



Booroongen  
Djugun Ltd

# NEWSLETTER

April, 2026



## THE NATIONAL SKILL AGREEMENT

This month our CEO Kylie O'Bryan attended for the signing of the NSA Ctg implementation plan funding along with all ACCO RTOs and spoke on behalf of the community of practice to the Ministers for Education. This will enable Booroongen Djugun College to rebuild and increase its education, training and employment opportunities in our Aboriginal workforce locally and regionally. A big thank you to all ACCO RTOs & AH&MRC of NSW for hosting this amazing milestone.

## RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE FACILITY

We are excited to announce that our roof is heading towards critical repairs being finalised, which is an important step in enhancing the safety and comfort of our facilities. In addition to this significant improvement, we are also focusing on addressing the critical infrastructure and equipment needs of our Elders and residents. By prioritising these essential upgrades, we aim to create a more supportive and secure environment that meets the needs of our Elders and Community.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## FIONA BESTON, CLINICAL GOVERNANCE ADVISOR

Fiona is an experienced healthcare leader with over 30 years in health service delivery, including more than 15 years in senior leadership roles. She is known for her integrity, sound judgement, and ability to deliver practical, community-focused outcomes.

Currently a part time hospital social worker, Fiona brings a strong combination of frontline clinical expertise and strategic insight. Her experience in crisis intervention, psychosocial assessment, and multidisciplinary care enables her to contribute grounded, real-world perspectives to governance and advisory roles.

Fiona has extensive experience within the NSW Local Health District environment, leading across clinical and corporate governance, service coordination, and system improvement, including in rural and remote settings. Having previously lived and worked on the Mid North Coast, she has a strong understanding of the local health landscape and the communities served by organisations such as Booroongen Djugun.

Her leadership experience spans quality and safety, policy development, risk management, and consumer and carer engagement. She has led accreditation across disability, mental health, and primary care services, including the National Safety and Quality Health Standards, and supported multiple headspace services. She has also held district executive responsibilities across Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Services, coordinating community-based teams and contributing to system-wide performance and planning. Fiona holds a Bachelor of Social Work and a Master of Health Management and is a qualified community accreditation assessor with QIP. She brings a thoughtful, ethical approach to Board Advisory roles, with a strong commitment to culturally safe, community-led governance and supporting Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to deliver sustainable, high-quality outcomes.

## JOHN CLANCY, DIRECTOR

As a proud Dughutti man, I have dedicated my career to working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities to create meaningful opportunities through employment, connection and empowerment. For many years, my professional journey has centred on helping people build confidence, gain skills and move into pathways that support long-term independence. I have worked across a range of roles within First Nations organisations, giving me a strong understanding of community engagement, operational delivery and the importance of culturally grounded practice. In my current role as National Operations Manager for Real Futures, I lead programs designed to support people into sustainable employment and future success. I take pride in bringing a practical, solutions-focused approach to my work, with extensive experience navigating systems, legislation and service delivery in ways that genuinely meet community needs. Building strong, respectful relationships has always been at the heart of what I do. I believe that trust, respect and cultural understanding are essential foundations for achieving positive outcomes that last. I have served on the Booroongen Djugun Limited Board for many years, and throughout this time, I have undertaken extensive governance training to strengthen my contribution and uphold strong, culturally safe governance. My continued decision to serve on the Board reflects my deep commitment to community and my belief in the power of strong leadership to help shape better futures. I remain dedicated to supporting community voice, strengthening culture, and creating opportunities that empower our people now and into the future.



## CHRISTIANN CARTWRIGHT, DIRECTOR

I am a proud Darug woman from Western Sydney, grew up in Wellington NSW and have lived on Dughutti Country for 25 years where I have raised my three children and am a proud grandmother of three. With over 20 years experience across employment services, training and community development I bring extensive expertise in strategic leadership, program design and delivery and governance. As CEO of Real Futures and Executive General Manager – AKG Communities, I lead a diverse portfolio of First Nations businesses operating across remote, regional and urban communities nationally – driving innovation, growth and sustainable outcomes. I am also Chair of the Her Futures Foundation and have had the privilege of representing Real Futures internationally at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

I hold an Executive Certificate in Public Leadership from Harvard Kennedy School and have completed executive programs including Leadership Decision Making, Leadership for the 21st Century, and Women & Power, strengthening my expertise in governance, decision-making and leadership in complex environments

My connection to community is grounded in both lived experience and a career dedicated to improving employment, education and economic outcomes for First Nations people. I am deeply committed to creating culturally safe pathways and am a strong advocate for gender equality including leading initiatives aligned to the UN Women Second Chance Education Program and supporting First Nations women to thrive

I serve on the Booroongen Djugun Limited Board because I am passionate about contributing to strong, culturally informed governance that empowers community-led decision making. I bring integrity, accountability and a collaborative leadership style and I am committed to ensuring community voice, strength and self-determination remain at the centre of BDL's work



## KEVIN SMITH, ACTING CHAIR

I am a proud Dughutti man from Kempsey, deeply connected to the Aboriginal communities of the Macleay Valley and recognised across NSW through long-standing cultural, family, and professional relationships. My career spans more than three decades in Aboriginal community service, frontline advocacy, justice, policing partnerships, project management, and leadership roles. I hold a Bachelor of Business Administration from UTS, diplomas in Community Services and National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Advocacy and qualifications in building supervision and carpentry, reflecting my lifelong commitment to learning, self-determination, and personal growth. ring BDL remains a trusted, culturally safe, and community-driven organisation that continues to empower our people.



