

ac.care and Moorundi Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation – a relationship of trust and respect



The seed for transition of the HIPPY Program to Aboriginal Community Control was planted long before it officially became 'a thing' driven by Brotherhood of St Lawrence and HIPPY Australia. It all began through the creation of a mutually trusting and respectful relationship between our two organisations.

Like all relationships, this partnership truly works thanks to key people in both organisations with the wisdom, values and passion for Aboriginal self-determination. In particular, Kathy Rigney, ac.care's Senior Aboriginal Advisor, Moorundi CEO Uncle Steve Sumner, and Dorothy Kartinyeri, ac.care's Manager Aboriginal Services and Community Partnerships. Each of these people are strong, wise and community focussed leaders in the Ngarrindjeri Nation who have not only been able to work tirelessly in their own community but have educated and influenced non-Aboriginal people in the same region.

For several years ac.care has tried to work hard to improve it's understanding and responsiveness to Aboriginal people. We've developed and actioned several Reconciliation Action Plans including most recently a stretch version. In the organisation's current Strategic Plan, the organisation set a goal to "Support First Nations People to Determine Their Own Futures". An inspiring goal but what actions would we take to make this happen? Yarning about the strength of Moorundi and other complimentary services they had, it became clear that partnering ac.care's HIPPY Program with Moorundi's Piltenggi-Walun Po:rlar (PKT) program would create a fantastic opportunity for families. Piltenggi-Walun Po:rlar (PKT) (meaning becoming strong children) is an early intervention program focussed on families positively interacting with their children through playgroups – so it was a natural fit!

Very early on in the process of partnering, ac.care and Moorundi's key staff (including CEOs and service delivery staff) workshoped a range of issues. This included building a strong understanding of each other's work and the way that work happens, the opportunities and challenges of a partnership and a vision for the future. It was clear that transition of the HIPPY program to Moorundi's control would be a natural and best outcome for Aboriginal families.

The transition began with a 'soft and gradual' approach. ac.care began to run HIPPY group gatherings for families from one of Moorundi's sites. This was incredibly successful as it was a facility already set up for children and families with a library, wet area, outdoor play area and kitchen. It was also familiar to many Aboriginal families. The natural progression from this was to offer combined community engagement activities including Reconciliation and NAIDOC week events, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Children's Day activities and even a 'Hangout Club' for older siblings.

The experience has been nothing but positive! Moorundi has proven to be a patient and generous partner who has shared their knowledge and been incredibly inclusive. Including to those families in the HIPPY program who are non-Aboriginal.

Our transition is not yet complete. However, we are confident that if we continue to progress in the same spirit of honesty and respect for each other with a focus upon what's best for Aboriginal families and their community, our transition should be completed smoothly by the end of 2025.

