

# Supporting a culturally responsive and accountable family violence sector

**Project Update: February 2025**

## Project intention

Djirra, Elizabeth Morgan House and Safe and Equal are partnering to support non-Aboriginal specialist family violence services to take actions towards a culturally responsive and accountable family violence sector. The project is grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' right to self-determination and culturally responsive, inclusive, and accessible family violence services, wherever they seek support.

## Project funding

This work is resourced by Safe and Equal as a demonstration of the accountability of the peak body and their non-Aboriginal member services under the *Dhelk Dja Partnership Agreement* which recognises non-Aboriginal service providers as critical partners in delivering culturally safe services. It is not a funded activity under Dhelk Dja.

## About this update

The update on the following pages describes the approach, the journey so far, the journey ahead and how your organisation can get involved.



# Project update

## The Journey so far

### *Deepening our understanding*

Guided by a Steering Group, co-chaired by Djirra and Safe and Equal with membership including two Aboriginal members of the Victim Survivor Advisory Council and representation from Elizabeth Morgan House, Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service, Good Samaritans Inn, Centre Against Violence, and FVREE, we reviewed the policy landscape, identifying the relevant policies and standards in relation to the provision of culturally responsive services by the specialist family violence sector.

We entered a listening phase to deepen our understanding of the current strengths and short falls in the provision of services to Aboriginal people experiencing family violence. We yarned with five Aboriginal women who have accessed family violence services, 38 staff across 13 Aboriginal family violence services (ACCOs) and 52 staff across 38 non-Aboriginal family violence services. Recognising that interpreting data and forming conclusions is not a neutral process, and to uphold data sovereignty, we held a sense making workshop with the Steering Group.

The findings are published in an [Insights Report](#). This truth-telling report examines the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in non-Aboriginal family violence services' support for Aboriginal people. We aimed to amplify the voices of Aboriginal women and services who generously shared their experiences and expertise, using quotes to honour the intent of what they shared.

### *Committing to action and accountability*

These insights guided the creation of a Commitment to Action and Story of Change, collaboratively developed with the family violence sector to ensure non-Aboriginal family violence services uphold Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people's rights to self-determination, choice, and safety and demonstrate accountability to communities.

The Commitment to Action is a statement from non-Aboriginal family violence services acknowledging, what they have **heard**, the **actions** they will take, and how they will demonstrate **accountability**. It is shaped around four ways of working, uphold self-determination, bring cultural humility, disrupt Whiteness, and move at the pace of trust. The Story of Change is a visual tool that illustrates the pathway of change we hope to influence. It is hoped that these living documents will also be a tool for ACCOs to hold our sector to account to do what we say we will do.

In August 2024, we hosted a day of discussion, personal reflection centred around these four ways of working outlined in the Commitment to Action. You can check out a summary of the event [here](#).

### *Expanding the partnership*

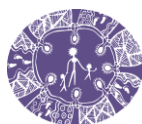
In late 2024, Elizabeth Morgan House joined the partnership. This exciting growth of the partnership will bring benefit from Elizabeth Morgan House's expertise and extended reach of sector capability building activities.

## The journey ahead

### *Putting words into action*

The Commitment to Action and Story of Change is rightfully ambitious. This is an ongoing journey, that requires sustained commitment. It is the responsibility of non-Aboriginal family violence services and Safe and Equal to put it into practice, informed by deep engagement with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. Over the course of 2025, we will be focusing efforts on setting up the conditions for meaningful change and accountability.

We are working to establish a **Directions Group**. This will be a governance structure of family violence ACCOs to enable accountability and transparency of progress against the Commitment to Action and Story of Change.



The group may also provide space to raise the voices of family violence ACCOs across different spaces.

We will create a **Collaborative Impact Framework** and associated participatory data collection tools, anchored to the Story of Change to measure and monitor action and impacts.

We will be embedding the Commitment to Action through **sector workforce development** training, networks and communities of practice, including, but not limited to:

- Build capacity for family violence service's justice-doing with statutory agencies
- Review and implement PSI Guidelines and support introduction of ACCO PSI Function
- Create practice and policy change to safety plan to enable time away from accommodation to restore and maintain connections and work at pace of trust
- Strengthen MARAM secondary consultation and co-case management
- Promote leadership's role in fostering equitable relationships with ACCOs and upholding Commitment to Action
- Develop supervision reflective tool for supervisors to embed discussions about upholding self-determination, disrupting Whiteness, bringing humility and moving at the pace of trust.
- Embed true history of how sector has enacted Whiteness and been complicit in colonisation historically and ongoingly into sector induction.
- Share policy templates for Cultural Supervision and Cultural Leave.

## Shared responsibility

While the project will initially focus efforts on specific areas of the Story of Change, specialist family violence services do not need to be limited to this. We recognise non-Aboriginal family violence service providers operate with different histories, regions, and readiness.

Services may choose to focus on actions that make sense to their context. To create the shift required, each non-Aboriginal family violence service will need to invest time, energy and resources into purposeful anti-racist reflective practice to examine their histories, and foster equitable relationships to guide their future work.

## Get in touch

Anna Wark is the Family Violence Project Lead based at Djirra and welcomes any questions you may have or opportunities to discuss your organisation's involvement ph: 0447 404 334 [awark@djirra.org.au](mailto:awark@djirra.org.au).

