Working together makes us stronger – mental health and AOD services for Nyoongar families

Service providers have developed greater confidence in delivering mental health and alcohol and other drug services to Nyoongar people, and Nyoongar people are beginning to trust services where there was distrust previously, thanks to an innovative project designed to incorporate the 'Nyoongar world view' into service provision.

The Looking Forward Aboriginal Mental Health Project's key objective is to change the way services are delivered to Nyoongar families in the southeastern suburbs of Perth. The project has brought several service providers together with about 20 Nyoongar Elders to help the service engage with the local community so they are more comfortable accessing them.

Nyoongar Elder Charlie Kickett with Sheila McHale, CEO of Palmerston Association

"Service providers have developed greater confidence and competence to approach their work with renewed insight and purpose, using their skills to greater effect, for the benefit of Nyoongar clients and their families," Project Coordinator Michael Wright said.

"The ripple effect is that Nyoongar people begin to trust services where there was great distrust previously."

This Project challenges the silos organisations often work in and promotes a collective way of working.

Francis Lynch, Chief Executive of Ruah Community Services, said: "This is not a journey that takes you from A to B; it's a meandering experience."

Warwick Smith, director of youth mental health services, said the project challenged usual notions of service delivery.

"This Project challenges the silos organisations often work in and promotes a collective way of working," he said.

NDRI national drug research institute

Curtin University