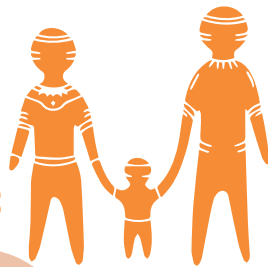


WELCOME TO RIVMED'S NEWSLETTER

January to June 2024





Message from the RivMed Deputy Chairperson

I am proud to present the latest news and achievements from RivMed.

We are excited to announce a significant partnership with the Salvation Army, marking the establishment of a new Alcohol and Other Drug Hub. This collaboration is a testament to our shared commitment to supporting our community members in their journey towards wellness. With the addition of another Alcohol and other drug outreach worker, we can expand our reach and provide even greater support to those in need.

I recently presented certificates to workers and want to thank AH&MRC for their invaluable support in providing AOD skill set training to our dedicated workers. The recent certification ceremony was a moment of pride and celebration for all involved. Congratulations to our staff from RivMed, GAMS, and AWAHS for their commitment to professional development and excellence in service delivery.

Our Breastfeeding Research Program has initiated a weekly support group. This group supports women supporting each other and empowers mothers navigating the beautiful and sometimes challenging path of breastfeeding. We stand firm in our commitment to nurturing the health and well-being of our mothers and children.

The team is busy planning our NAIDOC Event on Tuesday, 9th July, at Kyeamba Smith Hall. This celebration of Aboriginal culture and heritage is a testament to the strength and resilience of our community. We extend a warm invitation to all members of our community to join us in commemorating this important occasion.

We have many service providers attending it will be a great way to connect with community. Finally, I extend a warm welcome to all the new staff who have joined our RivMed family in recent months. Your dedication and passion are essential as we continue to provide health services to our community.

Maxine Honeysett

Deputy Chairperson
Riverina Aboriginal Medical
and Dental Corporation

Gawaaymbanha | Welcome!

Welcome to the RivMed Newsletter for January to June 2024! This edition celebrates our continued efforts in providing culturally appropriate and accessible health and care services to the Aboriginal community in Wagga Wagga.

In this edition, we proudly unveil our newly redesigned website at www.rivmed.org.au, which offers comprehensive resources and information about our services, history, and contact points for bookings and foster care.

We also showcase our wide-range of community engagement activities and initiatives facilitated by our amazing staff, including the launch of a new program; Elder Care Program.

Stay connected with RivMed as we continue to nurture the health and well-being of our community.

Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that the lands and waterways on which the Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation operates, and the communities we serve are the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people. We pay our respects to our elders past and present and we will continue to fulfill our cultural obligations as a First Nations organisation operating on Wiradjuri country.

Always Was. Always Will Be.



RivMed Successfully Regains Foster Care Accreditation

In 2022, RivMed's accreditation faced a temporary deferral due to identified shortcomings in operational policies and procedures, leading to intervention and assistance from the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG), the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and AbSec, the peak organisation for Aboriginal children and families in NSW. At the time of deferral, 54 children were in care with their carers being supported by RivMed's case management and support teams. As a result, these cases were carefully transitioned to other organisations.

Working diligently with OCG, DCJ and AbSec, RivMed has implemented a comprehensive performance improvement plan to address the identified issues and implement actions that focus on providing culturally safe and positive environments for vulnerable children in care, facilitating connections with family and kinship structures, and ensuring a strong sense of identity within the Aboriginal community.

Peta Larsen, RivMed's Chief Executive Officer said the corporation has been granted full accreditation for three years without restrictions on the number of children in care, or the complexity of their needs.

"RivMed is accredited as a designated agency under the provisions in Schedule

3A to the Children's Guardian Act 2019," Ms Larsen said.

"We are now actively working with non-Aboriginal government organisations to transition Aboriginal children and cases to our dedicated team of First Nations staff, skilled in delivering effective foster care case management and support services,

"Through our model of care, Aboriginal children and their carers will receive culturally appropriate support with access to culture and community to help develop children's positive self-identity, encourage healing, and maintain a sense of belonging, especially for those who have been disconnected from their immediate family," Ms Larsen said.