My work with the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), AES, NSW Police, and community-based organisations has strengthened my understanding of the challenges, strengths, and aspirations of our mob. I have delivered culturally grounded support, community legal education, suicide prevention initiatives, and advocacy that centres the safety, rights, and dignity of Aboriginal people. These experiences guide my approach to governance within an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation like Booroongen Djugun Limited.

I serve on the BDL Board because I believe our Elders, families, and communities deserve strong, culturally informed leadership that stands firm in their corner. I want our community to know that I bring honesty, integrity, strategic thinking, and a deep sense of responsibility to this role. My priority is ensuring BDL remains a trusted, culturally safe, and community-driven organisation that continues to empower our people.



## 2026. NSW ABORIGINAL AGED CARE FORUM

The NSW Aboriginal Aged Care 'Coming Together, Moving Forward' Forum 2026 was held the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2026, the Forum was an informative 2-day aged care gathering, held recently at the Murrook Culture Centre, Williamtown, Port Stephens, NSW, the aim of the Forum was to bring together Aboriginal Aged Care Providers, relevant and key stakeholders across the aged care industry to look at ways of improving service delivery to our Elders, network these discussion and connect our ACCO service providers over the 2 days. Was a wonderful event, and those who attended and presented included the National Peak Body for Aboriginal Aged Care - CEO Kim Whitely National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAAC); NSW/ACT Dpt. of Health, Disability and Aged Care Ms Rhiannon Evans, First Nations Engagement Officer - NSW/ACT Local Network Service Delivery Division; Ageing and Aged Care Group Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, Former Aged Care Council of Elders representative Aunty Gwenda Darling and Office of the Inspector General of Aged Care Director of Reports Lisa Berry and Gary Rake, Deputy Commissioner Regulatory, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. In attendance and other informative speakers included the Aged Care Research & Industry Innovation Australia (ARIIA); Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG); Dementia Australia; Kinchela Boys Home; Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council State - Elder Connector Program and University of Newcastle Older Persons Legal Clinic.

The forum included a plenary discussion on aged care for First Nations Elders Day 1 and a 'Yarn Up' roundtable on day 2 to discuss issues for service providers.

Adding to this, we were fortunate to have a small number of providers that displayed their services.

Most importantly, Welcome to the Forum was delivered by Booroongen Djugun Limited and an imperative part of the Forum was to include Cultural Immersion program this included Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony delivered by our local Worimi Elders; Cultural Awareness Speaking; Local Worimi Dancers and Weaving.

The NSW Aboriginal Aged Care 'Coming Together, Moving Forward' Forum 2026 was supported by the National Sector Support Development Community of Practice - First Nations Working Group and coordinated by Booroongen Djugun Limited Sector Support and Development.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

The CEO, Governing Body and Leadership Teams have had a busy month looking at BDLs current and future priorities to ensure we maintain our founding traditions while growing across multiple core business demands in Age Care, Disability and Training. I have been liaising with the Deputy Commissioner of Age care around an onsite to meet with all teams including our Governing Body to ensure our Elders voices and Age care needs are heard around Cultural safe practices. They will also be assisting the CEO, Governing Body and Key personnel around ensuring we maintain our Responsibilities and Compliance.



The CEO and Governing Body have been working together to ensure BDLs staff culture, code of conduct, workforce and financial capabilities are at the heart of current reviews ensuring Booroongen's capabilities and growth as an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation. I am happy to report that from our front-line staff to our Governing Body, we have been networking and collaborating across all states this month collaborating around core issues specific to Cultural Safe Practices and Principals.

**A big shout out to Rhonda Smith, Darren Holten, Sianna Dickson, Elly Harris and Estella Blair for the great 2026 NSW Aboriginal Aged Care Forum put together, attended and hosted !!**

The HR Team apologies for any delays in communication and I want to assure you that with the help of AES we are looking forward to another HR Team member commencing very soon. This will assist our current HR Advisors and Leadership teams in our recruitment processes.

Next month; keep a look out for our Leadership Team Profiles, Elders Quality Advisory Team and MOUs....

## WE ARE RECRUITING MORE SUPPORT STAFF

We are expanding our team and seeking additional support staff! Join us in providing high-quality, culturally rich services to our elders and individuals with disabilities. If you are passionate about making a difference and want to be part of a caring community, apply today or contact us for more information



**VISIT OUR WEBSITE**

