



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS: CONNECTING THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



Community First Development's Final Report from our recent Action Research Project confirmed the well-documented understanding that First Nations' communities operate within two forms of governance: First Nations' Governance and Western Governance.⁶ Our research also found that First Nations' communities regularly navigate the intersecting space where these two forms of governance meet, doing so out of necessity and to achieve goals such as securing funding.

FOR FIRST NATIONS' ORGANISATIONS, THE NEED TO 'WALK IN BOTH WORLDS' IS A PRODUCT OF COLONISATION THAT HAS RESULTED IN A NEW SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE PRACTICES BEING APPLIED ON TOP OF ONGOING FIRST NATIONS GOVERNANCE PRACTICES AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES THAT HAVE EXISTED FOR MORE THAN 65,000 YEARS.

In recent years, Community First Development has observed a steady increase in communities inviting us to work with them on projects focused on the area of 'Stronger Governance'. Types of activities include strategic and business planning; funding application support and mentoring; and governance training and capability building.

Image at top: Robert Duncan, Wandarrah Committee Member, providing cultural education to Wandarrah jarjums.

⁶ Community First Development. (2021). *Good governance practice leads to good relationships: An exploration of the effectiveness of Community First Development's community development approach in the Australian context - Final Report: Findings and lessons learnt.* Canberra, Australia: Community First Development.

GROWING CHILDREN UP STRONG

Wandarrah Preschool (now Wandarrah Preschool & Community Centre) was established in 1973 by 'Save the Children Fund' to provide a place of learning and gathering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families within the Inala and surrounding communities. Today, Wandarrah is a community kindergarten and childcare centre owned and managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

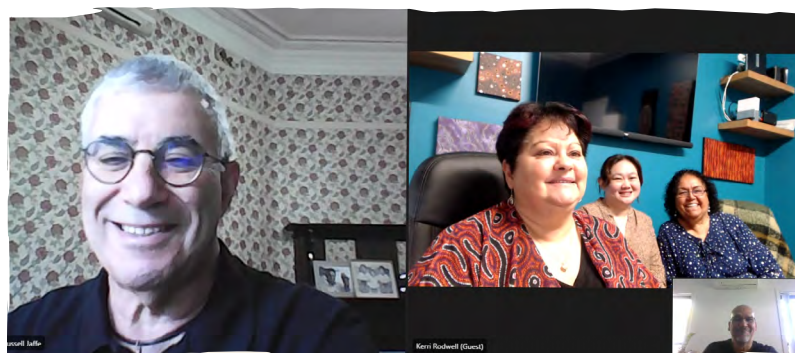
WANDARRAH IS A PLACE WHERE CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH PLAY IN A WARM AND NURTURING COMMUNITY.

It is a sanctuary that offers Indigenous Culture within the curriculum and embraces the culture of all children. Each child is made to feel safe, encouraged to explore and grow while learning important values and social skills. Wandarrah's long-term vision is to be operating from a purpose-built early childhood educational and training hub supported by key external partnerships, state of the art technology, recurrent funding, specialist staff in multiple areas, a significantly strengthened cultural program (including input from Elders), and a majority of First Nations' jarjums (children) in attendance.

CONNECTING WITH A SKILLED VOLUNTEER

Wandarrah reached out to Community First Development because they wanted support with developing a Strategic Plan.

The year 2023 marks 50 years since Wandarrah was established and the community was keen to develop a plan that would provide a strong foundation for their future.



Russell, Eddie, and the Wandarrah team participating in a planning.

After yarning further about what Wandarrah wanted to achieve through the project, Community First Development Senior Community Development Officer, Eddie, connected Wandarrah's General Manager/ Nominated Supervisor, Kerri, with skilled volunteer, Russell, who has expertise in strategic planning.

PLANNING FOR A STRONG FUTURE

Over several months, Kerri, the Wandarrah Board and Russell met via videoconferencing to scope out and progress the Strategic Plan. Following development of a draft Strategic Plan, Russell flew to Inala in March 2023 and spent three days with Kerri and the Board finalising the plan.

As part of these discussions, Russell presented and facilitated conversations on fundraising, governance, planning and risk management. He also shared and discussed a list of philanthropic grant opportunities that Wandarrah could potentially apply for.

Following his visit to Inala, Russell incorporated Wandarrah's feedback and produced a final draft of the Strategic Plan for Wandarrah's approval. The five-year plan reflects the aspirations, hopes and endeavours of the whole Wandarrah organisation and community. It outlines six strategic goals and a detailed action plan for the Board to implement.

For Kerri, the process of developing Wandarrah's Strategic Plan has provided an opportunity for reflection and to connect the past, present and future. She sees this as the highlight of the project:

"WORKING THROUGH THE PROCESS AND ACKNOWLEDGING CURRENT ACHIEVEMENTS, LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE WITH A CONSIDERED LENS, GATHERING THE VOICE OF ELDERS, STAFF, AND FAMILIES. TARGETED APPROACH TO WHAT CAN BE ACTIONED NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE. ACKNOWLEDGING THE FIRST VISION FROM THE BEGINNING IS STILL CURRENT."

- Kerri, General Manager/Nominated Supervisor, Wandarrah Preschool and Community Centre.

As part of the process, the Wandarrah team also gained a stronger understanding of the funding opportunities they could currently access and those that would require obtaining Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status.

For Russell, the highlight of the project was working with the Wandarrah team:

"THE ENTHUSIASTIC INVOLVEMENT OF THE CENTRE MANAGER, AND ONE KEY BOARD MEMBER, WHO BOTH WERE CLEAR IN WHAT THEY WANTED AND THE FUTURE THAT THEY SEE FOR THE CENTRE."

- Russell, Community First Development volunteer.

Wandarrah are currently focused on implementing the Strategic Plan. They have been engaging with government agencies around funding and hope to engage with other agencies, soon, in support of their goal to create one site for all of their early childhood education services.

Eddie and Russell with Faye (Wandarrah Board member), Kerri (Wandarrah's General Manager and Christine (Wandarrah Board Member).