In his notice of accreditation letter, NSW Children's Guardian Mr Stephen Kinmond OAM congratulated RivMed on this significant achievement.

"Given the improvement in systems and practice demonstrated by RivMed, I have removed the additional conditions previously imposed on RivMed,

"This includes the condition requiring RivMed to engage an external consultant with reportable conduct expertise and the condition limiting the number of

children and young people to whom RivMed may provide statutory out-of-home care services to,

“I have informed the Department of Communities and Justice that there are no longer any restrictions imposed by my office on the number of children and young people who may be placed with RivMed,”

Since regaining its accreditation, RivMed has furthered its holistic Out of Home Care model by introducing cultural support plans. These are designed to preserve cultural heritage and identity, ensuring that no child loses touch with their culture or community.

“This accomplishment is a testament to RivMed’s dedication to delivering positive outcomes for the Wagga Wagga Aboriginal community,” Ms Larsen said.

“We thank the Board for their resilience throughout the recent adversity, and acknowledge the perseverance of the operational team, especially their commitment to improvement and growth,”

As a designated agency, information about RivMed’s accreditation status is published on the Office of the Children’s Guardian’s website and accessible to the public.



Image:

Back Left to Right: Peta Larsen CEO,
Nathan Wells Case Manager
Front Left to Right: Cherie Vaughan
Program Manager, Chantelle
Little Case Manager, Susan Colley
Foster Care Carer Recruitment and
Support, Penny Kay Principal Officer

Media Contact: **Ms Peta Larsen**
Chief Executive Officer - Riverina Medical
and Dental Aboriginal Corporation
(02) 6923 5300
Email contact made via Latoya Terry
(Executive Assistant)
via Latoya.Terry@rivmed.org.au

are you THINKING ABOUT being a carer for our Buraay?



Yes, it is a **big commitment** and can bring some challenges, however the difference you can make in the life of a child is very **rewarding**.

As a **RivMed carer**, you will always be **supported** with ongoing training and access to our **skilled Carer Support Team**.

Our carers are part of our larger RivMed family, where we all come together to promote a **sense of belonging and community**.

When you're ready, there are many ways you can provide **care for our Buraay**.

Want to know more? Yarn with us

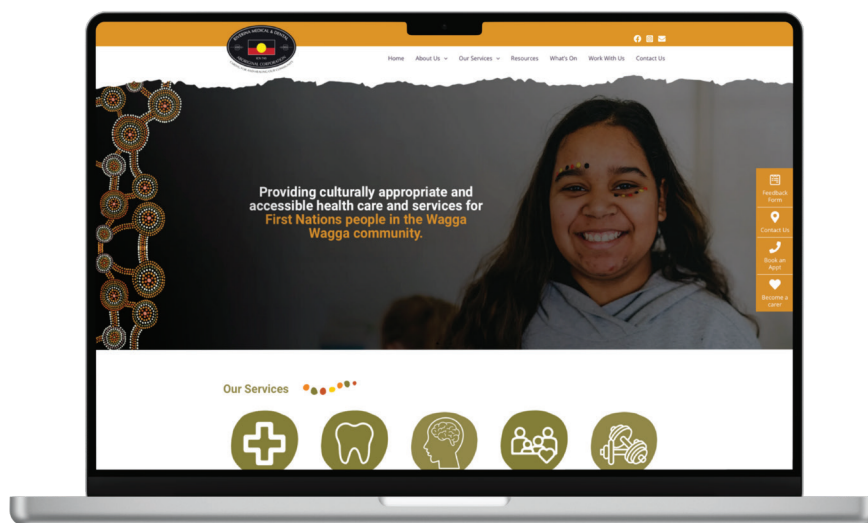
☎ 0438 580 769

✉ carerteam@rivmed.org.au

Family Services Unit | 30-32 Hammond Ave, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation Launches New Website

RivMed's New Website



Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation (RivMed) is thrilled to announce the launch of its newly redesigned website, aimed at providing comprehensive resources and information to support the constant growth and new programs for the First Nations people in the Wagga Wagga community.

