

STATEMENT

From Djirra, 3 June 2020




DJIRRA RESPONDS TO THE VAGO AUDIT OF SUPPORT AND SAFETY HUBS (ORANGE DOORS)

Djirra welcomes the Victorian Auditor-General's recommendation for Support and Safety Hubs (The Orange Door) to 'work with local Aboriginal services and community representatives to roll out mandatory cultural safety training that is specific to hub functions and operations' (recommendation 4 included in the [Victorian Auditor-General's Office](#) report released on Wednesday 27 of May).

The purpose of the audit was to examine whether 'hubs are providing effective and efficient service coordination for women and families'. The report makes nine recommendations to address the lack of clarity of the purpose of the hubs, failings in design, rushed implementation of the first hubs and inconsistent approaches in services coordination.

The report identifies gaps that have been of great concern for Djirra since the inception of the Support and Safety Hubs. The absence of mandatory training on how to deliver culturally safe services and the non-compliance of some of the hubs with the requirement to have at least two Aboriginal workers means that Orange Doors are not safe places for our women. The report also identifies tensions and inconsistencies within the hubs in relation to the level of support they provide for children. The perception of the Orange Doors' strong focus towards child protection injects fears of child removal for our women meaning that our women are less likely to disclose or report violence. The absence of consistent approach to the integration of perpetrator services is yet another source of distrust from our women. All these are well-known fears and barriers that prevent our women from accessing the Orange Door. Aboriginal women have the right to choose to access support from a culturally safe service that is Aboriginal community controlled.

As a specialist Aboriginal family violence service, Djirra must be prioritised as an essential and early reference point for the Orange Door. Djirra has state-wide reach, we have the expertise and our women trust our holistic, specialist and culturally safe services. Djirra referrals from Orange Doors are very low and this is extremely concerning. This means that Aboriginal women and children are being denied access to a trusted Aboriginal community controlled service and therefore their safety is compromised. The 'Always Was, Always Will Be Koori Children'



Inquiry (Commission for Children and Young People, 2016) found that family violence was the major driver leading to child protection involvement and entry into out of home care. Of the 980 children reviewed, 868 were known to have been exposed to violence within the family home, most often perpetrated by a male family member. The report recommends access to culturally appropriate and timely counselling and wraparound services for children and families who have been victims of family violence. Early access to legal representation for mothers will prevent child removal.

Djirra continues to advocate strongly for multiple access points for family violence support – not just the Orange Door. Mainstream approaches must not replace Aboriginal self-determined approaches. Priority must be given to resourcing Djirra to be one of the access points. Djirra still remains firm in our view that resources should be provided for workers to be based with us to provide outreach to Orange Doors across the State. Orange is not the new black.

- ends -

About Djirra

Established in 2002, Djirra is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation based in Abbotsford (VIC) with state-wide reach through its 7 regional offices. Djirra is dedicated to assisting Aboriginal people who are experiencing family violence or have in the past – predominantly women and children.

We provide culturally safe and holistic legal and non-legal support to Aboriginal women and Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence, including sexual assault: frontline legal assistance, wrap-around support through our Koori Women's Place, outreach and specialist support programs to women in prison, and a range of early intervention prevention programs. Protecting and promoting Aboriginal women's wellbeing and safety is our core business.

About Antoinette Braybrook

Antoinette Braybrook is an Aboriginal woman who was born in Victoria on Wurundjeri country. Antoinette's grandfather and mother's line is through the Kuku Yalanji, North Queensland.

Antoinette has been the CEO of Djirra since the service was established in 2002. In addition to Antoinette's leadership in Victoria, she has held the elected position of Chairperson of the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum (National FVPLS Forum), the peak body for 13 FVPLSs throughout Australia, since 2012.

www.djirra.org.au

Follow us on Twitter @DjirraVic