

## Resolution of Council

**24 August 2026**

### **Item 14.4**

#### **Supporting the Westerman Jilya Institute for Indigenous Mental Health**

Moved by Councillor Weldon, seconded by Councillor Ellsmore –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the Westerman Jilya Institute for Indigenous Mental Health (Jilya) is an Aboriginal Community Controlled not for profit organisation developing the next generation of Indigenous psychologists to address the escalating rates of First Nations child suicides, which are the highest in the world
- (ii) Jilya was created by Dr Tracy Westerman AM as a direct response to the needs of bereaved Indigenous families and communities following 13 deaths of Aboriginal young people in the Kimberley, and decades of government inquiries into suicides, child removals, and incarcerations
- (iii) that lack of access to culturally competent services was a significant driver in these poor outcomes, Dr Tracy Westerman AM commenced and personally funded the first Indigenous Psychology Scholarship Program in 2019. The program supports improved access to culturally and clinically complex mental health services to provide measurable outcomes for high-risk communities
- (iv) the Indigenous Psychology Scholarship Program now supports 42 students, through fortnightly stipends and access to mentoring, tutoring, networking, research and placement opportunities
- (v) Jilya's mission is to achieve a future free of generational child suicides, child removals and incarcerations that have plagued Aboriginal communities for too long

(B) Council further note:

- (i) Aboriginal young people have a suicide rate 4 times higher than non-Aboriginal children
- (ii) only 450 of Australia's 50,000 registered psychologists are Indigenous
- (iii) for every 700 Aboriginal people in critical mental health need, there is just one Indigenous psychologist
- (iv) since its establishment, Jilya has had a significant impact on the Aboriginal community:
  - (a) 53% of Jilya students come from the highest risk rural or remote areas
  - (b) 79 Indigenous Psychology students have been supported through the Dr Tracy Westerman's Indigenous Psychology Scholarship Program in just 5 years
  - (c) 81% of Indigenous psychology students have completed their undergraduate studies and commenced postgraduate studies, which is four times more than the national average
  - (d) 70% of students in the program are the first in their family to attend university
- (v) every \$10,000 raised by Jilya funds an estimated 40 hours of complex clinical therapy for an at-risk Aboriginal person – equivalent a full course of evidence-based, culturally informed treatment, delivered by an Aboriginal psychologist, at no cost to the person who needs it
- (vi) Jilya has no operational funding from government for their critical services. They are a self-determined, grassroots organisation delivering essential services to vulnerable Aboriginal people
- (vii) on Friday 23 October 2026, Jilya is hosting "The 2026 Westerman Jilya Institute Indigenous Child Suicide Prevention Fundraising Gala" to raise funds needed to establish the Indigenous Psychology Treatment Arm of Jilya, a Sydney base which will deliver clinical care to Aboriginal people across the country, in person and via telehealth
- (viii) the Gala reserves tables for bereaved Indigenous families to attend as part of Jilya's "Pay it Forward" campaign. The campaign also allows for people and organisations to purchase and donate tickets for bereaved families

(C) Council further note:

- (i) the City of Sydney Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-2028 outlines the following commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:
  - (a) support the aspirations, needs and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
  - (b) respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through local programs and services
  - (c) support a strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector to deliver projects that meet the needs and aspirations of people in the local area
- (ii) the City of Sydney endorsed a First Nations Strategic Framework in June 2026, outlining the following commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:
  - (a) advance First Nations self-determination, economic prosperity and wellbeing
  - (b) support First Nations community-led and controlled organisations
  - (c) respond to First Nations needs and priorities through social support initiatives
  - (d) support the implementation of Closing the Gap priority reforms

(D) Council approve:

- (i) supporting the Westerman Jilya Institute for Indigenous Mental Health by sponsoring “The 2026 Westerman Jilya Institute Indigenous Child Suicide Prevention Fundraising Gala” as a Community Partner at a cost of \$10,000 to be funded from the 2026/27 General Contingency Fund
- (ii) donating the table included in the Community Partner sponsorship package to bereaved Indigenous families through the “Pay It Forward” campaign.

Carried unanimously.

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