The new website, accessible at www.rivmed.org.au, features an array of resources including detailed information about RivMed's extensive range of services, the history of the organization, and quick access to contact points for making bookings and becoming a foster carer. This initiative marks a significant step forward in RivMed's mission to provide culturally appropriate and accessible health and care services to Aboriginal families in the region.

RivMed Chief Executive Officer Peta Larsen said the website was long-coming and required collaboration from all program areas to get it right.

"We are very proud of our new website, the relaunch was a much-needed project that will keep the community and families updated with the services available at RivMed,"

"As a community-controlled organisation, we are committed to transparency with the community as we continue to provide culturally appropriate and accessible healthcare and services that improve the lives of Aboriginal people and their families living in the Wagga Wagga region," Ms Larsen said.

In addition to the core services, the new website highlights the newly opened RivMed Wellness Centre. This facility offers a space for physical health and wellbeing programs facilitated by RivMed. Established through a joint investment by the New South Wales Government and Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales, the Wellness Centre aims to enhance local efforts towards closing the health gap for First Nations people.

As RivMed continues to grow, it strives to recruit talented professionals for both identified and non-identified positions within the organization. This effort ensures that RivMed remains a community-controlled entity fostering a model of care that empowers children, families, and carers to feel nurtured and connected.

For more information, please visit www.rivmed.org.au.

Yalbilinya Miya (Learn Together): A First Nations Led Initiative for Breastfeeding Support

The Yalbilinya Miya program, meaning “learn together,” is an Aboriginal-led initiative designed to support Koori women in their breastfeeding journeys.

Led by the Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation (RivMed) in collaboration with the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, University of Sydney, this program aims to reclaim and strengthen traditional breastfeeding practices that have nurtured Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies for over 65,000 years.

Program Highlights

- **Community-Driven Research:** The program gathers insights from Koori women living on Wiradjuri lands (Wagga Wagga) through Yarning Circles and one-on-one sessions. This participatory approach ensures that the program is grounded in the real experiences and needs of the community.
- **Comprehensive Support:** The initiative includes a tailored breastfeeding education program led by a Wiradjuri midwife and antenatal team. Participants have access to weekly breastfeeding support sessions, a dedicated breastfeeding support hotline, and personalized breastfeeding packs that include essential items such as electric breast pumps and culturally designed cover-ups.

- **Culturally Safe Training:** Key program leaders, including Aboriginal Health Workers and midwives, receive specialized lactation training to provide culturally safe and effective support to breastfeeding mothers.
- **Empowering Women:** By addressing the impacts of colonization and systemic inequities, the program seeks to empower Koori women to continue traditional breastfeeding practices, providing the best start to life for their babies and fostering stronger mother-child bonds.

Challenges Addressed:

- **Lack of Support:** The program addresses the need for more breastfeeding mentors, culturally safe lactation consultants, and supportive policies in workplaces and public spaces.
- **Systemic Barriers:** Issues such as racism in healthcare, lack of Aboriginal midwives, and the commercial influence of formula companies are being tackled to create a more supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers.
- **Education and Resources:** The program emphasizes the importance of educating both healthcare providers and the community about the benefits of breastfeeding and providing resources to help mothers navigate challenges like latching issues, low milk supply, and mental health concerns.

'Breastfeeding is the most beautiful and natural way of feeding our babies. Breast is best, anytime and anywhere, and this program will help to ensure all of our women have the tools and supports available to guide them through their breastfeeding journeys'

– Aunty Donna Kirby



Next Steps:

- Pilot Program Implementation: the program will design, implement, and evaluate a pilot breastfeeding support initiative.
- Lactation Training Framework: the project will develop a framework for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lactation training program.

