



**MDAS**  
MALLEE DISTRICT ABORIGINAL SERVICES

*"Generations of vibrant, healthy  
and strong Aboriginal communities."*

Mr Troy Williamson  
Koori Family Engagement Coordinator  
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By Email: [Troy.Williamson@courts.vic.gov.au](mailto:Troy.Williamson@courts.vic.gov.au)

30 March 2021

Dear Mr Williamson,

### **CORONERS COURT OUTSTANDING RESPONSE**

Further to your telephone call and email dated 25 March 2021 ("the email"), please see below Mallee District Aboriginal Services Limited's (MDAS) response to the Recommendations made by the Coroners Court of Victoria made on a date unknown but anticipated to be early 2020.

Please be advised that an entirely new Executive Management team has been put in place at MDAS between November 2020 and March 2021. The current Executive Management team were not aware MDAS had failed to respond to Recommendations made by the Coroner's Court, which response, as I understand it, was due in May 2020. The current Executive Management Team take these matters very seriously.

In response to the matters raised in the email, MDAS can advise the Coroners Court of the following initiatives:

1. Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program - MDAS has continued to apply to both Commonwealth and State Governments for funding to deliver youth programs. We note such funding opportunities are competitive processes with no guarantee that MDAS will be successful in any such bids. MDAS' current youth programs offered across the Mallee are:
  - a. Early School Leavers Program supports Aboriginal youth between the ages 10- 25 years, which includes a mentoring component;
  - b. About Tomorrow Program that supports Aboriginal female youth between the ages of 12-17 years through mentoring workshops; and



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- c. Too Deadly Leaders Program that supports Aboriginal youth between the ages of 10- 17 years through mentoring workshops for both adolescent boys and girls.
2. MDAS has recently secured a further grant of \$750,000 to employ additional youth workers. This funding allows MDAS to provide mentorship and equips MDAS to strengthen Aboriginal young people's identity and culture and work with them to build resilience and assist them to resolve day to day challenges.
3. Family Wellbeing Program - MDAS works with Aboriginal community members in the Mildura area to run an evidence-based group program designed to address underlying traumas caused by, colonial dispossession, inter-generational trauma, loss and grief, racism and the loss of identity. All factors that give rise to current difficulties and risk factors facing our community. The program involves four stages of approximately 30 hours of group work made up of:
  - a. 9 Family Wellbeing Programs which include elders;
  - b. 2 Early Years Parents' Groups;
  - c. 1 Men's Group at Wiimpatja Healing Centre;
  - d. 1 Women's Group; and
  - e. 4 Youth Groups.

During the time MDAS has run these programs, MDAS has created partnerships with Mildura Primary School and Chaffey Secondary College and attended both schools regularly to run programs. This arrangement also provides the opportunity for MDAS to offer additional mentoring support to Aboriginal children and youth.

4. MDAS was recently successful in a funding bid to commence the development of a Youth Hub which will allow MDAS to focus on re-opening the gym and running programs to target increased youth engagement.
5. MDAS undertook a clinical reviews of its internal systems of care for vulnerable infants, children and youth. The outcome of this review was that a Therapeutic Systems Team (TST) was introduced to support case reviews, reflective practices and MDAS service delivery. This approach was operationally established in May 2020 and continues to work across infant, youth and adult service streams. This approach increases awareness of case complexity, staff support and trauma informed practices. Representatives of the TST sit with High Risk Youth panels through the Department of Fairness, Families and Housing (DFFH) and on community therapeutic



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consultation panels (which include the Department, Take Two, CYMHS and other senior therapeutic providers).

6. In house training and development reviews have been initiated to increase the education, capacity and service delivery of front line staff and their line managers. Targeted mental health, wellbeing and Community trauma support tutorials are under-construction and set to be rolled out through 2021.
7. A full systemic review and changes to case co-ordination and management across MDAS are underway with intensive wrap around models about to be trialled. Date and quality reviews will be undertaken to assess the efficacy of new service delivery model.
8. We have attempted to make contact with the Koori Youth Council since receiving the email and have left messages for them to contact us about any potential for a partnership in the youth space. MDAS will continue to follow this up. MDAS is currently exploring partnership opportunities with the Salvation Army and Sunraysia Community Health Services with a view to building on MDAS' youth hub model and establishing a youth drop in centre.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Your sincerely

  
Jacquelyn Turfrey  
Chief Executive Officer  
MDAS

