



## STATEMENT

by Antoinette Gentile, Acting CEO, Djirra

From Djirra, 9 July 2020



## DJIRRA IS HERE FOR ABORIGINAL WOMEN AS COVID-19 CRISIS DEEPENS

All of us are facing many challenges at the moment following the Premier's announcement that the Melbourne Metropolitan area (and some surrounding areas) are again going into Stage 3 restrictions.

Right now, our thoughts are with the many residents of the nine public housing towers (or flats as us Aboriginal people call them) in Flemington and Kensington who are still in lock down. We cannot even begin to understand the level of fear, pressure, and uncertainty this situation is causing them. Not being able to leave - go to work, not to care for other family members, not to get groceries or external medical care.

Representatives from the ACCO sector, including Djirra, came together on Sunday to discuss ways in which our respective organisations can provide assistance to our mob affected by the lockdown.

Together with other ACCOs, Djirra will work in solidarity and do whatever is needed to support Aboriginal residents and get people through this challenging time. Djirra's legal and non-legal support services have identified all current and former clients and contacts who are living in the public housing towers in Flemington, North Melbourne, Collingwood, Richmond and Fitzroy - or living nearby. Throughout this week we have been reaching out for a yarn and offering support and assistance.

As Acting CEO, I am enormously proud of the work of all the staff at Djirra. I appreciate all the efforts you have made to make sure that our women know we are here to support them in any way we can.

Djirra is concerned about over policing and racism. We are worried for families cooped up in tiny flats for five days or more who may be struggling with loss of income, physical and mental health issues and family violence.

The heavy police presence in the public housing towers places a particular burden on Aboriginal women, many of whom, because of our history, have a profound mistrust of police and authorities. For generations, instead of being heard, supported and receiving the treatment we deserve as survivors of violence, Aboriginal women have been criminalised and our children removed. For Aboriginal families, police at our door means our kids being ripped from our arms. We always worry about losing our children, because we've seen it happen over and over again. This is one of the reasons why it's especially important right



now that Djirra can be there for our women and make sure they feel safe.

As this crisis deepens, it's more important than ever that we stay connected and accessible to our most vulnerable community members who have been locked in and cut off from their usual supports, with police stationed at their door.

Below is the combined ACCO's pamphlet and the CLCs Lockdown advice regarding legal services. Please share it with anyone who might need it. [Click here to download.](#)

#### HEY YOUR MOB!

We understand a large COVID-19 cluster has been linked to North Melbourne, Flemington and Kensington suburbs, which resulted in a stage 3 lockdown that went into effect midnight on Saturday 4 July 2020.

We know this must be incredibly stressful and challenging.

On Sunday 5 July 2020, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in Victoria came together with government to plan legal, medical, child and family, housing and community care supports for Aboriginal families and residents, as long as support is needed.

We're working close with government officials to help ensure you're in good health and spirits. It's important that our Aboriginal brothers and sisters feel safe, informed, empowered to make decisions, and have access to timely supports at this time.

Please refer to the below for useful contacts for supports.

#### HEALTH

##### VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICE

VAHS provides phone counselling and connection to other supports. GP phone consults and medication delivery. VAHS also offers COVID-19 assessment and testing at our Flinders site.

##### CONTACT

T: 1800 559 553 (Monday-Saturday, for phone counselling and support, operates 24 hours a day - free call)  
03 9419 3000 (VAHS Fitzroy, for GP phone consults and medication delivery, operates 9.5 Mon to Thurs, 8.4 Fri)

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#### HOUSING

##### ABORIGINAL HOUSING VICTORIA

AHV can help you access the services with social housing rental and tenancy issues such as arranging to pay rent or urgent maintenance.

##### CONTACT

W: ahv.org.au  
T: 03 9400 2100 E: clientservices@ahv.org.au  
facebook.com/aboriginalhousingvic

#### LEGAL

##### VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICES

VALS can help you with any legal matter. VALS has a 24 hour helpline offer hours support service.

##### CONTACT

W: vals.org.au  
T: 03 9418 2999 or to free: 1800 064 865  
facebook.com/VictorianAboriginalLegalService

##### ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER PROGRAM

If you need any urgent ACLO assistance, or need to work with police on file, please contact Safer, Immediate, Care, Peel.

##### CONTACT

W: police.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-community-liaison-officer-program  
T: 0438 328 827 E: craig.peel@police.vic.gov.au  
facebook.com/acclopage

#### FAMILY VIOLENCE

##### DADS MUMMURRO

Dads Mummurro delivers a range of family violence, housing and tenancy change programs for Aboriginal men and has a 24-hour line to assist anytime 1800 435 720.

##### CONTACT

W: dadsmummurro.com.au  
T: Free call 1800 435 720

##### DJIRRA

Our doors are closed but we are still available by phone during business hours to help you if you are experiencing family violence. We can also help you with tenancy, Orders, Family Law and Child Protection matters. You can also send us a message through our Facebook page and we will get back to you.

##### CONTACT

W: djirra.org.au  
T: Free call on 1800 105 303 E: info@djirra.org.au  
facebook.com/djirravic

##### VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY

VACCA delivers a range of family violence therapeutic services for women, children and young people experiencing family violence.

##### CONTACT

W: vacca.org  
T: 03 9422 8800 (Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm)  
facebook.com/vaccavict

#### OTHER HELPFUL KOORI ORGS

##### VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSOCIATION

W: vacal.org.au  
T: 03 9406 6266 E: reception@vacal.org.au  
facebook.com/VACSA

##### ABORIGINAL ADVANCEMENT LEAGUE

W: aaal.org.au  
T: 03 9400 7777  
facebook.com/AboriginalAdvancementLeagueVic-10473721626618

##### ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY ELDER SERVICES

W: acs.org.au  
T: 03 9388 6246 E: admin@acs.org.au  
facebook.com/acsun/About/About-Community-Elder-Services/1433274310082932

#### ROOPE PRIDE NETWORK

Rooppe Pride Network is a Facebook group specifically for LGBTQA+ Victorian Mob on Facebook.com/groups/42400281687954

More information on other side

#### VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED HEALTH ORGANISATION

VACCHO is the peak Aboriginal health body representing 350+ of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in Victoria.

W: vaccho.org.au/about-us/our-membership | vaccho.org.au/about-us/about-us  
T: 03 9419 2411 E: COVID-19@vaccho.org.au  
facebook.com/VACCCHO



**STUCK ON WHO TO CALL?**

We understand this might be a frightening time with increased isolation and anxieties. The Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector are here to provide assistance during this time.

If you're not sure who to call but need assistance, please call the helpful team at VAHS about anything on 1800 559 563. They can link you into the right services.

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who feel unsafe are encouraged to contact Djirra on 1800 105 303 or visit [www.djirra.org.au](http://www.djirra.org.au) to find out more.*

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## 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.

[www.djirra.org.au](http://www.djirra.org.au)

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