How to be part of the program:

✉ admin@rivmed.org.au

☎ (02) 6923 5200

📠 (02) 6927 0444

271 Edward Street
Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

Activities and Highlights

Wagga School Holiday Activities



15 JANUARY 2024
10am - 12pm
Tolland Community Centre

18 JANUARY 2024
10am - 12pm
Koorungal Community Centre

22 JANUARY 2024
10am - 12pm
Tolland Community Centre

25 JANUARY 2024
10am - 12pm
Koorungal Community Centre

We had a blast on January 18th at Koorungal Community Centre, January 22nd at Tolland Community Centre, and January 25th back at Koorungal Community Centre! From engaging games to creative crafts, each event was filled with smiles and laughter from families across Wagga. Kids and parents alike enjoyed bonding over exciting activities and making new friends. The success of these events was a testament to the vibrant and close-knit community we are fortunate to have in Wagga. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who joined us, making these school holidays truly special.

The school holiday activities in Wagga were a roaring success, bringing families together for days filled with laughter, creativity, and camaraderie. From January 18th to the 25th, the community gathered at Koorungal and Tolland Community Centres for a series of engaging games and hands-on crafts. Children relished the excitement of each activity, while parents cherished the opportunity to bond with their little ones and connect with other families. The vibrant atmosphere and sense of togetherness made these events truly memorable, leaving a lasting impact on everyone who attended. It was a testament to the strong community spirit that thrives in Wagga, where every moment shared is treasured and celebrated.



23 JANUARY 2024

10am - 12pm

Junee Library

92 Lorne Street Junee NSW

RivMed provides activities, opportunities and host regular events for young people to engage with services, learn about culture and adopt healthy behaviours and attitudes towards drugs, alcohol and other substances.



Junee After School Activities

Join us every **Thursday** starting **February 8, 2024** for exciting **after-school youth activities!**

 **Junee Library**
92 Lorne Street Junee NSW

 **3:30pm - 4:30pm**
During School Term Only



“Thrilling Thursdays” kicked off with an explosion of energy and excitement at June Library every Thursday from February 8, 2024. Children of all ages eagerly gathered to explore a world of creativity and fun. From captivating storytelling sessions to immersive hands-on crafts, each Thursday was a new adventure filled with laughter, learning, and friendship. Participants embraced the opportunity to unleash their imaginations, connect with peers, and make lasting memories.



“A HAPPY MOUTH... IS A HAPPY BODY”

FREE
Toothbrush and Toothpaste
Until supplies last

Celebrate **WORLD ORAL HEALTH DAY** at

 02 6923 5200  rivmed.org.au



This year’s theme, “A Happy Mouth, Is a Happy Body,” highlights the importance of dental health for overall well-being. At RivMed Dental, we’re here to support you in keeping your smile radiant!

During the event, we gave away free toothbrushes and toothpaste (while supplies lasted), helping you take care of your smile and your overall health.

Activities and Highlights

RivMed Celebrated International Women's Day with community



A heartfelt thank you to all the incredible ladies who joined us in celebrating International Women's Day on March 8, 2024! It was a beautiful occasion filled with meaningful conversations and the sharing of knowledge.

One of the highlights from our time together was recognizing the importance of regular Yarning Circles for women and girls in the Wagga Wagga community. In response, we're excited to announce the launch of a Women's Group session every fortnight on Fridays!



RivMed Celebrated International Women's Day with community



Programs we deliver:

- Cultural workshops, tours and overnight camps
- Men's Groups
- Women's Group
- Food & Mood Cooking Groups/Classes
- Get Active Program
- Drug and Alcohol Support Program
- Youth Activities and Programs

How to access Group Care

✉ admin@rivmed.org.au

☎ (02) 6927 0400

📠 (02) 6927 0444

30-32 Hammond Ave
Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

Activities and Highlights

RivMed Mardi Gras Float!

