

Change makers - working together to end violence



“Healing our babies is so important and it starts there. It’s not part of our culture to have domestic violence. It’s not part of any culture.”

Aunty Elsja Dewis – Cultural Healer, Murrigunyah

Aunty Elsja Dewis shares humbly with us how she came to work at Murrigunyah “The position finds you, all the stars were in alignment. I was retired and I opened a gelato shop, people were coming in and I was counselling them and I thought I need to heal people. It’s a true blessing to be here. I had worked in the Royal Commission into Sexual Abuse so I’d heard about domestic violence and sexual violence. To be part of the healing process is a true honour. I had been taught by my mother and grandmother and this allows me to do what I do now.”

“Helping the community to recognise trauma and break the cycle is so important. I have been able to work at developing our cultural framework. Healing and being a support where I can adapt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocol.” Aunty Elsja said.

Aunty Elsja sustains her work through her cultural teachings, kinship, communities and her elders. She tells us that it important to work towards “Finding solutions to problems and not leave people hanging on. It’s about empowerment and helping people with the language of change. It’s also about mainstream understanding our culture.”

At our most recent Virtual Knowledge Circle, Aunty Elsja spoke to participants about how we respond to challenges of people experiencing intergenerational trauma triggered during these times of Covid-19. She shared her healing tips about working with and trying to understand intergenerational trauma.

Aunty Elsja’s advice for others working across this sector is to “Look after yourself first and foremost. Don’t become part of the trauma. Self care is of utmost concern. Every morning I wake up and learn something from someone. I don’t know it all and you don’t know everything because no two cases are the same and each person needs to be treated as an individual. Be open to new learning. In every position I’ve had, I’ve remained open to learning new things.”



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