Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place
“Which Way Together”
Gunai/Kurnai language

Using Culture as a Vehicle to create change
Australasian Therapeutic Communities
Association 2016 Gathering
Wulgunggo Ngalu location in Gippsland
What is Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place?

A priority initiative from the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement

A state wide correctional facility that is not a prison

Participation is voluntary and involves living on site for between 3 to 6 months

Provides Koori men on a Community Correction Order with an important opportunity to learn new skills reconnect with, or further strengthen, their culture and participate in programs and activities to help them address their offending behavior.
Who is eligible?

To be eligible to participate in Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place (WNLP) the participants must be:

– Male, 18 years old or over
– Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
– Currently on a Community Correction Order

Participants may be required to complete an appropriate withdrawal process before attending the program

Referrals must come from either Community Correctional Services or the Courts.
Using Culture as a vehicle to create change

There are three main program areas in which participants must contribute:

**Community Correction Order**, e.g. Programs to reduce reoffending, drug and alcohol support, attendance to mental health treatment and counselling and community work

**Education component**, e.g. living skills, resumes, TAFE certificate courses, cooking, cleaning and community engagement

**Cultural component**, which focuses on strengthening spirit and connection to country, community and family by including elders who teach respect for land, self and others. Cultural specific programs include Dardi Munwurro, Marumali, Aboriginal Cultural Immersion and weekly men's business
Video The Eagle
WNLP – A Best Practice Model

In 2011, the Corrections Victoria Information Management and Evaluation Branch evaluated the order completion outcomes for WNLP participants. This study found that those who completed WNLP successfully completed their order at a much higher rate.

Clear Horizon Consulting undertook a qualitative evaluation on the role of cultural strengthening at WNLP, which was commissioned by CVIM&EB. This evaluation was completed in 2013 and found that WNLP cultural strengthening processes reflected best practice and had positive outcomes for participants. The full report is available on the Corrections Victoria public website.

The only relevant framework in the Australian context is that developed by Cunneen (2001), who outlines five principles for culturally appropriate diversion programs, arguing that they should:

1. Adopt a holistic view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing
2. Provide for meaningful, not tokenistic involvement of Aboriginal people
3. Involve the participant’s family and the community
4. Emphasise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, culture and law
5. Assist in establishing and strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (such as staff) who can become mentors and role models.
Eight key aspects of the WNLP model

WNLP evaluation conducted by Clear Horizon Consulting in 2013. Identified eight key aspects of the WNLP model

1. WNLP adopts a holistic program model, and cultural strengthening processes are embedded within and central to this model.

2. ERPs provide cultural advice and mentor participants.

3. There is a strongly individualised approach taken to each participant and their needs.

4. All core staff are Koori men, who act as strong role models.

5. There was extensive Koori input into WNLP’s design and there continues to be Koori involvement in the program’s oversight and governance.

6. WNLP has established a culturally safe physical environment.

7. The isolation of the WNLP site enables participants to take ‘time out’.

8. The voluntary nature of attendance means that participants tend to be more committed to the WNLP experience.
Order Completion Rates

- C-WNLP was the highest with 75%
- Non-Indigenous men were next highest with 65%
- I-WNLP followed with 61%
- Other group had 60%
Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place

!!! ICPA Award Winner !!!

2010