What an incredible weekend it was at our deadly 2024 RivMed Mardi Gras Float!

The spirit of our community was shining bright, and our Wagga First Nations Pride was on show and in full force.

It was heartwarming to witness the community coming together in support. A massive thank you goes out to everyone who participated, supported, and helped make the float possible. We can't wait to see you again next year for another incredible Mardi Gras celebration!



At RivMed we organise, host and partner with other community groups and stakeholders to create programs that help community members to re-engage, socialise, connect and engage with our services.

All programs are free to attend and open to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, living in our service region. Transport is available and can be pre-arranged. Contact us for more information.





Activities and Highlights

RivMed Celebrated World No Tobacco Day 31 May 2024

Winning Entrants

Anonymous: 'I didn't realise how bad and addicting it really was until I tried to quit, affecting not just myself but the rest of my family who were addicted as well. The amount of money wasted is insane.'

Anonymous: 'Watching my family vape makes me worried about their health. My pop died from smoking, so I always think about that.'

Kiara: 'Vaping is becoming something some of my mob is using to cope with their stress instead of getting the right help to cope.'

Rosie: 'Too many young ones doing it. Because vapes are sweet smelling and seen as cool by young ones, there are too many young ones choosing to vape! Vaping has been made a novelty.'

Rachel: 'Our young generation have big goals and dreams especially with sports. To make these dreams come true they need to have the knowledge and understanding that vaping or smoking can cause serious harm to their body and lungs. Vaping & smoking can be the only thing that stops their dreams from coming true and becoming our next big superstars of our future.'

Thank you to our community who came to our World No Tobacco Day event!

The sun shined while we enjoyed our hot chocolates and coffees, and yarned about how we can protect our young people from tobacco industry interference.

We announced the winners of our World No Tobacco Day competition and farewelled our Smoking Cessation Worker; Bettina Goolagong.





Every Thursday, RivMed has been having a blast playing indoor netball! We started with just one team, but thanks to so much interest, we've now got two deadly teams in the draw... and they got to face off against each other recently.

In June, KJ & Ash Clark from RivMed hosted a Men's Yarn Up event for the male staff and clients.

The Yarn Up was a wonderful opportunity for men to come together, connect, yarn, and enjoy a meal with other men.

It offered a relaxing environment where everyone could share stories and enjoy good food together in an informal setting.



Men's Yarn Up

Come along to connect, yarn and enjoy a feed with other men

 **7 June 2024**
RivMed Office,
Docker Street

Open to all male staff and clients of RivMed
RSVP by the 5th June with dietary requirements


To RSVP, contact KJ on 0439 067 986

External Networking Events



Murun-Dhu (I Live, I Breathe) First Nations Concert



RivMed proudly supported this year's Murun-Dhu (I Live, I Breathe) First Nations Concert, bringing the community and families together for an unforgettable experience. On Thursday, January 25, 2024, from 6pm to 9pm at the Riverside Stage, attendees were treated to a night filled with cultural performances and celebrations. The event continued the next day, Friday, January 26, 2024, from 10am to 4pm at the CSU Riverina Playhouse in Wagga Wagga, offering family-friendly activities such as elders' stories, animations, poetry, films, art, and more. It was a weekend of cultural enrichment and community bonding that will be cherished for years to come.

Murra Yarra Speak out Speak Loud

Murra Yarra
Speak Out Speak Loud

Meeting on
Wiradjuri Country
Wagga Wagga Tourist Information Centre Carpark
At 183 Tarcutta Street
Friday 15th March
5pm to 7pm

*Walk together to honour those
we have lost to suicide.*

Walking and Smoking Ceremony will commence at
5.30pm
and finish at Wagga Beach.

