the local area. This is shaped by previous experiences with the legal system, service system, and implications of colonisation.
- Trust is seen as important to the Aboriginal community for them to engage, as well as showing respect, being approachable and involving Aboriginal people in decision-making.
- While Aboriginal people wanted to know their legal position, they also wanted to gain a better understanding of what their rights were and to explore their options.
- There is opportunity for increased awareness within the Aboriginal community that law can be a help rather than a hindrance. 'Knowledge is power.' There is an appetite among community to learn more about areas of law they did not know can help them to allow their community to achieve better legal outcomes.

Thank you to those who participated in this research for enabling us to do this study and to learn about ways in which Aboriginal people can be better supported.

Many people don't understand the sorts of problems that might have a legal solution or that lawyers can help by providing other options that might not be known.

The learning from this study, including your participation and views, is shaping how the legal service will operate to ensure that you are able to know about, access, and ensure your human rights in a place of cultural safety.

There is a more detailed report available online that you are most welcome to read. Scan the QR code or view and download the report at <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4507339>

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Original artwork is titled 'Bunmabunmarra' meaning 'to show, help and assist' and was commissioned by Hume Riverina Community Legal Service in 2018.

Artist: Dan Bundadhaany Clegg Nation: Wiradhuri Totem: Gugaa