



OUTLINE OF EVIDENCE OF SHAUN BRAYBROOK (WULGUNGGO NGALU)

DECEMBER HEARINGS 2022 (CRIMINAL JUSTICE)

13 DECEMBER 2022

I BACKGROUND

1. I am an Aboriginal man who follows my grandfather line to the Kuku-Yalanji people.
2. I have been working with the Victorian Koori community for around 28 years.
3. I have extensive experience working in the government and corrections system, including:
 - in the Aboriginal Youth Support Unit as a youth worker;
 - as a youth worker with the Bert Williams Centre;
 - as an Aboriginal liaison officer at Port Phillip Prison;
 - in the Indigenous Service and Policy Unit at Corrections Victoria; and
 - as manager of Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place.
4. I am currently the general manager of Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place and have been involved since the program development commenced in 2006.
5. I was the recipient of the Australian Corrections Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2019.

II ABOUT WULGUNGGO NGALU

6. Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place is a joint initiative of the Aboriginal community and Victorian Government under the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement. It opened in 2008 in Yarram, Gippsland. The name translates to 'which way together.'
7. Wulgunggo Ngalu is a residential learning place, which accommodates up to 18 men, to complete Community Correction Orders.
8. The program is voluntary and available for men above 18 years of age.
9. Participants live on-site for between three and six months.
10. Aboriginal Elders provide leadership and communicate traditional cultural values. The program offers an opportunity to engage in a range of activities including education, community work and learning new skills.
11. In 2011, Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place won an International Prison and Correctional Award for Community Correction for its innovative approach in working with men on correctional orders.
12. Attachment A is the brochure for Wulgunggo Ngalu which outlines more about the program we run.

III SUCCESS OF WULGUNGGO NGALU

13. Wulunggo Ngalu has had significant success with helping Aboriginal men to complete their Community Corrections Orders, connect with culture and build their confidence.
14. This success is due to a number of unique qualities of Wulunggo Ngalu which ensure the residents can connect with their culture, including:
 - Aboriginal Elders attend Wulunggo Ngalu regularly and provide leadership and communicate through traditional values;
 - Aboriginal values are reflected in the environment, including the bush location, firepit, dance circle, and multiple shared living spaces for Elders and visitors;
 - The physical building was designed by an Aboriginal architect to reflect the blue wren, a totem of the local Aboriginal community; and
 - All staff are Aboriginal men who act as strong role models.
15. Through these measures, Aboriginal men at Wulunggo Ngalu are able to learn about, and connect with, their culture.
16. Attachment B is a case study of Wulunggo Ngalu completed as part of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. This provides some additional information on the structure and programs at Wulunggo Ngalu.
17. Wulunggo Ngalu is also successful because it has three distinct program areas which residents must participate in, being:
 - (a) the requirements of the Community Corrections Orders;
 - (b) an education component, including life skills; and
 - (c) a cultural component.
18. Residents are able to engage in a range of activities, including education, community work and learning new skills, many of which are directed at increasing cultural knowledge and strengthening identity. These activities and programs include the Aboriginal Cultural Immersion Program, Koori Art and Design (an on-site TAFE program) and ceremony activities.
19. Participants are involved in local community activities including a local Australian Rules football club.
20. Wulunggo Ngalu is voluntary which means the residents want to be there and have respect for each other and the process.
21. After the first three weeks, residents are able to return home every third weekend. Families may also visit and stay on-site at Wulunggo Ngalu on weekends. This is important for residents to maintain connection with their family and to help with the transition home.
22. Separately, Wulunggo Ngalu includes transition planning to help people exiting the program.
23. Staff are on-site 24 hours a day and Wulunggo Ngalu is a drug and alcohol-free environment.
24. Wulunggo Ngalu has a success rate of 75% of men completing their Community Corrections Orders.

Case study: Uncle Warren Marks

25. Uncle Warren Marks was a resident at Wulunggo Ngalu. Uncle Warren was separated from his family at birth and adopted out to a white family in Melbourne. He re-connected with his mother and brother later in life.
26. After losing his mother and wife in the space of a year, Uncle Warren fell into alcoholism and faced drink driving and assault charges, which were all alcohol-fuelled. The court gave Uncle Warren the option of attending Wulunggo Ngalu.

27. Uncle Warren has stated:

"If you let them teach you and listen to what they say ... you realise who you are, where you come from and what you stand for. You know how you got here but how you can fix yourself up and make your family proud."

...

"You come here just as a black fella and now I left here as a black fella who had become an Elder, somebody who learned about his culture as well."

IV PERSPECTIVES ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

28. Overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system is a significant issue.
29. A number of the issues which are underlying causes of incarceration, including alcohol and drug misuse, and intergenerational trauma, can be addressed by helping men to connect with their culture and learn from Elders.
30. It is important to have specialist diversion programs in place to prevent Aboriginal men from entering the prison system, or from entering the prison system further.
31. My work across a number of different roles has included:
 - Introducing the Healings Program at Port Phillip Prison, including the Aboriginal Cultural Immersion Program and Marumali Program which looked at transgenerational trauma;
 - Setting up a radio broadcast from Port Phillip Prison which interviewed Aboriginal people, allowing discussions about prison life and family; and
 - Implementing similar programs at Corrections Victoria and developing a cultural awareness package for new officers.
32. This experience all relates to establishing targeted programs for Aboriginal people which address the underlying causes of incarceration.

V AREAS FOR REFORM

33. Wulgunggo Ngalu has had significant success in diverting Aboriginal men from the justice system and helping them to connect with culture and build confidence.
34. The system could benefit from further Aboriginal-led diversion programs which help connect people with culture.
35. It would also be beneficial to have greater support for Aboriginal people once they are back in community, by continuing to offer support services and programs.