Hosted by Supported by

Please contact for any further
information
yamandhumarang@gmail.com

RivMed proudly supported and sponsored Yamandhu Marang and the memorial walk to remember those we've lost to suicide. The Wagga community gathered on March 15, 2024, from 5pm to 7pm, meeting at 183 Tarcutta Street on Wiradjuri Country (Wagga Wagga Tourist Information Park). Attendees were encouraged to wear memorial clothing in honour of their loved ones. Together, they walked, remembered, healed, and honoured the memory of those lost. Yamandhu Marang generously offered to print photos of loved ones, providing an opportunity for cherished memories to be included in the walk. It was a poignant and meaningful event, fostering unity, support, and remembrance within the community.

Upcoming Events and Programs

Dive into culture, connection, and community with RivMed's Youth Cultural Program!

Ages 12-17 can join us every fortnight for engaging activities like Aboriginal art workshops, bush walks, and traditional teachings.

- Aboriginal Art Programs (painting boomerangs and chapsticks, ochre crushing and mixing, weaving with natural fibres)
- Sharing Wiradjuri culture (bush, scrub and river walks, food and medicine plant teachings, artefacts, seasonal knowledge and Aboriginal history)
- Traditional activities (boomerang throwing and returning lessons spear throwing lessons).



Image Credit:
Yandarra Festival 2023
Photographer: Matt Beaver



YOUTH CULTURAL PROGRAM



Fornightly on Tuesdays
5:30pm to 8pm



Contact to know more
Ashley Clark **0419 629 410**
DJ Honeysett **0458 502 734**

Come join our RivMed Women's Group! We're creating a safe space for chatting, sharing knowledge, and making connections.

Calling all girls and
women of Wagga Wagga!

WOMEN'S GROUP



Fornightly on Fridays
10:30am to 12:30pm



Contact to know more
Sharna Solomon **0437 858 409**
Latoya Douglas **0457 461 209**



Image:
Left to Right:

New Program: Elder Care



RivMed's Elder Care Program

The program is designed to remove barriers and increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who receive care on Country.

To receive support, RivMed clients must be over the age of 50 and living within the Wagga Wagga Local Government Area (LGA). To access this program, you will need a referral from a RivMed GP. Contact 02 6923 5200 to make an appointment.

This program is delivered by Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation as a member of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO)



Employment Opportunities



Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation (RivMed) is a long-established Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation in the heart of Wiradjuri Country.

RivMed work to effect change in the most marginalised and vulnerable people in our community. We work to achieve this through the provision of culturally appropriate medical and well-being services for Aboriginal people and their families.

It is an exciting time to be in the health industry.

For medical appointments or to contact the Allied Health team

medical@rivmed.org.au
(02) 6923 5200
(02) 6921 7288 (fax)
271 Edward Street Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

For Family Services

admin@rivmed.org.au
(02) 6927 0400
(02) 6927 0444 (fax)
30-32 Hammond Ave Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

For Dental, RivMed Administration all other enquiries

admin@rivmed.org.au
(02) 6923 5300
(02) 6921 7120 (fax)
69-71 Docker Street Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

For Media Enquiries

Media Contact: **Ms Peta Larsen**
Chief Executive Officer - Riverina Medical
and Dental Aboriginal Corporation

(02) 6923 5300
Email contact made via Latoya Terry
(Executive Assistant) via Latoya.Terry@rivmed.org.au

After-Hours Medical Care

GP After-Hours

Phone: 69 310900
1/185 Morgan Street, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

Monday to Friday 6-9pm

Saturday 6-9pm

Sunday 9am-1pm & 5-9pm

Public Holiday Hours may differ

13Cure – After-Hours Home Doctor

Phone: 13CURE (2873)

Monday to Friday 6pm to 8am

Saturday 12pm to 8am

Sunday and Public Holidays 24 hours

Opening Hours :

Monday to Friday
8:30am - 5:00pm

Saturday and Sunday
Closed

In case of Emergency

Clients are informed in
cases of emergency to
call for an ambulance on
000



Scan for Feedback

