

## RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

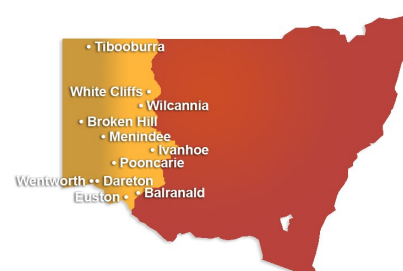


*Staff across the organisation have been working long hours and helping in jobs they wouldn't normally do as the region faces a COVID outbreak. Maari Ma's COVID Clinic has been doing vaccinations for 6 months and has ramped up it's service offering weekend vaccinations, walk-in appointments and going door to door with a mobile service.*

It's been all hands on deck for staff across the region since the Delta variant of COVID 19 spread to the far west. With communities across western New South Wales closely connected, when there was an outbreak several hundred kilometres away in Dubbo it was inevitable that it would reach the far west. Maari Ma staff were quick to rise to the rapidly developing and challenging situation. In Broken Hill, the vaccination drive had started in March when the first batch of Pfizer arrived from the Commonwealth. While there was a steady number of bookings and an incentive fruit and vegetable voucher

draw each week, the number of clients getting vaccinations needed to improve. Since the outbreak occurred vaccinations rates have increased, and with booked and walk in appointments at the clinic, a mobile service going to homes and an additional weekly incentive it's hoped that numbers will continue to climb. The organisation's overriding message to the community is that there is no greater incentive to get a vaccination than to help stop the spread of COVID, safeguard elders and families from getting sick and dying, and to sustain and maintain Aboriginal culture in the region.

**MAARI MA HEALTH  
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION  
REGION OF  
SERVICE**



## COORDINATED SUPPORT FOR WILCANNIA



*Maari Ma's mobile clinic is a valuable asset for community vaccinations. Jason Gowin—who is in a transitional Nurse Practitioner role, talks to a community member about the vaccination and Dr Michael Nugent is pictured standing.*

With the majority of initial cases in the far west occurring in Wilcannia, Maari Ma staff at the Primary Health Care Service, Wings and Strong Young Families banded with other services in the town to support people affected by COVID as well as those in the community needing to follow the stay at home orders. The support has extended from assisting with the distribution of donations, providing households with masks, sanitizer and COVID information packs to helping the RFDS and Local Health District with vaccinations. Maari Ma doctors, Dr Vic Carroll and Dr Michael Nugent have been in Wilcannia to assist COVID clients - either by phone or doing home visits, while ensuring that other clients are being attended to with their chronic health conditions and receiving scripts. The Maari Ma mobile van has also been deployed to access those community members who may have missed getting a vaccine and to offer them one. The Wilcannia team, assisted by Broken Hill staff, has been working very hard in its efforts to ensure the community is supported, and that clients are receiving the care and information they need.

## BALRANALD VACCINATION DRIVE

The team at Maari Ma Health Balranald assisted the AUSMAT team, along with the Balranald MPS, Balranald Shire Council and Land Council with a mass COVID19 vaccination day in the town. Staff were part of the door to door vaccination teams as well as working at the drive through clinic. The day long effort resulted in the vaccination of more than 270 people. Maari Ma Health Balranald was praised for its coordination of the door-to-door vaccinations - providing maps with highlighted houses and lists of those requesting a vaccination. Maari Ma also provided free transport if needed.





# VALUED ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Not long before the first COVID case was detected in the region Maari Ma celebrated the role that its Aboriginal health workers and practitioners have played, and continue to play, in efforts to improve the health of communities. A BBQ lunch was held for them to celebrate and recognise the inaugural National Day of Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners. Their valuable contribution increased 100 fold when the outbreak occurred and their efforts in working with communities have been exceptional. Maari Ma has supported four cohorts of trainees with up to ten trainees in each cohort over the past 10 years, with another cohort just recently commenced. The cohort last year did extremely well given the start of the pandemic and the uncertainty of what that meant for their training. But they adjusted, adapted and met their challenges admirably to complete their studies.



*A great achievement recognised was the recent graduation of Shannon Henderson who pursued her studies after completing her Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care and is now a registered nurse. Also recognised was Hannah Morris who has embarked on her nursing qualification and is also starting a Diabetes Education and Management course after completing her Cert IV last year.*



## DISTINGUISHED ATTAINMENT

Maari Ma CEO, Bob Davis has been appointed an Adjunct Professor of Practice in the School of Medicine and Public Health at the University of Newcastle. The title of Adjunct Professor is awarded to those who are outstanding leaders in their field and Bob has received the honour for his involvement in research for more than 30 years. In addition, Bob has become a Fellow of the Australasian College of Health Service Managers. A Fellowship of the ACHSM is a significant professional achievement and demonstrates an ongoing commitment to excellence in health service management.





# EXCEPTIONAL GENEROSITY



The generosity of individuals, communities and businesses since the far west outbreak started has been exceptional. From the beginning, donations and offers of assistance started to flow. A local group called Coordinated Food Support for Wilcannia delivered 566 food hampers and 173 personal hygiene hampers from Resilience NSW in the first weekend of the Wilcannia outbreak. It was quickly followed by a volunteer group on the other side of the state called Hawkesbury Helping Hands. Four volunteers in three vans drove nearly 1000 kilometres to Wilcannia with eight pallets of supplies including long life milk, toilet paper, non perishable food, bread, nappies, formula, toiletries, produce and hand sanitizer donated by Good 360 Australia. A coordinated effort of volunteers distributed the produce to the town's residents under stay at home orders and since that initial generosity the help has continued to flow.



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