



Ngunya Jarjum



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Introduction

Ngunya Jarjum was established in 1996 by Bundjalung elders and community members to address the crisis and need for more Aboriginal kinship and foster carers to keep Aboriginal children in family, on Country and in culture.

The organisation has grown from a small Aboriginal foster care support agency to one of the largest Aboriginal community controlled designated agencies under the NSW Office of Children's Guardian to provide culturally appropriate care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care within the Bundjalung Nation encompassing the Clarence, Richmond and Tweed Valley areas.

We have been significantly extending our service delivery to families at risk of having their children removed from their care by establishing the Ngunya Gumaguy service (family preservation) and Balaa service (culturally responsive casework)

Partners

We have one of the largest Aboriginal workforces in the non-government sector of Northern NSW, working in close collaboration with local Aboriginal communities and other Aboriginal not-for-profit Organisations on the Far North Coast.

Our staff have active memberships with SNAICC, local Aboriginal Land Councils and Family Law Planning Network and other significant Govt and non-Govt organisations, our CEO is a Board member of ABSEC.

Objectives

Over the past 23 years, Ngunya Jarjum have primarily delivered out of home care service after children have been taken from the care of their families.

We have recently established a family preservation service to work intensively with our most vulnerable families, led by culturally sound practice.



Methods

Understand the funding requirements of the program

- Non-negotiables
- Evidence base
- Fundamentals of practice

Develop a program informed by the family experience

- Trauma responsive practice
- Family lifestyle
- Understanding risk v's privilege
- Capacity and willingness of the family
- Extended family support structures
- Community ability



Yours, Mine, Our Children



Lessons Learned

Family preservation programs tried in the past were researched extensively prior to the development of the Gumaguy model. Although some were evidence informed, it was difficult to locate models that were developed by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal families in Australia.

Ngunya Jarjum staff chose to develop a model that is not only culturally based, but developed locally, engaging the knowledge and wisdom of the communities and families the program was identified to service.

Objectives were met throughout the development of the program by:

- Embedding the ABSEC Aboriginal Case Management Policy principles
- Checking cultural integrity throughout the development of the model
- Building from the experience of other partner Agencies

The model offers families skilled and caring workers who are not afraid to work through the real issues for our families such as:

- Disconnection from family and Community
- Bad things that have happened – and how it affects the ability to be a family now (trauma)
- Domestic and family Violence
- Grief and loss
- Drug and/or Alcohol problems that get in the way of caring for children
- Money worries/budgeting and planning
- Mental Illness
- Communication problems in families (such as parent-adolescent/s)
- Family routines
- Health and wellbeing plans
- Or anything else.....



The Gumaguy model is in the beginning phase of implementation at this time.

Into the future it is our vision to refine the model and expand the model to prevent more Aboriginal children entering the OOHC sector.

Partnerships with other services supported us to establish the program well. We are hopeful that other Aboriginal organisations will also benefit from using a similar methodology for program development to enhance the establishment of new programs they wish to develop into the future.

The program has a long term vision, one that makes great economic sense to a future Government, but more valuable to us is the preservation of Culture and Connection for our families, communities and children into the future.

The Gumaguy interface with Balaa program:

Alongside of establishing the Gumaguy program – Ngunya Jarjum also established the Balaa program, a suite of services available to support meaningful and quality casework to Aboriginal families.

This program offers services such as (but not restricted to) :

- Cultural consultation
- Finding mob
- Family conferencing and yarnups
- Youth mentoring
- Supervision for family time visits (contact)

Balaa services offer a way to lead family preservation work through Connection. Belonging and Identity for all Aboriginal people, in an Aboriginal way.



Impact/What's next?

As an Agency we are constantly searching to increase our Foster Carer pool and are actively seeking carers who believe that they can make a positive difference in the life of a child or young person. Our carers are assessed with the hope and vision that all our children will return home to the care of their families.

Ngunya Gumaguy will continue to refine our services and focus on our more vulnerable families as assessed to be at risk of removal by the Dept of Communities and Justice,

Enhancing the interface between Balaa services and Gumaguy will consolidate the model and offer families the most progressive experience when working toward change.

Acknowledgements

ABSEC
Dept of Communities and Justice